



## MARTIN SCORSESE SELECTS HIDDEN GEMS OF BRITISH CINEMA

# Hue and Cry

### Hue and Cry

Director: Charles Crichton

Production Company: Ealing Studios

Producer: Michael Balcon

Associate Producer: Henry Cornelius

Screenplay: T.E.B. Clarke

Director of Photography: Douglas Slocombe

Editor: Charles Hasse

Art Director: Norman G. Arnold

Music: Jack Beaver, Georges Auric

Sound Recording: Stephen Dalby

Cast:

Alastair Sim (*Felix H Wilkinson*)

Jack Warner (*Nightingale*)

Valerie White (*Rhona*)

Frederick Piper (*Mr Kirby*)

Harry Fowler (*Joe Kirby*)

Douglas Barr (*Alec*)

Heather Delaine (*Mrs Kirby*)

Stanley Escane (*boy*)

Ian Dawson (*Norman*)

Gerald Fox (*Dicky*)

Albert Hughes (*Wally*)

David Knox (*Dusty*)

Jeffrey Sirett (*Bill*)

James Crabb (*Terry*)

Joan Dowling (*Clarry*)

Paul Demel (*Jago*)

Alec Finter (*Detective Sergeant Fothergill*)

Bruce Belfrage (*BBC announcer*)

Grace Arnold (*Dicky's mother*)

Arthur Denton (*vicar*)

Robin Hughes (*Selwyn Pike*)

Howard Douglas (*watchman*)

Henry John Puvic (*Larry the Bull*)

Joey Carr (*Shorty*)

UK 1947

82 mins

35mm

A BFI National Archive print

The screening on Mon 30 Sep will be introduced by Josephine Botting, Curator, BFI National Archive

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In the forties, before the establishment of the specialist Children's Film Foundation, the commercial arm of the British film industry still sometimes made films especially for children, and *Hue and Cry* is the best example. The production company, Ealing Studios, had a well-established style, and *Hue and Cry* was the first time it was adapted for children. The result was hugely successful in Saturday matinees in the forties.

The project began not with a well known book or a famous star, but with a climactic scene which associate producer Henry Cornelius had seen in his mind's eye. Passing it on to writer Clarke, he said: 'I see a sequence in which hundreds of boys take possession of London for a few glorious hours.' Clarke's job was to invent characters, and a storyline, which would logically lead up to that climax.

True to Ealing's 'realist' style, the boys (and the one girl) in *The Blood and Thunder Boys* are nothing like American cute-moppet child stars of the thirties (e.g. Shirley Temple and Jackie Coogan). For a start, they are older, because in 1946 it was illegal in the UK for children under the age of 14 to work in the film business. Harry Fowler (who plays Joe) and the rest of the young actors were therefore 15, 16, 17 or more when they acted as Joe, Alec, Norman, Dicky, Arthur and Clarry, etc.

There were also some positive Ealing choices that gave the film its distinctive look. One was that Joe has an ordinary family, with a father who reads the newspaper while eating, a mother who tells him to wipe the sausage off his chin, and a sister always talking about her new dress. Further, when the boys get on the trail of the master criminal, they make mistakes in working things out, and they argue and fight among themselves. Such behaviour and such a background were not then common among screen children.

Another prominent aspect of the film's style is its semi-documentary approach. A good example is the scene at Covent Garden market where Joe has to learn to carry a tower of baskets on his head. Clarke and director Crichton agreed in wanting lots of scenes to be shot in authentic London locations, rather than inside a studio. Bomb-sites, dockland and St Paul's also figure in the film quite a lot, so that as well as being an exciting adventure, *Hue and Cry* is also a good way of seeing what London looked like just after World War II.

Apart from Harry Fowler, none of the youngsters had any previous acting experience. Cornelius and Crichton talked to youth clubs, asked for volunteers and then had to test over 1,000 boys before selecting a few who could handle dialogue and acting. One of them, James Crabb, was found to be so good at doing imitations of all kinds of noises that Clarke wrote a special part for him, bringing this talent into the story. After that search, the 300 extras needed at the end of the story were easier to find, because they weren't required to act; all they had to do was swarm all over the place, and 'take possession of London.' Most of them came from Boy Scout troops.

When the film was finished Clarke was very pleased with it, declaring it 'a far better story on celluloid than it was at any stage on paper.'

Terry Staples

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### Shooting Stars

Sun 1 Sep 11:30; Mon 9 Sep 20:40

### Brief Ecstasy

Tue 3 Sep 18:30; Wed 11 Sep 20:35

### The Man in Grey

Fri 6 Sep 18:10; Tue 17 Sep 20:40

### This Happy Breed

Fri 6 Sep 20:40; Tue 24 Sep 18:00

### The Seventh Veil

Sat 7 Sep 15:10; Wed 25 Sep 20:40

### Green for Danger

Sun 8 Sep 15:40; Thu 26 Sep 20:55

### It Always Rains on Sunday

Sun 8 Sep 18:10; Fri 27 Sep 20:50

### Hue and Cry

Sat 14 Sep 20:30; Mon 30 Sep 18:15 (+ intro by Josephine Botting, Curator, BFI National Archive)

### Uncle Silas

Sat 14 Sep 18:20

### Terence Fisher Double Bill:

#### To the Public Danger + Stolen Face

Sun 15 Sep 18:10; Tue 1 Oct 20:30

### Mandy

Mon 16 Sep 18:35; Sat 28 Sep 12:20

### Yield to the Night

Fri 20 Sep 18:00; Sat 28 Sep 15:10

### The Flesh and the Fiends

Sat 21 Sep 14:50; Wed 2 Oct 20:40

### The Damned

Sat 21 Sep 20:40; Fri 4 Oct 18:30

### Station Six Sahara

Sun 22 Sep 12:30; Sat 5 Oct 16:00

### The Mind Benders

Sun 22 Sep 18:00; Wed 2 Oct 18:20

### Went the Day Well? + intro by James Bell,

Senior Curator, BFI National Archive

### The Pumpkin Eater

Fri 27 Sep 18:00; Sun 6 Oct 15:00

### Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde

Sat 28 Sep 18:10; Thu 3 Oct 18:15 + intro by

Sam Clemens, son of Brian Clemens

### The Legend of Hell House

Sat 28 Sep 20:40; Mon 7 Oct 18:20

### Guns at Batasi

Sun 29 Sep 18:20; Sat 5 Oct 18:20

### With thanks to

Martin Scorsese and Edgar Wright

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Though by no means the first comedy to emerge from Ealing studios, *Hue and Cry* was among the first British comedies after the war, and is generally considered the first of what are now remembered as the 'Ealing comedies' – although the cycle really got underway two years later with the release of *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore!* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

The story of a group of East End kids who foil a gang of robbers who are using a children's comic to communicate their plans, *Hue and Cry* borrows something of its premise from the popular children's story *Emil and the Detectives* (first filmed in Germany in 1931).

While the story has an appealing *Boy's Own* quality, perhaps the film's most distinctive feature is its use of bombed-out locations in London's East End and Docklands. These rubble-strewn sites become the background for one grand boy's adventure (the children include only one girl – who is just about tolerated by the others), culminating in the film's best known image, in which hundreds of boys from all over London converge on a handful of unfortunate petty criminals.

In keeping with Ealing's tendency in the last years of the war to foster inclusive images of British society, the children are mostly working-class, and include a young Scottish boy, Alec (Douglas Barr).

Jack Warner, who within a few years would be well-known to TV audiences as the honest and steadfast PC George Dixon in Ealing's *The Blue Lamp* (1950) and the TV series *Dixon of Dock Green* (1955-76), took the most substantial adult role as the villain, Nightingale. Apart from a memorable cameo from Alastair Sim as *The Trump's* eccentric author, the rest of the major parts are taken by the children, led by Harry Fowler as Joe, the fantasist whose daydreams become real.

*Hue and Cry* was the first of seven comedies for the studio by T.E.B. Clarke, the writer whose work, including *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), did most to shape the way the Ealing comedies are usually remembered today – as cheery celebrations of English (even though two of the films are set in Scotland) community spirit and mild eccentricity.

Mark Duguid, BFI Screenonline