

50th Anniversary



No. 10
Release At Will

"FILMS FROM THE BBC" SALUTED AT MoMA

FILMS FROM THE BBC, a selection of twelve outstanding films produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation over the last two decades, will be presented by the Department of Film of The Museum of Modern Art from March 16 through 24, 1981. The selections in MoMA's salute outline the broad range of themes and styles which distinguish BBC film production as exceptional. Most of the films have never before been seen in the United States.

Featured in the program are four cinematic portraits created in the Sixties by the unconventional KEN RUSSELL. The New York Times noted that these early Russell films "were extraordinary biographies -- eccentric, exaggerated, but encapsulating the intensity and unique vivacity of the artistic experience." The composers Frederick Delius and Edward Elgar, the dancer Isadora Duncan and the poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti are the flamboyant subjects captured in these portrayals. The title role of ISADORA DUNCAN, made in 1966, is played by Vivian Pickles in an exuberant performance as the notorious San Francisco-born dancer, who created her own school of interpretive dance and whose adventurous life came to a tragic end in 1927. In DANTE'S INFERNO (1967) Oliver Reed stars as the morose, brilliant, sensual, prankish Rossetti, the tormented leader of the Victorian Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which included Holman Hunt, Millais, Burne-Jones and William Morris.

Frederick Delius is brought to life by Max Adrian's bizarre, forceful performance in Russell's 1968 SONG OF SUMMER. The film looks at the last years of the composer's life through the eyes of Eric Fenby, a young organist who devoted himself to the blind and paralysed Delius. The spirit of another great English composer is evoked in ELGAR, made in 1962. Voice-over commentary is used rather than dialogue, but the film's strongest themes are captured in the use of Elgar's music; his compositions mirror the opulence and optimism of Edwardian England as well as serve to portray the emotions

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of a single complex personality. These four intriguing films contribute greatly to our knowledge and understanding of Ken Russell's work.

Two remarkable, moving stories of the handicapped are featured in FILMS FROM THE BBC. JOEY, produced and directed by BRIAN GIBSON in 1974, is based on the memoirs of Joey Deacon, who was born in 1920 with brain damage, grew up severely spastic, and spent many years institutionalized and unable to communicate. Joey finally met a man who, though mentally retarded, could understand him, and "Tongue-Tied," Joey's memoirs, emerged from their comradeship.

The title of ON GIANT'S SHOULDERS is taken from the poet George Herbert: "A dwarf on giant's shoulders sees further of the two." The film, directed by ANTHONY SIMMONS in 1979, reconstructs the true story of Terry Wiles, a thalidomide victim. Wiles plays himself, and his intelligence and spirited personality shine throughout the film, which won a 1979 International Emmy Award.

BBC film production is distinguished by its effective use of the work of prominent British playwrights. DAVID HARE's 1978 film, LICKING HITLER, which he wrote as well as directed, takes place in the spring of 1941 and creates the claustrophobic atmosphere of the grand-manse headquarters of a counter-intelligence team transmitting propaganda to Nazi Germany.

STEPHEN FREARS is also better-known in this country for "Gumshoe" and the recent "Bloody Kids," shown at the 1980 British Film Now series of the New York Film Festival. His 1972 film A DAY OUT, a lyrical, gently funny sketch of a cycling club outing in 1911, will be presented in FILMS FROM THE BBC.

Particularly perceptive social comments are made by three BBC films in the MoMA program. THE SPONGERS, directed by ROLAND JOFFE, is a realistic depiction of a single-parent family reduced to "sponging" from the State for survival, set, in all its visual irony, against the backdrop of preparations for the extravagant 1977 Silver Jubilee.

Vivian Nicholson, whose image models would appear to be Jayne Mansfield and Diana Dors, said she was going to "spend, spend, spend" when she and her coalminer husband won a small fortune in the football pools. SPEND, SPEND, SPEND, based on Nicholson's book and directed

in 1977 by JOHN GOLDSCHMIDT, dramatizes the psychological effects of the big win.

SHADOWS ON OUR SKIN (1980), directed by JIM O'BRIEN, explores the harsh events in Northern Ireland through the emotional experiences of a sensitive eleven-year-old schoolboy. The Observer noted that it was one of the only television productions about Northern Ireland in recent memory.

A HYMN FROM JIM focuses on quite another slice of modern life. Set in the pop music world, it's an energetic and outrageous thriller, directed by COLIN BUCKSEY and written by RICHARD O'BRIEN (who also wrote the "Rocky Horror Show.") The Daily Mail commented: "I gobbled it down. O'Brien was being witty, malicious, and intentionally shocking about exploiters at every level of an industry."

"FILMS FROM THE BBC reminds us that there are many talented producers such as Mark Shivas, Brian Gibson and Tony Garnett striving for high quality in films for television. They and others have produced films with literate scripts, believable acting, attention to detail, and sensitivity to the social context." --Adrienne Mancina, Curator, Department of Film

FILMS FROM THE BBC was organized by Adrienne Mancina and is being presented in association with Time-Life Television, which distributes BBC productions in the United States and is a principal co-producer with the BBC.

The Department of Film would like to express its gratitude to Harvey Chertok of Time-Life Television for his close cooperation. We also wish to thank the BBC, Time-Life Films, Inc., and the National Film Archives of the British Film Institute for their participation.

February 9, 1981

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For daily film schedules, the public may call (212) 956-7078. For further press information, please call Alicia Springer, Film Press Representative, 956-7289.

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The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

FILMS FROM THE BBC

March 16 through 24, 1981

FILMS FROM THE BBC will be screened in the Roy and Niuta Titus Auditorium of The Museum of Modern Art.

- March 16 (noon) JOEY. Brian Gibson. 70 min.
- March 16 (2:30) THE SPONGERS. Roland Joffe. 104 min.
- March 16 (6:00) A DAY OUT. Stephen Frears. 50 min.
A HYMN FROM JIM. Colin Bucksey. 30 min.
- March 17 (noon) LICKING HITLER. David Hare. 70 min.
- March 17 (2:30) see March 16 (6:00)
- March 17 (6:00) see March 16 (noon)
- March 19 (2:30) DELIUS: A SONG OF SUMMER. Ken Russell. 75 min.
ELGAR. Ken Russell. 56 min.
- March 19 (6:00) ISADORA DUNCAN. Ken Russell. 67 min.
- March 19 (8:30) DANTE'S INFERNO. Ken Russell. 90 min.
- March 20 (2:30) see March 19 (8:30)
- March 20 (6:00) see March 16 (2:30)
- March 21 (2:30) ON GIANT'S SHOULDERS. Anthony Simmons. 92 min.
- March 21 (5:00) see March 19 (2:30)
- March 22 (2:30) SHADOWS ON OUR SKIN. Jim O'Brien. 80 min.
- March 22 (5:00) SPEND, SPEND, SPEND. John Goldschmidt. 90 min.
- March 23 (noon) see March 19 (6:00)
- March 23 (2:30) see March 22 (2:30)
- March 24 (noon) see March 17 (noon)
- March 24 (2:30) see March 22 (5:00)
- March 24 (6:00) see March 21 (2:30)

Program subject to change without notice.