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AND FAS PRESENT

NFT

BRITISH CINEMA

# POWELL

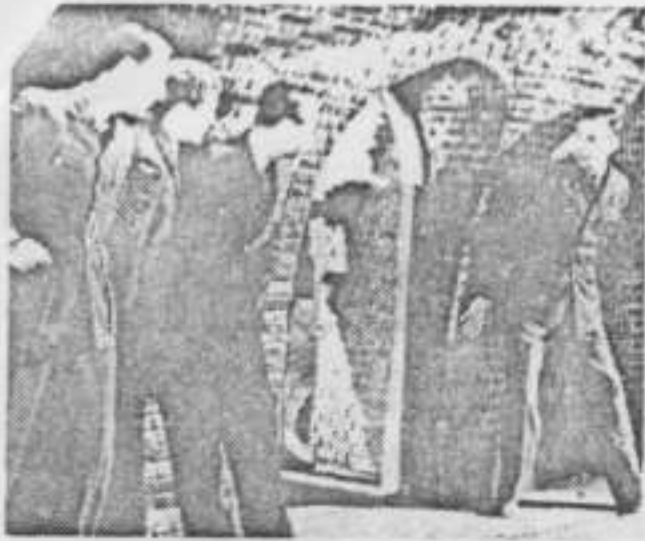
# PRESSBURGER AND OTHERS

— actors, designers, musicians,  
— are too numerous to list here, but no  
achievement of Michael Powell and his  
partner Emeric Pressburger would fail to  
be their many distinguished collaborators.  
It was "to gather such a stupendous team  
of artists and craftsmen that they're all  
under your control, like Lermontov in  
his *Anna Karenina*." This concern with modes of  
production and the bold combination of diverse talents  
has resulted in a body of work strikingly  
different from the mainstream of British cinema —  
contemptuous of naturalism and  
innovative in its treatment of 'important' subjects.  
He suggests that "Chesteron would not have  
the imputation of being a contriver of  
... yet he tends inevitably to revert to  
observations." So too does Powell, no doubt  
aided by Pressburger's liking for paradox and  
his awareness of the voyeurism inherent in  
cinema, particularly for those who have come to  
know his reflective masterwork *Peeping Tom*.  
This season makes it possible to discover the

roots of that perverse vision in the earlier films. It also  
offers the opportunity to trace a political economy of  
the British cinema over three decades — from the  
poverty of the 'quota' period, through the  
expansionism of the Forties under Korda and Rank,  
and into the triumph of low-budget 'realism' in the  
Sixties — and to follow that sustained reflection on the  
themes of tradition, identity and the demands of art  
which passes through the films of Powell, Pressburger  
and all their collaborators.

This retrospective includes all the films directed  
and/or produced by Michael Powell, many of them in  
collaboration with Emeric Pressburger, which are  
known to survive (some seventeen early films seem to  
be lost). Every effort has been made to locate  
complete versions and, thanks to the National Film  
Archive, several mutilated works have been newly  
restored.—*Ian Christie.*

*Note:* In addition to the session in NFT 1 on November  
8, there will be two seminars with invited critics on  
October 16 and 23, both at 8.45 in NFT 3, and a  
special booklet will be published during October.



Sat 7 Oct  
8.45

### One of our Aircraft is Missing

An interesting reversal of the basic plot of *49th Parallel*: the crew of a British bomber is shot out over occupied Holland and are sheltered by Dutch resistance before they can be smuggled to safety. Here the central concern is with 'fascism', and a consequent interrogation of the concept of normality, as the Dutch setting stands in for Britain. The opening conceit of a pilotless plane is a nod at the future use of fantasy in this first Anglo-American production. G.B. 1942/Dir Powell, Pressburger. With Eric Portman, Pamela Brown. Approx 106 mins.



Sun 8 Oct  
4.15 7.30

### The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp

The idea of *Blimp* grew from *One of our Aircraft is Missing* – combined with the topical stereotype of Low's cartoon character. Pressburger fashioned his epic of the military caste, tracing the consequences of pride, ignorance and emotional blockage as Clive Blimp grows older but no wiser, flanked by his comical adversary/friend and his wife/feminine ideal. Predictably, *Blimp* met with disapproval at the time, but this newly restored version stands as an astonishing achievement. G.B. 1943/Dir Pressburger. With Roger Livesey. 158 mins.



Wed 11 Oct  
8.45

### The Silver Fleet

Powell and Pressburger produced and supervised this further story of the Dutch Resistance through the newly-formed Independent Producers, which they had initiated within the Rank group. Ralph Richardson plays a dangerous game with the occupying Germans, ostensibly building submarines for the British, but also working with the Resistance to ensure that the submarines do not fall into German hands. The shipbuilding scenes are well-handled and the intersection of Richardson's double-cross is expertly handled. G.B. 1943/Dir Vernon Sewell, Gordon Wray. With Googie Withers. 88 mins.



Sun 15 Oct  
6.00

### I Know Where I'm Going

"Emeric was always trying to get rid of the dual theme . . . I saw how interesting Pamela's part would be if we could somehow link it with the legend without her knowing it . . . But it was excised by Emeric" (Powell). Wendy Hiller plays a woman who is to marry a wealthy businessman, but on her way to the Hebrides for the wedding she meets the Highland laird of Kiloran and changes her course. A re-working of *A Canterbury Tale*, infused with the same feeling for landscape and natural symbolism. G.B. 1945/Dir Powell, Pressburger. With Eric Portman, Roger Livesey.



Mon 16 Oct  
6.20

### A Canterbury Tale

Condemned as a failure on its release by many critics and immediately cut, *A Canterbury Tale* has now been fully restored. Essentially it is an extended reflection on the positive and negative aspects of tradition and a call to adjust to the reality of wartime Britain while respecting the past – hung on the slender tale of a sergeant spending several days' leave on his first trip to see Canterbury Cathedral. Beautiful black and white photography and a subtle, poetic construction make this one of the happiest re-discoveries of recent years. G.B. 1944/Dir Powell, Pressburger. With Eric Portman, Sheila Sim, Dennis Price. 124 mins.