



## Of Time and the City

Directed by: Terence Davies

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Northwest Vision and Media & Digital Departures  
presented in association with the Liverpool Culture  
Company and BBC Films

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through the Merseyside Film and Television Fund a  
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Development Fund, Northwest Regional  
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Attraction Fund, the UK Film Council, the Liverpool  
Culture Company

Executive Producers: Christopher Moll,  
Lisa-Marie Russo

Produced by: Solon Papadopoulos, Roy Boulter  
For Digital Departures: Production Executive: Tracy  
O'Riordan; Production Co-ordinator: Barbara Kirby;  
Pre-production Co-ordinator: Sian Hilton-Parry;  
Production Accountants: Joanne Bendon, Jason  
Potter; Post-production Supervisor: Shuna Frood  
For Northwest Vision and Media: Head of  
Development/Production: Helen Bingham; Finance  
Manager: Colin Phillips

For The Liverpool Culture Company: Executive  
Producer: Fiona Gasper

For BBC Films: Head of Programme Acquisition:  
Steve Jenkins

Production Manager: Karen Radford

Archive Producer: Jim Anderson

Archive Researchers: Mike McKibbin, Angela Byrne  
Written by: Terence Davies

Director of Photography: Tim Pollard

Camera Assistant: Dominic O'Keeffe

Lighting Gaffer: Colin Sage

Editor: Liza Ryan-Carter

Colourist: Jamie Parry

Camera Hire: Fact Media Services

Track/Dolly: Panavision Manchester

Lighting Hire: Pro-Vision Manchester

Music Supervisor (for DNA Music/Quantum Noise):  
Ian Neil

Dubbing Mixer: Adam Ryan-Carter

Sound Engineers: David Coyle, Steven Guy

EPK: Krishna Stott, Philip Shotton

Unit Publicity: Keeley Naylor, Zoe Flower,  
emfoundation

UK 2008©

74 mins

Digital

The screening on Sun 26 Oct will be preceded by a  
2008 filmed interview with Terence Davies from  
*The Culture Show* (BBC 2008. 15min. Digital)

The screening on Wed 29 Oct will include a  
pre-recorded intro by Jason Wood, BFI Executive  
Director of Public Programmes & Audiences

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## Love, Sex, Religion, Death: The Complete Films of Terence Davies

# Of Time and the City

There is something mysterious about Terence Davies' Liverpool from the outset: at the heart of this meditation on the city lies a tension, between urban change as a process that is brutal and unrelenting, and the persistence of memory as something that is delicate and filamentary. We weave our memories into a palimpsest of dreams where time and place melt into each other. Memories become maps through places to which we can never return in a world that is changing all about us.

In *Of Time and the City* Davies presents us with a wondrously idiosyncratic and elegiac journey that is filled with anger, joy and despair. He becomes the 'angel of history' hovering over Liverpool, alternately caressing his troubled city or pouring scorn on the forces that have brought it to its knees. The film is punctuated by quotes from poetry, literature and philosophy that are narrated to us by Davies with a sense of staccato urgency: poignant lines chosen from Chekhov, Engels, Joyce and others inform us that this is a serious film from the outset. This is not a film that panders to an existing audience but one that seeks to create a new one, and Davies is not making a pitch to our touristic curiosity, nor is he using the city in a narrowly didactic sense. This is a deeply personal mode of documentary filmmaking that is imbued with a profound sense of emotional intimacy.

Like Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il vangelo secondo Matteo*, released to general amazement in 1964, Davies uses music to sublime effect. Both Pasolini and Davies select music that, through its apparent incongruity, generates a powerful sense of authenticity and immediacy: faces, images and landscapes are dramatically transformed into far more than their mere physical presence as stones, bricks or flesh. In *Of Time and the City* Davies furiously juxtaposes music with place to transcend the petty cruelties of organised religion or the grinding toil of working-class life. Decaying housing estates are set to Bacarisse; cranes and industrial architecture to Mahler.

Davies reserves his real scorn for the British establishment in all their ineptitude and mean-spirited mediocrity. He exposes the flummery and sexual hypocrisy of organised religion with relish. He excoriates the monarchy and other archaic forms of gluttony that feast on the goodwill of ordinary folk. As we see newsreel footage of the royal marriage – 'Betty and Phil with a thousand flunkies' – and the gilded carriage passes through cheering crowds Davies reminds us that at the time, Britain was home to some of the worst slums in Europe. His droll disdain for the establishment is also extended to its would-be cultural assassins such as The Beatles who are rendered little more than a ghostly and ironic presence. Just as Joe Strummer rejected 'phoney Beatlemania' back in 1977 Davies derides the 'fab four' as looking like 'a firm of provincial solicitors' – 'yeah, yeah, yeah' indeed.

As for post-war architecture Davies notes with acerbic understatement that 'Municipal architecture, dispiriting at the best of times, but when combined with the British genius for creating the dismal, makes for a cityscape that is anything but Elysian.' These would-be utopias had by the early 1970s become spaces of decline and emptiness scattered with broken glass and overlooked by boarded-up windows. 'We hoped for paradise; we got the *anus mundi*': a city in a state of retraction and disorder. Liverpool had become a testing ground

## Love, Sex, Religion, Death: The Complete Films of Terence Davies

### The Terence Davies Trilogy

Tue 21 Oct 18:15 (+ intro by season curator Ben Roberts); Sat 1 Nov 12:10; Fri 7 Nov 20:55

### Distant Voices, Still Lives

Thu 23 Oct 18:20; Mon 27 Oct 18:20;  
Sat 29 Nov 18:30

### Terence on Television

Sat 25 Oct 15:00

### The Neon Bible

Sat 25 Oct 18:10; Sun 16 Nov 18:20

### Of Time and the City

Sun 26 Oct 12:10; Wed 29 Oct 20:45 (+ pre-recorded intro by Jason Wood, BFI Executive Director of Public Programmes & Audiences);  
Fri 28 Nov 20:40

### Remembering Terence Davies

Tue 28 Oct 18:30

### The Long Day Closes

Tue 28 Oct 20:45; Wed 19 Nov 18:20 (+ intro by season curator Ben Roberts)

### The Deep Blue Sea

Sat 1 Nov 15:10; Thu 6 Nov 18:10;  
Wed 19 Nov 20:45

### Sunset Song

Sun 2 Nov 18:00; Mon 3 Nov 20:20

### A Quiet Passion

Fri 7 Nov 18:00; Fri 21 Nov 20:30

### Book Launch: Terence Davies Screenplays, Volumes I and II

Tue 11 Nov 20:00 BFI Reuben Library

### The Unrealised Projects of Terence Davies

Tue 18 Nov 18:20

### Benediction

Sat 22 Nov 20:20; Sun 30 Nov (+ intro by season curator Ben Roberts)

### With thanks to

James Dowling, John Taylor, Dan Copley,  
Sophie Smith, Edge Hill University

## The Terence Davies Estate



### Dear Bud: The Creative Mind of Terence Davies

Edge Hill University, the repository of the Terence Davies Archive, curates a free exhibition of previously unseen materials from Davies' personal archive and the archive of production company Hurricane Films. The exhibition will include materials from both Terence's personal life and film career such as family letters and belongings, behind-the-scenes photos, props and draft scripts, highlighting his career long connection to the BFI, his deep love of music and a glimpse of his creative space with an interactive recreation of his working desk.

1-30 Nov BFI Southbank Mezzanine

where urban experiments had been forcibly grafted onto the damaged city. These new architectural forms were often poorly constructed and maintained, displaying but a faint echo of their exemplary prototypes in European cities, and containing their own versions of built-in senescence to match the social and political neglect of their new occupants.

The archival footage is superbly collated, ranging from the smallest details of family life – such as struggles to keep warm through the dank winter months – to the impact of immense historical events including troops leaving for the Korean War in the 1950s or the large-scale demolition of the city in the 1960s. The grandeur of the past – smartly-dressed crowds waving hats, football before its decent into greed and venality, and above all a sense of dynamism and industriousness – is counterpoised with the bleak emptiness of the post-industrial city.

Liverpool has been the traumatised epicentre of Britain's full-scale industrial decline since the 1960s with a greater population loss than almost any other British city. Unlike former industrial cities in Europe such as Hamburg or Milan, which have successfully rebuilt themselves, it is apparent that Liverpool's contemporary renaissance is slender indeed: not a replenished civil society or newfound industrial acumen but a retail desert populated by gaggles of drunken figures tottering around beneath the glare of streetlights and security cameras.

The final tracking shots of gentrified docks and warehouses evoke a sense of placelessness: these waterside developments with their familiar 'brandsapes' could be any one of a number re-fashioned industrial waterfronts from Baltimore to Buenos Aires. 'As we grow older,' observes Davies, 'the world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated... and now I'm an alien in my own land.' We float with Davies across neon-lit landscapes or hover over boutiques and wine bars that were once factories or churches. 'We are being gathered in at gloaming,' intones Davies, as the city becomes a myriad of strange illuminations in the failing light. What has Liverpool been? What have we been?

Beautiful and scathing in equal measure, *Of Time and the City* must surely rank as one of the best films about a British city that has ever been made. But the film is not simply about Liverpool: it is also a mordant response to the failures and disappointments of post-war Britain and a bittersweet exploration of the delicate connections between memory and place that anchor our sense of individual and collective identity amidst the tumult of historical change.

Matthew Gandy (Professor of Cultural and Historical Geography and Fellow of King's College, University of Cambridge), *Of Time and the City* DVD booklet essay (BFI, 2009)