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A New Digital Restoration of

Days of Heaven

Directed by Terrence Malick

with Richard Gere, Brooke Adams, Sam Shepard, Linda Manz

US 1978 | 94 mins | Cert PG

A BFI release

www.bfi.org.uk/releases

Release date: 2 September 2011

Opening venues: BFI Southbank, Edinburgh Filmhouse, Cambridge Arts Picturehouse, Irish Film Institute Dublin, plus selected venues nationwide

Days of Heaven, Terrence Malick's highly acclaimed follow-up to his debut *Badlands*, was the film which announced his characteristically visionary style of filmmaking. It is released by the BFI on 2 September in a beautiful digital restoration, supervised and approved by the director himself.

A tale derived from various Biblical sources, Malick's pastoral period piece is set around 1916 in the wheatfields of the Texas Panhandle. Bill (Richard Gere), his girlfriend Abby (Brooke Adams) and his young sister Linda (Linda Manz) leave the urban hellhole of Chicago to harvest crops for a wealthy, ailing farmer (Sam Shepard). In order to avoid scandal, Bill and Abby pretend to be siblings, but trouble brews when the farmer falls in love with Abby and asks her to be his wife. The story is punctuated by three spectacular manifestations – a flying circus, a swarm of locusts and a raging fire.

Although set in Texas, *Days of Heaven* was shot during the autumn of 1976 in Alberta, northern Canada. Malick's sensitivity to nature and his extraordinary visual awareness frequently caused him to abandon the planned shooting schedule so as to capture such natural

phenomena as a flight of wild geese. He also encouraged cinematographers Néstor Almendros (and later Haskell Wexler) to use a minimum of artificial illumination and to shoot as much as possible in the so-called 'magic hour' which, according to Almendros, is something of a misnomer as it is actually far shorter than an hour: *'It is the moment when the sun sets, and after the sun sets and before it is night. The sky has light, but there is no actual sun. The light is very soft, and there is something magic about it. It limited us to around twenty minutes a day, but it did pay on the screen. It gave some kind of magic look, a beauty and romanticism.'*

Art director Jack Fisk created the farmer's magnificent gothic mansion (inside and outside) from scratch, while Patricia Norris designed the costumes using fabrics from old clothes so as to avoid the look of studio-made costumes. Ennio Morricone composed the soundtrack after the film was completed, allowing Malick to use the music in whatever order he liked so long as he didn't displace the music composed for the wheat fire scene.

Richard Gere came to ***Days of Heaven*** having worked mostly in theatre (he had previously worked with Sam Shepard in a play so the two already had a working relationship). Brooke Adams was also an old friend of Gere (he apparently had a crush on her and was delighted with the casting). Sam Shepard was known then as a radical playwright, not as a film actor (***Days of Heaven*** introduced him to film audiences). And Linda Manz was a 16-year-old schoolgirl who was new to cinema and found it difficult to remember her lines. In the end, her voice-over was a semi-improvisation based on what she understood to have happened in a scene. Subsequently, Malick and editor Billy Weber (who has worked on all Malick's films) whittled down the 60 hours of recorded narration to a total of approximately 15 minutes.

Widely acclaimed as a landmark of 1970s cinema as well as one of the most gorgeously photographed films ever made, ***Days of Heaven*** won Malick 'Best Director' at the Cannes Film Festival of 1979, while Néstor Almendros received an Academy Award for his cinematography. The BFI hopes that Malick fans will relish the opportunity to see this new restoration on the big screen; to first-time viewers whose appetites have been whetted by ***The Tree of Life***, it should prove a revelation.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Days of Heaven plays at selected cinemas nationwide from 2 September. It will form the centrepiece of a **Terrence Malick season** at BFI Southbank from 2 September to 12 October.

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

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