

THE BIG CITY

(Mahanagar)

Directed by Satyajit Ray

Anil Chatterjee, Madhabi Mukherjee, Haren Chatterjee, Jaya Bhaduri
India 1963, 131 mins, Cert PG

Winner: Silver Bear for Best Direction, Berlin Film Festival, 1964



**Newly restored and back on the big screen
in its 50th Anniversary year**

**Opening on 16 August 2013 at BFI Southbank
& selected cinemas nationwide**

12 June 2013 – On 16 August the BFI brings Satyajit Ray's *The Big City* to cinemas across the UK. This richly absorbing tale of family and city life from the master of Bengali cinema is set in mid-50s Calcutta, a society still adjusting to Independence and gripped by social and financial crisis.

The film's nationwide release will coincide with a two-month complete retrospective of the director's work at BFI Southbank during August and September.

Subrata Mazumdar (Anil Chatterjee), a young bank clerk struggling to support his entire extended family on a meagre salary, firmly believes that 'a woman's place is with her cooking pots'. Unsurprisingly, he experiences conflicting emotions when his wife Arati (Madhabi Mukherjee) helps out by taking a job as a door-to-door 'salesgirl' peddling knitting machines to rich housewives. Though shy and nervous to begin with, Arati soon proves a huge success, relishing her new-found independence (not to mention the joys of lipstick) and thoroughly upsetting the family dynamic.

Bengali star Madhabi Mukherjee, with her expressive frown and mischievous smile, gives a ravishing, spirited performance as Arati. This was Mukherjee's first film with Ray (she was later to star in his *Charulata*) and she confessed herself 'stunned' by his extraordinary 'woman-centred' screenplay, so different from anything she had previously encountered. Indeed, Ray originally considered calling the film 'A Woman's Place'.

Yet, for all his focus on Arati's problems, Ray – who is renowned for his breadth of sympathy – also deploys warmth, abundant humour and deep psychological insight in his depiction of a large, multi-generational cast of characters, including Arati's conservative old father-in-law, her studious teenage sister-in-law, her feisty Anglo-Indian colleague and her benevolently despotic boss.

For this new restoration of *The Big City*, undertaken in India, the original negative was scanned at a high resolution (2K), enabling the film's epic scale and intimate detail – from the portrayal of bustling urban life to the exquisite play of emotions on Arati's face – to emerge in greater beauty and clarity.

Now re-released by the BFI to mark its fiftieth anniversary, *The Big City*, with its emphasis on conflicting social values – and most particularly on the role of women – feels as fresh and relevant as ever.

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- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences