

Under London's Night Streets

Tim Concannon,
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As the 2016 Scalarama DIY film festival begins, the London Underground is born anew as the Night Tube. With Resonance FM, we invite the public to join us this September as nocturnal flâneurs, exploring the Scala map and links between London films and London locations.

<http://www.thebeekeepers.com/scalaunderground/>

On one of his occasional sojourns in London, the American author Stephen King expounded the view that the city's place names, like 'Crouch End', are "infinitely sinister". "What is crouching?" The horror maestro was heard to ask aloud. "And why does it end?"

‘Artists have made profound use of real and imaginary subterranean worlds that promised places of mystery and a search for truth and power,’

the cultural critic Peter Stanfield observed in the 2011 academic compendium of studies of film-going ‘Explorations in New Cinema History’

‘This quest was mirrored in the excavations carried out by geologists, palaeontologists, anthropologists and archaeologists who sought, through their tunneling, mining and drilling to unravel the ‘Mystery of lost time’. The excavations uncovered a truth about the world’s development; its strata and fossils exposed to the light a time before man, as archaeological digs exposed a hitherto unknown history of man’.

The London Underground is over one hundred and fifty years old, cinema technology is a century old. As the 2016 Scalarama DIY film festival begins, the London Underground is born anew with the advent of the Night Tube. The name itself conjures up the image of a vast pipe emerging from the shadowlands inside the Earth, from the darkness which we usually only glimpse in the cracks between paving slabs; glimpses of the places where woolly bears dwell and do whatever it is woolly bears get up to.

Is the night tube bringing London’s Id, its dreaming, to the surface? Or is it swallowing everyone’s hopes, aspirations, anxieties, nausea, alienation into the submerged maze of tunnels and ducts; Londonder’s whims, caprices, their erotic confusion, their peacock displays of intoxicated abandon, siphoned into one consensual, hypnopompic, hallucinatory miasma between midnight and dawn?

From Friday August 19th, the Central and Victoria lines will run all night and all morning. Services on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines follow in autumn. While post-Brexit fear and loathing are erupting on the pavements above, beneath the tarmacadam are the tracings of London’s collective dreamtime beginning a century and

a half ago (at least). These unconscious patterns are made visible by Harry Beck's simple, beautiful Art Deco masterpiece, the London Tube map.

What will Londonders find to do in the expanded Spacetime, which until recently was the preserve of urban foxes and shift workers in hi-vis vests? Will the capital see a new generation of cinemas and viewing parlours for moving images, channeling the spirit of the Scala film club? (Which, before it landed up at Kings Cross, started its life in the basement of the old Channel Four building on Charlotte Street; the footprint of what was once the Scala theatre, which you can see The Beatles performing in at the end of Richard Lester's 'A Hard Day's Night'; hence on our Scala map – swapping tube stations on Beck's wonderful map for movies filmed near them or associated with them – The Fabs are at Goodge Street).

Resonance FM – London's art radio station – and programme makers The BeeKeepers have created the Scala map and will be broadcasting during the Scalarama season, inviting the public to join us as flâneurs, exploring the links between London films and London locations.

Some of the revelations may be unsettling, like the discovery about humanity's roots made in the film of Nigel Kneale's 'Quatermass and the Pit', when archaeologists unearth a crashed Martian spaceship at 'Hobbs End', an imaginary Tube station in W10 somewhere between White City and East Acton. Hobbs End, had it really existed, would have been built at some point from 1938 when the Central Line track was converted to the four-rail electrification system to take 8 car trains, and Wood Lane station was abandoned as too small for West London commuter's needs

Other discoveries are glorious. Neglected gems like Julien Temple's love letter to lost Soho and White City 'Absolute Beginners'. Julian Henriques's celebration of Harlseden's raggamuffin and Dancehall culture 'Babymother'. Frankie Dymon's 'Death May Be Your Santa Claus', arguably the only British black power film, featuring the prog rock band

The Second Hand, and Dymon's striking imagery that bears comparison with Sun Ra's 'Space Is The Place', the films of Ken Russell, Jodorowsky, Kubrick or Zeffirelli.

Now that we've made our mandala of subliminal and hidden London in the Scala map, with the occasional cooings and cat calls of the Scalarama organisers encouraging us along the way, cinemas and film spaces across London are responding to the succubitic siren songs of the Scala's many spirits.



On Sunday 4th September from 3pm, The **Genesis Cinema** in Whitechapel is showing a double bill of Jack the Ripper films, (£9.50 / £7 concessions) close to where the savage and still-unsolved killings of London sex workers occurred in grim reality. 'Murder By Decree', in which Christopher Plummer's Sherlock Holmes cracks the case with shocking consequences for the British Establishment; and the Hammer classic 'Hands of the Ripper' in which Eric Porter's Freudian psychoanalyst attempts to cure the daughter of the serial killer, even as she replicates her dad's murderous spree in a somnambulistic state.

There'll be a Q&A with fantasy author, poet, critic and Resonance FM broadcaster Roz Kaveney, whose 'Reading the Vampire Slayer' is a formative text on Buffy, who's joined by Kim Newman: film critic, historian of cult film and TV, and author of books including 'Anno Dracula', imagining a London inhabited by the openly vampiric, and who in Whitechapel are hunted at night by 'Silver Knife'.

Roz and Kim are back at **Genesis Cinema** on 11th September from 7pm to discuss 1970's 'Nightbirds' and the East London films on the Scala map. (£9.50 / £7 concessions). Dink (Berwick Kaler) and Dee (Julie Shaw) fall into bed (and sort of in love too), living perpetually near to homelessness on Whitechapel's streets. One of the many overlooked films rediscovered and championed as part of the British Film

Institute's Flipside series, 'Nightbirds' depicts an East London of peeling paint, still falling apart after the Blitz, seen from rooftops and doorways.

When the **Phoenix Cinema** in Finchley shows Neil Jordan's 'Interview with the Vampire' on Friday 16th September at 9pm (£11), based on Anne Rice's cult novel and starring Tom Cruise, you can watch the sequence filmed inside the Phoenix Cinema inside the cinema itself! Bonus points if you're also a real vampire.

On Thurs 15th September, 7:30pm to 11pm Roz Kaveney and friends are back, this time at South London's beautiful **Cinema Museum**, Oval. Join us for a recorded live DVD commentary – for later airing on Resonance FM – of 'The Magic Christian' (£5 / £4 concessions), a film depicting the other side of the swinging Sixties, not the love and peace version but the one where people all wanted to get filthy rich and screw the other fellow, damnit.

The film was partly scripted by Terry 'Easy Rider' Southern from his comic novel, with Pythons Graham Chapman and John Cleese also having a hand in the screenplay (Cleese makes a cameo as a snidely smooth auctioneer).

In the cleared site that became the National Theatre afterwards (hence, on the Scala map, its at Southwark, not that far from Oval) Peter Sellers and Ringo Starr in lab coats and gas masks stand by a large barrel filled with piss, blood and animal shit, to which they have added thousands of bank notes. Announcing "Free money!", they entice City workers from Waterloo Bridge to leap into 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. The Sixties was the era of the British satire boom, after all.

To round our wanderings off, we return to the source of London's cinema: starting at the **Cinema Museum**, Oval from 9:45pm on Saturday 24th September we'll retrace the steps of local boy Charles Chaplin, ending up at his boyhood home in Kennington. Chaplin grew up in poverty. 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. The Order of Water Rats put a commemorative plaque there. He went on to become the first international film star. When 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 Immigrant' was cited as evidence of his anti-Americanism. We'll project it near his plaque, with some appropriate live music. Join us to discover where Chaplin came from and where London's going almost a century later. We'll also be recording people's thoughts about the film and about South London for broadcast on Resonance FM's 'Music for Films'. The film and the walk are both free. Charlie Chaplin moved freely, and so should we.

Imagining London as a film programme made up of the kinds of weird films they used to show at the Scala, but all visualised on the London Tube map, is a never ending game, an endless process of remembering and rethinking the city. We invite everyone to join us in these derives, in thought or in person, and beyond this year.

We'd love it if film clubs want to show some of the films on the map near to their respective Underground stations, and to this end we'll be teaming up with CinemaForAll – the nationwide society of film societies – especially on Sunday 25th September, Home Cinema Day. Resonance FM (probably just me, actually, but as bloke-from-Resonance FM, I) will be happy to come along and interview film fans, film nuts and assorted obsessives in clubs and societies, and in their natural settings, leading the cheer for London on film.

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