



PREVIEW

Rebel Dread

+ Q&A with Don Letts

Director's Notes

For Don Letts, the instrument is influence... influences from politics, film, fashion and music; influences that you can either play or be played by.

Being first generation British-born-Black in the 1950s, Don was born into a divergent cross section of two different, radically creative and explosive cultures: the Jamaican roots culture of his immigrant parents and the desperate post-war climate of working class British youth. Both were hostile environments where the odds were stacked against you, but as the world would soon see, both unlikely sources held the potential to change the world forever. But at the time, the outlook for both were grim, incredibly separate and seemingly at odds.

For newly arrived immigrants of Caribbean descent, the promise of prosperity in their new home, was hard won on the streets. Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech challenged the white working class to mount a resistance against the newly arrived immigrants and rip them from their homes; unrest, hostility and political instability permeated the country.

And for Don's friends, the disaffected working class white kids of London, the promises of a new future weren't much better. England's economy was in a massive downturn and the city of London was barely functional, garbage was piling up in the streets and the destruction of wartime lingered across the city like a heavy blanket, a weight some feared may become a permanent part of the landscape.

For the children of immigrant parents as well as the working-class white kids of Britain, there were no jobs, no hope and no future. But for both, out of the desperation and the hopelessness came beauty, art and music unlike anything that had come before it.

In the light of a bright and emerging Jamaican independence from British rule in the early 1960s had come Ska, ever evolving to bring us Rock Steady and eventually Reggae. This was the music of Don's parents, the music that brought a peaceful yet powerful revolution to the powerless, something the streets of London in the mid-70s could use desperately, but were without.

For Don's white brethren, they had come to the same decision from the other side, they needed something; they were powerless and they knew it. Popular music of the middle 70s had become bloated and out of touch, it was completely inaccessible to working class kids, it didn't speak to them or represent them.

The art, sound, fashion and economy of England wasn't for them anymore, they didn't have any place in it and the whole thing needed to be ripped up, thrown away and re assembled, and out of that explosive search for a voice came the worldwide revolution that the media would soon describe as 'Punk'.

Don stood in the cross section of these two movements, a violent intersection that could have – would have – torn a lesser man apart. But those with true vision see cohesion in chaos and so Don, due to his truly unique heart and

intellect, along with his DJ gig at punk's first club, The Roxy, was in a rare position to show us the future. At long last there was dread at the controls.

The beautiful and defiant music of Don's culture would speak to and be understood by his rebellious comrades, they only needed to be shown it.

A world where we fit together, rather than tear apart, a world that without these unique, unifying voices would be ripe for the manipulation of the powers that struggle to divide us. A message that now, in the culturally hostile climate of today could not be more relevant or more needed.

The politics of England had unconsciously created the battleground for this revolutionary healing to take place, it could not have happened anywhere else!

And really, what choice did Don have? He was both parts equally; even so, it's no news to anyone that the influences at work in the world, wherever they come from, have forced a countless many to choose a side, to become less than what they truly are, and to be ultimately divided in the end – but this was not to be so for Don.

From being on the ground floor of revolutionary and divergent London-based fashion scenes poised to be worldwide forces, to introducing first wave British Punk to Reggae at London's first punk Club, The Roxy, to being an early multi-cultural voice as the music video director who brought MTV their first video starring a black musician, to decades worth of feature film work, Don was able to see past the divisions and find unity in the world and in himself.

As a result of Don's heart and vision he has shown us the connection between us all by connecting the lives and careers of artists such as Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon of The Clash, John Lydon of The Sex Pistols and PiL, Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Musical Youth, Gil Scott-Heron, Sun Ra, Mick Jones and Don's own band Big Audio Dynamite.

Through it all, Don seemed to know that becoming who you truly are means having the courage to be someone who has never been before.

William E. Badgley, Production notes

REBEL DREAD

Directed by: William E. Badgley

Production Company: Molasses Manifesto

Presented by: Hindsight Media, Bohemia Media, Head Gear Films, Moviehouse Entertainment

Executive Producers: Don Letts, Compton Ross, Gary Phillips, Lucy Fenton, James Swarbick, Christos Michaels

Produced by: Phil Hunt, Mark Vennis

Associate Producer: Allyson Baker

Written by: William E. Badgley

Directors of Photography: Alasdair Oglivie, William E. Badgley

Motion Graphics by: Burak N. Kurt

Edited by: Eric Pritchard

Original Score by: Von Wildenhaus

Music Supervisor: Samantha Simmons

With

Don Letts

Desmond Coy

Norman Jay

Andrea Oliver

Jeanette Lee

Leo Williams

Trevor Romeo

Grantley Marshall

Chris Salewicz

John Lydon

Mick Jones

Paul Simonon

Vivien Goldman

Greg Roberts

Dennis Bovell

Grace Letts

UK 2020

86 mins

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

Preview: Rebel Dread + Q&A with Don Letts

Thu 3 Mar 18:00

Member Picks: Evita

Fri 4 Mar 17:50

Doctor Who: Revelation of the Daleks

Sat 5 Mar 12:00

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 7 Mar 18:10

Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: True Things + Q&A with Director Harry Wootliff

Mon 7 Mar 20:35

Hive+ pre-recorded Q&A with filmmakers

Tue 8 Mar 18:15

TV Preview: Gentleman Jack Series 2 + Q&A with writer Sally Wainwright and actors Suranne Jones and Sophie Rundle

Wed 9 Mar 18:10

GFF International Women's Day Gala: Happening (L'évenement) + Pre-recorded Q&A with Director Audrey Diwan

Wed 9 Mar 20:40

TV Preview: Inside No. 9 + Q&A with creators Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton, and executive producer Adam Tandy

Fri 11 Mar 20:40

GFF Closing Gala: Murina

Sun 13 Mar 19:00

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Projecting the Archive: A Question of Adultery + intro by BFI Curator Josephine Botting

Tue 1 Mar 18:20

African Odysseys: From the Caribbean to West Africa: Edric Connor's Travelogues

Sun 6 Mar 14:00-16:30

Silent Cinema: The Joker (Jokeren) + intro by BFI Curator Bryony Dixon

Sun 6 Mar 15:00

Experimenta: Ticket of No Return + pre-recorded intro remembering Tabea Blumenschein with Ulrike Ottinger

Tue 8 Mar 18:00

Film Wallahs: The Beatles and India + intro by co-director Pete Compton and producer Reynold D'Silva

Thu 10 Mar 18:15

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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