March 8, 2011 (XXII:8)
John Mackenzie, **THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY** (1980, 114 min)

**THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY**

“THE BEST GANGSTER MOVIE TO COME ALONG SINCE THE GODFATHER!”

“A SPLENDIDLY CINEMATIC THUNDERBOLT! Bob Hoskins is a squat, bald-needled muscle so chilling he’d even send shivers racing through ‘Little Caesar’.”

“HUGELY ENTERTAINING.”

“A GANGSTER FILM IN THE CLASSIC OLD HOLLYWOOD MOLD OF SHARP CRAFTSMANSHIP!”

“★★★★. NOTHING SHORT OF A MASTERCRAFT. Bob Hoskins makes Marlon Brando’s ‘Godfather’ look like Mr. Rodgers by comparison.”

**BOB HOSKINS...HELEN MIRREN**

**THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY**

“...NOTHING SHORT OF A MASTERCRAFT. Bob Hoskins makes Marlon Brando’s ‘Godfather’ look like Mr. Rodgers by comparison.”

**PAUL FREEMAN...COLIN**


**LEO DOLAN...PHIL**


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**Directed by** John Mackenzie
**Written by** Barrie Keeffe
**Produced by** Barry Hanson
**Cinematography by** Phil Meheux
**Edited by** Michael Taylor
**Music Composed by** Francis Monkman

Paul Freeman...Colin
Leo Dolan...Phil
P.H. Moriarty...Razors
Derek Thompson...Jeff
Bryan Marshall...Harris
Bob Hoskins...Harold Shand
Helen Mirren...Victoria
Charles Cork...Eric
Pierce Brosnan...1st Irishman
Eddie Constantine...Charlie
Stephen Davies...Tony


Some of her 104 film and TV roles have been in the same year (the other two are Liza Minnelli and Helen Hunt). She won a Golden Globe, an Oscar and an Emmy for performances in "The Front," 1974-1975 "On Your Nellie," 1973 "The Protectors," 1971 "Doctor at Large," and 1964 "Crossroads."


**Eddie Constantine...Charlie** (Edward Constantinesky, October 29, 1917, Los Angeles, California, USA – February 25, 1993, Wiesbaden, Germany) is perhaps best known for his French B-movie character Lemmy Caution, a pre-Bond Bond he played in more than a dozen films, one of them by Jean-Luc Godard. He had roles in 122 films and TV programs, some of which were 1993 Three Shake-a-Leg Steps to Heaven, 1991 Tokyo no kyujitsu, 1991 Germany Year 90 Nine Zero, 1991 Europa, 1989 Europa, ends, 1989 "L'agence," 1989 "Le retour..."


John Mackenzie, from BFI Screenonline:

John Mackenzie was born in Edinburgh in 1932. He studied history at Edinburgh University and worked as a teacher before joining the city’s Gateway Theatre. In the early 1960s Mackenzie moved to London, where he worked at the BBC as an assistant floor manager. He was one of a group of young, socially conscious and generally left-wing men working at the Corporation including Ken Loach, Jim Allen, James MacTaggart, Kenith Trodd and Tony Garnett. Mackenzie worked as an assistant to Loach on Up the Junction (BBC, tx. 3/11/1965) and Cathy Come Home (BBC, tx. 16/11/1966), before making his directorial debut in 1967 with Voices in the Park (BBC, tx. 5/4/1967) a Wednesday Play produced by Tony Garnett. Subsequently Mackenzie went freelance, making various one-off dramas for the BBC and ITV before embarking on his first cinema film, One Brief Summer (1969), of many 60s films to explore a relationship between a middle-aged man and a young woman. More distinctive was his remake of the sinister 1965 BBC play Unman, Wittering and Zigo (1971), a finely wrought psychological suspense drama with David Hemmings as a public school teacher menaced by three murderous pupils. After directing Carol White and the singer-songwriter Roy Harper in Made (1972), an interesting companion piece to Ken Loach’s Poor Cow (1967), Mackenzie went back to television. His Plays for Today, such as Dennis Potter’s excoriating Double Dare (BBC, tx. 6/4/1976), Alan Garner’s Red Shift (BBC, 17/1/1978) and Peter McDougall’s Scottish trilogy - Just Another Saturday (BBC, tx. 7/11/1975), The Elephant’s Graveyard (BBC, tx. 12/10/1976) and Just a Boy’s Game (BBC, tx. 8/11/1979) - represent some of the best television drama of the 70s.

Mackenzie made a triumphant return to the cinema with The Long Good Friday (1979), which combines East End gangsters, the American Mafia and the IRA in a revenge tragedy that brilliantly prefigured the zeitgeist of Thatcher’s new enterprise culture. A further impressive television film followed - A Sense of Freedom (BBC, tx. 17/2/1981), again written by Peter McDougall - before Mackenzie’s first American-backed project: an intermittently successful adaptation by Christopher Hampton of Graham Greene’s The Honorary Consul (UK/US, 1983). Richard Gere is miscast as the young doctor caught in a struggle between Latin American revolutionaries and the state, but Michael Caine gives a fine performance in the title role. Mackenzie returned to make The Innocent (1985), set in the Yorkshire dales in the 1930s, and since then has alternated regularly between film and television productions in the UK and the US. Caine also starred in an adaptation of Frederick Forsyth’s The Fourth Protocol (1987), reportedly an unhappy experience for Mackenzie that emerged as little more than an efficient reworking of Forsyth’s The Day of the Jackal (filmed by Fred Zinnemann in 1973).

In the 1990s Mackenzie made a number of modest American films, including a solid cop drama, The Last of the Finest (1990), and a biopic of Jack Ruby, the man who shot Lee Oswald. For the BBC he made The Deadly Voyage (tx. 12/10/1996), based on a grisly true story of African migrants stowing away on a Ukrainian ship; and the series Looking After Jo Jo (1998), set in 1980s Edinburgh and featuring a blistering performance by Robert Carlyle as a small-time drug-dealer.

More recently Mackenzie demonstrated his energy, seriousness and vigour with When the Sky Falls (UK/Ireland/US, 2000), a biography of the murdered Irish journalist Veronica Guerin. A third collaboration with Michael Caine, a thriller set on the Côte d’Azur entitled Quicksand, has yet to find a distributor.

John Mackenzie in Time Out London:
The Long Good Friday’ is regarded by many as the UK’s greatest gangster flick. Starring Bob Hoskins as ferocious mob boss Harold Shand, the film follows his fraught efforts to seal a deal with the American mafia to redevelop London’s docklands.
Meanwhile, an unknown force is destroying Harold's empire from the inside out. Director John Mackenzie explains why he thinks the film’s appeal has endured.

The plans [for the redevelopment of Canary Wharf] had been around for several years before we started work on the film. There was a lot of building going on around the dock before 1981 with various big firms involved, so we knew quite a lot about what was proposed. London had essentially been a port and we regretted that all that had gone and it felt like a total area of neglect. The writer Barry Keefe, Bob and myself were very aware that there was going to be huge exploitation and that everyone was going to try to get rich quick. We were very conscious of that and worried it was going to be a mess.

I think Harold would have liked how it's turned out. I think he would have been delighted, because it has flourished – it's a whole new extension of London. The high-rise buildings and skyscrapers make the whole place come alive and Harry would have been at the heart of that. Of course, he also would have been the biggest exploiter of them all. As for the prophetic idea of London getting the Olympics, that was a bit of fun. Harold's thinking was getting more and more expansive – about Britain joining Europe and everything being on the up-and-up – [so] the Olympic idea just slipped in as part of that.

When they got the final product, the producers were very uncertain about it. I'd built up the IRA a lot from what was originally in the script, because I wanted this theme of terrorism versus the state. But the Grade organisation didn't really want to put it out as a feature film. They wanted to take out all the 'offensive' bits that they thought were there, all the – in their opinion – unpatriotic stuff about the IRA, and put it out as a simple television film. That argument went on for two years. [George Harrison's Handmade Films eventually bought the film and released it theatrically.]

I certainly didn't think it was going to become a legend or a cult film like it has. I think the reason is a combination of things. The idea of the classic gangster was important; you got them in American films but you didn't get them in Britain. The James Cagney, Edward G Robinson, Humphrey Bogart era of the 1930s – they were fantastic characters and I was brought up on all that sort of thing as a wee kid so I wanted Harry Shand to be like that. People are never totally one-sided; even the worst villains in the world have certain qualities that are liked, and Bob had the personality and humour to pull it off.

If the main character is interesting and strong then it's more than a gangster film, and I tried to take it further than that. I gave him a home background and a woman who was not just a gangster's moll but a real woman who actually had decisions to make. I tried to give them all a well-roundedness and depth, even the IRA characters.

I also think it's to do with the diversity of themes that are in the film. There's terrorism, religion, corruption… The one that instantly emerged and stood out was the terrorist theme: how can you ever fight a war against terror? We're still asking that question and I still think you can't. But I think all those themes will keep the film interesting and fresh for other generations. I hope so, anyway.

**The Long Good Friday by Michael Sragow (or the 1998 Criterion release):**

Harold Shand, the London crime boss at the center of *The Long Good Friday,* is more than an antihero. He’s the Antichrist, uniting bourgeoisie and barbarians in a simultaneous Pax and Pox Brittanica. With the “legitimate” help of cops and city councilors, Shand controls a criminal empire built on every vice except narcotics. His gun moll is a vision of class, aptly named Victoria; you can’t tell whether she’s joking or for real when she says she played lacrosse with Princess Anne. In this feverish 1979 thriller, Shand plans to buy up moribund London dockyards and redevelop them for the 1988 Olympics. His call for a “new London” wickedly echoes the Christian call for a “new Jerusalem.” Yet on the very Good Friday that Shand meets with an American Mafia chief to seal a financial partnership, somebody kills two of his right-hand men, attempts to murder his mother, and blows a favorite pub to smithereens.

Directed by John Mackenzie and written by Barrie Keeffe, *The Long Good Friday* is a rabidly engaging, complex melodrama, brimming over with moxie. Unlike classic gangster heroes like Little Caesar, who fought their way out of the faceless mob and were punished for brutality and ambition, Harold Shand struggles to control his animal urges and to act like a civic-minded businessman. He detests anarchy and tries to use violence only as a tool. If he’s doomed, it’s because his left-handed brand of capitalism can’t defend itself against the terrorism of the IRA. Harold Shand becomes a sacrificial lamb for all our Western sins. After Shand—the apocalypse!

The movie is viciously funny and exciting, but the filmmakers never let us exult in Shand’s (or the IRA’s) bloodletting. There’s a shocking, blasphemous edge to the imagery, even when it doesn’t involve a car being blown up in a church courtyard or a security guard’s hands being nailed to the floor. As Shand’s civilized facade crumbles to reveal the beast within, the sting is satiric as well as visceral. When Harry hangs underworld associates upside down from meat hooks in an abattoir, he could be conducting his own parodic crucifixions.
Bob Hoskins and Helen Mirren go all the way with the make-or-break parts of Harold Shand and his beloved Victoria. In no small performing feat, Mirren creates a gal who’s smart, sensual, and tough, able to control most of her big shot’s detonations and even, in a wrestling feint, calm him to a standstill. And Hoskins does more with his cheeks and jowls than Richard Nixon: He makes the curve of his teeth look as ominous as a crossbow, and trains his eyes like gun sights on his targets. Hoskins has the gift usually attributed to American, not English, actors—of getting so far inside a character’s skin that we seem to be witnessing vivid behavior rather than bravura performance. In The Long Good Friday, the felt life Hoskins packs into Shand’s bowling-pin body and pinsetter’s voice enables Mackenzie to resurrect the British gangster film.

**Glenn Erikson in DVD Talk:**
Gangster movies don't get better than Handmade Films' The Long Good Friday. The BFI officially lists it as one of the top British films, and in genre terms it sits right up there alongside the likes of Little Caesar, The Public Enemy and Scarface. This sizzler is as much about its era the conservative Thatcher years in England—as the American greats are about Prohibition. Barrie Keeffe’s tightly constructed screenplay is not only tough, it brings in a disturbing political element as mob capitalism is proven ineffectual against modern Terror methods. Top director John Mackenzie guides a stunning gallery of actors, topped by a fantastic performance from the powerhouse Bob Hoskins, whose runty, vicious Harold Shand is a true screen original, a convincing Cockney kingpin of London's underworld.

Mob boss Harold Shand (Bob Hoskins) rules London from his posh penthouse and his yacht on the Thames. He controls restaurants, pubs, casinos and even bathhouses with the aid of an army of Cockney henchmen and coordinated assists from local authorities. Old cronies Councilman Harris (Bryan Marshall) and top detective Parky (Dave King) grease the wheels at city hall for Harold's planned venture to develop a disused river wharf into a major entertainment and hotel complex for the upcoming Olympics. Harold's right-hand men Colin (Paul Freeman) and Jeff (Derek Thompson) arrange to wine and dine visiting American Mafia investor Charlie (Eddie Constantine of Alphaville). Harold has a sterling asset in his wife, upscale hostess Victoria (Helen Mirren), a charmer who knows how to smooth out social problems and lends him a much-needed touch of class. All is going great until Good Friday, when bombs start going off in Harold's clubs and one of his top associates is murdered. Harold fumes, rages and threatens to tear his own organization apart to find out who's hitting his 'corporation' ... but the source of the problem appears to lie somewhere else.

Made in 1979 but held up for release until 1981 because of its political content, The Long Good Friday crackles with excitement and tension, much of it coming from Bob Hoskins' ferocious bantam Harold Shand. Harold has no sooner returned from America than his top pal is knifed in a pool-spa, and a bomb blows up his pleasant dinner pub seconds before he's to arrive with his American investor. While his wife Victoria tries her best to put on a good front, Harold dashes back and forth across London, throwing his weight around. It's obvious that his criminal empire is under attack, but by whom? His big development deal would shift him 100% into legit business territory, with a lifetime of gang struggle gone forever. The last hint of mob opposition dried up ten years ago—Harold remarks to his corrupt cop buddy Parky that there simply isn't any competition capable of hitting him like this. Refusing to listen to reason, Harold wades into his own people, looking for the responsible party.

The Long Good Friday doesn't so much conjure an atmosphere as create an entire world. Harold stands framed before the Tower Bridge, offering himself as symbolic of the grand future of England, at least as an investment opportunity. Liberal critics (doubtlessly the ones responsible for the film's high rating in Brit film history) surely seized on this image because it characterizes Margaret Thatcher's shutdown of 'socialist' England and her issuance of a Free Pass for capitalist opportunists. The timing is perfect: the run-down, empty docks behind Harold's yacht will soon be transformed into glitzy new developments as public land is put to use for private profit. Harold is positioned as the new prince of the city, until his hoodlum past suddenly catches up with him.

The film has some unforgettable set pieces. Harold puts the fear of God into some of his cronies by having them kidnapped and hung from their heels in a slaughterhouse - a whole row of them. When violence breaks out, it's always unpredictable, like shotgun murders at a stock car racing track. Harold's volcanic temper is put to the test when things don't go his way. Wife Victoria and best pal Jeff have to physically restrain him from going berserk, and even then he's difficult to control.
A lot of the movie is spoken in a specific Cockney dialect with key phrases being bandied about without explanation. Embassy Pictures actually added a short glossary of words before the film. "Manor" = turf, "To grass" = to inform, and "Bottle" = nerve. Some phrases are harder than others to make out but the language of the film is fascinating -- it's like listening to a foreign tongue yet being able to understand most of what's being said. We aren't meant to get a handle on what's going on in the first few scenes, but with the arrival of Harold Shand on the supersonic Concorde the movie clicks into clarity….

The Long Good Friday takes place over an Easter Weekend and some of the ghastly events correspond to the Catholic stations of the cross. One character is accused of being a Judas and another is literally crucified. The big thematic twist comes when Harold finally discovers that the "gang" blowing up his empire is the I.R.A.. While everyone else runs for cover -- cops, associates -- Harold thinks he can deal with the "Micks" as he would any other rival mob, which is a big mistake. "It's like a bad night in Belfast!" Harold wails. In this new arena his gangster methods are totally outdated. Sherlock Holmes in The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes is no match for international spies, and Mike Hammer in Kiss Me Deadly is out of his depth dealing with nuclear weaponry. Harold Shand just doesn't understand that Terrorists have the edge because they fight for ideals, not profit. He may be the top dog in the London rackets, but they can blow him away any time they wish.

From Wikipedia:

The film was directed by John Mackenzie and produced for £930,000 by Barry Hanson from a script by Barrie Keeffe, with a soundtrack by the composer Francis Monkman; it was screened at the Cannes, Edinburgh and London Film Festivals in 1980.

The original story had been written by Keeffe for Hanson when the latter worked for Euston Films, a subsidiary of Thames Television. Euston did not make the movie but Hanson bought the rights from Euston for his own company Calendar Films. Although Hanson designed the film for the cinema and all contracts were negotiated under a movie, not a TV agreement, the movie was eventually financed by Black Lion, a subsidiary of Lord Lew Grade's ITC Entertainment for transmission via Grade's Associated TeleVision (ATV) on the ITV Network. The film was commissioned by Charles Denton, at the time both Programme Controller of ATV and Managing Director of Black Lion. After Grade saw the finished film, he allegedly objected to what he perceived as the glorification of the IRA and it was scheduled for transmission with heavy cuts on 24 March 1981.

In late 1980, Hanson attempted to buy the film back from ITC to prevent ITV screening the film with these cuts which he said would be "execrable" and added up to "about 75 minutes of film that was literal nonsense. It was also reported at the same time that Bob Hoskins was suing both Black Lion and Calendar Films to prevent their planned release of a US TV version in which Hoskins' voice would be dubbed by English Midlands actor David Daker.

Before the planned ITV transmission the rights to the film were bought from ITC by George Harrison's company, Handmade Films, for around £200,000 less than the production costs. They gave the movie a cinema release.

COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2011 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXII:

Mar 22 Bertrand Tavernier Coup de Torchon/Clean Slate 1981
Mar 29 Werner Herzog Fitzcarraldo 1982
Apr 5 Nagisa Ôshima Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence 1983
Apr 12 Stephen Frears The Grifters 1990
Apr 19 Jafar Panahi Dayereh/The Circle 2000
Apr 26 Ridley Scott Blade Runner 1982

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