

Warren Beatty at BFI Southbank in June 2012



Throughout **June 2012**, **BFI Southbank** dedicates a season to the acting and directing achievements of **Warren Beatty**, one of cinema's most charismatic and legendary actors, and brother of **Shirley Maclaine** (who also enjoys a companion season of her film work throughout the month).

Beatty is almost as famous for his love life as he was for his acting, producing and directing films, having been connected with an array of leading ladies over the years. Beatty's first major film role was starring alongside Natalie Wood as Bud in the romantic drama **Splendor in the Grass** (Dir Elia Kazan 1961) based on an original screenplay by American playwright William Inge. Critics refused to take the handsome young Beatty seriously, and he strove for more serious roles which lead to performances in **All Fall Down** (Dir John Frankenheimer 1962), Robert Rossen's masterpiece **Lilith** (1964) and a tour de force turn as a stand-up comic who flees Detroit for Chicago after incurring the wrath of the mob in Arthur Penn's **Mickey One** (1964). It was the next film directed by Penn, the classic **Bonnie and Clyde** (1967), which elevated Beatty's status in Hollywood. Beatty and co-star Faye Dunaway played the outlaws Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker in a landmark in new American cinema.

Over the next ten years, Beatty starred in, produced and occasionally directed some of the most important films in Hollywood. The critically acclaimed **McCabe & Mrs. Miller** (Dir Robert Altman 1971) considered Beatty's finest film; **Shampoo** (Dir Hal Ashby 1975) in which Beatty stars as a womanising hairdresser alongside Julie Christie, Goldie Hawn and a young Carrie Fisher; and the massive box office hit **Heaven Can Wait** (Dir Warren Beatty 1978) which was nominated for nine Oscars. It was Beatty's epic

tribute to the American communist John Reed, and the Soviet revolution **Reds** (1981) which won Beatty an Academy Award for Best Director.

The only other Beatty film in the 1980s after **Reds** was the disastrous **Ishtar** (Dir Elaine May 1987). So Beatty followed that up with **Dick Tracy** (1990) a live-action strip cartoon starring alongside Madonna. Following this was **Bugsy** (Dir Barry Levinson 1991), a biopic of the life of gangster Bugsy Siegel who founded Las Vegas which co-starred Annette Bening as Virginia Hill, the girlfriend of Bugsy. At last, Beatty the famous bachelor had found his mate. Beatty married Bening and they starred together in the costly disaster **Love Affair** (Dir Glenn Gordon Caron 1994). He later wrote, directed and played the lead in **Bulworth** (1998) and was a reminder that Beatty was still capable of making remarkable films and was a very funny satire on American politics to boot.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Splendor in the Grass

USA 1961. Dir Elia Kazan. With Warren Beatty, Natalie Wood, Pat Hingle, Sandy Dennis. 124min. 15

Set in Kansas in 1928, this is an original screenplay by William Inge and a portrait of raging sexual frustration. Bud and Deanie yearn to be lovers, but they are surrounded by mid-West repression. Director Elia Kazan squeezed every bit of erotic melodrama out of the material, Natalie Wood was a revelation as Deanie, but she was falling for her Bud (Beatty). With fine supporting work from Barbara Loden and Zohra Lampert.

Sat 2 June 14:45 NFT1

Wed 13 June 20:30 NFT1

All Fall Down

USA 1962. Dir John Frankenheimer. With Warren Beatty, Eva Marie Saint, Brandon de Wilde, Karl Malden, Angela Lansbury. 110min. 12A

Beatty's darkest performance as the older brother who dismays his younger sibling (de Wilde) by seducing a woman named Echo (Eva Marie Saint). William Inge adapted the James Leo Herlihy novel, with John Frankenheimer directing and John Houseman as producer. Karl Malden and Angela Lansbury were the brothers' parents. Overlooked nowadays, this feels a bit like Hud set in the polite suburbs. Beatty never let himself be as unlikeable again.

Tue 5 June 15:45 NFT2

Fri 8 June 20:45 NFT2

Lilith

USA 1964. Dir Robert Rossen. With Warren Beatty, Jean Seberg. 114min

Robert Rossen's last film, and his masterpiece, adapted from a novel by JR Salamanca. Beatty plays a young nurse who takes a job at an asylum and falls for a patient (Seberg). It's set in rural New England, but the mythological dimensions feels quite natural. Eugen Schufftan did the black and white photography, Beatty is increasingly tense and disturbed while Seberg's madness grows more beautiful and serene. With Kim Hunter, Peter Fonda and Gene Hackman.

Sun 3 June 15:40 NFT1

Fri 15 June 20:45 NFT2

Mickey One

USA 1964. Dir Arthur Penn. With Warren Beatty, Alexandra Stewart, Hurd Hatfield, Franchot Tone. 92min. PG

A stand-up comic thinks he has offended the Mob, so he goes undercover in grungy Chicago. Amazingly ambitious for its time and wildly poetic, it gets a tour de force from Beatty as the spirit of paranoia. Hatfield is a brittle impresario and Tone is magnificent as Ruby Lapp, the veteran who knows all the debts 'they' can call in. Arthur Penn directed a screenplay by Alan Srgal. The wistful improves on the soundtrack are by Stan Getz.

Sat 2 June 20:40 NFT2

Wed 20 June 20:40 NFT3

Bonnie and Clyde

USA 1967. Dir Arthur Penn. With Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, Denver Pyle, Dub Taylor. 107min. 15

'They're young. They're in love. They rob banks.' And so the Texan reality of Depression hoodlums blooms in the anti-establishment mood of the late 60s. The eroticism is built up by denial or inability – is Clyde impotent? Faye Dunaway is a fabulous Bonnie. Gene Hackman, Estelle Parsons and Michael Pollard are the other gang members. David Newman and Robert Benton did the script – but it got worked on. A landmark in new American cinema, a genre film but an indie, too.

Sat 2 June 17:20 NFT1

Sun 3 June 20:45 NFT1

Tue 12 June 20:50 NFT1

McCabe & Mrs Miller

USA 1971. Dir Robert Altman. With Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, Rene Auberjonois, Shelley Duvall. 121min. 15

Is this Beatty's finest film? If so, don't tell him, because he had wounding fights with Robert Altman over it. Dreamy or druggy, with Leonard Cohen in the background, moaning and sighing, and with widescreen winter-light photography by Vilmos Zsigmond, this is a weirdly real frontier (you feel its influence on Deadwood). But McCabe is a garrulous fool, with Julie Christie, the tough minded Mrs Miller, despairing of his whims. More than 40 years old, this western gets better every year.

Sun 3 June 18:10 NFT1

Mon 4 June 20:40 NFT1

Sun 24 June 20:40 NFT1

The Parallax View

USA 1974. Dir Alan J Pakula. With Warren Beatty, Paula Prentiss, Hume Cronyn, William Daniels. 102min. 15

Joe Frady (Beatty) is an investigative reporter, yet he's a flake and a bad-luck story. But when a one-time girlfriend (Paula Prentiss) is killed, he begins to believe her fears of a great conspiracy centred on a mysterious organisation called Parallax. Frady reckons he will infiltrate... and maybe he is a suitable candidate. Under Alan Pakula's direction, this is classic 70s paranoia, with some suspenseful scenes, and a disconcerting ambiguity in Frady himself.

Fri 1 June 20:50 NFT1

Tue 5 June 18:30 NFT1

Mon 11 June 21:00 NFT1

Shampoo

USA 1975. Dir Hal Ashby. With Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, Goldie Hawn, Jack Warden, Tony Bill. 110min

As written by Beatty and Robert Towne (there were disputes over who wrote what), this is as close as the movies came to a contemporary portrait of Beatty, who plays George Roundy, a womanising hairdresser. It's set in Los Angeles on the eve of Nixon's 1968 election with a bitter-sweet survey of sexual liberty and libertinism.

The women include Julie Christie, Goldie Hawn, Lee Grant and a young Carrie Fisher. As directed by Hal Ashby it is that rare thing, a tender satire.

Tue 5 June 20:45 NFT1

Sat 16 June 14:50 NFT1

The Fortune

USA 1975. Dir Mike Nichols. With Warren Beatty, Jack Nicholson, Stockard Channing, Richard B Shull. 88min. 12A

Beatty is often funny in serious films, but less so when he's doing comedy. With two con-artists fighting over a madcap heiress, this was screwball material, with Mike Nichols directing and Beatty and Jack Nicholson as the guys. But the Carole Eastman script was too long, no one quite grasped screwball, and there was indecision over the girl – Bette Midler was the late choice, until she was dropped for Stockard Channing. Sometimes failures like this suddenly snap into focus. Like *Ishtar*?

Wed 7 June 20:40 NFT3

Sat 9 June 18:20 NFT2

Heaven Can Wait

USA 1978. Dir Warren Beatty & Buck Henry. With Beatty, Julie Christie, James Mason. 101min. PG

Nominated for nine Oscars (it won for art direction), this was a big hit – nearly \$50 million in US rentals. Beatty wrote the script, with Elaine May; and he directed for the first time (with Buck Henry as his aide). It's a remake of *Here Comes Mr Jordan* (1941), with a footballer instead of a boxer. Julie Christie is the girl friend, James Mason is 'Mr Jordan', and the cast includes Jack Warden, Dyan Cannon and Charles Grodin. At just over forty, Beatty was angelic, but the comedy and sometimes the focus were on the soft side.

Wed 6 June 18:30 NFT1

Thu 28 June 18:10 NFT1

Reds

USA 1981. Dir Warren Beatty. With Beatty, Diane Keaton, Edward Herrmann, Jerzy Kosinski. 195min.15

An epic tribute to the American communist John Reed, and the Soviet revolution, this was released with Reagan as president, and it offended no one. Beatty played the lead, directed and produced, and it shows – it aged him. In hindsight, the great coup is the radiant, ruined faces of the witnesses (shot by Vittorio Storaro), old but alive with memories. Beside them the actors look shaky. But there are great scenes here; Diane Keaton is superb and Jack Nicholson has a nice turn as Eugene O'Neill.

Mon 4 June 16:15 NFT1

Wed 27 June 19:00 NFT1

Dick Tracy

USA 1990. Dir Warren Beatty. With Beatty, Madonna, Charles Durning, Mandy Patinkin. 105min. PG

The only other Beatty film in the 80s after *Reds* was *Ishtar* (directed by Elaine May). So the director of *Reds* followed that up with *Dick Tracy*, a pretty, live-action strip cartoon. It was very expensive, but it attracted large audiences. Did it ever get into profit? Beatty was Tracy in a yellow overcoat, Madonna was involved and there were guest spots for Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman and James Caan. It got three Oscars – for art direction, make up, and for Stephen Sondheim, who wrote a song for Madonna.

Sun 17 June 20:45 NFT1

Sat 23 June 15:40 NFT2

Bugsy

USA 1991. Dir Barry Levinson. With Warren Beatty, Annette Bening, Ben Kingsley, Elliott Gould. 136min. 15

This was a terrific come-back, scripted by James Toback (a long-time Beatty friend) and directed by Barry Levinson. It's a gloss on the history of Las Vegas, and kind to Virginia Hill, who probably skimmed off a lot of money from the Flamingo. But Virginia was Annette Bening: at last the famous bachelor had found his mate. Beatty may be too cerebral for Bugsy Siegel, but it's a good, funny performance in a stylish, violent movie. With Joe Mantegna as George Raft and Harvey Keitel as Mickey Cohen.

Thu 21 June 20:20 NFT2

Sun 24 June 15:20 NFT2

Love Affair

USA 1994. Dir Glenn Gordon Caron. With Warren Beatty, Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Gary Shandling. 107min. PG

So a happy man wants to show how lucky he feels and he decides to co-star with his wife in the classic that had been done with Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne (1939) and Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr (1957). Beatty and Robert Towne re-did the script, and Glenn Gordon Caron was brought in from writing Moonlighting to direct. Katharine Hepburn stepped forward, a little shakily, to play the Maria Ouspenskaya role. Alas, the audience decided that the film meant more to the stars than it did to them.

Sat 23 June 18:10 NFT2

Sat 30 June 20:40 NFT2

Bulworth

USA 1998. Dir Warren Beatty. With Beatty, Oliver Platt, Don Cheadle, Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. 108min

Everyone knew that Beatty was fascinated by politics. He worked hard for George McGovern; he was close to Gary Hart. He was even talked about as a possible candidate. Bulworth is the fruit of that interest, and in the first half at least it is a very funny satire on American politics and attitudes to race. Beatty wrote and directed and played the lead, with Halle Berry as the girl. It rather trails away – it needed Preston Sturges, maybe. But don't we all?

Sat 23 June 20:40 NFT2

Mon 25 June 20:40 NFT3

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