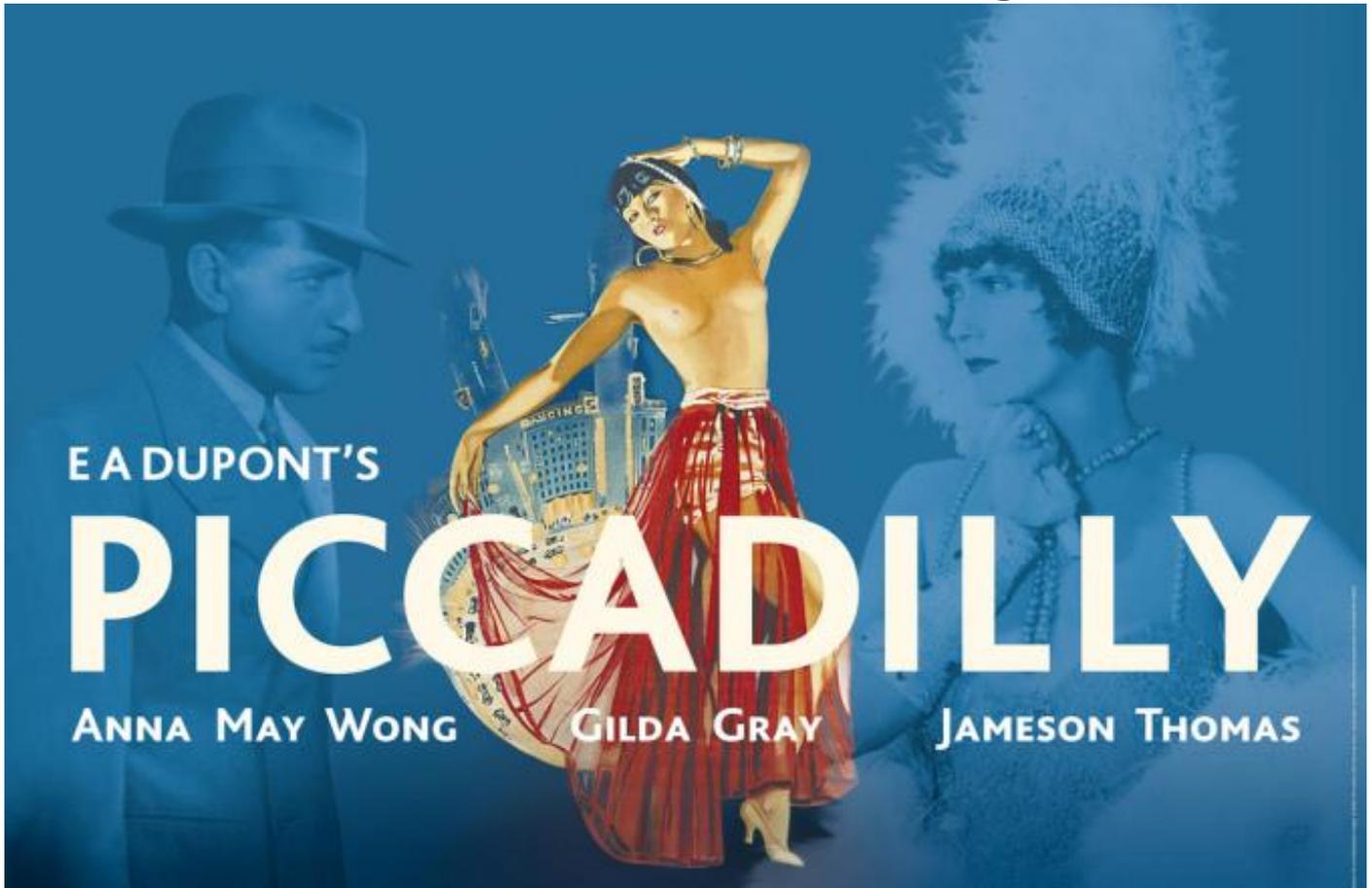




The Main Feature

Season 39 - Issue 9 screening 24.1.19



GB released 1 June 1929 92 minutes (109 minutes restored version)

Director	Edwald André Dupont	Writer	Arnold Bennett
Cinematography	Werner Brandes	Editor	Peter Lambert

Cast

Gilda Gray as Mabel Greenfield	Anna May Wong as Shosho
Jameson Thomas as Valentine Wilmot	Charles Laughton as A Nightclub Diner
Ray Milland as extra in Nightclub scene	Cyril Ritchard as Victor Smiles (as Cyrill Ritchard)
King Hou Chang as Jim (as King Ho Chang)	
Hannah Jones as Bessie, Shosho's friend and dishwashing supervisor	

'*Piccadilly*, restored to its original glory, was a genuine revelation to me. It's a bold, beautifully crafted, completely modern picture...One of the truly great films of the silent era.' Martin Scorsese

Valentine Wilmot, the owner of the popular Piccadilly Club finds his lead male attraction, Victor Smiles (Cyril Ritchard) has quit and that the public has judged Victor's partner Mabel as over the hill. Though they are lovers, Valentine must find another dancer to replace Mabel or face an uncertain future. When a customer (Charles Laughton in his first feature film) complains of a dirty dish, Valentine discovers the answer to all his problems down in the club's scullery...



After many years of supporting roles in Hollywood, Anna May Wong left for Europe in search of better roles. And did she find one. Her electric, sexually-charged performance in *Piccadilly* is a revelation. Wong is mesmerizing as Shosho, the Chinese scullery maid who overnight becomes the toast of London, and the object of sexual desire of all around her. The camera adores Wong, and her beauty glows in every frame. *Piccadilly* was the brilliant apex to Dupont's trilogy of backstage life (*Variété* and *Moulin Rouge*), showcasing the

director's signature mix of great acting, amazing imagery and astonishing camera movements.

This stylish evocation of Jazz Age London, directed by German émigré E A Dupont boasts the dazzlingly fluid cinematography of Werner Brandes and atmospheric sets by Alfred Junge – ranging from the opulent West End nightclub to seedy Limehouse.

It's a fascinating snapshot of 1920s multicultural London and offers one of the few early cinematic portrayals of a rounded, compelling Chinese British character. It shows a more nuanced representation of London's Chinese community than many other films from the period, and even countenances an interracial love affair.

The film was restored and released in anticipation of the centennial of Wong's birth (1904). With her slight, boyish figure, Wong is a modernist icon in the mode of Louise Brooks, whose hairstyle she emulates. Naturally, *Piccadilly's* publicity made much of Wong's exotic beauty: one contemporary poster - for the film's Austrian release - carries an illustration of the star dancing topless. It would have been unthinkable to portray a white actress in this way and, needless to say, no such image appears in the film. It is surprising that the poster issued by the BFI for the restored film (see front page of these notes) bears that image.

Born in Los Angeles to second-generation Hong Kong-Chinese-American parents, Wong became infatuated with the movies and began acting in films at an early age. During the silent film era, she acted in *The Toll of the Sea* (1922), one of the first movies made in colour and Douglas Fairbanks' *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924). Wong became a fashion icon and had achieved international stardom in 1924. Frustrated by the stereotypical supporting roles she reluctantly played in Hollywood, Wong left for Europe in the late 1920s, where she starred in several notable plays and films, among them tonight's film.

Wong spent the next year touring China, visiting her family's ancestral village and studying Chinese culture. In the late 1930s, she starred in several B movies for Paramount Pictures, portraying Chinese and Chinese Americans in a positive light. She paid less attention to her film career during World War II, when she devoted her time and money to helping the Chinese cause against Japan. Wong returned to the public eye in the 1950s in several television appearances.

In 1951, Wong made history with her television show *The Gallery of Madame Liu-Tsong*, the first ever U.S. television show starring an Asian American series lead. She had been planning to return to film in *Flower Drum Song* when she died in 1961, at the age of 56 from cirrhosis of the liver.

Although Wong is mainly remembered for her supporting role in Josef von Sternberg's *Shanghai Express* alongside Marlene Dietrich, her life and career were re-evaluated in the years around the centennial of her birth, with three major literary works and film retrospectives.

Iain McGlashan



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UK film age rating rules get stricter for scenes of sexual violence

Under-15s will no longer be able to go to see films that depict rape and other sexual violence under new rules set by Britain's film ratings body.

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) surveyed more than 10,000 people and found it to be among parents' main concerns.

Any film showing sexual violence will now get at least a 15 rating rather than a 12 or a 12A.

The BBFC also wants its ratings to appear on all streaming services.

BBFC chief executive David Austin said a film like Keira Knightley's 2008 drama *The Duchess*, which was classed as a 12 at the time, would be made a 15 today because it included a rape scene.

"What parents told us was, that's too much for 12-year-olds," he told BBC News. "It's enough that a 12-year-old knows that a rape has taken place. They do not need to see it, no matter how discreetly it's filmed."

In the survey, parents said they were worried about the "sexualisation of society and what they called the pornification of society", according to Mr Austin.

"They are worried about children growing up being exposed to too much too soon, and they want to hold onto their children's childhood as far as they can," he said.

"That's another one of the reasons why from now on we will not be classifying any depiction of sexual violence at 12. We will limit it to 15."

The BBFC also looked at other "real life" scenarios like self-harm, mental health and suicide, but said its existing rules were in line with the public's views.

For example, viewers were happy that Netflix's *To The Bone*, about a young woman dealing with anorexia, was given a 15.

"Parents and children said we were right to do this because that issue is not suitable when it's shown in that way for 12-year-olds," Mr Austin said.

Viewers were less worried about less realistic action violence, such as that seen in James Bond or Marvel films, the survey found.

Meanwhile, 95% of teenagers surveyed said they want online streaming services to carry the same age ratings as cinemas and DVDs.

They already appear on many Netflix shows and films, but Mr Austin said they were working with Netflix to make it 100% - as well as working with other services.

He said: "We are going to be working in 2019 with some of the big platforms to fulfil what the public has asked us to do, which is to ensure those ratings are consistent when you view something at the cinema, whether you view it on DVD or whether you view it on a tablet in your bedroom."

The new guidelines will come into effect on 28 February.

Comments and reactions to: **Three Billboards of Missouri**

Score **0** **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**
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No of reaction slips received = 42

Average Score = 7.4

Good story but wanted a different ending **So much anger in such a lovely area**
Didn't enjoy it but thought it was a good film *Very good, just a bit violent for me*
A very difficult to watch film. That's small towns for you. **Unusual – brilliant!**
Great cast, great film – deserves the accolades! *Rough, ready and realistic – v g acting*
Excellent film – powerful woman comes good! **Brilliant acting**
Still packed with power and pathos on a second viewing
A story with a strong message = anger is destructive
Brilliant acting – beautiful direction/camera work
Frances McDormand brilliant. Just as brilliant on second viewing.
So many morons, so much violence, great acting (Mildred). Cancelled hols in Ebbing!
The violence was unsettling for me but very well acted and believable performances
What was the purpose, unless to show up the state of the mid west of America?
Bleak, multi-layered, almost wholly unsympathetic characters – but works as an absorbing and unique film.
Strong message – strong characters – a very good Film Club choice
Good but unresolved. Someone commented earlier about the club showing films that could be seen in the cinema but I was glad to be able to see this one which I missed when it was released.

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Darkest Hour	8.08
2 nd	Guildford in the Great War	7.56
3 rd	Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri	7.4
4 th	The Violin Teacher	7.2
=5 th	L'homme du train	6.71
=5 th	Bar Bahar (In Between)	6.26
7 th	Death of Stalin	6.26
8 th	The Levelling	5.6
9 th	Phantom Thread	5.16



Next on 14 February:

"Brilliant crowd pleasing biopic with enough drama and humor to entertain and break your heart."

"A delightful comedy told with great taste, in which Meryl Streep stands out of course."

"An utterly delightful film you can't help but smile at."

"If you ever wanted to see Meryl Streep have the time of her life, Florence Foster Jenkins delivers."