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Bad timing, Roeg, Nicolas, 1980



Born in London in 1928, Roeg began his career in the British film industry in 1947. He worked for many years as a cameraman on films such as Corman's *The Masque of the Red Death*; Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*; Schlesinger's *Far From the Madding Crowd*; and perhaps most tellingly on Lester's *Petulia* before his relatively late move into direction.

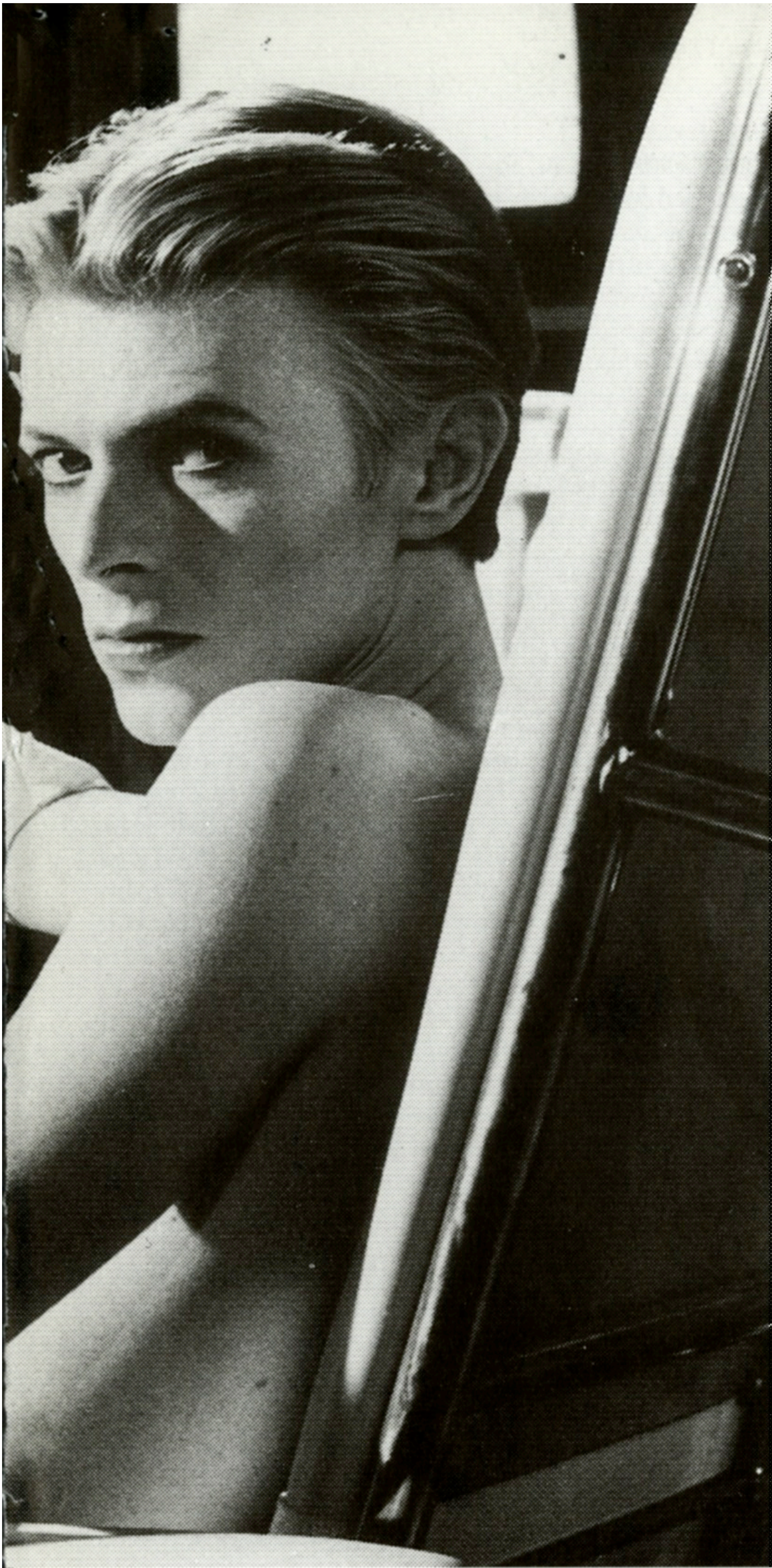
Roeg films are usually described as cubist, kaleidoscopic, fragmentary or elliptical. Their concerns unfold enigmatically through richly encrusted images and many-layered soundtracks. They are just as likely to flash forwards and sideways as they are to flash backwards, checking or contradicting our narrative expectations in the process.

The archetypal protagonist of a Roeg film is

the stranger in a strange land, confronted by a situation in which interpretation and survival are inextricably linked.

Time and again the characters in Roeg's films mistakenly read one world in terms of another and face the consequences. In *Performance*, Chas undergoes a complete metamorphosis as he steps out of his underworld milieu into the polymorphously perverse, hallucinatory world of Turner. In *Don't Look Now*, John Baxter resists acceptance of the existence of the supernatural then fatally misreads everyday reality. In *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, Thomas Newton's inability to distinguish between the Utopian images of the mass media and the actual ways of human behaviour is his undoing.

Roeg has also maintained an interest in



NICOLAS ROEG

Stranger in a Strange Land

Since his spectacular directorial debut with *Performance* in 1970, the films of Nicolas Roeg have challenged audiences and critics alike, placing him firmly in the first rank of British cinema's great innovators. Working on the cusp of art cinema and the mainstream, Roeg developed a distinctive style which combines traditional storytelling with a lateral, associational approach to editing (both visual and aural) and a density of mise-en-scène to give his best work an almost Borgesian complexity.

relationships that are in some respect limit cases. His characters are tested not only by their transitions from one world to another, but by relationships in which the boundaries between self and other become permeable. In *Bad Timing*, a film about border crossings, Alex's cold intellectual curiosity leads him to cross the threshold of permissible behaviour. Even the more conventional *Castaway* shows the most overblown romantic ideals foundering against harsh reality.

Roeg's decision to film Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, perhaps the ultimate tale of a journey to the edge, seems a logical development of the concerns of his work. We are pleased to welcome Nicolas Roeg to discuss his work in *The Guardian* Interview on 19 September. **■**

JOHN MOUNT



Performance

Tue 13 Sept 8.45 NFTI

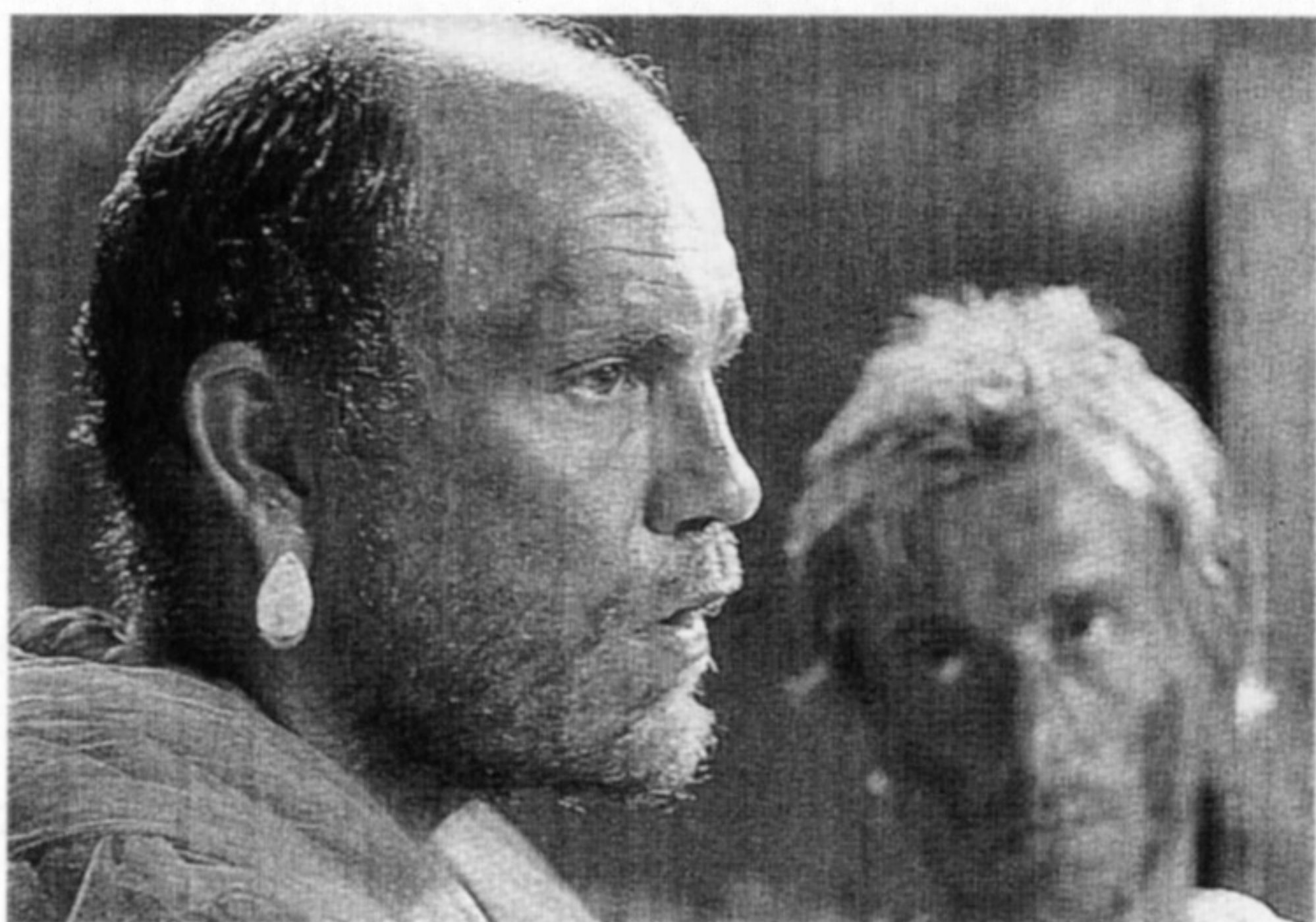
A remarkable film, *Performance* in many ways heralded the end of the certainties of the 1960s British school of social realism, thrusting its working class (anti)hero into a world of sexual and social uncertainty and snapping linear narrative into so many pieces. As hoodlum Chas Devlin leaves the orthodoxy of the ruthless criminal milieu for the Notting Hill retreat of burnt out pop star Turner, the boundaries between the two characters start to blur and their personalities merge as their two mutually exclusive worlds collide. The visual pyrotechnics and bold cross cutting declared Roeg's arrival. *UK 1970/Dirs Nicolas Roeg, Donald Cammell. With James Fox, Mick Jagger, Anita Pallenberg, Johnny Shannon, Michèle Breton. A Treasures from the National Film and Television Archive print.*



Walkabout

Wed 14 Sept 8.45 NFTI

Roeg's first solo directorial effort, scripted by playwright Edward Bond, uses the simple story of two Australian children abandoned in the Outback after their father commits suicide. At odds with nature and the landscape, the children are befriended by a young Aboriginal boy. Roeg's exquisite photography and use of montage bring out the connotative resonances of the landscape as the film hovers over the fleeting possibility that the Aboriginal boy and the girl will be able to brook the cultural difference that separates them. *UK 1971. With Jenny Agutter, David Gumpilil, Lucien Roeg.*



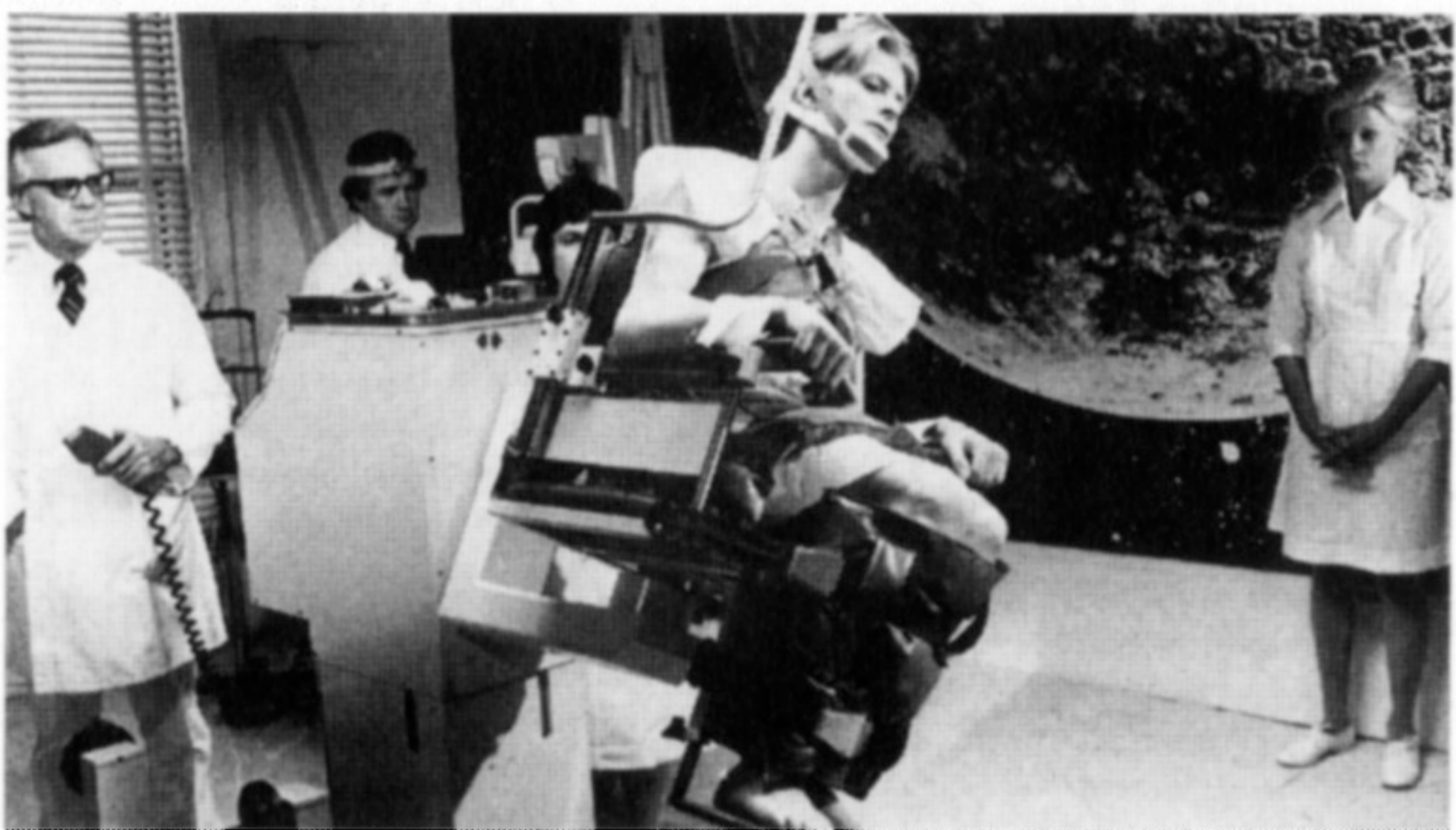
Special Preview: Heart of Darkness

Mon 19 Sept 6.30 NFTI

Roeg's latest film, made for Turner Network Television, is a faithful adaptation of Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel about Marlowe, a sailor who mounts an expedition up the Congo River to locate the mysterious chief of a Belgian trading company's remote trading station. There are exemplary performances from a very strong cast led by Tim Roth as Marlowe and John Malkovich as Kurtz. *US 1994. With James Fox, Iman, Peter Vaughan, Ian McDiarmid. Preview courtesy of Turner Pictures Worldwide. Free screening: advance tickets available for The Guardian Interview with Nicolas Roeg (see below) remaining tickets available from the box office from 6pm on day of performance.*

The Guardian Interview with Nicolas Roeg: Mon 19 Sept 8.45 NFTI

We are delighted to welcome Nicolas Roeg to the NFT to be interviewed about his extensive career. There will be an opportunity for questions from the audience. *Tickets £3.95. Members purchasing tickets for The Guardian Interview can request advance tickets for the screening of Heart of Darkness (see above). Please note this request on your booking form.*



The Man Who Fell to Earth

Wed 22 Sept 6.00 NFTI

Roeg's kaleidoscopic vision of America is filtered through the perceptions of a visiting alien, Thomas Newton, whose mission to save his own people is frustrated by his failure to understand human nature and his subsequent decline and self destruction. A technical tour de force, Roeg's splintered, poetic juxtapositions transform Walter Tevis' science-fiction novel into a rich filmic meditation. *UK 1976. With David Bowie, Rip Torn, Candy Clark, Buck Henry, Bernie Casey. 140 mins.*

Bad Timing

Thu 22 Sept 8.40 NFT1

One of Roeg's finest films, *Bad Timing* is a darkly composed mosaic of obsessive love gone wrong, thick with flashbacks, flash forwards, cross cutting and border crossings between East and West Europe. Alex, a psychology lecturer in Vienna, is drawn into a destructive relationship with a hedonistic young woman, Milena. Rich in cross references and allusions from Klimt to Freud, the film is anchored by Roeg to a central mystery as, in the wake of Milena's attempted suicide, a Dostoyevskian detective (played by Harvey Keitel) tries to uncover whether Alex is the perpetrator of an ambiguous crime. UK 1980. With Art Garfunkel, Theresa Russell, Denholm Elliott.



Eureka

Fri 23 Sept 8.30 NFT2

Based on the true life Harry Oates case, named after the Edgar Allen Poe story, and with many allusions to *Citizen Kane*, *Eureka* was critically under-appreciated on its first release, partly due to its restricted distribution, and is long overdue for reappraisal. Jack McCann, the central character, is a man for whom the satisfaction brought by striking gold in 1925 and attaining instant riches thereafter eludes him. Roeg turns this into a study in alchemy, handing McCann a philosopher's stone and prising forth examples of the ways in which daughters are a measure of a man's wealth and change hands accordingly. UK 1982. With Gene Hackman, Theresa Russell, Joe Pesci, Rutger Hauer, Mickey Rourke.



Insignificance

Sat 24 Sept 8.30 NFT2

Roeg's first adaptation of a stage play opens the text up temporally rather than spatially. 'We tended to develop characters backwards into their own histories,' said playwright Terry Johnson of his comedy. Set in a New York hotel room one night in 1953, it follows the overlapping lives of four instantly recognisable celebrities: a scientist, an actress, a baseball star and a senator. Roeg skilfully turns this location into a laboratory for the study of human experience, relativity, the nature of fame in Cold War America and a microcosm of the world outside of room service. UK 1985. With Michael Emil, Theresa Russell, Tony Curtis, Gary Busey.



Castaway

Sun 25 Sept 8.40 NFT1

Based loosely on Lucy Irvine's account of her misadventures as Gerald Kingsland's desert island 'wife', this is a recognisably Roegian study of rash romantic adventure but a good deal less dense and fatalistic in tone than, say, *Bad Timing*. Roeg details the disintegration of a barely established relationship between a blatantly incompatible couple in such a way as to expose their Utopian delusions against the harsh reality of a remote, unyielding paradise. UK 1986. With Amanda Donahoe, Oliver Reed, Georgina Hale, Francis Barber, John Sessions.



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Aria

Wed 28 Sept 6.15 NFT2

A portmanteau movie with an operatic theme, *Aria* is very much a mixed bag of tricks from a wildly diverse roster of directors, linked casually by John Hurt playing variations on the theme of Pagliacci. *Sight and Sound* found that Roeg's episode '...has the simple advantage of a neatly compressed narrative which manages effectively to integrate its opera (*Un Ballo in Maschera*) performance.' Roeg also takes the liberty of casting Theresa Russell as King Zog of Albania. UK 1987/Dirs Nicolas Roeg, Charles Sturridge, Jean-Luc Godard, Julien Temple, Bruce Beresford, Robert Altman, Franc Roddam, Ken Russell, Derek Jarman, Bill Bryden. With Buck Henry, Bridget Fonda, Tilda Swinton.



Track 29

Wed 28 Sept 8.45 NFT1

An intriguing collaboration with writer Dennis Potter, also known for disrupting the traditional flow of narrative. Unsurprisingly though it is their different attitudes to psychology and sexuality one notices most here. Martin, a strange young man who may be the illegitimate son of a Carolina housewife, arrives out of the blue to seduce her and disrupt her stifled, unfulfilling life. Gary Oldman gives a particularly compelling performance as Martin, whose neuroses are scattered like broken glass by Roeg throughout the film. UK 1987. With Theresa Russell, Christopher Lloyd, Sandra Bernhard, Seymour Cassel.



The Witches

Thu 29 Sept 6.30 NFT1

After the critical ambivalence which greeted *Track 29*, Roeg took a sabbatical from his usual filmic concerns and turned his hand to making this highly accomplished children's film, described by *Variety* as 'the work of a sensible Roeg; no convoluted flashbacks or sultry sexuality, but a controlled and suitably dark piece of film-making'. Roeg ably yokes the wizardry of Jim Henson's creature shop to a popular Roald Dahl tale, with Anjelica Huston carrying the day as the vampish Grand High Witch who seeks to turn British children into mice. US 1989. With Mai Zetterling, Bill Paterson, Rowan Atkinson. J-Cert PG.



Cold Heaven

Fri 30 Sept 8.45 NFT1

Still awaiting its theatrical release in the UK, this is a fascinating study of infidelity and religious guilt based on a novel by Brian Moore. A married woman is forced to reflect on an adulterous affair when her husband is the victim of a horrifying boating accident. Thereafter she is troubled by a religious vision which shakes her agnosticism. 'Roeg's stylish, well acted, metaphysical drama mixes the director's typical concerns of sexual identity and death with a fresh strain of Catholic mysticism, and *Cold Heaven* may well be his most challenging and ambitious film for years': *Adrian Wootton*. US 1990. With Theresa Russell, Mark Harmon, James Russo, Talia Shire.