

The Scala London

Underground Film Map

1916 – 2016



London's radicals, underworlds and counter-cultures over a century of cinema

www.thebeekeepers.com/scalaunderground

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Ever wondered how the London Underground programmed by the Scala – the legendary film club that was once at King's Cross in the Eighties – would look?

Wonder no more: in homage to Scalarama – a national festival of cinemas of every conceivable size and variety, held in the UK each September – we've made a map of the British capital's underground cinema century. There are 267 stories in the naked city of London (if you leave out DLR and Overground) and here they all are. The main inspiration for the map came from the legacy of the Scala cinema itself.

John Waters said of his one visit to the Scala:

“It was like joining a club, a very secret club, like a biker gang or something. I remember the audience was even more berserk than any midnight show I had ever seen in America. Maybe they were on ecstasy, I don't know, but it was a really raucous audience. It was so great – but it was almost scary.”¹

Co-founder Stephen Woolley (who went on to produce ‘Scandal’, on the map at Lancaster Gate, and ‘Made in Dagenham’, at Plaistow) has said of his role in the film club’s formation, after stints working at Screen on the Green in Islington and managing the more consciously political The Other Cinema:

“I had, in the meantime, discovered two cinemas in America whose programmes I greatly admired: the Nuart in Los Angeles, and the Roxy in San Francisco. They both showed a smorgasborg of movies presented in a stylish way with a diary-like programme [...]”²

“I had fire in my belly and wanted to create an alternative NFT, where you could laugh at Buñuel, weep at Sirk and scream at George Romero. In that first month we showed all-night Judy Garland classics and a celebration of Gay Pride Week shoulder to shoulder with macho men such as Toshiro Mifune, Robert Mitchum and John Wayne.

We put on double bills, triple bills, all nighters on Friday and Saturday, and had a fully licensed bar with the best jukebox in London; the original venue in London's Charlotte Street became a magnet for all sorts: New Romantics, off-duty policemen eager for a dose of Clint Eastwood, Chilean refugees, rockabillics, and Divine fans lapping up Pink Flamingos.”³

¹ Tony Paley, 31st July 2011 ‘Cinema of sin: London's old Scala picturehouse’ Guardian, London.

² Stephen Woolley, 2011 ‘A Scala Memory’ in ‘Scala Forever: Taking Cinema Back for the Future’ Scala Forever, London.

³ Stephen Woolley, 5th August 2010 ‘Beyond B-movies: Recreating The Scala's movie mecca’ Guardian, London.

Our rules of thumb in selecting films for the Scala map were:

1. We could imagine the Scala showing the film, if it were still around physically as a film club in an old cinema building.

(That is, in addition to the spirit of the Scala being channelled by the good people involved in the Scalarama film festival).

“We,” in this case, are BeeKeeper-about-town Tim Concannon and poet, novelist and film critic Roz Kaveney. Tim is in the habit of writing about himself in the third person (mainly for the lulz).

2. The film was made at – or has some link to – the station, which can include links to the stars, cast and crew.

Some of these associations are very strong.

The sequence where a commuter is savaged by the lycanthrope Yank tourist in ‘An American Werewolf in London’ was made at Tottenham Court Road station.

‘Hidden City’, mid-Eighties Channel Four weirdness starring Charles Dance and Richard E Grant, is about the British government’s pre-digital network of secret archives, including some stored in the eight London Underground stations with deep-level air-raid shelters that were built during the Blitz. One featured in ‘Hidden City’ is the Goodge Street Deep Level Shelter on Tottenham Court Road. It’s opposite Torrington Place, and near to Warren Street station (which is where it is on the Scala map).

In other cases, the link is – admittedly – quite tenuous. There isn’t much to be said in terms of cinematic history about Fairlop. However, Fairlop Fair was an important fixture in London’s calendar for several centuries and there’s a good fairground sequence in ‘Saturday Night and Sunday Morning’.

3. For the jollies.

This last point is quite significant to many of the selections we made for the map. A lot of the choices are capricious, not to mention whimsical. Children's Film Foundation film 'One Wish Too Many' (1956), the film at East Ham station, is about young Tony Richmond who becomes the luckiest lad in Poplar when he finds a magical marble of his very own and which grants him any wish.

'One Wish Too Many' is unlikely to be receiving a full restoration by the British Film Institute and international distribution as a neglected masterpiece of post-war cinema, any time soon.

Made around the futuristic Lansbury Estate (named after Labour leader, radical firebrand and grandfather of Oliver Postgate and Angela, George Lansbury) the film is mainly of interest for the purposes of the Scala map because Tony wishes for a giant steam-roller. With it, he goes on a rampage of High Modernist architectural criticism, trashing the crumbling, bomb-damaged remains of the old East End.

In this regard, 'One Wish Too Many' is very much like the Rita Tushingham starrer 'A Place to Go' (1963). A kitchen sink drama about the changing lives of working class Londoners, who mostly walk around bomb sites near Old Street, no one is going to claim it's a lost classic.

However, like a few films on the map which have been restored and re-released as part of the BFI's 'Flipside' Blu-ray and DVD series recently – 'Nightbirds' (1970), at Whitechapel station on the map; 'The Moon Over the Alley' (1975) at Notting Hill – and also like the 1969 James Mason-narrated documentary 'The London Nobody Knows', these films are of interest now mainly because they give a glimpse of a lost world.

These movies are a time machine taking us back to a decaying Victorian and Edwardian London, shattered by German bombs, eaten away from the inside by post-War austerity, rented by the new people moving into London from the Fifties onwards and as part of the “Windrush”, then squatted by hippies and punks. In an overheating glass and steel London – a greenhouse where everyone is monitored on CCTV and is monitoring themselves and everyone else with smart phones – the footage of this other, more anonymous, disappeared London might as well be being beamed to us now from Mars.

(‘The London Nobody Knows’ enjoyed a period of popularity a few years ago on DVD-re-release, when ‘psychogeography’ was A Thing. At one point in the documentary Mason wanders along the line by Camden Roundhouse near to Chalk Farm underground station, where it’s marked on the Scala map. A former engine shed next to the North London railway line, shortly after the documentary was made The Roundhouse became a pivotal venue in the London counter culture).

There are four films on the map with Rita Tushingham in. In addition to ‘A Place to Go’, there’s Richard Lester’s ‘The Knack ...and How to Get It’, plus Lester’s and Spike Milligan’s ‘The Bed-Sitting Room’ (1969) at Leyton, another movie restored as part of BFI’s ‘Flipside’ series and released on DVD a few years ago.

(Following a nuclear misunderstanding with the Soviet Union, the Queen’s char woman Mrs Ethel Shroake of 393A High Street, Leytonstone, is next in line to the throne. Rita Tushingham is among the twenty survivors in Britain and, with Arthur Lowe and Mona Washbourne, lives in a tube carriage on the Circle Line, actually shot on the Aldwych platform of Holborn station).

The third film on the map with Tushingham in is ‘The Leather Boys’ (1964) which is at Hanger Lane on the Scala map, near to the Ace Café which features in the film as the biker’s hang out. Dot (Rita Tushingham) and biker Reggie (Colin Campbell) get married but things quickly turn sour. Reggie grows closer to his eccentric mate Pete (Dudley

Sutton). Considered daring at the time because it portrayed gay characters, the film is a time capsule of the Rocker lifestyle to go alongside the depiction of Mods in 'Quadrophenia'.

Incidentally, 'Quadrophenia', made in 1979, is on the map at Shepherd's Bush Market, which Jimmy Cooper (Phil Daniels) and his Mod mates drive their scooters round at night. There's another Mods-and-rucks film – 'Bronco Bullfrog' (1969) – at Stratford where Del Walker and a few of his friends, all with equally dead-end lives, fail at robbing a café.

There are two – count'em two! – films featuring the late and much-missed front-man of psychedelic Mod outfit The Small Faces, Steve Marriott. He acts alongside a young David Hemming in the 1963 vehicle for Joe Meek's musical acts, 'Live It Up!' (At Upminster on the map since it features Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, Ball being from nearby Hornchurch). Marriot, appearing as himself, performs on board the pirate Radio London ship moored in the Thames in "Pop and cop" B movie 'Dateline Diamonds' (1966), released with 'Doctor in Clover' starring Leslie Phillips as the main feature in cinemas.

Marriott grew up on Strone Road, Manor Park. He said 'Itchycoo Park' referred to in the title of The Small Faces hit was Valentine's Park, where he played as a kid. Known locally for its wasps, it's near to Gants Hill underground station.

Both 'Quatermass' films are on the Scala map. 1955's 'The Quatermass Xperiment' is at Canning Town and 1967's 'Quatermass and the Pit' is at Chiswick Park: the church where the railway worker Sladden seeks refuge from terrifying visions of the Martian society's ritual eugenics is St Nicholas's, Chiswick.

There are four David Warner films. Archway station on the map is 'Morgan – A Suitable Case for Treatment' (1966). David Warner and Irene Handl have a heart to heart by Marx's grave in nearby Highgate Cemetery. Chigwell is 'Time Bandits' (1981),

in which David Warner plays Evil, Chigwell being near to where John Cleese's smarmy Robin Hood sequence was filmed in Epping Forrest. Highgate on the map is 'From Beyond the Grave' (1974). The title sequence of the last of the Amicus horror anthologies was shot, like 'Morgan', in Highgate Cemetery. In one vignette Warner plays a David Hemmings-style young shit about town. He buys a mirror from Peter Cushing's antique shop, then after an ill-advised séance unleashes the trapped spirit of a Victorian serial killer. He's also in 'The Omen' (1976) which on the map is at Northwick Park. After a fall, Katherine Thorn (Lee Remick) recuperates in Northwick Park Hospital. 'The Omen' also has (second Doctor Who) Patrick Troughton in, who was born in Mill Hill; hence another of his films, 'Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger' made in 1977, is at Mill Hill East.

If there'd been an adequate excuse we'd also have snuck in David Warner as disco Jack the Ripper, pursued in the Time Machine by Malcolm McDowell's H G Wells to Twentieth Century San Francisco, in Nicholas Meyer's sublime 'Time After Time' (1979).

(McDowell's on the map twice: 'A Clockwork Orange' made in 1971 is at Fulham Broadway; and 'O Lucky Man!' made in 1973, is at Hammersmith, District and Piccadilly branch).

Brighton-born Ray Brooks is on the map three times as well: 'Cathy Come Home' (1966) at Camden Town, 'The Knack ...and How to Get It' (1985) at Goldhawk Road – the 'White Pad' is nearby at 1 Melrose Terrace, Hammersmith – and 'Daleks – Invasion Earth: 2150 A.D.' (1966) at Parsons Green.

Like Rita Tushingham, we can't get enough of Ray Brooks, Malcolm McDowell and David Warner. So you see what we mean about whims and caprices in terms of movie choices on the map.

The point of this is: that's exactly how the choices of films at the Scala were made. Famously, members of the collective that ran the cinema club could get into furious

rows with one another about what to put on. Any selection of films is, ultimately, subjective and usually personal. You can easily imagine Scala running Rita Tushingham and Ray Brooks all-nighters.

Once we made our selection it was interesting to see which directors and actors kept popping up.

Some you'd expect: Ken Russell ('The Rainbow' at Chesham, 'The Boy Friend' at Preston Road, 'Savage Messiah' at Kensal Green, 'The Lion's Mouth' at Sudbury Hill); Julien Temple ('Absolute Beginners' at White City, 'The Filth and the Fury' at West Kensington, 'London: The Modern Babylon' at Tottenham Hale).

Derek Jarman ('Jubilee' at Canada Water, 'The Tempest' at Blackfriars, 'Savage Messiah' again, which Jarman designed sets and costumes for); Terry Gilliam ('Brazil' at Holland Park, 'The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus' at London Bridge, 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail' at Loughton, 'And Now for Something Completely Different' at Totteridge & Whetstone); Michael Powell ('Tales of Hoffman' at Convent Garden, 'The Red Shoes' at Ickenham, 'Peeping Tom' at Oxford Circus, 'Black Narcissus' at South Ruislip).

Director Richard Lester's career typifies the period after World War Two when the mainstream and counter cultures converged in British film ('It's Trad Dad!' at Hatton Cross, 'A Hard Day's Night' at Goodge Street, 'The Knack ...and How to Get It' at Goldhawk Road, 'Help!' at Bond Street, 'The Bed-Sitting Room' at Leyton). Producer Stephen Woolley is on the map three times: for the Scala itself which he co-founded ('King Kong' at Kings Cross); and for his films 'Made in Dagenham' at Plaistow and 'Scandal' at Lancaster Gate.

Actors who left their imprints firmly on London's collective unconscious in the Twentieth century are also present and correct. Dirk Bogarde ('Victim' at Charring

Cross, 'The Blue Lamp' at Royal Oak, 'The Servant' at South Kensington, 'Darling' at Stamford Brook). Peter Sellers is the greatest single presence on the map. It could be argued he connected all the London underworlds and subcultures of the Twentieth Century, up until the Punk period. ('I'm Alright Jack' at Northfields, 'The Magic Christian' at Southwark, 'The Case of the Mukkinese Battle Horn' at East Acton, 'The Smallest Show on Earth' at Kilburn, 'The Lady Killers' at Kings Cross, 'Never Let Go' at Kilburn Park, 'The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film' at Woodside Park).

Punk was where Peter Cook took over. He's in 'Bedazzled' at Gunnersbury, 'The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer' at Hammersmith (Hammersmith and Circle branch), and 'The Bed-Sitting Room' at Leyton. Derek to Cook's Clive, Dudley Moore is not only in 'Bedazzled' and 'The Bed-Sitting Room' but also '30 is a Dangerous Age, Cynthia' at Barking (where Moore was from).

There are surprises, too; persistent screen presences summoned from London's communal dreamtime, apparitions one might not expect in an admittedly partial selection of the odd, the outré and the brazenly exploitative.

One is Valerie Hobson, who plays Elizabeth Lavenza, Henry Frankenstein's fiancée in 'Bride of Frankenstein' at Dagenham Heathway. (God Mother of English feminism and mother of 'Frankenstein' author Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, grew up on a farm in Barking and Dagenham from 1765). Hobson also plays the adult Estella in David Lean's 'Great Expectations', (at Chancery Lane) and is the prim and virtuous Edith D'Ascoyne in 'Kind Hearts and Coronets' (at West Action).

In real life, Hobson's second marriage was to British politician John Profumo, the focus of the scandal which rocked Macmillan's government in 1963, when – as a Minister – Profumo admitted lying to the House of Commons about his relations with Christine Keeler (the subject of 'Scandal' at Lancaster Gate).

After the Keeler affair ended Profumo's political career, Hobson stood by her man much as she stands by Henry in 'The Bride of Frankenstein' despite his dalliance with Pretorius's experiments. The couple dedicated their lives to charity, in John Profumo's case becoming a trustee of Toynbee Hall in the East End in the 1980s.

Hobson's co-star in 'Bride of Frankenstein' Elsa Lanchester had an equally unconventional life. Growing up South of the River in Lewisham, her parents were socialists, atheists and never married. Elsa became a darling of the bohemian set. Evelyn Waugh made a home movie with her in. H G Wells wrote several short silent films in which Elsa starred in 1928. She met Charles Laughton and eventually moved to Hollywood with him, where they married and became US citizens.

Elsa had a long career even though her few moments on screen as The Bride have eclipsed all her other acting roles, including appearing in 'Mary Poppins', on TV in 'The Man From UNCLE', duetting with Elvis Presley in 'Easy Come, Easy Go' and playing the mother in the original 'Willard'. She also continued to perform the off-colour music hall songs which had made first her famous in cabaret, which she recorded on LP in the 50s.

As a co-founder of the tiny Turnabout Theatre (referring to the way streetcars could travel in both directions) she appeared alongside the satirical marionettes of the gay truple, the Yale Puppeteers. Their appreciative audience of polysexual Hollywood royalty often saw themselves sent-up affectionately in puppet form. Turnabout Theatre are also responsible for giving African American music legend Odetta her first showcase. The exact nature of Lanchester's relationship with Laughton, who it's often claimed was gay, was never clear to the public but they remained together from 1929 till his death in 1962.

In many ways Hobson and Lanchester led similar lives to their contemporary Coral Browne (in 'The Killing of Sister George', at Shepherd's Bush, Browne plays the lesbian television producer who comes between Beryl Reid and Sussanah York. While making

‘Theatre of Blood’ – at Putney Bridge on the map – she met Vincent Price, eventually marrying him and moving to the USA. Price was bisexual).

The common representation of Bright Young Things is of tragic ‘It’ girls like Elizabeth Ponsonby, the socialite contemporary of Cecil Beaton and Waugh who died before she was 40. Hobson, Lanchester and Browne represent a neglected group of women who could well be called The Unflappables. These are women who emerged from an artistic and theatrical demimonde – mainly that of London – in the period between two world wars. These women artfully navigated the patrician sexual and political attitudes of the time, and survived well into the Twentieth Century with varied careers and relatively-speaking happy private lives. They did so without succumbing to the clichés of drugs, decline and disregard which the English-speaking world usually preferred meted out as punishment to women who – within the sedate constrictions of the era – did what they wanted, when they wanted.

There are many other unexpected patterns, we notice, and others that – no doubt – people will spot but which have passed us by so far.

(Ringo Starr and Keith Moon crop up a lot...

Moon in ‘That’ll Be The Day’ at Oakwood, ‘Stardust’ at Northolt, ‘Son of Dracula’ at Alperton, the documentary about Who managers ‘Lambert & Stamp’ at Acton Town, and on the soundtrack to ‘Quadrophenia’ at Shepherd’s Bush Market.

Ringo’s in the two Fab Four films, ‘A Hard Day’s Night’ at Goodge Street, ‘Help!’ at Bond Street, as well as Apple film ‘Son of Dracula’, ‘That’ll Be The Day’, plus he’s also in ‘The Magic Christian’ with Sellers, at Southwark. In the cleared site that became the National Theatre afterwards, Peter Sellers and Ringo – both in lab coats and gas masks – stand by a large barrel filled with piss, blood and animal shit, to which they’ve added thousands of bank notes. Announcing “Free money!” they entice City workers from Waterloo Bridge to submerge themselves in the septic tank in order to recover the cash.

The commuters sink below the surface of the effluent to ‘Something in the Air’ by Thunderclap Newman. 1969 was still the age of satire, after all...)

This isn’t the definitive Scala London map. It’s a flight of fancy, an imaginative conceit. It’s not the definitive London Underground film map, either.

People will want to make their own choices for each station, working on the general principles we’ve used. We’d love it – and actively seek out and welcome – passionate argument about which films should go where.

Also, whose map is it? Want to make something of it, tough guy / gal? We all like tough guys, don’t we, huh? HUH?

... Yeah, that’s what I thought.



At this stage we’ve left off Overground and the DLR line too, because... you have to start somewhere. There’s an argument that the Modernist simplicity of Harry Beck’s Thirties design has allowed space for the clutter of complexity to build up over the rest of the century, a complexity which in the Twenty First Century undermines the parsimony of his ‘classic’ maps.

That tension exists in London’s culture now, too. Previously, simplicity – space, greater legibility of public spaces in relation to one another – led to an increasing freedom of movement for increasing numbers of diverse peoples within the city. Unifying London with one underground train system gave rise, over eight or more decades, to an electrified culture. This is opposed to what is now an increasing supervening complexity reinforcing a monoculture of pop-up gin bars, barista cafés and

secret cinemas; an ever-greater reliance across all classes of people on inside knowledge to get around, to get a job, get a flat, get ahead.

There are films we left out and themes we would have liked to explore more on the map, which you could argue are omissions.

South Asian cinema is as big as Hollywood in terms of output of films, and the historic links between London and the subcontinent in cinema are strong. South Asian film-makers in London are represented by Ruhul Amin's 1986 Channel Four film 'A Kind of English'. The Sarah Gavron-directed 2007 film of Monica Ali's novel 'Brick Lane' gets the accolades but Amin's earlier representation of the life of an East London Bangladeshi family is more interesting in terms of the Scala map. This is because it was made in an era when the Arts Council and Channel Four had a broader view of the value of British film than its commercial worth alone.

As well as Amin, Channel Four supported experimental and ground-breaking British Asian film-makers, including making Stephen Frear's and Hanif Kureishi's complex, sweet and funny drama about race and sexuality 'My Beautiful Laundrette' (the laundrette was at 11 Wilcox Road near Vauxhall station) and Gurinder Chadha's and Meera Syal's 'Bhaji on the Beach'.

Hindi cinema is on the map too: Manoj Kumar's 'Purab Aur Paschim' (1970) has acquired a kitsch notoriety for its depiction of Westernised Non Resident Indians in London, and features a shot of Euston station (where it is on the map), the point in London's public transport network where traditionally South meets North. Kumar has a surprisingly sympathetic view of hippies and the counter culture; along with administering a fair amount of directorial drubbing to the vanity and loose morals of the former colonial power, and Non Resident Indians who smoke and go to night clubs.

Another Mumbai-produced film on the map is at Rayners Lane's, near to where the Art Deco former cinema the Grosvenor on Alexandra Avenue – built in 1936 – is now

home to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe. This new, contemporary use of a classic Modernist movie theatre reflects the adaptable cultures of the communities that make up Harrow, including London's Parsis. Many of Mumbai's exquisite Art Deco buildings are cinemas owned by the city's Parsis, including the Liberty, built in the year of India's independence from British rule in 1947. 'Pestonjee', starring Naseeruddin Shah, Anupam Kher, Shabana Azmi and Kiron Kher, directed by Vijaya Mehta, is an intimate drama examining the interior life of Mumbai's Parsi community in the 1950s and 60s. An Indian film by a woman director, 'Pestonjee' is as rare a thing as a surviving Art Deco picture palace and Mumbai's Zoroastrians.

The film at Osterley is 'Provoked' (2006), a problematic dramatisation of the case of Kiranjit Ahluwalia who killed her abusive husband. 'Provoked' is directed by Jag Mundhra and stars Aishwarya Rai along with Robbie Coltrane and Miranda Richardson. The Kiranjit Ahluwalia case led to the formation of Southall Black Sisters, one of the UK's formative feminist groups. Co-founders Pragna Patel and Rahila Gupta, merged in the film to create one character played by Nandita Das, say the film took "a lot of artistic license". 'Provoked' is a flawed but worthwhile attempt by Indian film-maker Jag Mundhra – who had made a name for himself in Hollywood making exploitation pictures – to depict an important story.

Also worth a mention in exotic West London are two Selar Shaik Sabu films. Sabu, beloved around the world for his roles in Powell and Pressberger movies, was India's first international film star but he has still to receive recognition in his home country.

In 1937, Danemead House, Northolt (rebuilt in 1939 as Danemead Grove) was, briefly, home to Sabu who had recently arrived from India to film extra footage for the Zoltan Korda-directed 'Elephant Boy'. The Gaumont British Pictures temporary film studio was off Eastcote Lane, nearby. Elephants were delivered by train to Northolt station and led up Eastcote Lane for Sabu to work with them.

'Elephant Boy' is on the Scala map at nearby South Harrow, along with 'Black Narcissus' at South Ruislip. Powell and Pressberger's film about tormented desire in a nunnery high in the Himalayas, released only a few months before Indian independence, has a subliminal post-colonial subtext.

With the British presence declining, The Old General who rules the valley has become a yogic hermit while The Young General who will inherit (Sabu) wears 'Black Narcissus' perfume from the Army and Navy store in London.

Sabu as The Young General asks Kerr's nun, who's also his teacher:

"Oh Sister, don't you think it's rather common to smell of ourselves?"

Critic Dave Kehr has said the final scenes – nuns abandoning their building and leaving via mountain passes – could have been interpreted by British viewers as "a last farewell to their fading empire [...] a respectful, rational retreat from something that England never owned and never understood."

An emerging international star from London's Indian community is Dev Patel from North Harrow, marked on the Scala map by his forthcoming film 'The Man Who Knew Infinity' about Tamil mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan, who with almost no formal training made huge contributions to mathematics.

'My Beautiful Laundrette' is about London's Pakistani and Indian communities. Riz Ahmed – rapidly becoming Asian Britain's hottest film property in Hollywood, in every sense of the word, after his role in 'Nightcrawler' (2014) – is in Chris Morris's 'Four Lions' (on the map at West Harrow) and Plan B's 'Ill Manors' (at Upton Park).

However, actors and film-makers associated with Pakistan are routinely ignored in comparison with the cinema of India, even to the culture of a South Asian London more

broadly. That's an asymmetry we're acutely aware of and one we'd like to rebalance in future versions of the map.

Black British film-makers and actors are represented on the map as well.

Clapham South is 'Death May Be Your Santa Claus': writer and director Frankie Dymon Jnr made what's arguably the only British black power film, about a black British student who fails his exams and fantasizes an affair with a woman on the phone. Featuring the prog rock band The Second Hand, Dymon's film includes striking imagery that bears comparison with Sun Ra's 'Space Is The Place', the films of Ken Russell, Jodorowsky, Kubrick or Zeffirelli. One especially stunning sequence is of a woman dressed as the Virgin Mary, running down a street of burned-out houses. This cuts to a roving camera following the sounds of The Second Hand rehearsing in a dingy squat.

Dymon is in the tradition of English eccentrics such as Vivian Stanshall (his 'Sir Henry Rawlinson at Rawlinson End' is at Blackhorse Road, near where he grew up in Walthamstow), and Sir John Betjeman (whose much-loved 1973 BBC documentary 'Metro-Land' is at Chorleywood).

Other idiosyncratic black film-makers on the map are Isaac Julien – Russell Square, 'Young Soul Rebels'- and Julian Henriques, whose 'Babymother' – one of the few Black British films given a theatrical release in the UK since the 1980s – is set in Harlesden.

Henriques has gone on to be an academic, writing about reggae sound systems as sonic sculpture. Eschewing a "gritty" social realism and the "problems" of being black in London – the same approach Henriques took with his previous, Peckham-set film 'We The Ragamuffin', almost all the dialogue and music of which is in Jamaican patois – 'Babymother' is a widescreen musical with an entirely black cast, which has more in common with 'Sunshine on Leith', Dennis Potter's 'The Singing Detective' and Julien

Temple's 'Absolute Beginners' than it does with later films about the inner city like Noel Clarke's 'Kidulthood' or Plan B's 'Ill Manors'.

Honorable mentions on the Scala map for depictions of Black London also go to: 'Flame in the Streets' at Kentish Town, 'To Sir With Love' at Becontree, 'Rude Boy' at Mile End, 'Bob Marley and the Wailers: Live! At the Rainbow' at Finsbury Park; and 'The Moon Over the Alley' at Notting Hill Gate. A musical by 'Hair' composer Galt McDermot, the film is set in a crumbling and affordable Portobello Road, Ladbroke Grove, Westbourne Park and North Kensington, a world of bedsits and aspiring hippie rock stars. Recently restored by BFI and released as an extra on one of its Flipside DVDs, the film is a rare dramatic depiction of a vanished Notting Hill: a Caribbean community with an open door to artists and people trying to embrace a less materialistic lifestyle. 'The Moon Over the Alley' includes appearances by Jamaican-born singers Danny Raye, whose 'Revolution Rock' B-side was covered by The Clash on 'London Calling', and Sharon Forrester, who has gone on to provide backing vocals for Burning Spear and Jimmy Cliff, among others.

Julien Temple's love letter to his home, 'London: The Modern Babylon' is at Tottenham Hale (in the film, people discuss the 2011 riots triggered by the police shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham). An artful montage of archive footage and narration, the documentary reflects on a city where over three hundred languages are now spoken.

Any attempt to encapsulate the underground subcultures of London definitively through a list of films is thwarted by the sheer plurality and complexity of its population. Our efforts to embrace that complexity in creating the Scala map are, at best, superficial because they're a direct product of what makes a multicultural city exciting for its inhabitants: your neighbours may not do things the way that you do. The unfamiliarity is thrilling. It's also an opportunity to experiment, to try out new ideas and ways of doing things, and to change.

The earliest “immigrant experience” on the Scala map is from the perspective of a European leaving for the New World: when London-born Charles Chaplin was expelled from the United States in 1952 for his supposed Communist beliefs, his tramp character kicking an immigration officer up the arse in the ‘The Immigrant’ (1917) was cited as evidence of his anti-Americanism. Chaplin grew up in poverty in Kennington, where the film is on the map. At seven, he was placed in a workhouse, the Cuckoo Schools, which is now Hanwell Community Centre, Westcott Crescent, Hanwell. One of Chaplin’s childhood homes is at 39 Methley Street, Kennington. The Order of Water Rats put a commemorative plaque there. Chaplin continues to be revered around the world as the first international movie star and his films are still shown in cinemas. Preserved forever as a ghost on the screen, South London boy made good, Charles Chaplin refuses to go home, and continues to cause mirth and trouble in equal measure.

The experience of having a composite or patchwork identity which is familiar to second and third generation immigrants in London is represented on the map by two films. ‘The Infidel’ (2010) at Brent Cross – writer David Baddiel went to primary school in Brent – is a comedy about a London Muslim man (Omid Djalili) who discovers he’s adopted and that his biological parents were Jewish. Five years after it was made, ‘The Infidel’ now seems like the Coca-Cola Hill Top advert in the giddy optimism of its radical message of tolerance and mutual understanding. ‘Leon the Pig Farmer’ (a wedding sequence was filmed at Swiss Cottage, where it is on the Scala map) tells a similar adoption story but from a North London Jewish perspective: this time the biological father is a distinctly un-kosher farmer played by Brian Glover.

A blind spot on the map may be cinema which is set in London from the Middle and Far East, Africa, Australasia, Central and Eastern as well as films from Western Europe... In Truffaut’s ‘Fahrenheit 451’ based on Bradbury’s 1953 dystopian novel about a fireman (Oskar Werner) whose job is to burn books, there’s a single location shot in London: book burning on the Alton Estate in Roehampton, near Wimbledon station.

'Una lucertola con la pelle di donna' ('A Lizard in a Woman's Skin'), an Italian giallo directed by Lucio Fulci, features a psychedelic chase sequence filmed at Alexandra Palace, near to Wood Green station. Carol Hammond (Florinda Bolkan) is the daughter of a politician. She has nightmares of depraved sex orgies, and a terrifying LSD trip where she commits a murder; only to wake up to a criminal investigation into her neighbour's killing.

'Piccadilly' is at Piccadilly Circus and stars legendary Chinese American femme fatale of the Twenties Anna May Wong as a dancer, in a silent melodrama in which Charles Laughton disrupts the cabaret in a nightclub with a loud complaint about a dirty plate. However, there may be films from Hong Kong or mainland China featuring London locations, that the Scala film club may well have shown, but which we've overlooked. We'd welcome people correcting our inevitable oversights.

'I Am a Cat' at Clapham North is based on the novel by Natsume Soseki, widely considered the greatest modern Japanese writer, who between 1900 – 02, lived at 80b The Chase, Clapham: now a museum dedicated to his work. Soseki wrote of his period in Clapham:

"The two years I spent in London were the most unpleasant years in my life. Among English gentlemen I lived in misery, like a poor dog that had strayed among a pack of wolves."

The David Cronenberg-directed 'Eastern Promises' about the Russian mafia in London starring Viggo Mortensen and Naomi Watts is at Park Royal: the now-demolished Central Middlesex Hospital doubles for Trafalgar Hospital, where Watts's character is training to be a mid-wife.

Jiri Menzel's peerless classic of Czech New Wave cinema 'Closely Watched Trains' is at Roding Valley, Essex – the most Northern corner of North East London – which, with

around 712 passengers a day, is the least-used station on the entire Underground network.

Yet you may well ask: where is the cinema of Germany, Spain, Poland, Hungary and Romania on the map? We are bound to be missing some treasures and rely on you, dear reader, to clue us in.

One usual oversight in compendia of world film which we've tried to avoid making is Arabic cinema. Edgware Road is known for its large Egyptian, Lebanese, Arabic and African communities. The Edgware Road Odeon shows films in Arabic. It's unlikely they'll ever show the psychedelic horror and spy thrillers of Frank Agrama, the Middle East's Roger Corman. 'Wadi Ul-Mawt' aka 'That Man From Tehran' was made in Lebanon and distributed in Iran and in Arabic markets: proof that in 1968 Beirut was swinging every bit as much as Carnaby Street, and with better coffee.

The exploitation and cult cinema of the Arabic world is vast but hardly appreciated internationally. On a future iteration of the Scala map we'd like to include 'Anyab' ('Fangs') Egyptian horror director Mohammed Fouad Shebl's 1981 self-financed homage to Dracula and 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show'.



Speaking of which, another underground stream running through a century of London films is LGBT cinema. As well as 'Rocky Horror' at Sloane Square (where it was first performed in 1973 at the Royal Court's 63-seat Theatre Upstairs) the Scala map's LGBT cruising spots include 'Breakfast on Pluto' at Leicester Square, 'Velvet Goldmine' at Hounslow Central, 'Bride of Frankenstein' – made by gay British director James Whale – at Dagenham Heathway, 'My Beautiful Launderette' at Vauxhall, 'Prick Up Your Ears' at Angel (Joe Orton and his lover Kenneth Halliwell were sentenced to 6 months in prison for stealing and defacing Islington Public Library books), and 'The Private Life of

Sherlock Holmes' at Baker Street. Like most writers since Conan Doyle who have explored the homoerotic subtext of the Great Detective's exploits, the film decides that Holmes and Watson were both straight (but would it matter if they were bi?)

'Victim' at Charring Cross was the first film to show gay men leading secret lives due to the criminalisation of their sexuality, and to depict gay Soho. The BBFC awarded the film an 'X' certificate, including because "the film implies that homosexuality is a choice, which 'is a dangerous idea to put into the minds of adolescents who see the film'." Featuring a cast of gay actors who remained in the closet (Dirk Bogarde, Dennis Price) and speeches where the idiocy of criminalisation is discussed openly, 'Victim' was a ground-breaking film which many critics say changed the British public's attitudes. A drama every bit as important to the LGBT struggle for human rights as 'The Naked Civil Servant', 'Queer as Folk' and 'Pride'.

Of equal importance to London's lesbian culture is 'The Killing of Sister George' at Shepherd's Bush, based on the 1964 Frank Marcus play. Representations of lesbians in films and TV were so rare in the early Sixties that the film adaptation took on extra significance. This was amplified in the film adaptation, including by using real-life London lesbian hangout the Gateways Club as a location.

Also deserving an honorary mention in London's LGBT cinema is 'The Long Good Friday' at Canary Wharf. Made in 1979, the same year that Margaret Thatcher came to power – who as Prime Minister went on to persecute LGBT people during the HIV AIDS epidemic with 'Clause 28', banning councils from "promoting" a gay lifestyle – in the film, old fashioned East End gangster Harold Shand (Bob Hoskins) tries to borrow money from a delegation from the American mafia (led by Eddie Constanine, Lemmy Caution in Goddard's 'Alphaville') to develop an Olympics site in docklands.

Meanwhile, his criminal empire across London is under attack from the IRA because his lieutenant Colin (Paul Freeman), who happens to be gay, has stolen money from

them. Freeman's character ends up being stabbed in the shower by Pierce Brosnan. Surprisingly forward-looking in its attitudes to sexuality, it's implied that Shand and Colin had a relationship during National Service.

The "no questions asked" London of 2016 is one which is tolerant not only of sexuality but which has also, in effect, decriminalised greed and financial corruption too. The result is that two gay men are now free to fall in love and get married but they still can't move in together in London because they can't afford anywhere to live. All the council flats and affordable homes are being sold off to businessmen from China, the Emirates and Russia. The IRA may be stood down now, but the London which 'The Long Good Friday' is a warning of – the City and East London run by dodgy money, bent coppers and international organised crime – is now the reality. London's fantastically corrupt, you could say, but at least it's fantastic.

Author and organised crime analyst Roberto Saviano says the City is the money-laundering centre of the world's drug trade:

“The British treat it as not their problem because there aren't corpses on the street”.

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA) threat assessment:

“hundreds of billions of US dollars of criminal money almost certainly continue to be laundered through UK banks, including their subsidiaries, each year”.

There's a lot of dignity in that, isn't there?

