Fritz Lang

The current season devoted to the films of Fritz Lang is long overdue. One of the most prolific of the great directors, his work will gain, one feels sure, in being seen en bloc. He is one of those directors who never has a film in the ten-best polls, for his masterpiece is the whole oeuvre itself. He has made films in Germany, France and America, but, as Lotte Eisner pointed out, "Lang's films maintain a certain style even where new national influences or the pattern of another epoch can be detected". The season falls into two parts: the European films and the American ones. We shall not be able to show all of Lang's films. As usual, some of them are no longer available. Some are all too available, but not in the form Lang intended. (I am thinking of the Tiger of Eschnapur: originally made in two parts and lasting 195 minutes, it is being shown in America and this country in a 90-minute version— which, needless to say, Lang neither approved nor authorised.) Some of these films have already been shown at the National Film Theatre: The Niebelungen, Metropolis, Dr. Mabuse, Destiny, etc. Others will be new to our members.

The expressionist cinema (Caligari, Warning Shadows, etc.) is not the only German contribution to the art of the film—as last year's Pabst season proved. And the discredit (justified, I think) into which the expressionist school has fallen of late should not deter members from making a fuller acquaintance with the films of Fritz Lang. For although Lang made use of expres-
sionist techniques from time to time, he was never dominated by them. First and last, Lang is an artist who thinks in terms of light and dark, of architecture, of space and dynamics; regardless of the value of his raw materials (script, actors), he has never made a film which was not interesting as film.—Richard Roud.
The Spiders (Die Spinnen)
The first statement of one of Lang's favourite themes: the anarchistic master-criminal who seeks world power. Planned as a four-part cycle, the two parts that were completed (The Golden Lily on Eustoria, and The Silver Ship) deal with an organisation of super-criminals bent on world domination through the fabulous buried wealth of the Inca. Seen today, the film strikes one by its unexpected and unexpected surreal touches, its evocative of an insane universe, the world of the "abird".
1924. Germany. Dea-Microscopio.
Directed and written by Fritz Lang.
Starring Lil Dagover, Carl de Vogt, Ressel Orla, Paul Morgan.

Dr. Mabuse, The Gambler (Dr. Mabuse, Der Spieler)
Hans Brix's novel of a sinister criminal skilled in the use of hypnotic and disguise who sets out to found a personal empire which would undermine the economic structure of the world provided exciting material for Fritz Lang. Although the film is in the form of a thriller, it goes far beyond that; for it becomes in Lang's hands a penetrating study of conservative psychology, an analysis of the social rotteness of the time. The fast-moving nature of the story and the brilliant treatment which Lang brings to it maintain a carabass tension, while Roste-Rogglo gives a performance which was to make Mabuse a prototype of the screen.
1922. Germany. Dea-Microscopio.
Directed by Fritz Lang.
Starring Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Alfred Abel, Adele Nissen, Gertrude Welcker and Berndt Goretzka.

Destiny (Der Mörder Tod)
Both Destiny and Laughter were supreme examples of the German art film. Destiny, also, was finely designed using every contemporary resource of Dick photography and illusionary editing. Unlike Dracula which was a straightforward narrative of facts, Destiny was an interlaced series of three stories, "the three lights", each connected symbolically to the main romance theme of the two lovers. The film was magnificently conceived and realted, played with unforgettable power by Berndt Goretzka as Cato, Lil Dagover as the Girl and Wolter Jannasch as the Boy—Paul Rotha.
1921. Germany. Dea-Microscopio.
Directed by Fritz Lang.
Starring Lil Dagover, Wolter Jannasch, Berndt Goretzka.
The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse (Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse)

In the guise of a sequel to Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler, Lang made his first anti-Nazi film. Mabuse is now a patient in an insane asylum, who hypnotizes the director of the asylum into directing his gang as the outside world the asylum’s director believes he has become Mabuse reincarnated. Into the mouth of the madman Lang placed the Nazi philosophy. Employing uneasy uses of sound effects and music, with dramatic stretches of silence and unprecedented photographic effects, Lang succeeded in evoking a taste of suppressed terror from beginning to end.—Herbert J. Weiberg, Sight and Sound. Index to Lang’s work.


The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse

Lang’s most recent film is the latest episode in the Mabuse story, Die 100 Augen des Dr. Mabuse. This time the action takes place after the war in an hotel where every room is fitted with a hidden close-circuit television camera, the control room in the basement. Someone has come up with the monstrous Will of Dr. Mabuse, embodying his plan for an anarchistic world of crime and has carried the idea one stage farther—the destruction of the world and a return to primal chaos by means of the ultimate atomic explosion... Lang’s technical mastery has not slackened and the set pieces come off to perfection.—The Times.

The Nibelungs, Part I—Sigfried.

For sheer pictorial beauty of structure and architecture, Sigfried has never been equalled... Who can ever forget the tall, dark forests, the black glade, bespangled with flowers where Sigfried was slain; the procession of Gunther's court, seen distantly through the mail-clad legs of the sentinels; the calm, all but atmosphere of the castle rooms, with their simple, hand-carved decoration; and above all, the dream of the heavens—Paul Rotha.

1924. Germany. Decla-Bioscope-Ufa.
Directed by Fritz Lang.
Starring Paul Richter, Margarete Schön, Hanna Ralph.

The Nibelungs, Part II—Kriemhild's Revenge.

Not nearly so well known as its predecessor, Kriemhild's Revenge is today generally considered to be filmically superior. Hence it is of the more to be regretted that it has been less widely shown than Sigfried. It takes up the story after the death of Sigfried. Kriemhild, his widow, marries Attila, king of the Huns, and incites the Huns to attack the wicked Gunther and his clan. A terrible mass slaughter ensues, and the end of the film is an orgy of destruction which would be difficult to equal for speed, excitement, and obsessive hysteria.

1924. Germany. Decla-Bioscope-Ufa.
Directed by Fritz Lang.
Starring Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Margarete Schön, Theodor Loes.

The Woman in the Moon (Frau im Mond)

A super-Jules Verne affair dealing with a flight to the moon by a gigantic manned rocket. Especially noteworthy, remarked Paul Rotha, were the remarkable realistic studio-made sets, and such scenes as the rocket's departure, the scenes inside the rocket in flight, and the wonderful luminosity of the lunar landscape. One of the last of the great German silent films. Lang's technical advisors on the film were Professors Otto and Willy Ley. Gribel became a hero, but Ley fled to become a rocket expert in the U.S. The Geopto, later co-founded by the same men, completely recast models of the space ship (actually a highly advanced model of a rocket) which were built for the film and also attempted to fabricate all foreign prints of the film.

1929. Germany. Fritz Lang Film-GMBH/Ufa.
Directed by Fritz Lang.
Starring Greta Maurus, Willi Fritsch, Fritz Rasp.
Metropolis

In Metropolis, Fritz Lang let loose his twin passions for skeletal, abnormal melodrama and sufferings of imaginative grandeur and ingenuity. Metropolis itself, thatolphin city where workers toil underground, moving with boxed heads and shuffling steps, is like some gnomastic design grown monstrous and active in evil... The story gets more fluid and extravagant as it goes on, but there is no denying the strength of Lang's imagination, an imagination expressing itself in the terms of the cinema and the cinema alone.—The Times, 1926.

Starring Brigitte Helm, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Alfred Abel, Gustav Frolich.

M (1932)

M can be claimed the greatest crime story of the screen; not before or since has such an imaginative study of a mass-murderer been made. Here Fritz Lang has embarked with enthusiastic abandon on a loose version of the Düsseldorf murders, but has also squeezed out an unforgettable portrait of the sexual maniac alternating between dark ecstasy and trembling terror.—Richard W没能

Starring Peter Lorre, Gustav Gründgens, Otto Wernicke.
In the January 1st number of Sight and Sound results are given of a poll of film critics from all over the world who were asked what they considered the ten best films of all time. Sight and Sound does not claim that “anyone’s individual list, or the consensus of opinion reached by totting up the various choices, involves any definitive judgement. How can such a judgement be definitive?” In any case, this referendum is a fascinating indication of how opinion has moved since 1952. At that time, when Sight and Sound organised its first referendum, the top ten (actually there were twelve, because three films were tied for the number ten spot) were the following:

1. Bicycle Thieves
2. City Lights
3. The Gold Rush
4. Potemkin
5. Louisiana Story
6. Intolerance
7. Greed
8. Le Jour Se Lève
9. The Passion of Joan of Arc
10. Brief Encounter
11. Le Million
12. La Règle du Jeu

The list on the facing page contains only four from the 1982 list, and their relative positions among the top ten have been drastically altered.

We thought it would be interesting to present all of the top ten films (1982 list) at the National Film Theatre. At the time of going to press we think they will all be available, but it would be wise to check the summary/stage press page for any cancellations or substitutions.

Citizen Kane
L’Avventura
La Règle du Jeu
Greed
Ugetsu Monogatari
Battleship Potemkin
Bicycle Thieves
Ivan the Terrible
La Terra Trema
L’Atalante
MIDWINTER BLOOD
Additions and Revisions

The copyright situation on horror films is more than usually complicated, and two of the films previously announced for our horror season have now come unstuck. We are replacing Freaks with Black Sunday, and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with Them!

Any inconvenience is regretted, and notes on the two replacement films will be found below. The one addition to the season is the original Frankenstein, perhaps the most famous (and rightly so) of horror films.

Black Sunday

Adapted from a vampire story by Gogol, Black Sunday has already received high praise both in France and America. "Great suspense and excitement is stirred up by photography and art work. The film keeps coming, accelerating, and sucking in and out of the most forbidding corners of the old Russian castle and surrounding forest, to hold the spectators' nerves at attention."—Variety.

"Black Sunday proves at least that fear need not exclude beauty. The long awaited renewal of the horror film has been brought—without trumpets or fanfare—by Mario Bava."—Cahiers du Cinema.


Frankenstein

Frankenstein or A Modern Prometheus is the title Mary Shelley gave to her famous novel. The title which pervades the most interesting films about gods and goddesses... The monster of the modern age is not the one she wrote about, but a creature she would have been hard pressed to describe. He is a very modern being, with the same weaknesses and strengths as modern men. He is a being of extremes—both of extreme physical agility, cleverness, movement, strength and dignity—and by no means just another freak. His relationship to mankind, with all its loneliness, its historical fear of him, is not without a peculiar pathos.


Them!

H. G. Wells would not have been ashamed of Them! Whatever the posters and the x-certificate may suggest to the public, this is much more a first-class, highly efficient adventure thriller than a mere horror film. Realized in the first atomic explosion in the New Mexico desert, ants have grown to fifteen-foot proportions, killing humans with mammoth injections of ferrocyanic acid and setting about the total destruction of mankind with all the normal ant intelligence plus. Two queen ants fly away to breed in a battleship and in the sewers of Los Angeles, in which echoing tunnels the whole of American defense resources are employed to exterminate the rest by flame-thrower, Tommy gun and cyanide gas—J. B. H. Newman.

British Film Academy Week

For the second time the National Film Theatre in cooperation with the Society of Film and Television Arts is screening a short list of the 1961 British Film Academy Awards committee. Each performance will be attended by members of the Society of Film and Television Arts and the shows are designed to allow them to see all the films nominated for this year's awards.

The programmes are presented in co-operation with the Society of Film and Television Arts (incorporating the British Film Academy), the Kinematograph Renters' Society, the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, and the individual companies supplying the prints. For National Film Theatre members it is difficult to think of a better way in which to catch up on the important films of 1961.

The programmes will take place from Tuesday 13th February to Sunday 18th February inclusive. The Academy committee draws up and publishes its short list on the 15th January; full details of the programmes will be posted up at the National Film Theatre from then onwards.

WE REGRET THAT WE CAN GIVE NO DETAILS OF THESE PERFORMANCES UNTIL THAT DATE SO PLEASE DO NOT ENQUIRE AT THE BOX OFFICE UNTIL THE MORNING OF THE 16th JANUARY AT THE EARLIER. AN ADVERTISEMENT WILL ALSO APPEAR IN THE "EVENING STANDARD" AND "EVENING NEWS" ON JANUARY 17th GIVING DETAILS OF FILMS TO BE SHOWN.

FILMS FROM THE ARCHIVE

Monday Nights 6.15 p.m. and 8.30 p.m.

The Early Work of Chaplin (Part II)

The New Janitor (1914) 22nd January, 1962
With Al St. John
A piece of characteristic Keystone knockabout with Charlie as a blundering office cleaner.

Triple Trouble (1916)
A fascinating "patchwork" film based on an actual shot during the making of the Essanay comedies.

One A.M. (1916)
A rare example of early Chaplin virtually in each Chaplin is alone for almost the entire film.
Supported by - SWEDE LEARS TO SWIM (1915)
An example of an early comedy series featuring Wallace Beery.
THE HOME FRONT (1917)
A wartime novelty.

Dough and Dynamite (1914) 29th January
A typical Keystone slapstick comedy with Charlie in a bakery.

Shanghaied (1915)
A lively Essanay comedy with Charlie as a ship's cook.

The Floorwalker (1916)
The first film made by Chaplin for the Mutual Company; it all takes place in a department store.
Supported by - THE STAGECOACH DRIVER AND THE GIRL (1913)
One of the first Westerns with Tom Paix.

His Musical Career (1914) 29th February
With Mack Swain. Charlie and Mack as piano movers in the true Keystone tradition.

Work (1915)
Charlie as a peripatetic's assistant in a real slapstick situation.

The Vagabond (1916)
A remarkable departure into a new realm, this film is almost a straight drama and is, in fact, the prototype of The Kid and The Circus.
Supported by - PULLMAN BRIDE (1915)
A Mack Swain comedy with Gloria Swanson and Mack Swain.
His Trysting Place (1914)  
With Mabel Normand and Mack Swan. A comedy of home life.

In the Park (1915)  
A typical knockabout comedy in the Keystone “park” style.

Behind the Screen (1916)  
A satirical slapstick film of the Keystone variety, set in a movie studio. 
Supported by: EXPLOITS OF ELAIN (1915) An example of the Pearl White serials.

Great Names in Silent Screen Comedy  
Monday Night at 8.15 p.m. and 8.30 p.m.

The success of our season devoted to the work of Charlie Chaplin has suggested that our audience would like to have the opportunity of examining the careers of other comedians of the period. We are therefore presenting a short survey of the work of the principal artists of the period from 1914 to 1928 whose joint efforts are now often spoken of as the “Golden Age of Screen Comedy”.

Harold Lloyd (Programme I)  
16th February

“A man of no larderess, no philosophy, but the embodiment of American cheek and indefatigable energy.” (Gilbert Solon).

Never Weaken  
U.S.A. 1921. With Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis and Roy Brooks.

This is one of many films in which Harold Lloyd experimented with the idea of the “Thrill” picture as basis for comedy.

Also:—
LONESOME LUKE’S MOVIE MUGGLE (with Bebe Daniels);
CAPTAIN KIDD’S KID (with Bebe Daniels);
I DARE (with Mildred Davis); and a recorded interview with Harold Lloyd.

Safety Last  
U.S.A. 1923. With Mildred Davis.

One of Harold Lloyd’s best-known silent comedies. As in NEVER WEAKEN, the skyrunner film depended on height for its effect.

Also:—
THE CHEF (an interesting early Lloyd comedy);
SPRING FEVER (with Bebe Daniels).

Buster Keaton (Programme II)  
5th March

The General  
U.S.A. 1927. No part of silent film history has enjoyed a more unexpected and completely successful revival than the work of Buster Keaton. This film is about a hero, a railway engine and the American Civil War.

Also:—
CONNY ISLAND. U.S.A. 1917. With Buster Keaton and Fatty Arbuckle.
TOP TEN

AND THE

BRITISH FILM ACADEMY AWARDS WEEK