



MARTIN SCORSESE SELECTS HIDDEN GEMS OF BRITISH CINEMA

Terence Fisher Double Bill: To the Public Danger + Stolen Face

To the Public Danger

Directed by: Terence Fisher
J. Arthur Rank presents a Highbury production
Producer: John Croydon
Production Supervisor: Adrian Worker
Assistant Director: Philip Horne
Screenplay: T.J Morrison, Arthur Reid
Adapted from the play by: Patrick Hamilton
Directors of Photography: Harry Waxman, Roy Fogwell
Camera Operator: Robert Navarro
Editor: Graeme Hamilton
Art Director: Don Russell
Wardrobe: Violet Beaumont
Music: Doreen Carwithen
Music Played by: Philharmonia Orchestra
Conducted by: Muir Mathieson
Sound Supervisor: W. Anson Howell
Sound System: Western Electric
Cast:

Dermot Walsh (*Captain Cole*)
Susan Shaw (*Nancy Bedford*)
Bary Letts (*Fred Lane*)
Roy Plomley (*Reggie*)
Betty Ann Davies (*barmaid*)
Sydney Bromley (*man at bar*)
Cliff Weir (*landlord*)
Patricia Hayes (*postmistress*)
John Lorrell (*police sergeant*)
Sam Kydd (*police driver*)
Frederick Piper (*labourer*)
Patience Rentoul (*labourer's wife*)
UK 1947©
43 mins
35mm

A BFI National Archive print

Stolen Face

Director: Terence Fisher
Production Company: Hammer Film Productions
Presented by: Exclusive Films
Producer: Anthony Hinds
Production Manager: Arthur Barnes
Assistant Director: Jimmy Sangster
2nd Assistant Director: Bill Shore *
3rd Assistant Director: Len Lee *
Continuity: Renée Glynn *
CASTING DIRECTOR: Nora Roberts
Screenplay: Martin Berkeley, Richard H. Landau
Story by: Alexander Paal, Steven Vas
Director of Photography: Walter J. Harvey
Camera Operator: Peter Bryan
2nd Camera Operator: E. Ford *
Focus Puller: Neil Binney *
Clapper Loader: Tom Friswell *
Stills: John Jay *
Editor: Maurice Rootes
Assembly Editor: Bill Lenny *
Art Director: Wilfred Arnold
Draughtsman: Alec Gray *
Lizabith Scott's Wardrobe: Edith Head
Furs by: Deanfield
Make-up: Phil Leakey
Hairstyles: Bill Griffiths
Music: Malcolm Arnold
Specialty Number: Jack Parnell
Music Recorded by:
The London Philharmonic Orchestra
Solo Pianist: Miss Bronwyn Jones
Recorder: Bill Salter

To the Public Danger

Before he directed his series of horror classics for Hammer, Terence Fisher demonstrated his versatility across a range of genres. His early short *To the Public Danger* is an atmospheric, psychologically tense thriller about a drunken night out that turns fatal, based on a radio play by Patrick Hamilton.

Stolen Face

This similarly noir-ish B-picture, made for Hammer, exploits the postwar fascination with plastic surgery and identity, with Paul Henreid as a surgeon, and Lizabeth Scott in a double role as the woman he transforms to resemble the lover who spurned him.

James Bell

Terence Fisher's critical reputation rests almost entirely on the horror films he directed for Hammer in the 1950s and 1960s, but he was a more versatile filmmaker than his horror output suggests. Born in London on 23 February 1904, he served in the Merchant Navy before entering the film industry in 1933. From 1936 to 1947 he worked as a film editor for a variety of production companies, with his best-known project probably the Gainsborough melodrama *The Wicked Lady* (d. Leslie Arliss, 1945). His first three films as director – *Colonel Bogey* (1947), *To the Public Danger* and *Song for Tomorrow* (both 1948) – were short dramas produced at Highbury Studio, which was being used by the Rank Organisation to develop new talent. *To the Public Danger*, an impressively staged adaptation of a Patrick Hamilton radio play, was the best of these, and some critics have retrospectively seen it as anticipating Fisher's later horror work. As a further sign of things to come, future Hammer star Christopher Lee made a brief appearance in *Song for Tomorrow*.

After Highbury, Fisher moved to Gainsborough where he directed (or co-directed with Antony Darnborough) four feature films. As with *To the Public Danger*, horror critics have identified the period mystery drama *So Long at the Fair* (1950), Fisher's final Gainsborough film, as a horror-like project. But Fisher's other Gainsborough films reveal him to be a talented director adept at a range of subjects – the plight of post-war refugees in *Portrait from Life*, tragic romance in the Noël Coward vehicle *The Astonished Heart* (1949) and light comedy in the portmanteau drama *Marry Me!* (1949).

When Gainsborough closed in the early 1950s, Fisher became a prolific specialist in the low-budget support feature that was becoming an increasingly important aspect of British film production. None of these films, 19 in total, were strikingly original but some of them – notably the melodrama *Stolen Face* (1952) and the SF drama *Four-Sided Triangle* (1953) – contained flashes of talent and ambition. Eleven of these films were made for Hammer, an up-and-coming independent production company with which Fisher's future career would become inextricably linked. When Hammer decided in the mid-1950s to remodel itself as a horror factory, Fisher became its main director. He was part of the team that produced all the 'classic' Hammer horrors – including *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), *Dracula* (1958), *The Mummy* (1959), *The Hound*

Sound Camera Operator: Gordon Everett *

Boom Operator: Percy Britten *

Studio: Riverside Studios

Cast:

Lizabeth Scott (*Alice Brent/Lily B*)

Paul Henreid (*Dr Philip Ritter*)

André Morell (*David*)

Mary Mackenzie (*Lily A*)

John Wood (*Dr Jack Wilson*)

Arnold Ridley (*Dr Russell*)

Susan Stephen (*Betty*)

Cyril Smith (*Alf*)

Diana Beaumont (*May*)

Terence O'Regan (*Pete Snipe*)

Russell Napier (*Cutler*)

Ambrosine Philpotts (*Miss Patten*)

Everley Gregg (*Lady Harringay*)

Alexis France (*Mrs Emmett*)

John Bull (*Charles Emmett*)

Richard Wattis (*Wentworth*)

Dorothy Bramhall (*Miss Simpson*)

Janet Burnell (*Maggie*)

Grace Gavin (*nurse*)

William Murray (*floor walker*)

John Warren (*1st commercial traveller*)

Anna Turner (*maid*)

Hal Osmond (*photographer*)

Philip Vickers (*1st soldier*)

James Valentine (*2nd soldier*)

Howard Douglas (*1st farmer*)

Brookes Turner (*2nd farmer*)

Bartlett Mullins (*3rd farmer*)

Frank Hawkins (*2nd commercial traveller*)

UK 1952

72 mins

35mm

A BFI National Archive print

* Uncredited

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of the *Baskervilles* (1959) and *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961) – and his measured and stately style was a key aspect of the Hammer formula.

Given the low budgets involved and the breakneck production schedules, the quality of these films was inevitably uneven, but some of them, and especially *Dracula*, were remarkable achievements, albeit ones that were not generally feted by critics at the time of their initial appearance. After the box-office failure of *The Phantom of the Opera* (1962), Fisher worked less often for Hammer, although his later Hammer films arguably comprise his best work, reflecting as they do both a technical maturity and a willingness to innovate. Although Fisher is regularly accused of representing a conservative moralistic force within British horror, films like *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1967) and *The Devil Rides Out* (1968) show a tentative and questioning attitude to social authority and morality.

Fisher's other films from the 1960s – the SF invasion fantasies *The Earth Dies Screaming* (1964), *Island of Terror* (1966) and *Night of the Big Heat* (1967), and a German-produced Sherlock Holmes story – are less successful although interesting nevertheless. Fisher's final film, the Hammer production *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, was completed in 1972 (although not released until 1974).

Fisher received very little critical attention throughout his career. Ironically, as that career ended, the publication in 1973 of *A Heritage of Horror*, David Pirie's book-length study of the British horror film, led to a re-appraisal of his work. Since that time, Fisher has come to be seen as a major British film director, especially so far as his horror films are concerned, and as someone who embodies the virtues of a popular British genre cinema. It is still the case, however, that Fisher's pre-horror work has not received the critical attention it merits.

Peter Hutchings, BFI Screenonline