



Film

BAM presents U.S. Theatrical premiere of Franco Rosso's *Babylon* (1980), Mar 8—14

February 5, 2019/Brooklyn, NY—From Friday, March 8 through Thursday, March 14, BAM presents the U.S. Theatrical premiere of Franco Rosso's *Babylon* (1980), a portrait of Caribbean youth, racism, and the dub and roots reggae scene in Thatcher-era London.

Deemed “too controversial, and likely to incite racial tension” (*Time Out*) by the New York Film Festival and never released in North America, Franco Rosso's incendiary film follows a young dancehall DJ (Brinsley Forde, M.B.E., frontman of landmark British reggae group Aswad) in South London as he pursues his musical ambitions, battling fiercely against the racism and xenophobia of employers, neighbors, police, and the National Front. The film features a screenplay by *Quadrophenia* scribe Martin Stellman and beautifully smoky cinematography by the legendary two-time Oscar winner Chris Menges (*Kes*, *Local Hero*, *The Killing Fields*, *The Mission*, *The Reader*).

Babylon is the product of outsiders: director Rosso (1941-2016) was the son of an Italian immigrant (and experienced xenophobic abuse as a child), Stellman was the son of Viennese Jewish immigrants, producer Gavrik Losey was the son of blacklisted Hollywood director Joseph Losey, and composer Dennis Bovell was a Bajan immigrant and falsely imprisoned for running a sound system (the script was partly based on his experiences). Even the film's funding from the National Film Finance Corporation (predecessor to today's Film Council) can be attributed to the enthusiasm of Saudi-born Mamoun Hassan, a filmmaker and then-managing director of the NFFC. Beyond the significance of being the only feature film about London's sound system scene, the film unflinchingly observes the place of marginalized people in a society resistant—to the point of violence—to multiculturalism. *Babylon* is fearless and un sentimental, tempered by the hazy bliss of the dancehall and set to a blistering reggae and lovers rock soundtrack featuring Aswad, Johnny Clarke, Dennis Bovell, and more.

Actor and musician Brinsley Forde, musician Dennis Bovell, writer Martin Stellman, cinematographer Chris Menges, and producer Gavrik Losey are all available for interviews. Please contact Shelley Farmer at sfarmer@bam.org or Gabriele Caroti at gabriele@seventy-seven.co to schedule. Screeners available upon request.

Approx. 95 min. | DCP
A Kino Lorber Repertory / Seventy-Seven Release
Director: Franco Rosso | Screenplay: Martin Stellman
Cinematography: Chris Menges

“Like the reggae music that pulses through it, *Babylon* is rich, rough and real. And like the street life of the young black Londoners it portrays, it's threatening, touching, violent and funny. This one seems to explode in the gut with a powerful mix of pain and pleasure.” —*Variety*

“FEARLESS... Loud and musical and cheerful and funny, and also tragic.” —*The Times* (London)

“REMARKABLE... Its hard edge is undeniable... Never lets go for a moment.” —*The Guardian*

For further press information, please contact:

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[About BAM Film](#)

Since 1998 BAM Rose Cinemas has been Brooklyn's home for alternative, documentary, art-house, and independent films. Combining new releases with year-round repertory program, the four-screen venue hosts new and rarely seen contemporary films, classics, work by local artists, and festivals of films from around the world, often with special



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appearances by directors, actors, and other guests. BAM has hosted major retrospectives of filmmakers like Spike Lee, Chantal Akerman, John Carpenter, Manoel de Oliveira, Luis Buñuel, King Hu, and Vincente Minnelli (winning a National Film Critics' Circle Award prize for the retrospective), and hosted the first US retrospectives of directors Arnaud Desplechin, Hong Sang-soo, Andrzej Zulawski, and Jiang Wen. Since 2009 the program has also produced BAMcinemaFest, New York's home for American independent film, and has championed the work of filmmakers like Janicza Bravo, Andrew Dosunmu, Lena Dunham, and Alex Ross Perry. The 12-day festival of New York premieres, now in its eleventh year, runs from June 12—23, 2019.

Credits:

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Special thanks to: Jonathan Hertzberg/Kino Lorber Repertory; Gabriele Caroti/Seventy-Seven

General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place (between Lafayette Ave and Hanson Place), houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas features first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater) D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue

Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center

Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.