



THE DAVID LEAN FILM RESTORATION PROJECT

All film restorations require collaboration, but the David Lean Film Restoration Project partnership is a model for how this kind of collaboration can most profoundly affect film heritage.

The David Lean Foundation, whose resources come directly from the revenue the films of David Lean still generate, sponsored the restoration of eleven of the sixteen films that David Lean directed. The BFI undertook the technical side of the restoration of ten of these titles, working with Granada International and Studiocanal.

The BFI National Archive in Berkhamsted is now the permanent home of the preservation elements resulting from the restoration work. The restored films will be the basis of all distributed elements in the future, ensuring that every audience everywhere will see the restored version of each film.

The overall technical approach to the project, led by Andrea Kalas, Senior Preservation Manager of the Archive Film Lab, was to find the best surviving material on each title and restore and preserve each film using the best methods available. For 8 of the films this involved collaboration with Granada International's Perivale archive and working with the technical team headed by Fiona Maxwell, Director of Operations and Servicing. As quality considerations focus mainly on elements duplicated from an original, each element was inspected for quality and condition. Dirt and scratches can be printed in, and focus and fluctuation issues in the image can also occur. Condition issues can include signs of deterioration, mould, and most often the effects of usage.

Original camera negatives of many of the films were badly damaged: with scratches, frames missing, tears, even one important original negative entirely missing. Elements from both the BFI and Granada International archives were viewed and compared to find the best materials to work from.

The next stage was to decide how and where to complete the restoration which needed specialized equipment and expertise. Archival film is often fragile and in need of printers and scanners that have been optimized for this purpose, and the knowledge of the experts who are restoring the films is crucial. The ability to ensure that Guy Green's black and white cinematography is brought back to life with utmost care is the ability to understand how to effectively reproduce sharpness, contrast and the greyscale range. To ensure that the *Blithe Spirit* is a shade of green that looks ghostly and not cartoonish, requires an understanding of the Technicolor process and how to replicate that in modern film stocks.

The ten films were restored by one of three standard film restoration processes: Photochemical, Digital Sections and Full Digital Intermediate. Each film also had digital audio restoration. Although the Archive Film Lab at the BFI National Archive was the main facility for the restoration work, other film labs such as Cineric in New York were used for additional specialized work. Following the photo-chemical work, Granada International remastered their films to High Definition with full digital picture and sound restoration.

THE RESTORED TITLES

IN WHICH WE SERVE

Lean shared the directing credit with Noël Coward, who wrote and starred in this tense and moving account of life on board a wartime destroyer. Although based on the experiences of Louis Mountbatten, this is a state-of-the-nation film with social divisions on shore faithfully mirrored aboard ship. Lean arranged all the camera set-ups and directed Coward in his scenes in front of the camera.

With John Mills, Bernard Miles, Celia Johnson, Richard Attenborough.

UK / 1942 / bw / 116 mins / Granada International / Park Circus

THIS HAPPY BREED

Noël Coward was again the source for this story of a London lower middle-class suburban family in the inter-war years from 1919 to 1939. The finely and wittily observed family feuds unfold against a panorama of public events ranging from the General Strike of 1926 to the outbreak of war itself. Beautifully acted by an ensemble cast and shot in Technicolor, the film was a huge contemporary hit and has lost little of its appeal.

With Robert Newton, Celia Johnson, John Mills, Kay Walsh, Stanley Holloway.

UK / 1944 / Technicolor / 114 mins / Granada International / Park Circus

BLITHE SPIRIT

David Lean's first comedy, again scripted by Noël Coward from his Broadway hit, stars Rex Harrison as a successful and cheerfully cynical novelist whose marital bliss is interrupted by the mischievous ghost of his first wife, visible to him but invisible to everyone else. The simple but effective special effects, all the more impressive in Technicolor, won an Oscar.

With Constance Cummings, Kay Hammond, Margaret Rutherford.

UK / 1945 / Technicolor / 96 mins / Granada International / Park Circus

BRIEF ENCOUNTER

David Lean's international reputation was established with this study of unfulfilled passion and guilt – themes that were to recur in his later work. Critically debated, mocked, referenced and remade, this account of an unconsummated affair between a middle-class housewife and a doctor, forced to meet at a railway station, retains a tight emotional grip on any contemporary audience.

With Celia Johnson, Trevor Howard.

UK / 1945 / bw / 86 mins / Granada International / Park Circus

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Undoubtedly one of the finest Dickens adaptations, the film is studded with memorable set-pieces, from young Pip's hair-raising encounter with Magwitch in the graveyard to the eerie Gothic fantasy world of Miss Havisham. The Oscar-winning team of cinematographer Guy Green and production designer John Bryan bring Dickens' settings to vivid, indelible life.

With John Mills, Valerie Hobson, Bernard Miles, Alec Guinness.

UK / 1946 / bw / 118 mins / Granada International / BFI (licensed by Park Circus)

OLIVER TWIST

Dickens' extravagant vision of Victorian London is perfectly balanced by superb performances and Lean's fierce grip on the sprawling narrative. Guy Green and John Bryan lend an Expressionist look to Fagin's hellish underworld and Alec Guinness, in his second major role, gives a finely judged theatrical – if controversial – depiction of Fagin himself. Lean was always eager to open a film without dialogue and here he excels himself with a tour de force sequence of Oliver's pregnant mother battling against a storm.

With Robert Newton, John Howard Davies, Kay Walsh.

UK / 1948 / bw / 116 mins / Granada International / BFI (licensed by Park Circus)

THE PASSIONATE FRIENDS

Re-released by the BFI to mark David Lean's centenary in 2008, *The Passionate Friends* has been hailed by critic David Thomson as his work 'most deserving rediscovery'. Mary (Ann Todd) has chosen a comfortable secure life with her rich banker husband (Claude Rains) over romantic passion with her first love Steven (Trevor Howard). Turmoil ensues when Steven suddenly reappears in her life. With its subtle performances, nuanced direction and beautiful cinematography, Lean's absorbing romance, adapted from a story by H G Wells, is a fascinating companion piece to *Brief Encounter*.

With Ann Todd, Trevor Howard, Claude Rains.

UK / 1948 / bw / 91 mins / Granada International / BFI (licensed by Park Circus)

MADELEINE

In this period drama, set in Victorian Glasgow and based on a true story, Lean exploits the ambiguous and enigmatic screen presence of Ann Todd. Here she plays a young woman who, rebelling against her patriarchal father, falls for a penniless but exploitative French aristocrat who later dies of arsenic poisoning. Madeleine is anything but a victim, daring to expose her sexuality. Guy Green's deep focus photography owes much to *CITIZEN KANE*.

With Leslie Banks, Elizabeth Sellars, Ivan Desny.

UK / 1949 / 91 mins / Granada International / BFI (licensed by Park Circus)

THE SOUND BARRIER

The human cost of scientific progress underlies this story of an aircraft manufacturer whose obsession for perfection leads him into near madness and brings his family suffering – a tendency shared by Lean himself. The script by Terence Rattigan delivers the drama, but the exhilarating aerial footage and the score by Malcolm Arnold are what lodge in the memory.

With Ralph Richardson, Ann Todd, Nigel Patrick.

UK / 1952 / bw / 118 mins / Studiocanal

HOBSON'S CHOICE

Charles Laughton delivers a bravura performance as a self-important Lancashire bootmaker who attempts to dictate his daughter's choice of husband, only to find that she marries his downtrodden and simple-minded employee and starts a rival business. Set in the 1890s, this working class comedy by Harold Brighouse was first staged in 1916 but is here given a fresh breath of cinematic life thanks to luminous cinematography by Jack Hildyard.

With John Mills, Brenda de Banzie, Prunella Scales.

UK / 1953 / bw / 107 mins / Studiocanal

www.bfi.org.uk/lean