



AFRICAN ODYSSEYS

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

+ discussion with Kevin Le Gendre and Alex Pascall, chaired by Colin Prescod.

Join us for an afternoon of beautiful, restored colour films of Africa and the Caribbean, made by Edric Connor – actor, singer, folklorist, director and musicologist. A cultural ambassador, Connor introduced Caribbean culture to a wide range of arts, including mainstream cinema. We'll be joined by an expert panel who will discuss Connor's extraordinary achievement in helping bring awareness of Caribbean and African culture to the UK. Films screening include *Caribbean Honeymoon 1 & 2* (1960), *Bound for Lagos* (1960), and *Carnival Fantastique* (1960).

bfi.org.uk

Rarely seen 1960s Caribbean travelogues shot by singer and actor Edric Connor have recently been unearthed and restored. Connor, who migrated to the UK from Trinidad in 1944, became the first Black actor to perform with the RSC. He also dedicated his life to demonstrating the cultural vitality and independence of his homeland, then still under colonial rule. In 1959, he returned to the Caribbean to chronicle everything from the manufacture of aluminium to the celebration of Trinidad Carnival over the course of four films, two of which have never been screened for an audience.

'There aren't many travelogues written, or even dictated, from the perspective of people from the Caribbean in this period,' says BFI assistant curator Xavier Pillai, who is organising a celebration of Connor's work on 6 March at BFI Southbank. This will be the first time these films – digitally restored for last year's London Film Festival – have been screened together (they are also on BFI Player). '[The films] exist as a unique document of the time, the cusp of independence, and aren't widely available.'

One of them, *Caribbean Honeymoon No. 1* (1960), is about Mayaro, Connor's birthplace. The film has the structure of a standard ethnographic documentary, with sprawling panoramics of the Trinidadian landscape, but personal touches let Connor close the distance between the omniscient narrator and, for example, cricket players on a white, sandy beach. 'This is my country,' he says at the film's start, rather than identifying the land as Trinidad: 'These are my people.'

His travelogues were subsequently edited by his wife, Pearl Connor-Mogotsi, with whom he started the Edric Connor Agency, providing vital talent representation for Black actors and artists. Connor also lent his voice to BBC radio's *Caribbean Voices* in the 1940s, which according to Pillai was a 'touchpoint' for rising literary stars such as Samuel Selvon and Kamau Brathwaite after they arrived in the UK. '[Connor] decided to make media for the Caribbean,' Pillai says. 'The intention was to convince Caribbean leaders to think about creating their own media voice, akin to the BBC.'

Carly Mattox, *Sight and Sound*, April 2022

Kevin Le Gendre

Kevin Le Gendre is a journalist, broadcaster and writer with a special interest in Black music. Deputy editor of *Echoes*, he contributes to a wide range of publications that include *Jazzwise*, *MusicWeek*, *Vibrations* and *The Independent on Sunday* and also appears as a commentator and critic on radio programmes such as BBC Radio 3's *Jazz Line-Up* and BBC Radio 4's *Front Row*.

Alex Pascall

Alex Pascall travelled to Britain from Grenada in July 1959 to pursue his goal in communication and music. By 1996 he was awarded the O.B.E. for Services to Community Relations, which he affectionately dubbed the 'Order for Black Excellence'.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Alex created an impressive variety of musical ensembles – The Magnets, a series of vocal trios and quartets specialising in popular songs of the African diaspora to the hugely successful Alex Pascall Singers, a ground-breaking choir of Caribbean and African voices and personalities. He also co-founded a promotion and publishing company with his wife Joyce. In 1974 Alex was headhunted to develop *Black Londoners*, which became the first Black daily radio programme in Britain in 1978, aired on BBC Radio London. It quickly became the focal point and outlet for Black British art and culture, sport, and politics. He was first to introduce Black women to British Radio airwaves from the *Black Londoners* programme, the spark that lit the fire for Black broadcasting and print media with his co-founding of *The Voice* newspaper, Britain's first national Black newspaper.

While Alex honed his skills as a communicator, researcher, singer, songwriter, composer, and playwright, as an extension to all of these he chaired the Notting Hill Carnival and Arts Committee (CAC) from 1984 to 1989. This was a natural commitment to grass roots activity. After full-time broadcasting, Alex focused his energies working with schools to enrich multiculturalism in Britain, introducing Caribbean culture in projects for drama, music and storytelling.

Alex's journey was and still is challenging as a pioneer in Black culture, arts and media. His 'BAMAAPC' (Black Audio and Media Archive Alex Pascall Collection), is managed by Good Vibes Records and Music Limited, co-founded with his wife Joyce. Clients include BBC Radio 2,3,4, ITV, TVS, Judita Da Silva Productions, Nigeria, Deutschland Funk Radio Germany, UK Borough Councils, The Smithsonian Museum USA and consultancy to independent feature film and TV production companies.

Colin Prescod

Over some five decades, Colin Prescod has variously worked as an academic, documentary filmmaker, theatre maker, TV (BBC) commissioning editor, cultural animator (specifically in museums, archives, and heritage sector). Most recently he has worked on the exhibitions *No Colour Bar. Black British Art in Action 1960–1990* (2016) and, with the British Library, *Windrush: Songs in a Strange Land* (2018).

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

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

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

SEEN & HEARD: DARING FEMALE COMING-OF-AGE FILMS

Skate Kitchen

Tue 1 Mar 20:40; Sun 13 Mar 20:45

Divines

Wed 2 Mar 20:50; Tue 15 Mar 20:50

Jinn

Sat 5 Mar 17:45; Tue 8 Mar 21:00

37 Seconds (37 sekanzu)

Sat 5 Mar 20:30; Sat 12 Mar 20:45

Water Lilies (Naissance des pieuvres)

Sun 6 Mar 18:45; Mon 14 Mar 20:50

Marie Antoinette

Tue 8 Mar 18:10 (+ intro by Hannah Strong, Little White Lies Digital Editor and author of *Sofia Coppola: Forever Young*); Sun 13 Mar 18:00

Somersault

Fri 11 Mar 20:50; Mon 14 Mar 18:10

IN THE EYES OF A SILENT STAR: THE FILMS OF ASTA NIELSEN

In the Eyes of the Law (Nach dem Gesetz)

Tue 1 Mar 20:50; Mon 7 Mar 18:15

Hamlet

Wed 2 Mar 18:15; Sat 5 Mar 17:00 (+ Intro by Prof Judith Buchanan)

Earth Spirit (Erdgeist)

Sat 5 Mar 12:10 (+ intro by Season Curator Pamela Hutchinson); Wed 9 Mar 20:50

The Decline (AKA Downfall) (Der Absturz)

Sat 5 Mar 14:30 (+ intro by season curator Pamela Hutchinson); Tue 15 Mar 18:20

The Joyless Street (Die freudlose Gasse)

Sun 6 Mar 17:40 (+ intro by BFI Inclusion Team Coordinator, Miranda Gower-Qian); Wed 16 Mar 18:00

Impossible Love (Unmögliche Liebe)

Wed 9 Mar 18:20; Tue 15 Mar 20:45

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