



POWER TO THE PEOPLE: HORACE OVÉ'S RADICAL VISION

A Hole in Babylon + The Garland

Play for Today: A Hole in Babylon

Directed by: Horace Ové

©/Production Company: BBC

Producer: Graham Benson

Assistant Floor Manager: Jeremy Ancock

Production Unit Manager: Carol Robertson

Production Assistants: John E. Norton,

Jerry Desmonde, Romey Allison

Director's Assistant: Lydia Morris

Script Editor: Terry Coles

[Written] By: Jim Hawkins, Horace Ové

Photography: Kenneth Macmillan

Film Editor: Tony Woollard

Designer: Geoff Powell

Costume: George Ward

Make-up: Marianne Ford

Theme Song Composed by: Sammy Abu

Lyrics by: Horace Ové

Film Recordist: Geoff Tookey

Dubbing Mixer: Andrew Nelson

Dubbing Editor: Danny Nissim

Cast:

T-Bone Wilson (*Frank Davies*)

Trevor Thomas (*Bonsu Monroe*)

Archie Pool (*Wes Dick*)

Victor Baring, Franco Derosa, Carlos Douglas,

Leonard Fenton, Peter Laird, Louis Mansi,

Ray Marioni, Alfred Maron, Colin Starkey (*hostages*)

Carmen Monroe (*Mrs Munroe*)

Helen Webb (*Sheila*)

Shope Shodeinde (*Lena*)

Floella Benjamin (*Norma*)

Johnny Shannon (*gambler*)

Eric Kent (*Baron*)

Max Harvey (*Termine*)

Michael Chesden (*Costas*)

Stefan Kalipha (*Peter*)

Astley Harvey (*Rabby*)

Mellán Mitchell (*Ram*)

Jeanie Fisher (*Brenda*)

Michael Sheard (*prison officer*)

Patrick McAlliney (*foreman*)

Peter Marinker, Peter Davidson (*policemen*)

Le'mar N. Haynes (*Winston*)

Larrington Walker (*deskman*)

UK 1979

BBC1 tx 29.11.1979

66 mins

Digital

Play for Today: Shai Mala Khani: The Garland

Director: Horace Ové

©: BBC

Production Company: BBC Birmingham

Producer: Peter Ansoorge

Production Unit Manager: Carol Park

Assistant Floor Managers: William Hartley,

Dick Teague

Production Assistant: Ian Fraser

Director's Assistant: Kate Salmon

Written by: H.O. Nazareth, Horace Ové

Photography: Michael Williams

Film Editor: Oliver White

Designer: Jim Hatchard

Costume Designer: Gill Hardie

Make-Up Artist: Carol Gannicliiff

Film Recordist: John Parker

Dubbing Mixer: David Baumber

Bangladeshi Adviser: Nurunessa Chowdhury

A Hole in Babylon

Based on the real-life Spaghetti House siege, this was a hugely controversial BBC production, with some seeing its mix of drama and real archive footage as a distortion of the truth. However, the debate missed the brilliance of what Ové and co-writer Jim Hawkins achieved, weaving together a complex tapestry of flashbacks that gives those at the centre of the siege hope, dignity and motives that resonate far wider than the events that took place.

bfi.org.uk

The controversial *Play for Today, A Hole in Babylon* builds powerfully on director Horace Ové's earlier *Pressure* (1975) in both subject matter and style. Ové continued his exploration of racism and the fight-back of the second generation of black youth, and further developed his highly experimental style of storytelling. Here, he employed a pioneering form of drama-documentary, involving multiple dramatic flashbacks interspersed with archive footage.

A Hole in Babylon dramatises the botched 1975 Spaghetti House Siege in Knightsbridge. Middle-aged petty criminal Frank Davies, accompanied by two young men, Wesley Dick and Anthony Monroe, prepare to rob the restaurant. The younger men want out but Frank keeps them focused. As the three cross the point of no return, things immediately go wrong. The police are called and the siege is on. What began as a means to an end is now repackaged as a political and revolutionary act. Frank Davis assumes command of the quickly improvised Black Liberation Army.

As police negotiations begin, Ové winds back in a series of flashbacks, and flashbacks within flashbacks, to explain how we got here. He intersperses the back stories of the three characters with developments at the siege, without once losing the immediacy of the moment. First, Frank, recently released from prison, is haunted by mental problems; Wesley, a poet, stuck in a dead-end job, is wishing for paid community work; Anthony, a middle-class medical student drop-out, is dreaming of going to Nigeria's Ibadan University to escape 'Babylon's education'.

Ové sensitively captures the way the unfolding siege provides the opportunity for a different kind of glory as black liberators. This grandiose scheming is intercut with real news archive from the time, which shows the reverse – the siege descending into farce and defeat. Ové's dignified treatment of the pressures facing the men led to widespread outrage. The BBC refused to sell on rights to US broadcasters, stating, 'we are not going to sell a film... about a group of black hooligans.'

But Ové's film is more subtle than this. Despite the racist provocations which provide motivation, 'Black Revolution' is shown to be ultimately just another hustle for Frank, the supreme opportunist. For the younger men, having reluctantly come this far, the glory of martyrdom appears a good way of advancing the cause. Frank's views nevertheless prevail, despite the disgust of the youngsters and his own personal humiliation.

Onyekachi Wambu, BFI Screenonline, www.screenonline.org.uk

Cast:

Tariq Yunus (*Raji*)
Patricia Garwood (*Leela*)
Albert Moses (*Huq*)
Katy Mirza (*Nadira*)
Lyndham Gregory (*Roy*)
Shreela Ghosh (*Amina*)
Ishaq Bux (*Amina's father*)
Sahat Qizilbash (*Amina's mother*)
Olegario Frank (*wedding lawyer*)
Paul Anil, Ranjit Nakara (*Huq's assistants*)
Sneh Gupta (*Fatima, woman at funeral*)
Veronique Choolhun (*Zareen, woman at funeral*)
Charu Bala Chokshi
(*lawyer's wife, woman at funeral*)
Patricia Gallimore (*Margaret Leela's guest*)
Terry Molloy (*Clarence, Leela's guest*)
Leon Tanner (*Greg, Leela's guest*)
Anita Love (*Rita, Leela's guest*)
Gurdial Sira (*Anand*)
Moti Makan, Paul Satvender (*Raji's friends*)
Bhasker Patel (*Vijay*)
Anand Versani (*Rahim*)
Seva Dhalivaal (*Kumar*)
Johannah Heaney (*Sandra*)
Julian Ronnie (*Mike*)
Andrew Schofield (*skinhead leader*)
Dev Sagoo (*community worker*)
Adrian Bracken, John Cashmore (*policemen*)
Marian Kemmer (*policewoman*)
Terry Pearson (*immigration officer*)
Esmail Sheikh, A.K. Durvesh,
Mohammed Kassam (*musicians at wedding*)
BBC1 tx 10.3.1981
UK 1981
88 mins
Digital

**POWER TO THE PEOPLE:
HORACE OVÉ'S RADICAL VISION**

Playing Away

Tue 21 Nov 20:45

Dabbawallahs + pre-recorded intro by producer
Annabelle Alcazar + **Who Shall We Tell?**
Fri 24 Nov 18:00

HORACE OVÉ: FILM INFLUENCES

Pather Panchali

Tue 14 Nov 14:30

Bicycle Thieves *Ladri di biciclette*

Tue 14 Nov 18:20; Sun 19 Nov 18:40; Fri 24 Nov
20:45

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guidance and support for this season

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**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away the film's ending.

The Garland

When Raji moves with his wife to a new more upmarket area, they are forced to confront prejudices surrounding their mixed-race marriage. Meanwhile, their son tries to escape his own crisis of identity by retreating into the fantasy world of the Bollywood movie. Ové demonstrates an ability to empathise with the concerns of the South Asian community living in the UK on a par with his own Black British experience. Aided by H.O. Nazareth's script, this production from BBC Birmingham has a real sense of authenticity and remains all too relevant.

bfi.org.uk

The Bollywood opening of Horace Ové's *Play for Today: The Garland* is unexpected but shapes the rest of this play, which, with its unconventional plotting, tears, comedy and tragedy, unfolds like standard Bollywood fare.

Engineering professional Raji (Tariq Yunus) has taken his middle-class English wife, Leela (Patricia Garwood), to see the film in question. She hates such films but tolerates them because of her love for Raji – in much the same way as she tolerates his culture. He hates the genteel English suburb they have moved to, which he tolerates because of his love for her. She thinks he is oversensitive about racism, he can't understand why she doesn't see the obvious.

A burglary at their house finally puts paid to their evasions, forcing both to confront the issues of institutional racism. Against Raji's wishes, Leela involves the police. She is shocked when they treat Raji as thief, not victim, and racially abuse their 17 year-old son, Roy (Lyndam Gregory), also suspected of being the thief.

Leela's growing confusion and Raji's anger create tension at home, which impacts on Roy, who is already experiencing nightmares and questioning his own mixed identity.

Into this brew comes Mohammed Huq (Albert Moses), an old Handsworth friend of Raji's. Following a Muslim divorce of his first wife, Huq is expecting his new bride from Bangladesh. To sort out Huq's immigration problems, Raji connects him with an unscrupulous but rising Asian bigwig. At Huq's wedding, Roy falls for Amina (Shreela Ghosh), the daughter of a Muslim notable. Roy begins to live a dangerous life – dodging Amina's strict parents and a group of skinheads who have already attacked his mother. With his life becoming unbearable, Roy lashes out at his parents for marrying across the colour line, and creating a life-long crisis of identity for him.

The catalyst for a family reconciliation is the arrest of Huq's newly pregnant wife by immigration officials. Raji and Leela join forces in a futile campaign against her deportation. The tears of Huq and his wife, as they are separated at the airport, bring Leela to a deeper understanding of her country.

Made at a time Britain's inner-cities were exploding in anger, Horace Ové's warm and engaging film, and his use of the humane Leela as a way of allowing middle-class England to directly experience the horrors of racism, could hardly have been bettered.

Onyekachi Wambu, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk