



Nightshift

Director: Robina Rose

Production Company: Robina Rose

With assistance from: Arts Council of Great Britain

Producer: Mary Rose

Production Supervisor: Alicia Wille

Production Assistants: Nicola Lane, Max Handley,

Christina Birrer, Deborah Kingsland

Written by: Robina Rose, Nicola Lane

Additional Dialogue: Max Handley, Mike Lesser,

Jonathan Gems

Photography: Jon Jost

Editors: Janet Revell, Robina Rose

Music for Hoover: Simon Jeffes

Music for lounge: Eye Level

Music for bar: The Stroke, Famous Names

Sound: Stephen Brown

Cast:

Jordan (*night receptionist*)

Anne Rees-Mogg

Mitch Davies

Jon Jost

Max Handley

Barbara Jung

Tom The Milk

Vivianna de Blonville

Heathcote Williams

Phil Turner

Sibylle Oellerich

Oscar X

Sam Jones

Mikey Nelson

Joe Dworniak

Yvonne Munro

Dan Bowling

Marga Wille

Lore Sproule

Claudia Bolton

Lin Solomons

Wanda Gusynski

Shaun Lawton

Kristin Birrer

Philip Oellerich

UK 1981

68 mins

Digital 4K

Digitally restored in 4K on behalf of Lightbox Film Center (Philadelphia) in collaboration with the British Film Institute and Cinenova. Restoration funding provided by Ron and Suzanne Naples

Presented in partnership with Cinenova

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Restored

Nightshift

+ intro by Jon Jost, filmmaker, cinematographer and friend of Robina Rose

Legendary punk stayover The Portobello Hotel provides the location for Robina Rose's stunning, psycho-dramatic long-night-of-the-soul. The thankless, dreamlike monotony and stillness of nocturnal reception work shifts and mutates with the eruptive arrival of eccentric guests from London's counterculture, including Heathcote Williams and Anne Rees-Mogg. The Penguin Café Orchestra's Simon Jeffes soundtracks the uncanny temporal fluctuations and strange events. Tonight's screening is dedicated to the memory of Robina Rose, who died in January.

bfi.org.uk

Nightshift was filmed in five nights over Christmas 1980. The budget (in the region of £6,000) was possible as a result of the entire cast and crew working for nothing.

The director and scriptwriters had worked as night receptionists at the hotel over a long period, and the film grew out of this accumulative experience.

The script took the form of a very precise storyboard/cartoon ... with the dialogue being worked out largely in collaboration with the performers.

From behind her desk the hotel receptionist watches guests, staff and outsiders move across the reception area – dreamlike set pieces that lie somewhere between vaudeville and *Last Year in Marienbad*. She performs her tasks ... participating both in the mechanics of the hotel and (vicariously) in the fantasy it represents.

Robina Rose, 25th London Film Festival programme notes

Contemporary reviews

The receptionist on the nightshift at the Portobello Hotel has a face like a beautiful Japanese doll, very white and impassive with deep-set, almond-shaped eyes. With her head tilted slightly to one side, framed in the reds and browns of the dimly lit hotel lobby, a lamp to her right completing the composition, she observes the comings and goings of her shift, accomplishing the appropriate gestures at the appropriate moments, answering the telephone, taking a message, handing over a key. She is like the camera she faces and which often shows what she sees: unhurried, deliberate, receptive without displaying emotion, often immobile for what seem like hours on end. Yet the world is contained in the hotel oyster, and all human life really is here: a middle-aged spinster tourist; a pop group called The Urban Guerrillas whose distraught manager tries to keep his lads from drinking; two young executives discussing 'percentages' in their best mid-Atlantic accents; a conjuror; a woman in black who announces she is the wife of Room 16; some Black musicians who stage an impromptu session in the lounge; the Countess Vivianna, draped in gold brocade, who descends the stairs majestically and takes up a position beside the telephone. Time passes gradually.

Nightshift shows what film can do if the conventional pace of narrative is slowed down and montage diminished. It is not a new idea, of course, but the way it is done here is both absorbing to look at and satisfying from the moral

Regular Programme

Silent Cinema: 100 Years of Film as Art:

Celebrating the Centenary of The Film Society +

intro by BFI National Archive curator Bryony Dixon

Sun 18 May 15:20

Relaxed Screening: *Pariah* + discussion

Mon 19 May 18:35

Projecting the Archive: *Sleeping Car* + intro by

Michael Williams, author of *Ivor Novello: Screen Idol*

Tue 20 May 18:15

Seniors: *Touchez pas au grisbi* Hands Off the

Loot + intro by Professor Ginette Vincendeau,

Emeritus Professor in Film Studies, King's College

London

Fri 23 May 15:00

Experimenta: *Nicky Hamlyn: Cycles of Time*

+ Nicky Hamlyn in conversation with BFI National

Archive curator William Fowler

Thu 29 May 18:10

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point of view. For in making the audience conscious of watching, it invests the most mundane aspects of work and one of the most stultifying of jobs with dignity and significance. It is true that events are 'enlivened' somewhat with the occasional shot of a room or the lift going up or down, but Robina Rose uses these interpolations to point to ellipses of time rather than to revive the audience's attention. In any case, in emphasising the quirkiness of the hotel's clients, Rose only makes us believe all the more readily that what we are seeing is fortuitous, fascinating and, somehow, superreal. *Nightshift* surprises its audience into being interested and makes banality the secret of success.

Jill Forbes, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1982

The best British film of this year – and the best of the [Edinburgh] festival – was shown at midnight, and the fact that it benefited from this is a strong indication of its success. It's called *Nightshift*. Robina Rose and her co-writer Nicola Lane worked for a long time as night porters in a hotel, and the film grew out of their experiences. Through the eyes of the young woman behind the reception desk, we see what happens in the nighttime foyer of a small hotel: virtually nothing. Of course, once our eyes have become accustomed to the old-fashioned warm red and gold tones (Jon Jost, himself an excellent American filmmaker, operated the camera), once we have adjusted to the slowed-down rhythm of nighttime movements, then our minds begin to wander leisurely, and we piece together the story, the stories of the people who, as if lost in a dream, are dragging their bags through the nighttime foyer. And with us, the young woman, *Nightshift* begins to dream gently, almost imperceptibly: an older woman, framed by her twitching shadow, cast by the television on the wall behind her; the young wife of a gnome-like film director dressed all in white; a pillow fight, a shower of feathers in slow motion. With the simplest of techniques, Robina Rose has created an enchantingly serene film.

Kraft Wetzlar, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 26 September 1981

Robina Rose was born in 1951 to Danish and German parents and grew up in Notting Hill, London. After leaving school, she became a film projectionist at the Arts Lab on Drury Lane, Covent Garden. Rose graduated from the Royal College of Art in 1977, where she did camera work on Celestino Coronado's *Hamlet* starring Helen Mirren and Quentin Crisp. Rose was awarded a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) fellowship and moved to Berlin, where she was later invited to teach at the German Film and Television Academy (DFFB) and remained there for the rest of the 1980s. On her return from Berlin she worked for the Community Programme Unit of the BBC.