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SATYAJIT RAY

Satyajit Ray is universally considered to be the director almost single-handedly responsible for bringing contemporary Indian cinema to world audiences and is undoubtedly one of the acknowledged masters of cinema. For a magnificent body of work stretching back to his astonishingly natural and captivating debut *Pather Panchali* in 1955, Ray will be awarded an honorary Academy Award at the Oscar ceremonies on March 30 (none of his 29 films has ever been nominated). Amazingly, Ray had never picked up a camera prior to 1955; born into a Calcutta family prominent in the arts, he worked as a layout artist at a British-run advertising agency before achieving prominence as a leading illustrator (one early commission was for the book that he would later adapt into *Pather Panchali*). After meeting Jean Renoir, who was in India filming *The River*, and seeing *The Bicycle Thief* on a business trip to London, Ray scraped together enough money to make *Pather Panchali*: director and film received almost instant acclaim. Now 70, Ray's production has slowed down but not ceased, and his new film *The Stranger* debuted at the Venice festival last fall. While, sadly, a few of the central Ray titles are currently unavailable (including *The Lonely Wife*, *The Chess Players* and *Days and Nights in the Forest*), non-theatrical distributor Films Incorporated is to be congratulated for maintaining fine quality prints of the Apu trilogy and numerous other works by a director whose humanism, compassion and consummate skill with actors has been compared to Jean Renoir and Kenji Mizoguchi. What is incomparable, as Chidananda Das Gupta has written, is Ray's "philosophical outlook [that] is Indian and traditional in the best sense of that overused word. It finds joy in birth and life; it accepts death with grace. It arises from a knowledge that brings detachment, freedom from fear and from restlessness. This...combined with compassion makes it possible for the artist to see a wider arc of reality and to combine largeness of canvas with fineness of detail."

THE GODDESS (DEVI)

Wed, March 4, 6:30

Originally banned from export for its candor about the power of superstition in India (a ban widely believed to have been lifted by Nehru himself), *The Goddess* concerns the delusion of a zamindar (feudal landlord) that his daughter-in-law is the incarnation of a goddess. Without her husband's protection (he is away studying in Calcutta), the young woman succumbs to his belief and eventually goes mad. "It is part of our heritage from the thirties that the poor still seem 'real' and the rich 'trivial.' *The Goddess* should, however, please even Marxists if they would go to see it; it is the most convincing study of upper-class decadence I have ever seen. But it is Ray's feeling for the beauty within this disintegrating way of life that makes it convincing."—Pauline Kael

Written and directed by Satyajit Ray, from a story by Prabhat Mukherjee. With: Chhabi Biswas, Soumitra Chatterjee, Sharmila Tagore, Karuna Banerjee. India, 1960, b&w, 99 minutes, Bengali with subtitles, Satyajit Ray Productions, 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.

The Apu Trilogy I:

PATHER PANCHALI (SONG OF THE LITTLE ROAD)

Sat, March 7, 6:00

Sun, March 8, 3:00

As subtly beautiful a first film as can be found in the history of cinema, *Pather Panchali* is the luminous story of a poor Brahmin family in a Bengal village and their struggle to survive. "The scenes of poverty and death that fill this film might be expected to make it a depressing one, but curiously they do not... The radiant beauty of the picture continually lifts the spirit... *Pather Panchali* is perhaps the finest piece of filmed folklore since Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*. It is a pastoral poem dappled with the play of brilliant images and strong, dark feelings, a luminous



Aparajito

revelation of Indian life in language that all the world can understand."—Time
Written and directed by Satyajit Ray, from the novel by Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay. With: Kanu Banerjee, Chunibala Devi, Champa Banerjee, Uma Das Gupta. India, 1955, b&w, 112 minutes, Hindi with subtitles, Government of West Bengal, 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.

The Apu Trilogy II:

APARAJITO (THE UNVANQUISHED)

Tue, March 10, 8:15

Wed, March 11, 6:30

A continuation of the trials and tribulations of the Bengal family first introduced in *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito* follows them as they move from their

village to Benares (the holy city) following the death of the daughter and eventually focuses on the maturation of young Apu as he struggles with the demands of family and his growing thirst for knowledge. "[Satyajit Ray] is carrying this project forward with the dedication of a man determined to preserve the truth about his people for the people themselves and for the world: who means (to paraphrase Dedalus), to forge in the smithy of his art, the uncreated conscience of his race."—Stanley Kauffman, *A World on Film*
Written and directed by Satyajit Ray, from the novel by Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay. With: Kanu Banerjee, Karuna Banerjee, Pinaki Sen Gupta, Smaran Ghosal. India, 1956, b&w, 108 minutes, Bengali with subtitles, Epic Films, 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.

**The Apu Trilogy III:
THE WORLD OF APU (APUR SANSAR)**

Sat, March 14, 3:30

The climactic film in the Apu Trilogy finds the young man abruptly married, only to lose his wife in childbirth. After years of loneliness working in a coal mine, he is drawn back to his wife's village and the young son he had thought he could not bear to see. "Its magnificent sweep, its nobility of spirit and its exquisite images evoke memories of Mizoguchi. Like him, Satyajit Ray was a painter; like him, he knows how to fill a landscape with a profound silent presence... It is the kind of film one sees only once in a decade. Indisputably, it is one of the masterpieces of cinema."—Pierre Marcabru
Written and directed by Satyajit Ray, from the novel "Aparajito" by Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay. With: Soumitra Chatterjee, Sharmila Tagore, Swapan Mukherjee, Alok Chakravarty. India, 1960, b&w, 103 minutes, Bengali with subtitles, Satyajit Ray Productions, 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.

KANCHANJUNGA

Mon, March 16, 8:45

Wed, March 18, 6:30

In the first film for which Ray composed his own score, a smug and domineering businessman finds his world collapsing unexpectedly during the course of a single afternoon at a health spa in the Himalayan resort of Darjeeling. "Chekhovian," an epithet often applied to Ray's work, was used with particular frequency about *Kanchanjunga*, within whose quiet microcosm the social conflicts of a nation are clearly mirrored. Bahadur Indranath Choudhury [Chhabi Biswas], smugly proud of his British-bestowed title and exacting unquestioning obedience from those around him, is as outmoded a relic of the past as the tattered pomp of the former imperial hill station."—Philip Kemp, *World*



The World of Apu

Film Directors Volume Two

Written, directed, and scored by Satyajit Ray. With: Chhabi Biswas, Alakananda Roy, Anil Chatterjee, Karuna Banerjee. India, 1962, color, 102 minutes, Bengali with subtitles, N.C.A., 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.

THE BIG CITY (MAHANAGAR)

Thu, March 26, 6:30

Sat, March 28, 3:00

In contemporary Calcutta, a bank clerk who cannot make ends meet reluctantly allows his wife to work, only to find that she is so good at it that she

threatens to eclipse his traditional role in the family. "It includes some delectable comedy and a superb performance by Madhabi Mukherjee—who Ray described as 'a wonderfully sensitive actress who made my work very easy for me.'"—Philip Kemp, *World Film Directors Volume Two*. A forerunner of Ray's so-called "City Trilogy" of the seventies—sadly unavailable for exhibition in its entirety. *Written, directed, scored by Satyajit Ray, from a story by Narendra Nath Mitra. With: Anil Chatterjee, Madhabi Mukherjee, Vicky Redwood. India, 1964, b&w, 122 minutes, Bengali with subtitles, 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.*

THE ADVERSARY

(PRATIWANDI, aka SIDDHARTHA AND THE CITY)

Tue, March 31, 6:30

One of Satyajit Ray's most distinctive and unusual movies ("my first political film," he called it), *The Adversary* "has captured what it feels like to be young, conscious and undecided in the modern world. The deceptively simple narrative about an ex-student seeking a job in the teeming, competitive city becomes extraordinarily touching and expansive, a vision of what virtually all intelligent young people experience when confronted with crucial choices in life. Dhritiman Chatterjee is marvellous as the young protagonist. This movie may be remembered as one of the most perceptive and relevant works of the decade."—Gary Arnold, *The Washington Post* (1973)
Written, directed, and scored by Satyajit Ray, from a story by Sunil Ganguly. With: Dhritiman Chatterjee, Jayashree Roy, Krishna Bose, Kalyan Chatterjee. India, 1971, 110 minutes, Bengali with subtitles, Shree Vishnu Pictures, 35mm print courtesy Films Inc.



The Adversary