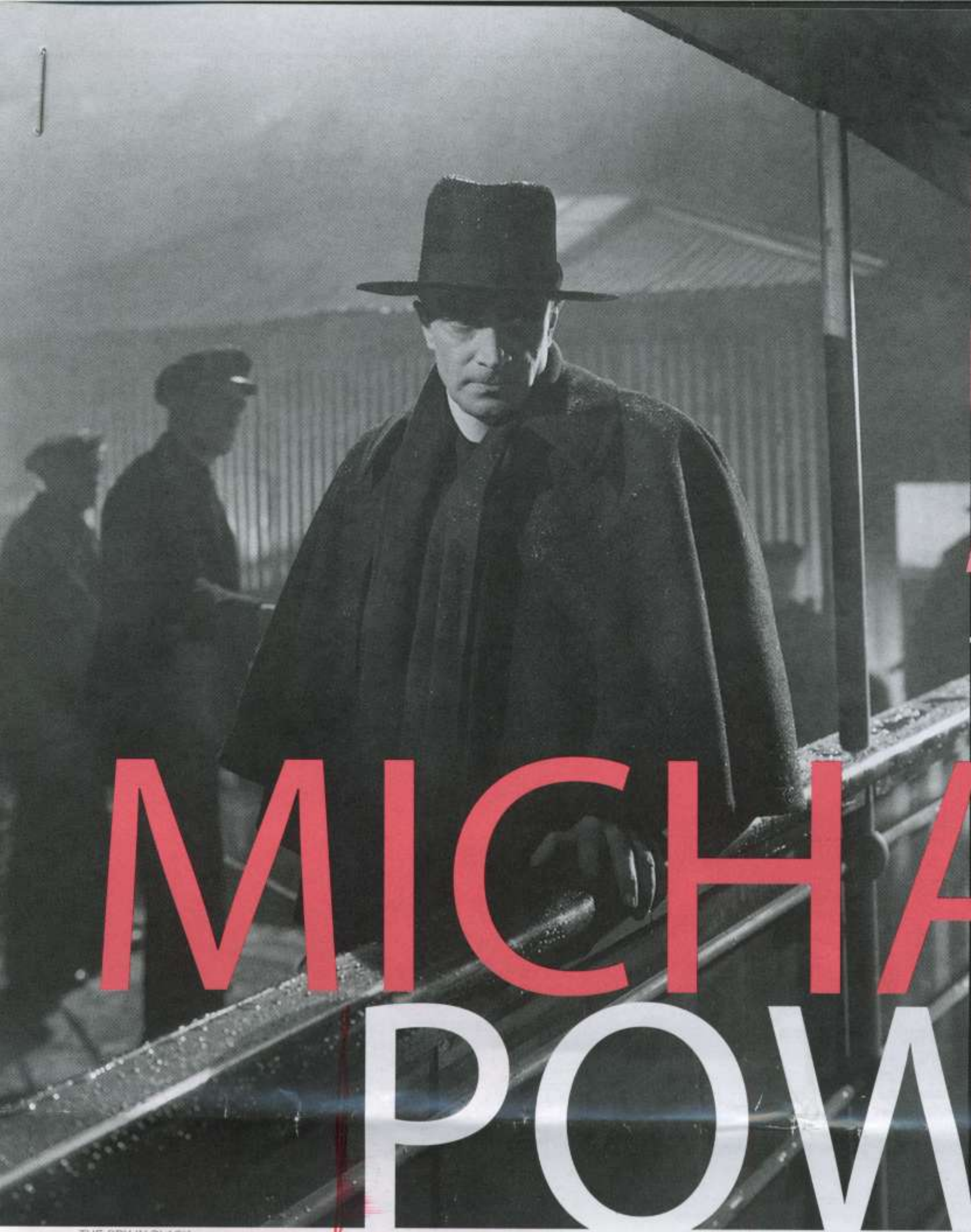


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Peeping tom, Powell, Michael, 1960
A Canterbury tale, Powell, Michael, 1944
The life and death of Colonel Blimp, Powell, Michael, 1943
The red shoes, Powell, Michael, 1948
One of our aircraft is missing, Powell, Michael, 1942
The thief of Bagdad, Powell, Michael, 1940
Tales of Hoffmann, Powell, Michael, 1951
Gone to earth, Powell, Michael, 1950
The battle of the River Plate, Powell, Michael, 1956
A matter of life and death, Powell, Michael, 1946



MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

THE FILMS OF

MICHAEL POWELL

THE SPY IN BLACK

ALL 35MM PRINTS!

"IF I FIND MYSELF GETTING DISCOURAGED ABOUT MY CAREER, MY WORK, I WILL ALWAYS HAVE MICHAEL'S EXAMPLE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT."

— MARTIN SCORSESE

"THIS MAN REALLY IS THE CINEMA."

— BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

Since our first presentation, almost seven years ago, of a retrospective of the films of British director Michael Powell and his scriptwriter Emeric Pressburger, we have had many requests to bring it back. (The "greatest hits," such as *THE RED SHOES* and *PEEPING TOM*, predictably sold out, but it was the many discoveries, such as the eternally haunting *A CANTERBURY TALE*, the tormented *THE SMALL BACK ROOM*, and the stirring, peculiar 49TH *PARALLEL* that one most yearns to see again.) Given that several restorations and new prints of Powell and Pressburger's films have become available since then, we have taken the opportunity to present a more extensive body of their work. Spanning over two decades during which the Powell and Pressburger duo, known as The Archers, produced some of the most memorable and beautiful works in cinema, this retrospective features many superb 35mm prints. In the case of Powell-Pressburger, the availability of restored prints is doubly important. Among the most visually extravagant films ever made, they must be seen in excellent prints on the big screen. And they have over the years also been subjected to all manner of cutting, abbreviation, re-editing, and revision, for both economic and political reasons. (Cutting was particularly conspicuous in the North American market, because exhibitors had problems with the length and complex structure of many of their films, and distributors and producers were also often intolerant of their aestheticism.) The British Film Institute and such distributors as Milestone Film & Video and MGM have lovingly restored many of the films, so that we can now see them as The Archers intended.

Once grievously underrated or ignored, the films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger now enjoy a critical reputation that rivals and, in some cases, surpasses that of Hitchcock. As J. Hoberman has written: "Long misappreciated, this British... team – at their best during the years bracketing World War II – have been rehabilitated as something like the crown jewels for their distinctively baroque, atmospheric, florid, and occasionally delirious entertainments." Or, as Richard Combs amusingly observed in a special section dedicated to the Powell-Pressburger team in *Film Comment*: "How did they come by the remarkable trick of being the most frequently 'discovered' of British filmmakers?"

What accounts for this sudden spike in the value of P-P stock? Certainly some critics, most notably Ian Christie, were champions of The Archers long before it was fashionable. And directors as different as Martin Scorsese and Derek Jarman have praised Powell as one of the greatest figures in the history of cinema. (Brian de Palma reportedly decided to become a filmmaker after seeing *THE RED SHOES*.) But it is only recently, with the tireless advocacy of Scorsese and his editor (and Powell's widow) Thelma Schoonmaker Powell, that P-P's status in the pantheon has been universally recognized.

The Archers' oeuvre, extending from early espionage and war films influenced by German expressionism to the florid fantasies of the fifties, emphasized artifice, irony, and spectacle; exoticism and mysticism (*THE EDGE OF THE WORLD*, *I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!*, *BLACK NARCISSUS*); fervent romanticism and pantheism (*GONE TO EARTH*, *I KNOW*); sexual neuroticism and perversity (*NARCISSUS*, *A CANTERBURY TALE*, *PEEPING TOM*); surrealism (*CONTRABAND*, *A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH*); a reflexive, often morbid treatment of art and illusion (*THE RED SHOES*, *THE TALES OF HOFFMANN*, *PEEPING TOM*); and, in the last decade in which The Archers worked together, extravagant *mise en scène*, hallucinatory Technicolor, and lavish costumes (*THE TALES OF HOFFMANN*, *OH...ROSALINDA!!*). These decidedly un-British traits were suspect in a national cinema increasingly dedicated to the literary and, later, to regional social realism. (Joseph Losey's taste for mannerism and baroque was similarly suspect.)

The Archers' ardent Europhilia, in a country which today still seems intent on isolation from the continent, may also have contributed to their initial critical eclipse. They worked with an international team of technicians and actors – Pressburger himself was a Hungarian Jewish

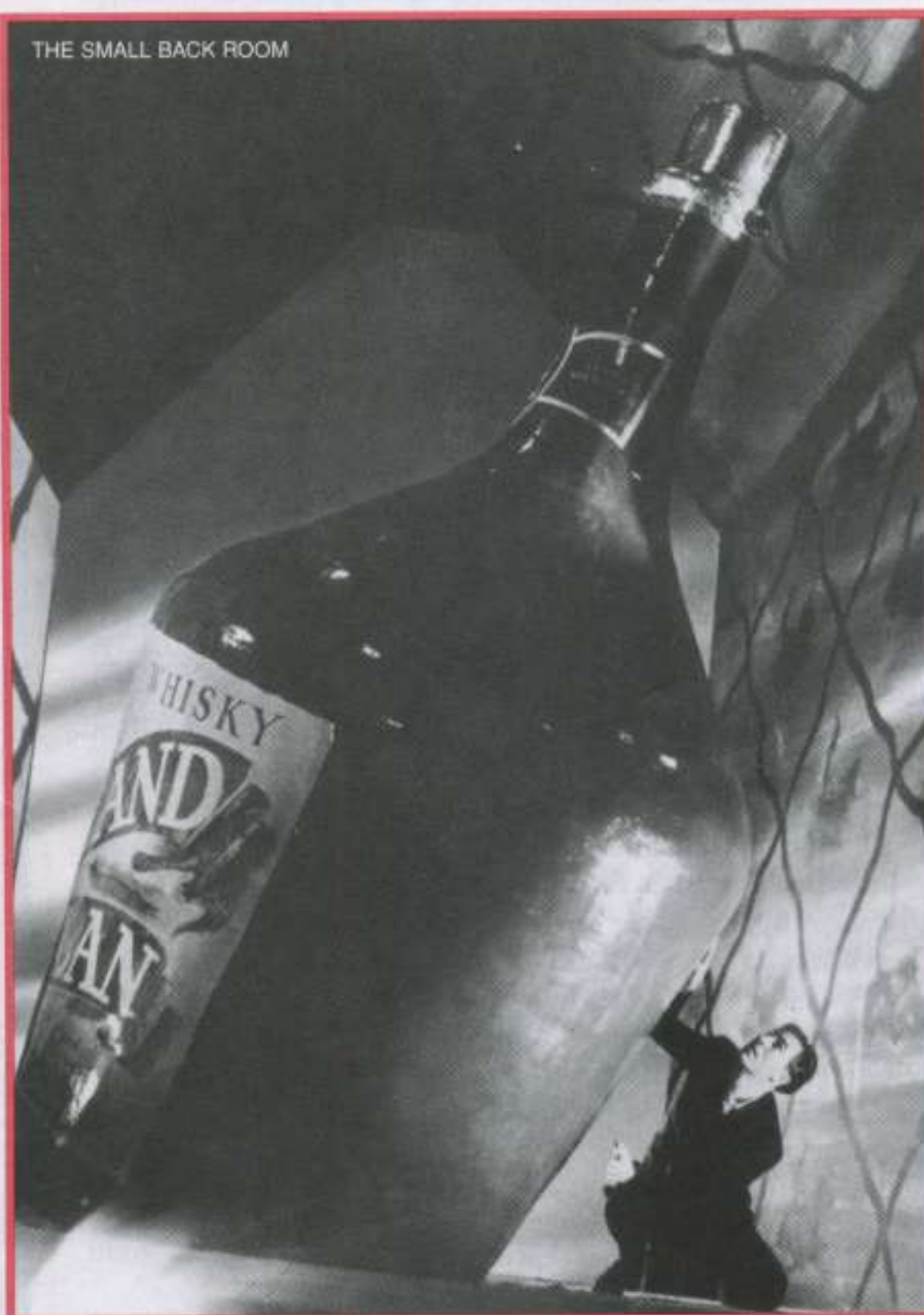


Top row (l. to r.): THE TALES OF HOFFMANN, A CANTERBURY TALE, BLACK NARCISSUS. Second row: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP, GONE TO EARTH, THE SMALL BACK ROOM. Third row: THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE, THE RED SHOES, THE EDGE OF THE WORLD.

émigré and Powell spent summers at his father's hotel in Cap Ferrat surrounded by European and American artists – and their aesthetic embraced the innovations of continental culture. Powell, like Hitchcock, idolized Spanish surrealist Luis Buñuel, calling him “my master in movies,” and was influenced at an early age by German cinema, particularly the films of Fritz Lang. Images and sequences from many Powell films seem derived from the dream machines of European expressionism or surrealism: the Sternbergian superimpositions and elemental fantasia of THE EDGE OF THE WORLD, the Magritte-like stairway to heaven in A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, the noir hallucinations of THE SMALL BACK ROOM, the fevered artifice of BLACK NARCISSUS. Even when shot on location, using locals as actors or extras, Powell's films have little of the documentary or verist qualities of much contemporary British cinema; neither was his romanticism groomed or muted, tending more to the delirious and rhapsodic. And as patriotic and controlled as many of the P-P wartime films are, they are also marked by incipient mysticism, anarchy, and extravagance which emerged full blown in their fifties work.

Powell's “politics,” to use that word in its most traditional sense, were similarly contentious. Critics cannot agree on the political values implicit in the P-P films. On one hand, Richard Combs states that “the political framework of even their most outlandish fantasies was invariably conservative, sometimes in ways that would make a modern Conservative blush.” On the other, Elliot Stein discerns a progressive political subtext in I KNOW WHERE I'M

THE SMALL BACK ROOM



GOING!, and Derek Jarman who, in praising Powell as “the only English feature director whose work is in the first rank,” claims that he is also “the only director to make a clear political analysis in his films.” That analysis presumably parallels Jarman's: leftist, if not Marxist. Perhaps, as Jonathan Rosenbaum wrote when THE EDGE OF THE WORLD was recently re-released, “Powell was an unapologetic Tory throughout his career,” but had a strong, characteristically British sense of collectivity.

The very qualities which so frustrated or alienated critics in previous decades – the romanticism and melodrama, elaborate visual style, political ambiguity, knowing artifice, self-reflexivity – appeal to today's postmodern sensibilities. (British social realism has become correspondingly unfashionable in the cinema.) In the latest “Powell and Pressburger Rescue Mission,” as Richard Combs describes it, The Archers have been reborn as experimentalists and pioneering postmodernists. To the legions who have long valued BLACK NARCISSUS as a study in repressed passion, or who have loved THE RED SHOES as a terrifyingly beautiful tale about the consuming demands of art, these claims will be baffling or laughable. No matter. The films reward (and, in their mysteriousness, resist) every interpretative approach, so rich are they in visual and narrative invention.

– JAMES QUANDT

Acknowledgements: This retrospective was made possible by the kind cooperation of Bryony Dixon, BFI Collections, London; John Kirk, MGM, Santa Monica; Dennis Doros, Milestone Film & Video, Harrington Park, NJ; and Mike Thomas, Rialto Pictures, Los Angeles.



THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

RESTORED 35MM PRINT! THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1937 81 minutes • Cast: Niall McGinnis, Belle Chrystal

Pride of place goes to this stunning restoration of the film that made Powell's reputation, receiving its first Toronto screening here. Premiered at the 1999 New York Film Festival, this restored rarity received some of the best reviews of the year. "It's about eleven months too early for predictions for the best films of 2000," David Sterritt wrote, "but a likely contender has already arrived – direct from the vaults of film history, where THE EDGE OF THE WORLD has been languishing since its original run in 1937." Magical and magnificent, EDGE sets a Romeo-Juliet love story on the storm-lashed cliffs of a now abandoned island in the Hebrides – the *ultima thule*, or "edge of the world," of the ancient Romans. The vertiginous sequences of human struggle amid a surging, elemental world of sea, wind, and jagged rock are often thrilling – the cast performed their own treacherous stunts, and had to be rescued by airlift after a storm stranded them for over a week. Infused with Celtic mysticism, featuring a smart cameo by Powell himself, and rhapsodic in its treatment of both landscape and human romance, the film has a fierce, archaic beauty. "A small-scale masterpiece that shouldn't be missed" (Sterritt). Preceded by another Powell rarity, LETTER TO HIS MOTHER (1941), "a deeply moving piece of war-effort propaganda . . . narrated by John Gielgud and lasting only five minutes" (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*).

Friday, March 22 6:30 p.m.



I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!

NEW 35MM PRINT! I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1946 92 minutes • Cast: Wendy Hiller, Roger Livesey

Pure delight. Martin Scorsese wrote, "I reached the point of thinking there were no more masterpieces to discover, until I saw I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!" The most enigmatic and entrancing of all the Powell-Pressburger films, I KNOW sends Wendy Hiller on a trip into the mystic. She plays a headstrong young woman who travels to the Hebrides to marry her rich boss. There she falls under the magical spell of the landscape and finds herself yearning for another man (P-P stalwart Roger Livesey). Full of ineffable symbolism – what is all that falconry about, anyway? – and a palpable sense of magic and windblown mystery, I KNOW is now the top choice of many Powell critics: "My personal favourite of all . . . witty and moving, one of the finest of all screen romances" (Elliot Stein, *The Village Voice*); "The films of Michael Powell are romantic, passionate, poetic, sensuous, pictorially ravishing, disturbing, and above all magical. For me, the most enchanting is I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!" (Greg Olson, *Film Comment*).

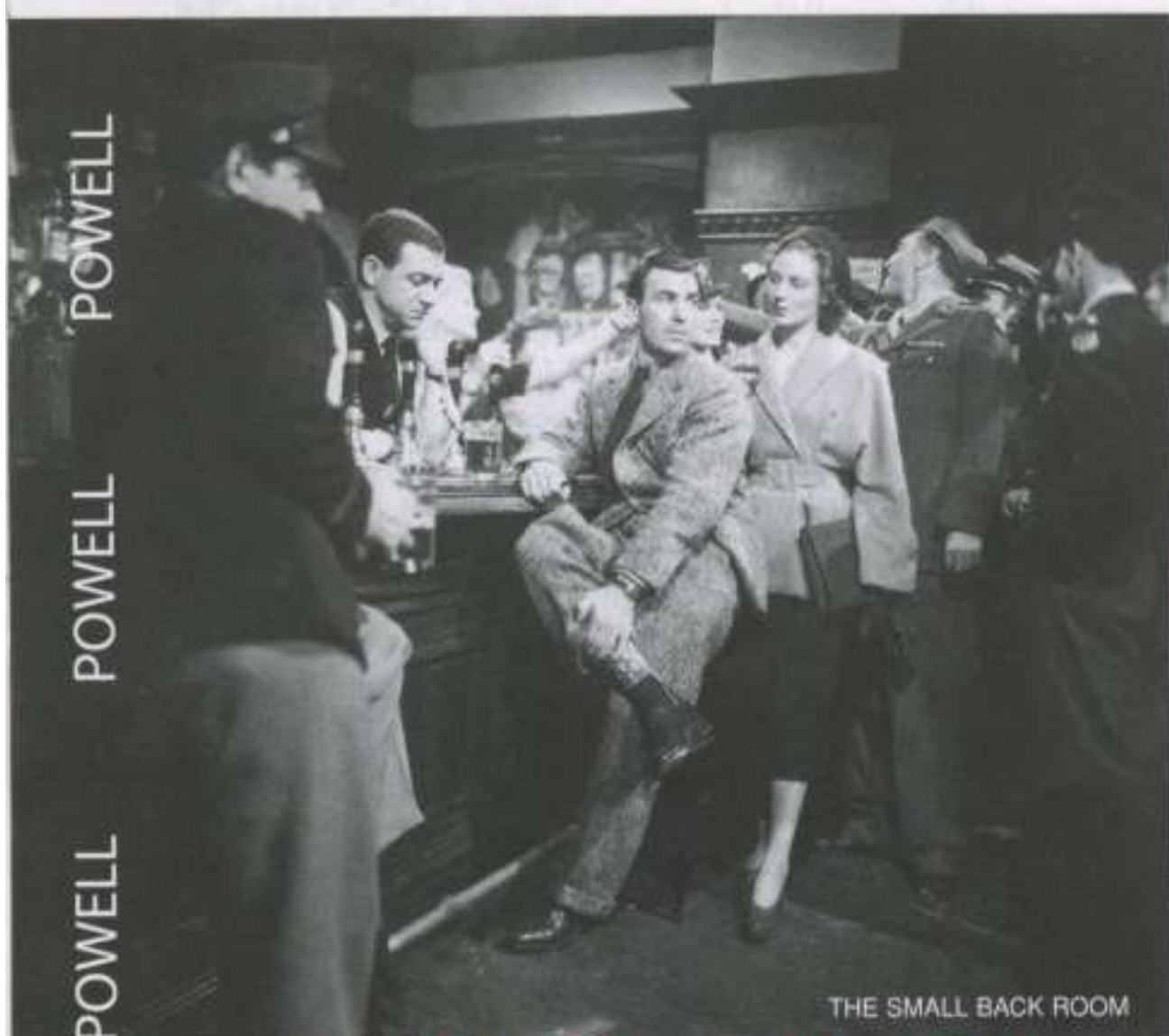
Saturday, March 23 4:00 p.m.

THE RED SHOES

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1948 134 minutes • Cast: Moira Shearer, Anton Walbrook

Martin Scorsese chose THE RED SHOES as one of the five greatest films in the history of cinema; Raymond Durnat wrote that its final ballet is "the peak of cinema"; and even Seijun Suzuki (!) has it on his list of ten greatest films. No matter how many times you have seen THE RED SHOES – its devotees are hard-core recidivists – the film demands another viewing. Moira Shearer is the young ballerina whose dedication to her art, as in the Hans Christian Andersen tale of the title, leads to tragedy. Anton Walbrook is the ruthless impresario Lermontov who discovers the ballerina and then drives her to life-threatening extremes. (Powell wrote in his memoirs: "When it came to . . . that devil Lermontov, there was no question in our minds who should play him, and give a performance filled with passion, integrity and, yes, with homosexuality.") Exquisitely designed, danced, and acted, THE RED SHOES is one of cinema's most beloved classics. (Brian de Palma claims he decided to become a film director after seeing, not PEEPING TOM as one might expect, but THE RED SHOES. And Martin Scorsese had a cossack shirt made in the style of Lermontov's, so taken was he with the "cruelty and beauty of his character.") Bring enough tissues to share with your neighbour.

Sunday, March 24 1:00 p.m.



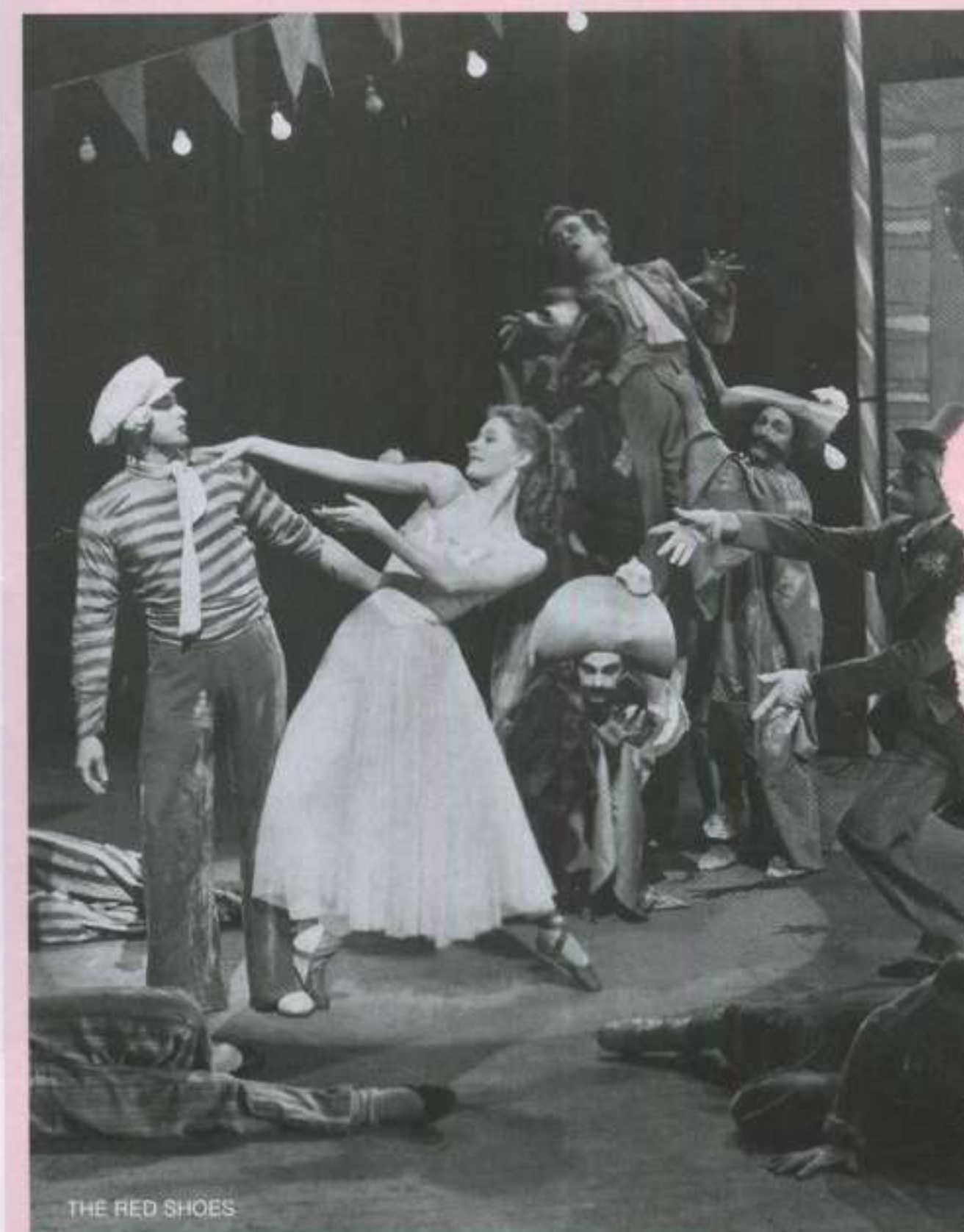
THE SMALL BACK ROOM

THE SMALL BACK ROOM

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1948 108 minutes • Cast: David Farrar, Kathleen Byron

"THE SMALL BACK ROOM is a film that I love," Powell said. "I think that it is my best film." Critics agree: "Powell and Pressburger's last film of the forties was perhaps their best" (Nigel Andrews, Harlan Kennedy); "A major film . . . with Powell's most erotically eloquent lovers" (David Thomson). The follow-up to THE RED SHOES couldn't be more unlike that film in tone and look. A dark, tautly paced thriller about loss, obsession, and redemption, it focuses on a bitter scientist, whose work in munitions has led to personal disaster: his foot was blown off in a bomb blast. Increasingly reliant on painkillers and booze, he alienates both the woman in his life and his superiors. Only when he is called on to master and defeat a new German bomb can he overcome his disabilities. Famous for its film noir hallucination – a giant booze bottle crushes the scientist in one of his dreams – and for its tense, brooding sense of implicit violence and sexual obsession, THE SMALL BACK ROOM was, as were so many of Powell's films, ahead of its time. "Would look like a masterpiece in the filmographies of most British directors" (Tony Rayns, *Time Out*). "The climax, a long tense scene of bomb disposal, is a virtuoso suspense sequence that is rightfully acclaimed as one of the most memorable in the annals of film history" (George Eastman House).

Saturday, March 23 8:45 p.m.



THE RED SHOES

MICHAEL POWELL

MICHAEL POWELL

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (a.k.a. STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN)

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1946 104 minutes • Cast: David Niven, Kim Hunter

A gorgeous print of what Martin Scorsese calls “one of the best of the Powell/Pressburger movies,” and Ian Christie has named one of the ten greatest films in the history of cinema. Fully restored to its original glory, it confirms its status as one of The Archers’ most important achievements. A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH rivalled THE RED SHOES as their biggest hit in North America, but until recently could not be screened here because of rights problems. A dashing David Niven plays an R.A.F. pilot whose plane is shot down off the coast of England. Thinking he has landed safely, he falls in love with the American operator who talked him through the crash. But he begins to have visions of Another World, and soon finds himself in a celestial court which will decide his fate, whether he will go to heaven or whether he will be allowed to stay on earth. Both funny and wrenching, LIFE AND DEATH features some of the most audacious art design and Technicolor work in the Powell-Pressburger canon – their conception of the stairway to heaven is Mitchell Leisen meets Magritte – and some of the most memorable performances. “This film was Powell’s personal favourite, and it’s easy to see why. It not only paved the way for the British director’s best-known works, BLACK NARCISSUS and THE RED SHOES, with its bold and dazzling use of colour, but also revealed his heart, his belief in the power of love and its delirious effects on the mind. . . . The film editor Thelma Schoonmaker, Powell’s widow, thinks A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH comes closest to expressing his personality. ‘Living with him,’ she says, ‘I found he had no fear of death.’ ‘Love is sacrifice and sacrifice is love,’ he used to say. The real reason it was his favourite was he could be a magician with it. He could create heaven and earth and stop time” (Bill Desowitz).

Wednesday, March 27 8:30 p.m. (note early start time)

ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1942 105 minutes • Cast: Eric Portman, Googie Withers

A crisp and compelling wartime classic, ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING opens much as A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, with a British crew bailing out of a bomber during World War II. The plane returns on its own, empty, while the crew, which includes a baronet, an actor, a football player, and a garage-owner, are rescued by the Dutch Resistance. As they are moved from one hiding place to another, threatened at every turn by the Nazis, the film becomes a suspenseful study in trust and allegiance. Somewhat austere for a Powell production, AIRCRAFT nevertheless features striking expressionistic cinematography and an ingenious script that maximizes suspense and character complexity. Peter Ustinov appears as a priest. “An uncommonly sophisticated genre film – one of the best war pictures made during World War II” (*Film Comment*). “An impressively directed and beautifully performed piece of work” (*Time Out*).

Friday, March 29 8:30 p.m. (note early start time)

THE ELUSIVE PIMPERNEL

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1950 109 minutes • Cast: David Niven, Margaret Leighton

Ian Christie, one of Powell’s most persistent champions and perceptive critics, recently claimed that the once maligned PIMPERNEL “shows Powell at the height of his powers as a visual stylist, synthesizing many traditions of cinema as an electric spectacle.” Powell dwells on this film in the second volume of his memoirs, *Million Dollar Movie*, calling the original version “one of the lost treasures of The Archers.” After a difficult production, the film was cut and re-edited by the studio and, though shot in Technicolor, was presented in black-and-white in its North American release. (Powell exclaims in horror about the butchered, black-and-white version: “A Ph.D. thesis is probably being written about this copy at this moment, and no doubt several archives are fighting for it.”) Tonight’s print is as close as currently possible to Powell’s original intentions. David Niven plays the debonair Brit twit who saves aristocrats from the bloodthirsty masses during the French Revolution. A strikingly faithful adaptation of the famous tale, PIMPERNEL is rich with plummy performances and lavish court sequences, its costumes and settings recreated with painstaking historical detail.

Saturday, March 30 4:00 p.m.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1943 163 minutes • Cast: Roger Livesey, Deborah Kerr, Anton Walbrook

A modernist masterpiece, not to be missed. Andrew Sarris once claimed that he preferred THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP to CITIZEN KANE, and *The New Yorker* recently asserted that it “may be the greatest English film ever made.” Denounced as treasonous and banned by Churchill, subsequently released in a severely cut and ineptly re-edited version which undid its complex narrative structure, BLIMP was finally restored to its original grandeur in the late eighties. BLIMP charts the career of the archetypal British officer from the Boer War through World War II. At once an ironic portrait of the British class system and an affecting love story – Deborah Kerr plays three different women – BLIMP has influenced a generation of filmmakers, from Martin Scorsese to Derek Jarman, who pronounced it “the finest English film.”

Saturday, March 30 7:00 p.m. (note start time)

GONE TO EARTH

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1950 111 minutes
Cast: Jennifer Jones, Cyril Cusack



Now a cult favourite and considered a landmark in Technicolor style and technique, GONE TO EARTH was produced with considerable ill will by David O. Selznick. (Powell remarks in his memoirs, “We decided to go ahead with David O. the way that hedgehogs made love: verriy carefully!”) Selznick cut the film by more than half an hour, had Rouben Mamoulian shoot extra scenes, and released it as THE WILD HEART. Powell-Pressburger took a conventional bodice-ripper and turned it into a haunting, elemental study of a parson’s wife who can escape her earthly confines only through death. With an intense, incendiary performance by Jennifer Jones, an engorged crimson colour scheme, and a wild, malign Shropshire landscape reminiscent of Thomas Hardy, GONE TO EARTH is vintage Powell in its pantheism and stylistic extremes. “Visually spellbinding. The haunting, dreamlike consistency recalls that other fairy story of innocence and menace, THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER” (*Time Out*). “One of the ten greatest films in the history of cinema” (Pam Cook, *Sight and Sound*).

Sunday, March 31 4:00 p.m.

BLACK NARCISSUS

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1947 100 minutes • Cast: Deborah Kerr, Sabu

One of the best and most beautiful Technicolor films ever made – “Powell’s triumph as cinematic painter” (Nigel Andrews, Harlan Kennedy) – BLACK NARCISSUS won an Oscar for cinematographer Jack Cardiff. Set in a Himalayan hothouse of repressed passion – a nunnery in the Tibetan jungle, recreated entirely in an English studio – BLACK NARCISSUS defines delirium. (It has one of the best lipstick scenes in cinema.) Deborah Kerr is all nobility and anguish as the Anglican nun whose pure spirit can neither combat nor endure the moral chaos unleashed in the isolated convent by the carnal desires of the mad Sister Ruth (the intense Kathleen Byron, one of the loves of Powell’s life). Designed to the hilt and then some – Elliot Stein calls it “one of the last masterpieces of studio-based art direction” – and pulsating with a sense of the exotic and the erotic, NARCISSUS was cut into incomprehensibility in accordance with the demands of the Catholic League of Decency. Tonight’s gorgeous print restores everything, including the references to Kerr’s pre-convent affair. “Michael Powell’s florid expressionism has never been more boldly designed or inventively kitschy” (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*). “One of cinema’s most beautiful films, a visual and emotional stunner” (Leslie Halliwell).

Thursday, April 4 6:30 p.m.

THE SPY IN BLACK

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1939 82 minutes
Cast: Conrad Veidt, Valerie Hobson

The first Powell and Pressburger collaboration, THE SPY IN BLACK was a huge hit. SPY has earned a reputation for its foreshadowing of World War II, and for its striking atmosphere and design: its camerawork, studio settings, and performances all seem derived from German expressionism. Indeed, the film was designed as a vehicle for Conrad Veidt, who played Cesare in THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI. Veidt plays a (surprisingly sympathetic) German spy during WWI, who slinks through the crags and vales of Scotland on his espionage mission. The tone – a combination of menace and amusement – may remind you of early Hitchcock, but the tempest-tossed lyricism of the landscape shots, combined with Miklos Rosza’s lush score, reveal the emerging romanticism of Powell’s style.

Friday, April 5 6:30 p.m.



A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH



ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING



THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP



NEW 35MM PRINT! ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1957 104 minutes • Cast: Dirk Bogarde, Marius Goring

ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT has more than a great title: a vivid, suspenseful story based on an actual incident, atmospheric location shooting (the French Riviera doubling for Crete), and a haunting musical soundtrack by Mikos Theodorakis (of ZORBA THE GREEK fame). With his usual panache (and an occasional hint of camp), Dirk Bogarde plays Patrick Leigh-Fermor, a Byronic classical scholar and travel writer who longs to "look like an Englishman leaning against the Ritz bar." He heads a group of partisans on an impossible mission in Nazi-occupied Crete: kidnapping a German commander and getting him into the hands of the British navy. As the imperious Nazi, Goring chews up the picturesque scenery, and Bogarde more than makes do with what's left over. The hugely enjoyable ILL MET comes to us in a new 35mm VistaVision print.

Saturday, April 6 4:00 p.m.



THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1951 127 minutes • Cast: Moira Shearer, Robert Rounseville

Martin Scorsese cites HOFFMANN as a major influence on his own work: "There's hardly a day when the score of the picture doesn't go through my mind, and of course it had an effect on the way I handled the musical sequences in NEW YORK, NEW YORK and the fights in RAGING BULL." The film has become central to the Powell-Pressburger revival, critics and filmmakers outdoing each other in their praise for its extravagant strangeness. Moira Shearer returns from THE RED SHOES to play the first of three mythic women in this spectacular version of E.T.A. Hoffman's Gothic stories: a dancer who turns out to be a marionette. The second woman is a prostitute from Venice and the third, a consumptive opera singer. HOFFMANN occasionally surpasses even THE RED SHOES in its fervid romanticism and its theme of art as transcendence over death. *Film Comment* carried a lengthy paean to HOFFMANN, and it appears to be heading for new canonization. Powell himself called the film "a Pandora's box of a movie. . . . There is a visual surprise about every ten seconds. . . . There was no limit to our inventions, or to our fun."

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Saturday, April 6 8:30 p.m. (note early start time)

NEW 35MM PRINT! 49TH PARALLEL

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1941 123 minutes • Cast: Laurence Olivier, Leslie Howard

Marvellous. Pressburger won an Oscar for his script for 49TH PARALLEL, one of the most stirring and entertaining of films made about World War II. As the title suggests, Canada supplied the setting for what was ostensibly a propaganda film designed to convince the United States to enter the war. (It's worth seeing just to enjoy The Archers' conception of our true north strong and free.) Six Nazis, stranded in a U-boat accident, make their way across Canada to escape to neutral territory (the United States!). Along the way, they encounter a French-Canadian trapper (that famous Québécois Laurence Olivier), a Hutterite leader (the urbane Anton Walbrook), an aesthete and expert on Indians (Leslie Howard), and an AWOL Canadian soldier (the stolid Raymond Massey). David Lean was the editor.



Sunday, April 7 1:00 p.m.

NEW 35MM PRINT! A CANTERBURY TALE

Director: Michael Powell
Britain 1944 124 minutes • Cast: Eric Portman, Dennis Price

A brand new 35mm print of the film that likely is Powell's masterpiece. The little known A CANTERBURY TALE deserves its growing reputation as one of the glories of British cinema. (Its many fans include Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.) Among Powell's most personal and complex films, A CANTERBURY TALE is a strange foreshadowing of the infamous PEEPING TOM in its theme

of predation and perversity. Set in 1444, the film involves a misanthropic magistrate from Kent who secretly crusades for British tradition by ambushing and pouring glue in the hair of local women who date American soldiers. Three young townspeople – present-day versions of Chaucer's pilgrims – set out to track down the mad glumman, and find that a kind of divine force has entered their lives. At this point, the film deepens into mystical mystery, "and the final reel is one of the most spiritually uplifting in all cinema" (Alan Maughan). Cut and re-edited when it was originally released in North America, A CANTERBURY TALE is now restored to its original life as "one of the richest and strangest treasures in British cinema . . . a glorious film" (David Thompson).

Thursday, April 11 6:30 p.m.

CONTRABAND

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1940 92 minutes • Cast: Conrad Veidt, Valerie Hobson

A crackling Hitchcockian tale of intrigue set in London, CONTRABAND revels in the visual possibilities of the wartime blackout. The witty corkscrew plot sends Conrad Veidt as a Danish freighter captain on the trail of Valerie Hobson through a noirish world of bizarre nightclubs "before rounding up the villains with enthusiastic help from a posse of Danish waiters and carousing rugby players picked up en route" (Tom Milne, *Time Out*). Powell's marriage of the grim and the whimsical – in one sequence, a man hawks gas masks at Victoria Station – and startling bits of surrealism (German agents operating from a warehouse filled with thousands of abandoned busts of Neville Chamberlain) remind one that Powell was bewitched by the paranoid films of Fritz Lang and was later to claim his debt to Buñuel. "Playful and provocative . . . a virtual anthology of motifs from German thrillers, notably Lang's MABUSE and SPIONE" (Ian Christie).

Thursday, April 11 8:45 p.m.

NEW 35MM PRINT!

THE THIEF OF BAGDAD

Director: Michael Powell (with Tim Whelan, Ludwig Berger, Alexander Korda, Zoltan Korda, William Cameron Menzies)
Britain 1940 109 minutes • Cast: Conrad Veidt, Sabu



Winner of Oscars for best cinematography, art direction, and special effects, this dazzling classic became a favourite of the Movie Brat generation of filmmakers (Spielberg, Coppola, Lucas, Scorsese). Typically resisting the edict of the British government that all wartime films should serve propaganda purposes, Powell went wild with visual extravagance in this Arabian Nights tale about a good sultan, a wicked Vizier, and the little thief (the sublime Sabu) who helps the rightful ruler return to his throne and win his woman. Opening with a splashy crane shot, indulging in all manner of Orientalist fantasy, eye-filling Technicolor spectacle, and Méliès-like tricks and special effects (a morphing dog, a gigantic Djinni, a flying horse, amnesia-inducing flowers, a statue with an All-Seeing Eye), Powell produced a work of such blazing invention and delight that British cinema would never be thought of the same way again. If the prospect of so much delirious fun seems too kiddie-inclined for you, consider that Powell exegete Ian Christie has claimed that "there are striking parallels between THE THIEF and Powell's later film maudit PEEPING TOM, also centring on the sexual metaphor of the act of looking. . . . A disturbing treasure trove for grown-up children to play with and marvel at."

Saturday, April 13 6:30 p.m.

OH...ROSALINDA!! 35MM SCOPE PRINT!

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1955 101 minutes • Cast: Ludmilla Tcherina, Mel Ferrer

Rarest of rarities, OH...ROSALINDA!! heads over the top from its first frame and just keeps going into the kitsch stratosphere. (The twin exclamation marks in the title are not there for nothing.) A musical fantasy that updates Strauss' "Die Fledermaus" to post-WWII Vienna, the film bursts with so much dubious invention and jaw-dropping artifice, all stuffed into baroque widescreen compositions, that it has recently been called a "pre-postmodernist musical in the style of Frank Tashlin." Shot in lush, confectionary Technicolor – beautifully restored in this print – and with Anton Wolbrook as "the magnificently droll master of ceremonies" (David Thomson), OH...ROSALINDA!! "looks better and better as the years pass: a rare example of cosmopolitan wit and invention amid the gloom of British cinema of the fifties" (Ian Christie).

Friday, April 19 6:30 p.m.

THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE NEW 35MM PRINT!

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1956 119 minutes • Cast: Peter Finch, Anthony Quayle

"Is there anything left to be discovered [in the Powell-Pressburger canon]?" Richard Combs asked in *Film Comment*, and quickly answered: "Well, consider THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE." Despite its unpromising title, this, one of the last collaborations of The Archers, now seems to teem with fascinating subtexts and ambiguities, sexual and otherwise. A leather-jacketed Peter Finch plays Captain Langsdorff of the Graf Spree, "a fittingly dark romantic subject for Powell and Pressburger" (Combs). When the Spree pulls into harbour at Montevideo, the ship becomes the subject of schemes and stratagems involving characters from Britain, the U.S., and Uruguay, seemingly transported from one of Orson Welles' internationalist conspiracy films. (Christopher Lee has a juicy cameo as a nightclub owner.) Richard Combs claims that "no scene in PEEPING TOM is as sexually charged, as convulsively self-reflexive, as the end of the Graf Spree," and that RIVER PLATE may "fuel the next stage of the Powell-Pressburger rediscovery programme." Ergo, a must for all Archer acolytes, especially in this new print.

Saturday, April 20 6:30 p.m.

PEEPING TOM RESTORED 35MM PRINT!

Director: Michael Powell • Britain 1959 109 minutes • Cast: Carl Boehm, Anna Massey, Moira Shearer

One of the most disturbing films ever made, PEEPING TOM effectively ended Powell's directing career. British critics lambasted it as "beastly," "the sickest and filthiest film I remember seeing," "wholly evil"; one critic thundered that "the only really satisfactory way to dispose of PEEPING TOM would be to shovel it up and flush it down the nearest sewer." The film was yanked from distribution and went into obscurity for two decades, before being rediscovered by a new generation of critics and filmmakers. (Martin Scorsese was responsible for its re-release. He said, "PEEPING TOM and 8 1/2 are the two great films that deal with the philosophy and danger of filmmaking.") A mild-mannered photographer, who as a boy served as the guinea pig in his father's "experiments in fear," films women as he murders them, camera and weapon becoming one. Powell himself plays the evil father, and creepy Carl Boehm (who later appeared in Fassbinder's troupe) as the title character reminds one of Norman Bates in the way his demure, tidy anonymity masks his derangement. PEEPING TOM rivals PSYCHO as a complex meditation on impotence and aggression, voyeurism and cruelty, childhood trauma and adult psychosis, murder and the family romance. Powell's technically brilliant, richly metaphorical exploration of the connection between the peeping Tom's psychopathic desire and the audience's own voyeuristic impulse is "now recognized as a classic of self-reflexive cinema, of *mise en scène* as crime" (Elliot Stein, *The Village Voice*).

Wednesday, April 24 8:45 p.m.

MICHAEL POWELL