

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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BRITISH FILM RETROSPECTIVE TO OPEN AT MoMA OCTOBER 26

Two-Part Series Will Be the Largest Film Exhibition in Museum's History

Over 300 films from nine decades of cinema history will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art in the exhibition BRITISH FILM, opening October 26, 1984, and continuing into early 1986.

The largest film exhibition ever mounted by the Museum and the most comprehensive survey ever conducted of British film history, the retrospective will be the first series in the newly renovated Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1, the older and larger of the Museum's theaters, which has been closed because of construction since January 1982. The opening of BRITISH FILM thus inaugurates a new period for the Department of Film, which from now on will maintain exhibitions in two theaters simultaneously.

Part One of BRITISH FILM is titled MICHAEL BALCON: THE PURSUIT OF BRITISH CINEMA. It is devoted to a chronological survey of the work of the producer whose career paralleled that of British film as a whole for four decades, from the 1920s to the 1960s. Balcon (1896-1977) was head of production successively at Gainsborough, Gaumont-British, briefly at MGM's British operation, and then for a quarter of a century at Ealing Studios. During this time he produced over 260 feature films, from the earliest works by Alfred Hitchcock to the much-loved comedies starring Alec Guinness and the Ealing Studios players. Balcon also helped found the British Film Institute's Experimental Film Fund and was its chairperson through 1972, by which time the Fund had grown into the Production Board. A producer who worked closely with teams of filmmakers--directors, writers, cameramen, editors, actors--among whom were some of the finest artists and craftspeople in British film, Balcon campaigned tirelessly for an indigenous British cinema and became known as the industry's spokesman and statesman. Although a few of the 81 films in Part One are well known to American audiences--such as the opening-night presentation, Kind Hearts and Coronets--most have not been seen theatrically here since their original U.S. release.

MICHAEL BALCON: THE PURSUIT OF BRITISH CINEMA will run through February 7, 1985. After a brief pause, BRITISH FILM will resume with Part Two, an extensive and critical 90-year survey organized thematically, according to certain traditions that

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are evident in British film history. Part Two--which will include short films, documentaries, and animated films as well as features--will examine British film's tendency toward melodrama (often of an extravagant or fantastic nature), the parallel tendency toward realism (both in locations and acting), the influence of the music hall, respect for the performed word, and preoccupations with the history of the Empire and the British character.

BRITISH FILM would not have been possible without decades of work in acquiring and preserving British films by the staff of the National Film Archive, a division of the British Film Institute, London. In 1985 the National Film Archive will celebrate its 50th year, as will The Museum of Modern Art's Department of Film; the close collaboration during these joint anniversaries is appropriate. The shape and content of BRITISH FILM was determined by the curatorial staffs of both institutions, and the majority of prints will be 35mm copies borrowed from the National Film Archive. Co-directing BRITISH FILM in New York are Adrienne Mancina and Larry Kardish, Curators in the Department of Film. The co-directors in London are Clyde Jeavons, Deputy Curator of the NFA, Elaine Burrows, Viewings Supervisor, NFA, and David Meeker, Print and Copyright Research. Also participating in the selection was Scott Meek, former Feature Films Officer of the NFA. Special thanks must go to Sir Richard Attenborough, Chairman, and Anthony Smith, Director, the British Film Institute, and to David Francis, Curator of the National Film Archive, for their co-operation.

The Department of Film would also like to thank the following distributors for their loan of films and the permission to screen prints borrowed from Britain: Janus Films, Films Incorporated, Kino International, Corinth Films, Rank Film Distributors, and MGM/UA. Thanks are also due to William K. Everson, New York, and Geoff Brown, London, for their advice on MICHAEL BALCON: THE PURSUIT OF BRITISH CINEMA.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Department of Film will publish Michael Balcon: The Pursuit of British Cinema, a book of essays, photos, and extensive information on the Balcon canon.

BRITISH FILM has been made possible through the generosity of Pearson, Goldcrest Films and Television, and Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment. Additional support has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the British Council. BRITISH FILM is dedicated to the memory of Iris Barry.

For further information, the public may call (212) 708-9500. For a recorded daily announcement of the film schedule: (212) 708-9490.

PLEASE NOTE: Updated schedules for BRITISH FILM will be issued approximately every two months.

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For further PRESS information, please contact Stuart Klawans, Film Press Representative, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019 (212) 708-9752.