

Thu 19 Sep 2024

barbican

Jazz On Screen 2024

EFG London Jazz Festival

Sat 16 Nov – Sat 23 Nov



A Bundle of Blues, US 1933, Dir Fred Waller

- **So Watt: Jazz and Improvisation on British TV + ScreenTalk with comedian Stewart Lee, jazz vocalist Maggie Nicols and writer/ curator Ian Greaves**
– Sat 16 Nov
- **Max Roach @ 100: *Noi insistiamo. Suite per la libertà subito* + *Black Sun***
– Sun 17 Nov
- **Symphonies in Black: Duke Ellington Shorts** – Sat 23 Nov

Coinciding with the [EFG London Jazz Festival](#) from 15 – 24 November 2024, Barbican Cinema is pleased to present [Jazz On Screen](#), a series that explores the intersection of jazz and film and offers audiences a journey through the sights and sounds that have shaped the genre's enduring influence on media and culture.

This now established series opens on **Sat 16 Nov** with ***So Watt: Jazz and Improvisation on British TV***, which illustrates how the rich legacy of jazz was portrayed on British television from the 1970s onwards. Through rare archival footage this programme revisits the groundbreaking moments when jazz innovators boldly redefined the genre's boundaries on screen. The Barbican is delighted that the renowned comedian **Stewart Lee**, known for his love of jazz, will lead a ScreenTalk and panel discussion with the celebrated jazz vocalist **Maggie Nicols** and the co-curator and writer **Ian Greaves**.

Jazz On Screen also includes programmes that honour the legends **Max Roach** and **Duke Ellington**, whose powerful music continues to resonate globally today. Coinciding with the concert **Charles Tolliver celebrates Max Roach @ 100** taking place in the Hall on **Mon 18 Nov** – Barbican Cinema presents two films, both made in 1964, which bring together the cinema and the music of drummer **Max Roach**. The first, ***Noi insistiamo. Suite per la libertà subito***, is a short directed by **Gianni Amico** based on Max Roach's ***We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*** and is a photographic montage that illustrates the history of Black emancipation, with Roach's compositions inspired by **Oscar Brown Jr.**'s poems.

The second **Koreyoshi Kurahara's *Black Sun (Kuroi taiyo)*** is an unconventional anti-buddy film scored by Roach, about a young Japanese jazz fanatic and a Black American GI, both fugitives in Tokyo, as their relationship evolves into an absurd yet tragic cultural clash.

The season concludes on **Sat 23 Nov** with **Symphonies in Black: Duke Ellington Shorts**, a special screening event featuring 16 captivating films that highlight the extraordinary musical legacy of **Duke Ellington** and his Orchestra. Spanning nearly a quarter of a century (1929-1953), these films showcase Ellington's performances in a variety of settings, often accompanied by dancers and singers, including the legendary **Billie Holiday** in ***Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life***.

While the primary allure of these shorts is undoubtedly musical, the narratives provide a fascinating glimpse into the perceptions of jazz and Black musicians during the early era of sound films. Many of the films are Soundies from the 1940s, created for sound-and-image jukeboxes, such as ***Jam Session*** (1942), where **Ray Nance, Rex Stewart, Ben Webster**, and others captivate an audience at an after-hours eatery, and ***Hot Chocolate*** (Cottontail), which features dazzling jitterbugging dancers.

Matthew Barrington, Cinema Curator comments:

*"The EFG London Jazz Festival has always been about celebrating the transformative power of jazz, and this year's **Jazz On Screen** series is a perfect reflection of that mission. These films not only capture the essence of jazz as a dynamic and ever-evolving art form, through rare and iconic performances, but also offer audiences a unique opportunity to witness the magic of jazz in a whole new light."*

Screenings:

So Watt: Jazz and Improvisation on British TV and ScreenTalk with comedian/ writer Stewart Lee, jazz vocalist Maggie Nicols and writer Ian Greaves

Dir various

Sat 16 Nov, 2.30pm

Cinema 3

Dive deep into the captivating world of British jazz as the Barbican celebrates the intersection of jazz and television from the 1970s—a time when the genre's pioneers pushed the boundaries of music and fought to carve out a space in the mainstream. This special program offers a rare opportunity to view groundbreaking performances and to reflect on the enduring impact of these jazz innovators. We will present a collection of rarely seen performances drawn from the British TV archives, shedding light on a vibrant yet often overlooked era of British jazz. These films not only document the thrilling improvisations and experimental techniques that characterised the scene but also capture the essence of the musicians' struggle for recognition.

Open Door: Musicians' Action Group (1974)

Introduced by the inimitable **Spike Milligan** and legendary jazz presenter **Charles Fox**, this programme features rare footage of The Tony Oxley Unit in an audacious performance that redefined jazz improvisation on British television.

Stan Tracey, Norma Winstone and Maggie Nicols also take part in a programme that made by women from the UK jazz community.

***Aquarius: Sounds Amazing* (1975)**

Experience a dynamic and unrestrained performance by saxophonist **Evan Parker** and percussionist **Paul Lytton** at the much missed Unity Theatre, as part of this groundbreaking ITV documentary. The six musicians profiled make pioneering use of "new and rediscovered" instruments, reflecting the spirit of innovation of the era. From Max Eastley's kinetic structures to David Toop's flute and Lytton's dental tools, by way of Hugh Davies' collection of springs and apparatus, submit to a soundscape that is as intense as it is inventive. This film stands as a testament to their fearless exploration of sonic possibilities.

Max Roach @ 100: *Noi insistiamo. Suite per la libertà subito*

Italy 1964, Dir. Gianni Amico, 16min

+ ***Black Sun***

Japan 1964, Dir. Koreyoshi Kurahara, 95min

Sun 17 Nov, 3.30pm

Cinema 2

Koreyoshi Kurahara's 1964 film *Black Sun* (Kuroi taiyo) is a slightly strange, unconventional anti-buddy picture that follows a young Japanese jazz fanatic and a Black American GI, fugitives in Tokyo, as their relationship evolves into an absurd yet tragic cultural clash, scored by Max Roach. Roach's music features prominently as a backdrop to the jazz obsessed protagonists everyday life (his cat is called Thelonius Monk), and speaks to the films directors Koreyoshi Kurahara celebrated, innovative, free-form filmmaking, which captures the anger and anxieties of a generation living in the shadow of postwar Japan, capturing the jazz clubs, their dark shadows interiors.

The pairing of these two films, both made in 1964, shows the international reach of Roach, and underlines his enduring influence.

Symphonies in Black: Duke Ellington Shorts

Dir various

Tue 19 Nov, 7.30pm

Cinema 3

Spanning a quarter of a century (1929-1953), these films showcase Duke Ellington's performances in a variety of settings, often accompanied by dancers and singers, including the legendary Billie Holiday in *Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life*. This film fluidly transitions between Ellington composing in solitude, leading his band in a tuxedo at a concert, and artistic depictions of African American life, including a moving sequence with Billie Holiday portraying heartbreak similar to Bessie Smith's iconic film appearance six years prior.

The programme opens and closes with innovative cinematic techniques. *Black and Tan*, directed by Dudley Murphy, draws inspiration from his collaboration with Fernand Léger on *Ballet mécanique* (1924), adapting its imagery to portray a dancer's (Freda Washington) hallucinations and critiques of racial exploitation amidst its comedic elements.

The inventive wipes in *A Bundle of Blues* (1933) and the rhythmic edits of *Daybreak Express* (1953) by D.A. Pennebaker, capture the vibrant energy of Manhattan's vanished *Third Avenue El*, set to an exhilarating Ellington tune, further demonstrate the artistic ingenuity on display. This screening barely scratches the surface of the diversity presented, which includes a delightful George Pal Puppetoon (Date with Duke), the Delta Rhythm Boys' performance in *Symphony in Swing*, and a visually exclusive homage to Louis Armstrong with a three-minute "History of Jazz" in *Salute to Duke Ellington*.

An unforgettable evening celebrating the music and legacy of one of jazz's most influential figures.

For more info on the **EFG London Jazz Festival**:

www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2024/series/efg-london-jazz-festival

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Standard ticket price: £13/ Members: £10.40/ Concessions: £11

Under 18s: £6, Young Barbican: £5

Barbican press room

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About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [the BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Britten Sinfonia](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Entertainment](#).

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About Barbican Cinema

We connect audiences with a curated programme of international cinema; from celebrated filmmakers to ground-breaking and under-heard voices from past and present.

Our programmes are presented in Cinemas 1 in the main centre and Cinemas 2&3 on Beech Street. Our programme ranges from thematic seasons that respond to today's world, to new releases, ScreenTalks, cross-artform collaborations, family events, access screenings and event cinema that presents the performing arts on screen.

We showcase the work of emerging filmmakers, as well as less familiar work of exceptional filmmakers from the UK and around the world.

We champion the work of Barbican Young Programmers and give stage to emerging musicians in our ongoing film & live music series which includes our flagship collaboration with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

As part of a cross-arts centre, our cinemas are a cultural space for people to share the viewing experience. We strive to be inclusive in everything we do; providing platforms for the widest possible range of filmmakers and ensuring we are an open, welcoming and accessible venue for all our audiences.