



PROJECTING THE ARCHIVE

Hoffman

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

+ intro by director Alvin Rakoff

A young secretary (Cusack) is blackmailed into spending a week at the flat of one of her bosses, who has uncovered her fiancé's criminal activity. Sellers was ideal casting for Benjamin Hoffman, and gives his customary immersive performance, while Cusack – headlining for the first time – holds her own in a difficult role. The dynamic between them occasionally makes for uncomfortable viewing but Cusack is confident and uncompromising, and Sellers' sinister touches give way to a more tender approach. Originally a TV play, this two-hander is saved from claustrophobia by John Blezard's striking design of Hoffman's pad, around which director Rakoff skilfully guides his actors.

bfi.org.uk

Hoffman is a film without much of a reputation, which is a shame because it contains one of Sellers' most interesting performances. Famously, he considered the end result to be too revealing of his own personality and offered to buy back the negative from EMI. This in itself is fascinating because Hoffman is a troubled, dark character, a man who becomes obsessed with the woman he imprisons in his flat for a weekend for the purposes of blackmail. It's a complex and enlightening turn, with Sellers appearing gaunt and grim, spitting out misogyny and simmering with suppressed rage. The film falls apart after the first half and never becomes the battle of wills that it promises to be – no reflection on Sinéad Cusack's excellent performance – but it's full of interesting things. It shows a demon inside Sellers which we now know to have been ever-present in his life and it's not comfortable to watch.

Mike Sutton, bfi.org.uk, 8 September 2016

HOFFMAN

Directed by: Alvin Rakoff
©: Longstone Film Productions
Production Company: Associated British Pathé
Produced by: Ben Arbeid
Production Supervisor: Bruce Sharman
Assistant Director: Jake Wright
Continuity: Doreen Dearnaley
Screenplay by: Ernest Gébler
Based upon his own novel: Ernest Gébler
Director of Photography: Gerry Turpin
Camera Operator: Michael Sarafian
Chief Electrician: Sid Wainwright
Editor: Barrie Vince
Art Director: John Blezard
Construction Manager: Ron Coleman
Wardrobe: Elizabeth Adamson
Make-up: Harry Frampton
Hairdresser: Pat McDermott
Colour by: Technicolor
Music by: Ron Grainer
Sound Recordist: Claude Hitchcock
Dubbing Mixer: Len Abbott
Sound Editor: Ian Fuller
Studio: Associated British Elstree Studios

uncredited

Production Secretary: Van Jones
2nd Assistant Director: Michael Harvey
Focus Puller: Eddie Collins
Clapper Loader: Keith Brown
Stills: Joe Pearce
Assistant Editor: Joseph Despins
2nd Assistant Editor: Alistair Fryer
Assistant Art Director: Tony Reading
Draughtsman: Terry Ackland-Snow
Assistant Make-up: Peter Frampton
Sound Supervisor: A.W. Lumkin
Sound Camera Operator: Gordon Beavis
Boom Operator: John Hall
Maintenance Engineer: Dan Grimmel
Assistant Dubbing Mixers: Eddie Haben, C. Anderson
Assistant Sound Editor: Len Tremble
Publicity: Ruth Phillips

Cast

Peter Sellers (*Mr Benjamin Hoffman*)
Sinéad Cusack (*Janet Smith*)
Jeremy Bulloch (*Tom Mitchell*)
Ruth Dunning (*Mrs Mitchell*)
David Lodge (*foreman builder*)

UK 1969
112 mins

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Thu 27 Jan 20:30

Relaxed Screening: L'Enfant sauvage (The Wild Child) + intro and discussion

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