

A restoration by the BFI National Archive

# UNDERGROUND

Directed by Anthony Asquith

UK 1928 | 84 mins | Cert U

With Elissa Landi, Brian Aherne, Norah Baring, Cyril McLaglen



A BFI Release

Score composed by Neil Brand

Conducted and orchestrated by Timothy Brock

Performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra

[www.bfi.org.uk/releases](http://www.bfi.org.uk/releases)

Release date: 11 January 2013

Opening venues: BFI Southbank plus selected cinemas nationwide

The BFI celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the London Underground\* with the nationwide cinema release of one of the great British silent features - Anthony Asquith's subterranean tale of love, jealousy, treachery and murder. This restoration by the BFI National Archive is wonderfully enhanced by Neil Brand's score, performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and recorded live at the Barbican in 2011.

Eighty-five years since the making of *Underground*, your average tube ride might not be quite so eventful, but anyone who has exploited the city's public transport system to romantic advantage will find much to recognise. More than any other film from Britain's silent canon, Asquith's working-class love story evokes the lives of ordinary Londoners with its scenes of the bustling Underground (the behaviour of the passengers is strikingly familiar) and the capital's parks, double-decker buses, pubs and shabby bedsits.

In the late 1920s Asquith, along with Hitchcock, was one of the most audacious young talents in British film. Working to his own original screenplay, he brilliantly portrayed the light and dark sides of city life aided by a superb cast: Brian Aherne and Elissa Landi as the nice young lovers and Norah Baring and Cyril McLaglen as their unhappy counterparts. The 26-year-old's direction is highly assured, with some remarkably cinematic flourishes, clearly inspired by contemporary German and Russian filmmaking but with one or two tricks of his own, climaxing with a thrilling chase scene across the rooftops of the Lots Road Power Station.

For many years the restoration of *Underground* presented insurmountable difficulties, but developments in digital technology have enabled the BFI to make a significant improvement to the surviving film elements. In the words of film historian Matthew Sweet, it now looks 'as if someone has turned the lights on'.

The restoration of *Underground* was made possible by the generous support of Simon W Hessel.

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**\*\*\* PICTURE DESK ALERT \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting  
BFI theatrical releases can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net)**

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

- 10 January 2013 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the London Underground: the first stretch of line – the Metropolitan, or Met - opened on 10 January 1863. It measured nearly four miles and ran between Paddington and Farringdon Street.
- BFI Southbank will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the London Underground on 10 January with a special preview of Asquith's film. Following the screening composer Neil Brand, Archive curators Bryony Dixon and Ben Thompson, and Simon Murphy, Curator, London Transport Museum, will discuss, with chair Francine Stock (BBC Radio 4), the score, the restoration and the history of the Underground. (BFI Southbank, 10 January 2013 at 6pm)
- *Underground* will be released by the BFI on DVD/Blu-ray on 17 June 2013.

### About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- 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