



Sam Selvon in Full House

UK 1974

5 mins

Twilight City

Director: Reece Auguiste

©/Production Company:

Black Audio Film Collective

Financial Assistance: Channel Four

Funded by: Channel Four

Producer: Avril Johnson

Associate Producer: Lina Gopaul

Production Manager: Avril Johnson

Production Accountant: Avril Johnson

Location Manager: Avril Johnson

Production Assistant: David Lawson

Trainee Production Assistant: Hilda Sealy

Researcher: Reece Auguiste

Voice Over Script: Edward George, John Akomfrah

Lighting Cameraman: Jonathan Collinson

Rostrum: Ken Morse

Additional Camera: Shangara Singh

Assistant Camera: Edward George

Grip: Carl Ross

Stills: Edward George, Rotimi Fani Kayode

Models: Denis Carney, Robert Taylor

Editor: Brand Thumim

Post-production Facilities:

Black Audio Film Collective

Titles: Plume Design

Negative Cutter: Frank Clarke

Film Processing: Universal Film Laboratory London

Original Music: Trevor Mathison

Sound: Trevor Mathison

Dubbing Mixer: Peter Hodges

Dubbing Studio: Glenthams Studios

Sound Editor: Brand Thumim, Joe Boatman

Drivers: Peter Spencer, Wendy Simpson

Studio Facilities: PCL, Star Productions

Cast:

Amanda Symonds (Voice Over)

Homi Bhabha

Andy Coupland

Paul Gilroy

Gail Lewis

Savriti Hensman

Femi Otiotoju

George Shire

Rosina Visram

David Yallop

UK 1989

52 mins

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TOGETHER: THE LONDON FILMS OF LORENZA MAZZETTI

Twilight City

+ intro by BFI National Archive Curator, Xavier Pillai

Tender letters between a recent UK arrival and her mother back in Dominica, juxtaposed with choice archival footage and personal recollections from Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy and Gail Lewis, ground the viewer in lived experience. The Black Audio Film Collective's strategies expose the social and political changes that took place in London under Thatcherism.

Also, Sam Selvon reads from his 1956 novel about post-war West Indian migrant experience, *The Lonely Londoners*.

bfi.org.uk

Black Audio Film Collective followed the success of its first two screen ventures *Handsworth Songs* (d. John Akomfrah 1986), a film essay about the riots in Birmingham, and its first feature film, *Testament* (d. Akomfrah, 1988) with another reflection piece, *Twilight City*. The theme of this docudrama is the physical and social change of London that occurred under ten years of Conservative rule in the 1980s.

A fictional letter from a daughter, Olivia, to her mother in Dominica is the narrative thread connecting interviews from (predominantly) black and Asian cultural critics, historians and journalists. The choice of occupation for the daughter, a researcher, perhaps strains the narrative conceit too far. Nevertheless, for an avowedly political documentary the result is absorbing.

The interviews with respected commentators like Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy and George Shire offer fascinating personal stories that contrast with the polemics with which they are usually associated. In this film their politics are located within their own personal experiences of exile and search for identity.

Like *London* (d. Patrick Keiller 1993), *Twilight City* tries to describe the psychic and social landscape of the city; both films have severe criticisms to make of contemporary politics.

Olivia's personal commentary supplies a human connection that the succession of interviews on their own could not, and gives meaning to the empty images of water, traffic or pieces of statues.

The film throws out topics as various as the malign influence of the Docklands Enterprise Zone and Section 28, the notorious prohibition on material 'promoting homosexuality'; the effects of urban social fragmentation and the history of a 19th Century Laskar community.

Twilight City is one of the few Black Audio Film Collective works not directed by John Akomfrah. Reece Auguiste's other directorial work for BAFC was *Mysteries of July* (1991), a documentary about the alarming number of deaths in police custody in the UK.

Ann Ogidi, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 16 Oct 18:30; Mon 20 Nov 18:30

TV Preview: Time Series 2 + Q&A with writers

Jimmy McGovern and Helen Black, and actors Jodie Whittaker, Tamara Lawrance, Bella Ramsey and Siobhan Finneran (cast tbc)

Wed 18 Oct 18:15

Doctor Who: The Underwater Menace (Animated)

Sat 21 Oct 12:00

Re-release Preview: Pressure + panel discussion

Mon 23 Oct 20:10

TV Preview: The Lazarus Project + Q&A with cast

Paapa Essiedu, Caroline Quentin, Anjli Mohindra and writer Joe Barton

Tue 24 Oct 18:15

Thelma Schoonmaker in Conversation

Thu 26 Oct 18:30

Preview: How to Have Sex + Q&A with director

Molly Manning Walker and actor Mia McKenna-Bruce

Wed 1 Nov 20:45

23 Seconds to Eternity + BFI DVD & Blu-ray

launch + Q&A with director Bill Butt

Mon 6 Nov 18:10

Preview: The Eternal Daughter + Q&A with writer-

director Joanna Hogg and actor Tilda Swinton

Fri 10 Nov 19:00

Exhibition: The Red Shoes: Beyond the Mirror

From Fri 10 Nov to Sun 7 Jan

Matthew Bourne's production of The Red Shoes

+ Q&A with Matthew Bourne and Ashley Shaw

Sat 11 Nov 15:00

Preview: Is There Anybody Out There? + Q&A

with director Ella Glendinning, hosted by Jack Thorne

Sat 11 Nov 17:45

Preview: The Red Shoes

Sun 12 Nov 15:30

Journey to Italy Viaggio in Italia + extended

introduction by Jeremy Cooper and Ben Rivers

Mon 13 Nov 20:40

Joanna Hogg in Conversation

Wed 15 Nov 18:30

Talk: The Creative Worlds of Powell +

Pressburger

Sat 25 Nov 12:00-17:00

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The Black Audio Film Collective was formed in Hackney, London in 1982 by John Akomfrah, Reece Auguiste, Edward George, Lina Gopaul, Avril Johnson, David Lawson and Trevor Mathison. It was one among many such collectives founded in Britain during the early- to mid- 1980s – including Sankofa, Ceddo and ReTake. This period was characterised on the one hand by the founding of Channel Four and the ACCT Workshop Declaration (both 1982), which encouraged innovative independent work, and on the other hand by the increasingly free market ideology of Thatcherism. The Collective was at the forefront of debates about the politics of representation: their work argues that 'their racial identities grow out of their social and political histories; they call for a recognition that these racial differences are multiple and complex... they interrogate their own images to confirm their histories'. (Jackson and Rasenberger).

After producing some tape-slide experiments (*Signs of Empire* (1984), *Images of Nationality* (1984)), the Collective produced some of the most challenging and experimental documentaries in Britain in the 1980s. *Handsworth Songs* (1986) has been critically acclaimed for its political commitment and formal experimentation. The film's representation of Black history refracted through the civil disturbances of the 1980s was influential because it engaged with precisely how a group can be marginalised by the practices and ideology of mainstream media. The themes of diaspora, memory and political struggle are also evident in *Testament* (1988), a film about an exiled Ghanaian politician who returns to Ghana two decades after the 1966 coup. *Twilight City* (1989) explores London as a symbolic as well as a civic space, representing ideals of affluence and the hope of a new beginning, and contrasting it with the reality of the harsh welcome afforded many Black migrants.

The Collective's work in the 1990s was characterised by the same experimental interest in memory and history. *Who Needs a Heart* (1991) explores the emergence of Black Power in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. They also tackled the iconic figures of Malcolm X (*Seven Songs for Malcolm X*, 1993) and Martin Luther King (*Dr Martin Luther King – Days of Hope*, 1997). Both these films epitomise the critical – yet celebratory – attitude that the Collective has taken to all its subjects. According to Akomfrah, the former film attempts to look at the 'significant silences' in Malcolm X's autobiography, such as his Caribbean mother, and his ambivalent relationship to America: 'we were attempting] to sneak a few of these ghosts into the back door'.

The Collective dissolved in 1998, though its members – most notably Akomfrah – continue to work individually.

Paul Ward, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk