



The Tiger of Eschnapur Der Tiger von Eschnapur

Director: Fritz Lang

Production Company: CCC Filmkunst (Berlin)

In collaboration with: Rizzoli Editore, Régina, Critérium Film (Paris)

Executive Producer: Eberhard Meichsner

Executive Producer: Artur Brauner *

Producer: Louis de Masure *

Production Managers: Woldemar Wasa, Wolfgang Volker, Peter Krahe

Assistant Director: Frank Winterstein

Costumes for Debra Paget Designed by:

Screenplay: Fritz Lang *

Based on the novel by: Thea von Harbou

Based on the worldwide success by:

Richard Eichberg

Director of Photography: Richard Angst

Editor: Walter Wischniewsky

Art Directors: Willi Schatz, Helmut Nentwig

Costumes for Debra Paget Designed by:

Günter Brosda

All Other Costumes: Claudia Herberg

Make-up: Jupp Paschke, Heinz Stamm

Music: Michel Michelet

Instrumentation/Music Director: Gerhard Becker

Music Recording: Werner Maas

Choreography: Robby Gay, Billy Daniel *

Sound: Clemens Tütsch

Cast:

Debra Paget (*Seetha*)

Paul Hubschmid (*Harald Berger*)

Claus Holm (*Dr Walter Rhode*)

Walther Reyer (*Chandra*)

Sabine Bethmann (*Irene Rhode*)

Luciana Paluzzi (*Bharani*)

René Deltgen (*Prince Ramigani*)

Inkijinoff (*Yama*)

Jochen Brockmann (*Padhu*)

Richard Lauffen (*Bhowana*)

Jochen Blume (*Asagara*)

Helmut Hildebrand (*Ramigani's servant*)

Victor Franzen (*Busser*) *

Panos Papadopoulos (*messenger*) *

West Germany-Italy-France 1958©

101 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

* Uncredited

The screening on Sat 12 Apr will include a pre-recorded introduction by season programmer Karina Longworth

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SIGHT AND SOUND

You Must Remember This Presents... "The Old Man Is Still Alive"

The Tiger of Eschnapur

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

In 1958 West German producer Artur Brauner offered Fritz Lang the opportunity to make a new film based on *Das Indische Grabmal*, scripted by Thea von Harbou and directed by Joe May in 1921. Lang claimed that the earlier script was a collaboration between Harbou and himself (one of their first) and that Lang had been slated to direct it, but, at the last moment, May announced that he himself would take over the film. Whether or not Lang's account is completely accurate (even in his remake, only Harbou is credited with the original story), the experience of regaining a project taken away from him undoubtedly gave Lang a circular sense of completion, the granting of a long-delayed promise.

The resulting two-part film, *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb*, was shot partly on location in India. Once again Lang appears to shadow the career of Jean Renoir who also shot his first film after his Hollywood career, *The River*, in India – although one could hardly imagine films more different, or visions of India more contrasting, than Lang's and Renoir's. As in the Asian film of another 50s refugee from the Hollywood studio system, Josef von Sternberg's *Anatahan*, produced and shot in Japan, Lang created an India of his imagination, drawn from the Orientalism of such German painters as Ludwig Deutsch and Rudolph Ernst, as well as the Arabian novels of Karl May. Lang's films also revive a tradition of German Orientalist silent films, including Joe May's original *Das Indische Grabmal* and sequences of his *Die Herren der Welt*, and Lang's own *Hara Kiri* and *Der Spinnen*. But while in debt to a long tradition of European Orientalist fantasies (with all the richness of imagery and dubious ideology that that entails) Lang's Indian films relate even more strongly to the contemporary late films of Sternberg and Renoir. Like *Anatahan* and *The River*, *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb* attempt to establish an alternative filmmaking style to the classical Hollywood narrative forms, while making full use of the devices of visual spectacle each director had perfected in different ways. All these films express a debt to the silent cinema in which the directors began their careers, especially to the visual language forged in that era and a form of imagistic rather than psychological narrative. But in the case of Lang and Renoir the more recent innovation of colour photography formed a cornerstone of this desire to recapture the visuality of the earlier cinema in a modern form.

The bitter attacks on Lang's Indian films by West German reviewers (in spite of their popularity and commercial success) decried them as anachronisms, returning to an outmoded dramaturgy, an attempt to revive a style of epic filmmaking that had perished with Kriemhild and the Nibelungs. Such criticism shows tremendous myopia since Lang's control of colour photography (particularly the ways the colours and hues of costumes relate to the colour values in the various décors) represents a truly modern aspect of filmmaking. The non-realistic, semi-abstract plot and characters would inspire the most advanced filmmakers of the 60s, such as Jean-Luc Godard and Jean Marie Straub. But on a more profound level, Lang does create an untimely style of filmmaking and even attempts a work of resurrection – one that goes further back than his own silent films to realms of myth and magic. German critics compared the films to *Die Nibelungen*, a work that Lang refused to remake when Brauner suggested it after the Indian films, partly, he claimed, because of the difficulty of treating a mythical subject in sound cinema. However, *Die*

You Must Remember This Presents... "The Old Man Is Still Alive"

The Tiger of Eschnapur Der Tiger von Eschnapur
Tue 1 Apr 20:45; Sat 12 Apr 12:00 (+ pre-recorded
intro by season programmer Karina Longworth)

A Hole in the Head

Wed 2 Apr 20:40; Sat 5 Apr 15:00

The Indian Tomb Das indische Grabmal

Sat 5 Apr 20:30; Sat 12 Apr 15:00 (+ pre-recorded
intro by season programmer Karina Longworth)

Cheyenne Autumn

Wed 9 Apr 20:10; Sat 19 Apr 14:20 (+ intro by
season programmer Karina Longworth)

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Sat 12 Apr 17:30; Fri 18 Apr 14:00 (+ intro by
season programmer Karina Longworth)

Red Line 7000 + intro

Mon 14 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Sat 26 Apr 20:50

The Liberation of L.B. Jones

Tue 15 Apr 18:00 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Sun 20 Apr 14:50

The Only Game in Town

Tue 15 Apr 20:35 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Fri 25 Apr 17:55

Frenzy

Wed 16 Apr 20:35 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Sun 27 Apr 18:35

Such Good Friends

Thu 17 Apr 20:45 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Mon 21 Apr 13:45

True Grit

Fri 18 Apr 17:50 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Sat 26 Apr 17:35

Rich and Famous

Sat 19 Apr 17:45 (+ intro by season programmer
Karina Longworth); Wed 30 Apr 20:40

Avanti!

Sun 20 Apr 14:40; Wed 23 Apr 20:15

Movie Movie

Sun 20 Apr 18:30; Mon 28 Apr 20:50

Under the Volcano

Mon 21 Apr 18:35; Tue 29 Apr 20:50

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Nibelungen chronicles the decay and betrayal of a mythical world, as the supernatural heroes Siegfried and Brunhild descend into the world of treacherous human civilisation. In the Indian films, representatives of the enlightened arts of the West, architects and engineers, penetrate into ever more ancient layers of the city and palace of Eschnapur, discovering a realm of magic and divine power, which can either betray or redeem.

The Tiger of Eschnapur ends with its hero Berger, the German architect, and his lover Seetha nearly perishing in the desert from thirst and heat as they try to escape from Eschnapur. Before he collapses, Berger fires his automatic into an overpowering sun which burns out the screen. As if Lang were directly attacking the overexposed, blinding light which dominated his last Hollywood films, in these films his protagonists seek refuge within cavernous realms of magic and concealment. But this is a realm of other gods and powers than those found in the Odenwald or the volcanic mountains of Iceland; Lang lets the nationalist super-heroes he had created in the 20s rest in their tombs. The mythical figures that emerge here are frankly sensuous mother goddesses, whose images, sculpted or painted, are enclosed in caves. The most magical moment in these films occurs when a spider, responding to Seetha's prayers to the image of the goddess, weaves a web over the entrance to the cave in which Seetha and her German lover hide from the Maharajah's troops, the glistening web convincing the searching soldiers that no-one has passed into the cave recently. This salvation accomplished by the smallest of the goddess's creatures endows the film with a gentle fairytale quality, quite in contrast to the epic mythical imagery of Siegfried's battle with Fafner the dragon.

But if a certain innocence radiates from the film's folktale plot, nonetheless the gods, or rather goddesses, remain jealous and vengeful when betrayed, with the lovers' refuge immediately invaded when Berger eats the fruit consecrated to the goddess, and Seetha loses the goddess's favour when Berger accidentally witnesses her secret ritual dance before the huge image of the goddess in the lower levels of the city. As in *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler*, a magical performance, in this case a fakir performing the traditional rope trick, serves as camouflage for a murder. The cavernous depths of Eschnapur contain images of living death in the leper colony imprisoned there, and characters face mortal danger when they lose their way in this labyrinth, as Maria did in the catacombs under the city of *Metropolis*. Magic and the divine return to the screen in Lang's Indian films, but they remain ambiguous forces. The goddess may offer benevolence and protection, but Lang persists in seeing mythical forces as ultimately dangerous and inimical to humans, sinister and misleading.

All of Lang's exotic films of the 50s, both in Hollywood and West Germany, *Rancho Notorious*, *Moonfleet*, and *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb*, present colourful worlds of the past whose exotic locations, drenched in history and legend, provide a seeming respite from the harsh black and white worlds of his contemporary exposés. But Lang's characters never recover a lost paradise for long. Ultimately in all these films the past emerges in terms of loss. As beautiful as the Indian films are – with their colour, elegance of costume and décor, graceful and sensual actors' movement and lush lighting – they remain a portrayal of an enclosed world, a tomb from whose funereal richness and imprisoning luxury the characters spend most of the film attempting to escape.

Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (BFI, 2000)