



Of Time and the City

Terence Davies

United Kingdom, 2008
English

77 minutes ■ Colour/D-Cinema
Production Company: **Hurricane Films Ltd.**
Executive Producer: **Christopher Moll, Lisa Marie Russo**
Producer: **Solon Papadopoulos, Roy Boulter**
Written by: **Terence Davies**
Cinematographer: **Tim Pollard**
Editor: **Liza Ryan-Carter**
Sound: **Adam Ryan-Carter**

Production: **Hurricane Films Ltd., 19 Hope Street, Liverpool L1 9BQ United Kingdom.**
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Canadian Distributor: **Filmswelike**
International Sales Agent: **HanWay Films**
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While its power and intensity suggest something more exalted, I suppose we must label Terence Davies's newest work an "essay film," which is a rather prosaic way of indicating that it's filled with poetry and insight, arresting images and a polemical spirit of erudite anger and magical nostalgia. Its characters are many but finally only one: the filmmaker himself.

Of Time and the City was commissioned by the city of Liverpool as part of the celebrations surrounding its designation as the European Capital of Culture 2008. Davies was the obvious choice; much of his masterful body of work (*The Terence Davies Trilogy*; *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*; *The Long Day Closes*) breathes through Liverpool's damp lungs. Yet the burghers were surely not expecting a tribute such as this. Davies's social history eschews the men cast in statues for the enormous, convulsive changes wrought on what were once known as the "working classes." He recalls a time of great poverty and camaraderie, when the cinemas were the only palaces his family and friends could actually enter. He remembers scandalous priests and corrupt officials who were never punished, while lonely men in the city's various parks were tossed in jail for a wink and a nod.

He surveys the fatter, less desperate citizens of today, and finds them wanting. Churches have become discotheques, the promenades have emptied, the architecture of heavy Victorian industry seems tailor-made for modern loft living. All well and good, but Davies wonders where the spirit

of community might have gone – and finds some answers through the prisms of post-industrial rot and Catholicism's collapse into the Mersey River.

Of Time and the City is also often great fun. Davies's voice-over, which runs throughout the work, is a delight. An insightful intellectual with a distinctive drawl, he often manages to be incredibly funny in a wry, sometimes cynical and deliriously romantic way. A precise balance between evocative archival footage and newly shot material completes this unique and inspiring work. This is the first film Davies has made in eight years. It would be criminal to make us wait so long for the next one.

■ Noah Cowan



Terence Davies was born in Liverpool. His first successes came with three short films, *Children* (76), *Madonna and Child* (80) and *Death and Transfiguration* (83), which were later combined and screened as a feature, *The Terence Davies Trilogy* (84). He went on to direct the acclaimed features *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* (88), *The Long Day Closes* (92), *The Neon Bible* (95) and *The House of Mirth* (00). *Of Time and the City* (08) is his most recent film.

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