

Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance!

The MGM Musical

at BFI Southbank



**With special guests including:
Debbie Reynolds, Leslie Caron, John Wilson, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies**

The wonderful world of the **MGM Musical** will be celebrated at **BFI Southbank** throughout November and December. From composers such as **Cole Porter** and **Irving Berlin**, choreographers and actors including **Stanley Donen**, **Gene Kelly** and **Fred Astaire** to the greatest musical singing and dancing stars including **Judy Garland**, **Ann Miller** and **Cyd Charisse** - they will all be presented in their full glory on the big screen. Many musicals will screen in newly restored prints and there will be some very special guests and events, including **Debbie Reynolds** and **Leslie Caron**, each discussing their remarkable careers, and **John Wilson** providing insight to the scores of MGM musicals and his orchestrations of them. As a centrepiece of this season, **BFI Distribution** will release two of the most dazzling titles – **An American in Paris** (1952) and **Meet Me in St Louis** (1944) - nationwide and each will screen in an **Extended Run** at BFI Southbank. This instalment will conclude with a very rare outing for **Ken Russell's The Boy Friend** (1971), a comic pastiche of the roaring 1920s starring **Twiggy**, accompanied by a Q&A with the director and **Barbara Windsor**. This exuberant selection of MGM Musicals season will also herald an ongoing tribute to the musical genre from the BFI, throughout the next three years.

This golden era of Hollywood song and dance will begin with fare from the dazzling 1930s. With **Joan Crawford** and **Clark Gable** in **Dancing Lady** (1933), a time when **Eleanor Powell** began tapping her way to fascinating rhythms in **Broadway Melody of 1938** (1937) and Judy Garland was brought in to replace Shirley Temple as Dorothy in **The Wizard of Oz** (1939). By the 1940s **Vincente Minnelli** was in the director's seat with **Cabin in the Sky** (1943) and **Meet Me in St Louis**, before presenting **The Band Wagon** (1953). **Charles Walters** directed Fred Astaire in **Easter Parade** (1948) and **The Barkleys of Broadway** (1949), the latter reuniting Astaire with **Ginger Rogers**. Singers such as **Frank Sinatra** became box-office hits with films including **On the Town** and **Take Me Out to the Ball Game** (both made in 1949), while

Olympic medal winner **Esther Williams** became an underwater sensation in films such as **Dangerous When Wet** (1953).

The dynamic directing partnership of Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly was truly established with the event of the first musical feature to be shot on location - the Oscar-winning *On the Town*. They would go on to direct one of the most widely loved musicals, **Singin' in the Rain** (1952), along with **It's Always Fair Weather** (1955). Musical adaptations were aplenty with **Show Boat** (1951), **Seven Brides for Seven Brothers** (1954), **High Society** (1956) and even Shakespeare was turned to as a basis for **Kiss Me Kate** (1953), which will be presented in 3D.

These titles are just an example of the glorious Technicolor spectacles that will be offered throughout MGM Musicals. And for viewers who want to understand more about the genre there will be an accompanying course: **MGM: a new kind of Musical**, running from 2 November – 14 December, and **Oklahomo!**, an investigation into the campness of the genre with writer and broadcaster David Benedict, with a little help from Judy Garland, **Barbra Streisand** and friends. For those keen to take advantage of a wide range of MGM-viewing there will be a special 3 for 2 ticket offer. Stay tuned for further details...

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PRESS CONTACT:

BFI Southbank:

Ilona Cheshire Tel: 020 7957 8986 email: ilona.cheshire@bfi.org.uk

Tim Mosley Tel: 020 7957 8918 email: tim.mosley@bfi.org.uk

PROGRAMME INFORMATION

NOVEMBER:

Leslie Caron in Conversation

We are delighted to welcome Lesli Caron to BFI Southbank as part of our Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance! season to discuss her wonderful career. *An American in Paris* was her first screen role and first of many with MGM. Becoming an overnight star, she continued her success with the studio in productions such as *Gigi*, and *Lili* for which she received an Oscar nomination for Best Actress. She also gained recognition as a serious dramatic actress in films such as *The L-Shaped Room*, *Chocolat*, and recently received an Emmy for her appearance in *Law and Order*.

Joint ticket available with *An American in Paris* at 20:45 (see p32) £13, concs £9.75 (Members pay £1.50 less)

Wed 2 Nov 18:30 NFT1

Course: MGM: a new kind of Musical

Take a trip around the genre and the stars of MGM's perfect-pitch pictures of Americana just before the end of the studios. The course will examine the history of MGM and the musical genre and how the two became linked and almost synonymous. As part of a major MGM musicals programme at the BFI we will take a close look at titles that form part of the MGM season. With tutor John Wischmeyer.

HF040 To book a place call 020 7831 7831. Full fee: £73 Senior fee: £73 Concession: £22

Wed 2 Nov 18:30 NFT1 18:30 – 20:30 Studio

John Wilson in Conversation

Upon discovering that the original scores and orchestrations for almost the entire MGM catalogue had been destroyed (apparently used as landfill for a golf course), John Wilson began the process of reconstructing the scores, painstakingly notating the instruments by repeated forensic listening. Alongside Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance! season curator David Benedict, John Wilson will discuss the history of the MGM musical scores, his passion for the genre and detail the lengths he went to breathing new life into the glamorous and vibrant era of MGM musicals.

Joint ticket available with *The Barkleys of Broadway* £13, concs £9.75 (Members pay £1.50 less)

Sun 20 Nov 16:00 NFT2

EXTENDED RUN: *An American in Paris* NEW PRINT Fri 28 Oct – Thu 17 Nov

Gotta sing! Gotta dance!! Gotta paint!!! Now digitally restored 60 years after it swept the Oscars, Minnelli's Gershwin-based musical remains one of the creative pinnacles of the genre. Gene Kelly is at his dazzling best as Jerry Mulligan, a former GI whose dreams of becoming a successful artist have led him to the city of light, love and the Impressionists. Much admired by wealthy patron Milo (Nina Foch), he risks her displeasure when he falls for shopgirl Lise (Leslie Caron), herself betrothed to Henri (Georges Guétary), who's an old friend of Jerry's pianist pal Adam (Oscar Levant). This romantic roundelay is, in the end, simply the framework – albeit a consistently engaging one – for some of the finest musical sequences ever filmed. Most memorable of all is the climactic ballet danced to Gershwin's titular tone poem on ravishing sets inspired by Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, et al – an eloquent evocation of Jerry's inner life, and as audacious and exhilarating as its equivalent in *The Red Shoes*. 'S wonderful!

USA 1951. Dir Vincente Minnelli. With Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron, Oscar Levant, Georges Guétary. 113min. Digital. U. A BFI release

Dancing Lady

USA 1933 Dir Robert Z Leonard. With Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Franchot Tone, Fred Astaire 92min U
Deciding to give her the top spot in his show, Gable harangues Crawford: 'Maybe I can make something of you if you can stand up when I get through with you.' 'I've got good legs,' counters tearily happy Crawford. MGM's answer to 42nd Street also features Gable's legs in a gym sequence and Fred Astaire's debut which sees him dance in lederhosen alongside Crawford in blonde plaits in a hymn to Bavarian beer.

Fri 28 Oct 18:20 NFT2, Sun 30 Oct 16:00 NFT2

Rose-Marie

USA 1936. Dir WS Van Dyke. With Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, Reginald Owen. 113min. U
MGM's operettas were largely elaborate Excuses for radiant love duets, none more famous than the 'Indian Love Call', the unexpectedly huge hit from *Rose-Marie*. As the Mountie who must get his man (a very young James Stewart), Nelson Eddy may be as wooden as the landscape but his baritone is as lustrous as his looks, and everyone's favourite soprano Jeanette MacDonald simply shimmers in the title role.

Sat 29 Oct 16:00 NFT2, Fri 11 Nov 17:40 NFT2

The Wizard of Oz

USA 1939. Dir Victor Fleming. With Judy Garland, Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr. 98min. Digital. U
MGM boss Louis B Mayer wanted Shirley Temple but, mercifully, Garland played the heroine who learns that, 'If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard' – which makes it as conservative a fantasy as *Brief Encounter*. As Garland herself later wrote to composer Harold Arlen, "Over the Rainbow" has become part of my life. It's so symbolic of everyone's dreams and wishes.'

Sun 30 Oct 18:20 NFT2, Fri 4 Nov 17:50 NFT1, Mon 21 Nov 18:20 NFT1

Broadway Melody of 1938

USA 1937. Dir Roy Del Ruth. With Robert Taylor, Eleanor Powell, Judy Garland George Murphy. 110min. U
Not the first time anyone crossed horse racing and singing – the Marx Brothers' *A Day at the Races* opened 10 weeks earlier – but Groucho *et al* didn't have 'the wingless angel of the dance' Eleanor Powell singing and dancing in the rain with George Murphy 15 years before Gene Kelly. And then there's Sophie Tucker, plus sixth-billed young Judy Garland becoming a sensation singing 'You Made Me Love You' to a photo of Clark Gable.

Sat 29 Oct 18:20 NFT2, Fri 11 Nov 20:30 NFT3

Broadway Melody of 1940

USA 1940. Dir Norman Taurog. With Fred Astaire, Eleanor Powell, George Murphy. 101min. U
The series that began in 1929 with MGM's *The Broadway Melody*, the first 'all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing' motion picture, peaked with the film that Astaire, having left RKO, came to MGM to make because it gave him the chance to dance with the gloriously insouciant Powell. The all-Cole Porter score for this traditional backstager climaxes – that's the word – with their lavishly staged, ravishingly designed, ten-minute duet 'Begin the Beguine'.

Wed 2 Nov 20:40 NFT2, Sun 6 Nov 18:20 NFT2

Cabin in the Sky

USA 1943. Dir Vincente Minnelli. With Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, Louis Armstrong. 99min. U
MGM's second all-black musical (the first was 1929's Hallelujah) is a successful revamp of a folksy Broadway musical about heaven and hell vying for the soul of a gambler. The set was riven with rivalry between Broadway star Waters and the exquisitely photographed relative newcomer Horne. The Vernon Duke-Harold Arlen hits are in the spectacularly good hands of Louis Armstrong (as the Devil's Trumpeter) fronting the Duke Ellington orchestra.

Wed 9 Nov 18:15 NFT1, Sat 12 Nov 15:20 NFT2

The Harvey Girls

USA 1946. Dir George Harvey. With Judy Garland, John Hodiak, Ray Bolger, Angela Lansbury. 101min. U
Imagine McDonalds – The Musical... Not so far fetched since this film is a celebration of the real-life 1880s Harvey restaurant chain, staffed here by gingham-clad nice girls, including lonely-hearted Garland, who swing into town 'On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe', the best train song in movie history – it rightly won the Oscar. Meantime, running the town's steakhouse-cum-whorehouse, sneering arch-rival Angela Lansbury is less than impressed....

Tue 8 Nov 18:15 NFT1, Sun 13 Nov 18:30 NFT1

Easter Parade

USA 1948. Dir Charles Walters. With Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, Peter Lawford, Ann Miller. 107min. U
Gene Kelly breaking his ankle led to Astaire coming out of semi-retirement for his only pairing with Garland while top tapper Ann Miller replaced a similarly indisposed Cyd Charisse. Although the standard issue backstage dancing-partner-jealousy plot isn't filled with surprises, the film has glories, not least its 17 Irving Berlin song'n'dance numbers including the celebrated vainglorious tramp song 'A Couple of Swells'.

Fri 18 Nov 18:30 NFT1, Wed 23 Nov 20:45 NFT1

Take Me Out to the Ball Game

USA 1949. Dir Busby Berkeley. With Frank Sinatra, Esther Williams, Gene Kelly, Betty Garrett. 93min. U
Before they donned sailor suits for On the Town, Kelly, Sinatra and Jules Munshin played baseball and vaudeville in this turn-of-the-last century film about a woman (Williams on dry land) who inherits a baseball team. Director Berkeley only handled the dialogue. The nine musical numbers were directed by Kelly and ex-dancer Stanley Donen who'd dreamed the entire picture up during a cross-country car trip to California.

Sat 19 Nov 18:20 NFT2, Tue 22 Nov 20:45 NFT1

The Barkleys of Broadway

USA 1949. Dir Charles Walters. With Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Oscar Levant, Billie Burke. 109min. U
By the time they shot their reunion – and final – picture together, Rogers was 38 and Astaire was 50, which gives a depth to Comden and Green's in-joke of a screenplay about the backstage bickering of a husband-and-wife dance team. Their partnering in 'They Can't Take That Away from Me' looks typically effortless and 'Shoes with Wings On' feasts on past films from Fantasia to The Red Shoes.

*Joint ticket available with John Wilson in Conversation

Wed 16 Nov 18:20 NFT3, Sun 20 Nov 18:20 NFT2*, Wed 30 Nov 20:50 NFT1

DECEMBER:

Debbie Reynolds in Conversation

MGM star and Academy Award nominee Debbie Reynolds will take to the stage to discuss her life and career as a highlight to the final part of the Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance! Season. Her first lead role on-screen was in *Singin' In The Rain*, Reynolds went on to take wholesome roles in countless MGM musicals. Off screen, Reynolds has been instrumental in building a world renowned collection of Hollywood film memorabilia, which was famously sold at auction earlier this year.

Tickets £13, concs £11.50. Joint ticket available with *Singin' in the Rain* at 20:45 £20.70, concs £19.20 (Members pay £1.50 less)

Wed 14 Dec 18:30 NFT1

Oklahoma!

Approximately 99 per cent of musicals are happy heterosexual stories starring female pin-ups and there simply aren't enough lesbians and gay men in the world to account for the viewing figures of *The Sound of Music*. So what is it about classic Hollywood musicals that makes them seem so gay? Is it the music, the men who made them, the millinery? With help from Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand and Seven Brothers (without their brides), Critic and broadcaster David Benedict investigates the camp conundrum. Approximately 90min

Sun 18 Dec 17:20 NFT1

EXTENDED RUN: Meet Me in St Louis NEW PRINT Fri 16 Dec – Thu 29 Dec

'Have yourself a merry little Christmas...' So sings Esther Smith (Judy Garland) to her sister Tootie as they ponder the prospect of the family leaving behind their loved ones in St Louis and relocating to New York. It's this imminent change that undermines the Smiths' customary happiness over the four seasons leading up to the great Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 – a change too, perhaps, for the wider world as it nears the end of an era. Despite these dark undercurrents, however, Minnelli's tender, witty musical rivals the start of Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* in expressing, elegantly and eloquently, a warm nostalgia for an easier, slower, gentler way of American life. The production design, Technicolor and songs – including 'The Boy Next Door', 'Skip to My Lou' and 'The Trolley Song' – all contribute to the affectionate mood, but it's the performances and the deceptively light script which supply the emotional substance. As so often, the late, great Tom Milne was right in assessing it as 'one of the great musicals'.

USA 1944. Dir Vincente Minnelli. With Margaret O'Brien, Mary Astor, Leon Ames. 113min. Digital. U

Seniors' Matinee with intro Fri 16 Dec 14:00 NFT1

On the Town

USA 1949 Dir Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly With Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Ann Miller, Vera-Ellen 98min

Betty Comden and Adolph Green's Broadway hit about three sailors on 24-hour shore leave gave their city its anthem: 'New York, New York, a helluva town'. Only three more of their songs with Leonard Bernstein appeared onscreen but Roger Edens' replacements are zesty, as is Donen and Kelly's radical, game-changing film. Out went old-fashioned, stagey production numbers and – a first – in came musical sequences shot on location across the city.

Thu 1 Dec 20:45 NFT1, Sat 10 Dec 20:45 NFT1, Thu 22 Dec 18:30 NFT1

Annie Get Your Gun

USA 1950. Dir. George Sidney. With Betty Hutton, Howard Keel. 107min.

'Troubled' doesn't begin to describe the story of this faithful stage-to screen transfer of Irving Berlin's hit which began with Judy Garland, Frank Morgan (formerly the Wizard of Oz) and Busby Berkeley directing. Arthur Freed's final team delivered a picture costing \$3,768,785 but which grossed over \$8m and made a star out of debuting, 6' 4" Howard Keel. The 'There's No Business Like Show Business' number alone used over 1,040 extras, 800 horseman and 224 musicians.

Fri 2 Dec 20:30 NFT3, Thu 8 Dec 20:40 NFT2, Tue 20 Dec 18:20 NFT2

Show Boat

USA 1951. Dir George Sidney. With Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ava Gardner

In 1927, Oscar Hammerstein II and composer Jerome Kern adapted Edna Ferber's novel *Show Boat* about showbiz and miscegenation, creating the first stage musical built around a truly serious idea. James Whale filmed it in 1936 but this version cleaves less fiercely to the stage incarnation. America's sanitized 1950s sensibility meant controversial dialogue and some depictions of racial politics were dropped but grandeur and gloss came aboard with plush casting.

Sun 4 Dec 18:30 NFT1, Tue 13 Dec 18:30 NFT2, Wed 14 Dec 20:30 NFT3

Singin' in the Rain

USA 1952. Dir. Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly. With Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Donald O'Connor. 102min.

'*Singin' in the Rain* and childbirth were the hardest things I ever had to do in my life,' said Debbie Reynolds who was just 18 and no dancer. And, in this beloved movie about the indignity of dubbing, Reynolds' own singing voice was dubbed. The title number was shot on one August day (plus half a day's retakes) before 5pm when the local residents turned on their lawn sprinklers, reducing the studio's water pressure to a dribble.

Mon 5 Dec 20:30 NFT3, Sat 10 Dec 16:00 NFT2, Thu 15 Dec 20:45 NFT1

The Band Wagon

USA 1953. Dir. Vincente Minnelli. With Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse. 111min.

The film that created the number (and, later, MGM's greatest hits trilogy) 'That's Entertainment' boasting, arguably, the smartest lyric the studio ever filmed skewering Hamlet in 12 words: 'Where a ghost and a prince meet/ And everyone ends in mincemeat.' Comden and Green's backstager sees song'n'dance man Astaire inveigled into High Art by director Jack Buchanan. But the fun stuff triumphs and the Astaire/ Charisse partnership hits the sublime in 'Dancing in the Dark' in Central Park.

Sat 10 Dec 18:30 NFT1, Fri 23 Dec 18:30 NFT1, Thu 29 Dec 20:30 NFT3

Dangerous When Wet

USA 1953. Dir Charles Walters. With Esther Williams. 95min.

Possibly the only musical about financing a dairy farm by swimming the English channel – actually the Portuguese Bend on California's Palos Verdes Peninsula – this is definitely the only musical whose star is serenaded underwater by seahorses, chased by a cartoon shark, and dances with Tom and Jerry. Esther Williams, MGM's mermaid (she made 19 films for them) teams up with Fernando Lamas (reader, she married him) for aquatic antics and Johnny Mercer songs.

Mon 12 Dec 20:30 NFT3, Tue 27 Dec 18:30 NFT1

Kiss Me Kate (3D)

USA 1953. Dir George Sidney. With Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ann Miller. 109min.

Arguably MGM's best stage-to-screen transfer, Cole Porter's glorious musical-within-a-musical revamp of The Taming of the Shrew (his flat-out finest score) is dazzling in its 3D version thanks not least to Cedric Gibbons and Urie McCleary's eye-widening, high-contrast production design shot in Technicolor. All that and the 3D-effect of Ann Miller tapping in your lap and young, blond Bob Fosse leaping to stardom as Hortensio in Hermes Pan's choreography for 'Tom, Dick or Harry'.

Fri 16 Dec 18:10, 20:30 NFT3, Sat 17 Dec 15:50, 18:10, 20:30 NFT3

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers

USA 1954. Dir Stanley Donen. With Howard Keel, Jane Powell. 103min.

Barn-raising most certainly didn't begin and end with Witness. A less than politically correct plot based on The Rape of the Sabine Women is given exuberant life by ex-dancer Donen's bravura CinemaScope handling of Michael Kidd's rip-snorting choreography. His eight-minute, pulse-quickening barn-raiser is balanced by a winter wood-chopping ballet. The control of colour, the zing of the orchestrations and the sheer pep of the performances turned it into a runaway hit.

Thu 15 Dec 18:30 NFT1, Mon 19 Dec 20:45 NFT1, Wed 28 Dec 20:45 NFT1

It's Always Fair Weather

USA 1955. Dir Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly. With Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse. 102min.

Mad Men – eat your heart out. What looks like Comden and Green's nostalgiafest about three wartime pals re-meeting after ten years is actually a startling satire on television and advertising. Charisse is the TV-type who lures our former heroes on to a This Is Your Life-style show fronted by alarmingly glamorous Dolores Gray. Terrific dance routines (music by André Previn) take advantage of CinemaScope width and the entire picture has a uniquely tart tone.

Tue 13 Dec 20:45 NFT1, Fri 23 Dec 20:45 NFT1

Silk Stockings

USA 1957. Dir. Rouben Mamoulian. With Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse. 117min

Lubitsch's Ninotchka begat Cole Porter's stage musical Silk Stockings which begat the MGM musical directed by Mamoulian who, 25 years earlier, had revolutionised musicals with his thrillingly fluid Love Me Tonight. Cyd Charisse plays Garbo's role of the Communist commissar who falls for Astaire and, in a reverse striptease, Paris fashions. Also featuring Astaire and Janis Paige attacking 'glorious Technicolor, breathtaking CinemaScope and stereophonic sound', plus Peter Lorre singing and dancing in fear of Siberia.

Thu 22 Dec 20:45 NFT1, Tue 27 Dec 16:15 NFT1, Fri 30 Dec 20:30 NFT3

High Society

USA 1956. Dir Charles Walters. With Grace Kelly, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra. 107min.

The Philadelphia Story with songs, High Society features eight first-rate new ones from Cole Porter plus "Well, Did You Evah!" from his Broadway hit *Dubarry Was a Lady* originally performed by Charles Walters who, 17 years later, directed this, MGM's biggest box-office grosser of the year. In addition to a suitably arch Celeste Holm as the sceptical photographer, Grace Kelly shimmers as wealthy Tracy in what was her screen swansong.

Wed 21 Dec 20:45 NFT1, Wed 28 Dec 18:30 NFT1, Fri 30 Dec 18:10 NFT3

The Boy Friend

UK 1971. Dir Ken Russell. With Twiggy, Christopher Gable. 125min.

Sandy Wilson, creator of 1954's smash-hit salute to innocent Twenties musicals *The Boy Friend*, was scandalized by Ken Russell's iconoclastic vision that put the 'vamp' into 'revamp'. Watching a clapped-out stage production, Hollywood producer Mr. De Thrill reimagines it as a Busby Berkeley spectacular. Twiggy is disarmingly charming and the supporting cast, including unbilled Glenda Jackson, is wonderfully bizarre. Russell's jaw-droppingly over-the-top dream sequences prove that nothing succeeds like excess.

Sun 18 Dec 18:30 NFT1, Thu 29 Dec 18:30 NFT1

About the BFI

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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

Booking information

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £9.00, concs £6.65 Members pay £1.40 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

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Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

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