



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Of Time and the City

Of Time and the City

Directed by: Terence Davies

©: Hurricane City Limited, Digital Departures Northwest Vision and Media & Digital Departures presented in association with the Liverpool Culture Company and BBC Films

Made with the support of Northwest Vision + Media through the Merseyside Film and Television Fund a project part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Northwest Regional Development Agency through The Regional Attraction Fund, the UK Film Council, the Liverpool Culture Company

Executive Producers: Christopher Moll, Lisa-Marie Russo

Produced by: Solon Papadopoulos, Roy Boulter For Digital Departures: Production Executive: Tracy O'Riordan; Production Co-ordinator: Barbara Kirby; Pre-production Co-ordinator: Sian Hilton-Parry; Production Accountants: Joanne Bendon, Jason Potter; Post-production Supervisor: Shuna Frood For Northwest Vision and Media: Head of Development/Production: Helen Bingham; Finance Manager: Colin Phillips

For The Liverpool Culture Company: Executive Producer: Fiona Gasper

For BBC Films: Head of Programme Acquisition: Steve Jenkins

Production Manager: Karen Radford

Archive Producer: Jim Anderson

Archive Researchers: Mike McKibbin, Angela Byrne

Written by: Terence Davies

Director of Photography: Tim Pollard

Camera Assistant: Dominic O'Keeffe

Lighting Gaffer: Colin Sage

Editor: Liza Ryan-Carter

Colourist: Jamie Parry

Camera Hire: Fact Media Services

Track/Dolly: Panavision Manchester

Lighting Hire: Pro-Vision Manchester

Music Supervisor (for DNA Music/Quantum Noise): Ian Neil

Dubbing Mixer: Adam Ryan-Carter

Sound Engineers: David Coyle, Steven Guy

EPK: Krishna Stott, Philip Shotton

Unit Publicity: Keeley Naylor, Zoe Flower,

emfoundation

UK 2008©

75 mins

With intro on Wed 14 Jun only

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

SIGHT AND SOUND

With intro on Wednesday 14 Jun only

There is something mysterious about Terence Davies' Liverpool from the outset: at the heart of this meditation on the city lies a tension, between urban change as a process that is brutal and unremitting, and the persistence of memory as something that is delicate and filamentary. We weave our memories into a palimpsest of dreams where time and place melt into each other. Memories become maps through places to which we can never return in a world that is changing all about us.

In *Of Time and the City* Davies presents us with a wondrously idiosyncratic and elegiac journey that is filled with anger, joy and despair. He becomes the 'angel of history' hovering over Liverpool, alternately caressing his troubled city or pouring scorn on the forces that have brought it to its knees. The film is punctuated by quotes from poetry, literature and philosophy that are narrated to us by Davies with a sense of staccato urgency: poignant lines chosen from Chekhov, Engels, Joyce and others inform us that this is a serious film from the outset. This is not a film that panders to an existing audience but one that seeks to create a new one, and Davies is not making a pitch to our touristic curiosity, nor is he using the city in a narrowly didactic sense. This is a deeply personal mode of documentary filmmaking that is imbued with a profound sense of emotional intimacy.

Like Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il vangelo secondo Matteo*, released to general amazement in 1964, Davies uses music to sublime effect. Both Pasolini and Davies select music that, through its apparent incongruity, generates a powerful sense of authenticity and immediacy: faces, images and landscapes are dramatically transformed into far more than their mere physical presence as stones, bricks or flesh. In *Of Time and the City* Davies furiously juxtaposes music with place to transcend the petty cruelties of organised religion or the grinding toil of working-class life. Decaying housing estates are set to Bacarisse; cranes and industrial architecture to Mahler.

Davies reserves his real scorn for the British establishment in all their ineptitude and mean-spirited mediocrity. He exposes the flummery and sexual hypocrisy of organised religion with relish. He excoriates the monarchy and other archaic forms of gluttony that feast on the goodwill of ordinary folk. As we see newsreel footage of the royal marriage – 'Betty and Phil with a thousand flunkies' – and the gilded carriage passes through cheering crowds Davies reminds us that at the time, Britain was home to some of the worst slums in Europe. His droll disdain for the establishment is also extended to its would-be cultural assassins such as The Beatles who are rendered little more than a ghostly and ironic presence. Just as Joe Strummer rejected 'phoney Beatlemania' back in 1977 Davies derides the 'fab four' as looking like 'a firm of provincial solicitors' – 'yeah, yeah, yeah' indeed.

As for post-war architecture Davies notes with acerbic understatement that 'Municipal architecture, dispiriting at the best of times, but when combined with the British genius for creating the dismal, makes for a cityscape that is anything but Elysian.' These would-be utopias had by the early 1970s become spaces of decline and emptiness scattered with broken glass and overlooked by boarded-up windows. 'We hoped for paradise; we got the *anus mundi*': a

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The 400 Blows (Les Quatre cents coups)

Thu 1 Jun 18:20; Tue 13 Jun 20:30

The Big Lebowski

Fri 2 Jun 20:30; Sat 17 Jun 18:10

La dolce vita

Sat 3 Jun 17:00; Tue 13 Jun 13:30; Sun 18 Jun 17:30

Boyz n the Hood

Sat 3 Jun 20:40; Fri 30 Jun 18:10

Vertigo

Sun 4 Jun 15:30; Tue 20 Jun 20:40

Bicycle Thieves (Ladri di biciclette)

Mon 5 Jun 20:45; Fri 16 Jun 20:40; Sat 24 Jun 12:00

The Third Man

Tue 6 Jun 20:40; Wed 21 Jun 18:10 (+ intro); Sun 25 Jun 12:30

The Long Goodbye

Wed 7 Jun 18:00 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Tue 27 Jun 20:35

Cleo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)

Mon 12 Jun 21:00; Thu 29 Jun 18:30

Of Time and the City

Wed 14 Jun 18:30 (+ intro); Thu 22 Jun 20:50

Taxi Driver

Sun 18 Jun 18:30; Fri 23 Jun 20:45

Get Carter

Mon 19 Jun 18:20; Mon 26 Jun 20:45

La Haine

Wed 21 Jun 21:00; Sat 24 Jun 20:40; Wed 28 Jun 18:15 (+ intro)

Don't Look Now

Sat 24 Jun 16:00; Fri 30 Jun 20:45

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

city in a state of retraction and disorder. Liverpool had become a testing ground where urban experiments had been forcibly grafted onto the damaged city. These new architectural forms were often poorly constructed and maintained, displaying but a faint echo of their exemplary prototypes in European cities, and containing their own versions of built-in senescence to match the social and political neglect of their new occupants.

The archival footage is superbly collated, ranging from the smallest details of family life – such as struggles to keep warm through the dank winter months – to the impact of immense historical events including troops leaving for the Korean War in the 1950s or the large-scale demolition of the city in the 1960s. The grandeur of the past – smartly-dressed crowds waving hats, football before its decent into greed and venality, and above all a sense of dynamism and industriousness – is counterpoised with the bleak emptiness of the post-industrial city.

Liverpool has been the traumatised epicentre of Britain's full-scale industrial decline since the 1960s with a greater population loss than almost any other British city. Unlike former industrial cities in Europe such as Hamburg or Milan, which have successfully rebuilt themselves, it is apparent that Liverpool's contemporary renaissance is slender indeed: not a replenished civil society or newfound industrial acumen but a retail desert populated by gaggles of drunken figures tottering around beneath the glare of streetlights and security cameras.

The final tracking shots of gentrified docks and warehouses evoke a sense of placelessness: these waterside developments with their familiar 'brandsapes' could be any one of a number re-fashioned industrial waterfronts from Baltimore to Buenos Aires. 'As we grow older,' observes Davies, 'the world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated... and now I'm an alien in my own land.' We float with Davies across neon-lit landscapes or hover over boutiques and wine bars that were once factories or churches. 'We are being gathered in at gloaming,' intones Davies, as the city becomes a myriad of strange illuminations in the failing light. What has Liverpool been? What have we been?

Beautiful and scathing in equal measure, *Of Time and the City* must surely rank as one of the best films about a British city that has ever been made. But the film is not simply about Liverpool: it is also a mordant response to the failures and disappointments of post-war Britain and a bittersweet exploration of the delicate connections between memory and place that anchor our sense of individual and collective identity amidst the tumult of historical change.

Matthew Gandy (Professor of Cultural and Historical Geography and Fellow of King's College, University of Cambridge), *Of Time and the City* DVD booklet essay (BFI, 2009)