

# Melbourne Cinémathèque

## Cast a Dark Shadow: The Beautiful Sadness of Dirk Bogarde

2021

12 – 26 MAY

After beginning his theatrical career in London's West End, Dirk Bogarde (1921-1999) became one of British cinema's most significant and richly talented actors, his distinguished star persona balancing swooning, matinee-idol good looks with an array of dark, complex, turbulent characters. Bogarde's proclivity towards multifaceted, sometimes tortured roles can perhaps be traced to the horrors – for example, he was one of the first Allied officers to enter the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after it was “liberated” – he witnessed during World War II, as well as his necessarily closeted homosexuality. With a sensitive, commanding demeanour, and vividly expressive eyes, Bogarde's screen presence is both subtle and domineering. As his biographer David Huckvale writes: “If Bogarde was starring, the film was simultaneously always about him.” In this regard, it can be said that many of Bogarde's roles well and truly *belong* to the actor, while often exploring the complex sexual, political and social identity of his characters. This season includes many of the landmark films of Bogarde's mature career selected from a wealth of British and European arthouse cinema, profiling his work with six distinguished directors from Liliana Cavani and Luchino Visconti to Rainer Werner Fassbinder. It focuses, in particular, on many of his most notable roles of the 1960s and 1970s, including his indelible performances in Basil Dearden's *Victim* and Joseph Losey's *The Servant*, and presents a rare screening of his valedictory film, Bertrand Tavernier's aching *Daddy Nostalgie*.

WEDNESDAY 12 MAY



### 7:00PM THE SERVANT

Joseph Losey (1963)  
116 mins : M

The first of three collaborations between Losey and celebrated writer Harold Pinter is an uneasy chamber drama involving the privileged Tony (James Fox) and his newly appointed manservant, Hugo (Bogarde in one of his most iconic roles). Adapted from Robin Maugham's 1948 novel, the film's power play is permeated with psychological and sexual tension. Winning three BAFTA awards, Losey's landmark film garnered praise for its candid treatment of class and sexuality as well as Douglas Slocombe's claustrophobic cinematography. With Sarah Miles.



### 9:10PM DADDY NOSTALGIE

Bertrand Tavernier (1990)  
105 mins : G

A delicate three-hander is played out between a charming but selfish man (Bogarde, in his final film), his estranged daughter (Jane Birkin) and embittered, neglected wife (Odette Laure). The sensitive screenplay by the director's former spouse, Colo Tavernier O'Hagan, may be at least partly autobiographical; the film, like a Chekhov play, allows small details to take on a magnified significance. Composed of discrete scenes like moving photos from a private album, the film's montage, Tavernier observed, is dictated not by plot but by emotion.

WEDNESDAY 19 MAY



### 7:00PM THE NIGHT PORTER

Liliana Cavani (1974)  
118 mins : R 18 +

Notorious upon its release, this erotic Nazisploitation film explores the sadomasochistic relationship between a former SS officer (Bogarde) and a Holocaust survivor (Charlotte Rampling) whose compulsive repetition of their past leads to them “recreating” the conditions of a concentration camp. Provocative and perverse, with dark and evocative cinematography by Alfio Contini, Cavani's controversial film examines transgressive behaviour, love and suffering alongside the lasting social and psychological effects of fascism. *Courtesy of Cinecittà Luce.*



### 9:10PM DESPAIR

Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1978)  
119 mins : M

Bogarde plays a Russian Jewish chocolatier in 1930s Germany who plots an escape to Switzerland after becoming convinced that a vagrant (Klaus Löwitsch) is a doppelgänger whose identity he can adopt – though it's clear to all that what he's most trying to escape is himself. In response to Tom Stoppard's adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's absurd novel, a macabre tale laced with melancholy humour, Fassbinder delivers what *The Guardian* calls “an icy, psycho-melodramatic nightmare”, exploring themes of alienation and mental breakdown in oblique, playfully provocative ways.

WEDNESDAY 26 MAY



### 7:00PM VICTIM

Basil Dearden (1961)  
90 mins : M

Anchored by Bogarde's searing performance, this courageous and groundbreaking “social problem” thriller – the first time the word “homosexual” was spoken in a British film – played a key role in the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Britain. Bogarde stars as a married lawyer who risks his career and marriage to investigate the blackmailing of several closeted gay men – including himself – in socially conservative early 1960s London. Like Bogarde's character, the film's smooth and mannered surface only partially obscures an undercurrent of anger, paranoia and injustice.



### 8:40PM THE DAMNED

Luchino Visconti (1969)  
156 mins : M

The first film in Visconti's “German Trilogy” follows the trials and tribulations of an industrialist family who are brutally coerced into manufacturing arms for the Nazis. The film's loose, disjointed structure and provocative, operatic and expressionistic excesses can be read stylistically as a parable of the decline of the Weimar Republic and the ensuing nationalistic lurch towards totalitarianism and fascism: an orgy that culminates in a massacre. Starring Bogarde, Ingrid Thulin and Helmut Berger, and featuring Charlotte Rampling in a supporting role. *Courtesy of Cinecittà Luce.*

# Melbourne Cinémathèque 2021 Screenings

Presented by the Melbourne Cinémathèque and The Australian Centre For The Moving Image.

Curated by the Melbourne Cinémathèque.

Supported by Film Victoria and the City of Melbourne Arts Grants Program.

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## FILM CLASSIFICATIONS:

\* Where a film is labelled "Unclassified 15+" viewers are required to be 15 years or older, unless accompanied by an adult.

† Where a film is labelled "Unclassified 18+" viewers are required to be 18 years or older.

Articles on many films in the program can be found in 'CTEQ Annotations on Film', online at [www.sensesofcinema.com](http://www.sensesofcinema.com)

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