



BETTE DAVIS: HOLLYWOOD REBEL

All About Bette Davis

In this richly illustrated and insightful discussion our invited speakers will explore Bette Davis' extraordinary career, including her acting style, the key aspects of her star persona, and the films and performances that established her as a leading Hollywood actor. We will also look at her off-screen accomplishments, in particular her impact on the Hollywood studio system.

About the speakers

Lucy Bolton is Reader in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London, where she teaches and researches film and philosophy and film stardom. She has published widely in these fields, and is currently working on a monograph on philosophy and film stardom combined. She is the co-editor of *Lasting Screen Stars: Images That Fade and Personas That Endure*, and the author of *Contemporary Cinema and the Philosophy of Iris Murdoch*, and *Film and Female Consciousness: Irigaray, Cinema, and Thinking Women*. Lucy appears regularly on television and radio and recently took part in the episode of *Free Thinking* on Radio 3 about Bette Davis:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000y068>

Pamela Hutchinson is a freelance writer, critic and film historian who contributes regularly to *Sight & Sound*, *The Guardian*, *Empire*, *Criterion*, *Indicator* and the BBC, specialising in silent and classic cinema and women in film. She has written essays for several edited collections and is the author of the BFI Film Classic on *Pandora's Box* and the editor of *30-Second Cinema* (Ivy Press). She is a guest lecturer at the National Film and Television School, and a member of both Fipresci and the London Film Critics' Circle. She also writes the silent cinema website Silent London:

www.silentlondon.co.uk

Martin Shingler was a lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at Staffordshire University from 1990 to 2005 and a Senior Lecturer in Radio & Film Studies at the University of Sunderland from 2005 to 2019. He now works as an independent scholar and freelance writer, editor and researcher. In addition to co-editing the BFI *Film Stars* book series between 2012 and 2019, he published two monographs, *Star Studies: A Critical Guide* (2012) and *When Warners Brought Broadway to Hollywood, 1923-39* (2018). His forthcoming publication *Diana Dors: Film Star and Actor* is to be published by Edinburgh University Press. Martin has been publishing essays on Bette Davis in academic journals and anthologies since 1995, including 'Masquerade or Drag?' (*Screen* 1995), 'Interpreting *All About Eve*' (*Screen Acting* 1999), 'Now, Voyager: Melodrama Then and Now' (*The New Film History* 2006) and 'Bette Davis Made Over in Wartime' (*Film History* 2008).

<http://www.martinshingler.co.uk>

Chair: Justin Johnson is the BFI's Lead Programmer for BFI Southbank and also selects films for the BFI London Film Festival. He is a regular contributor to radio and TV on matters concerning films and animation and has produced films for Atticus Films. He has served on juries at many European Film Festivals including Berlin, Copenhagen and Zlin and has served as both a selector and a juror for the British Animation Awards. Justin has been a member of the BAFTA Film Committee and Deputy Chair of the BAFTA Children's Committee as well as chairing professional juries for different award categories and for the Royal Television Society.

‘If Everyone Likes You, You’re Not Doing It Right’: The Career of Bette Davis

Bette Davis was born Ruth Elizabeth Davis in 1908 in Lowell, Massachusetts, and had the nickname ‘Betty’ from early childhood. In 1926, aged 18, she saw a production of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* and was inspired to go into the theatre. Her move into the movies came in 1930, when she moved to Hollywood and screen-tested for Universal. But her time there was not a success, and she was about to return to New York when actor George Arliss chose her to appear in the Warner Bros film *The Man Who Played God* (1932). The film proved to be the break she was after, and Warners offered her a five-year contract.

Davis's critical breakthrough came with *Of Human Bondage* (1934), and she won her first Academy Award the following year for her part in *Dangerous* (1935). But Davis felt that her career was being damaged by the mediocre roles she was being given, and she took Warners to court in a bid to break her contract. She was unsuccessful, but the next period of her career saw her fortunes change dramatically, with films such as William Wyler's *Jezebel* (1938), for which she won her second Oscar; *Dark Victory* (1939); *Juarez* (1939); *The Letter* (1940); *The Little Foxes* (1941); and *Now, Voyager* (1942).

The immediate post-war years saw Davis's popularity with audiences decline slightly, despite films such as *A Stolen Life* (1946) and *Winter Meeting* (1948), but 1950's *All About Eve* proved to be a career high. Her career struggled through the 1950s, but saw a remarkable revival with 1962's *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, in which she starred opposite her old rival Joan Crawford. The 1970s saw her appear in films such as *Burnt Offerings* (1976), and in 1977 she became the first woman to be awarded a lifetime achievement award by the American Film Institute. Despite ill health, she worked intermittently through the 1980s, up to her death in 1989, upon which tributes were paid to her as one of the finest actors – and most distinctive stars – in Hollywood history.

***Sight and Sound*, September 2021**

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Of Human Bondage
Sun 1 Aug 12:40; Thu 12 Aug 18:00

Dangerous
Mon 2 Aug 18:15; Fri 13 Aug 21:00; Wed 18 Aug 18:10

All About Eve
Tue 3 Aug 14:30; Sat 14 Aug 20:25; Sun 29 Aug 15:00

Marked Woman
Tue 3 Aug 18:10; Thu 12 Aug 20:40; Sat 14 Aug 14:45

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?
Wed 4 Aug 14:15; Wed 11 Aug 20:30; Mon 16 Aug 18:00; Sat 28 Aug 17:20

Jezebel
Wed 4 Aug 20:40; Sun 15 Aug 15:30; Fri 27 Aug 18:00

Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte
Thu 5 Aug 14:15; Fri 13 Aug 17:40;
Wed 18 Aug 14:30; Sat 28 Aug 20:30

All About Bette Davis
Thu 5 Aug 18:10

Dark Victory
Fri 6 Aug 14:15; Mon 23 Aug 18:00

Promotional drinks partner



The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex
Sat 7 Aug 15:00; Sat 21 Aug 11:40

The Letter
Sun 8 Aug 15:45; Tue 17 Aug 17:50

The Man Who Came to Dinner
Sun 8 Aug 18:20; Thu 19 Aug 20:40

The Little Foxes
Mon 9 Aug 18:00; Mon 16 Aug 20:30;
Thu 19 Aug 17:40

The Whales of August
Wed 11 Aug 14:30; Thu 26 Aug 20:30;
Tue 31 Aug 18:10

Old Acquaintance
Wed 11 Aug 17:40; Sun 22 Aug 15:30

Mr. Skeffington
Sat 14 Aug 17:10; Sun 29 Aug 11:30

The Star
Sun 15 Aug 18:30; Wed 25 Aug 20:45

Dead Ringer
Fri 20 Aug 17:45; Mon 30 Aug 15:20

The Nanny
Tue 24 Aug 20:45; Mon 30 Aug 12:40

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