

# rescoring the classics

By Michael Leader

If, as Shakespeare wrote, music is the food of love, then music must often carry the romance of the cinema. Scores and soundtracks, either explicitly or subtly, guide the audience through their experience, acting as an important aspect in montage and other cinematic arts. Whether featuring swirling strings, haunting brass, or bass-heavy electronics, these pieces stick with viewers far beyond the film's release, or leech into popular culture over the years.



Photo: Jonathan Murray

Above: MI21

Right: The Matinee Idles

However, unlike the structure of musical culture, which revives itself through nostalgia, retrospectives, and lines of inspiration, classic cinema can often be consigned to dusty DVD collections, or the discussion of hard-core cineastes. To battle this, there are examples of promoters and producers incorporating some of the key opportunities of music into presenting vintage films to a contemporary audience – such as live performance, reinterpretation and remixing. Indeed, after the release of his 1925 propagandist masterpiece *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN*, Sergei Eisenstein reportedly expressed a desire for the work to be rescored, and re-exhibited, every 20 years, in order to keep its message fresh and relevant.

This approach has given birth to projects like the Pet Shop Boys rescoring of *POTEMKIN*, screened in Trafalgar Square in 2004, and Giorgio Moroder's 1984 re-edit of Fritz Lang's seminal science fiction film *METROPOLIS*, with a synth pop soundtrack. Over the coming months, two special cinema events will be seeking to similarly reintroduce classic films to the public.

In August, arts agency Kala Phool will be touring a project called MI21, a re-cut and remixed version of 1957 Indian film *MOTHER INDIA*. Described as 'the Indian GONE WITH THE WIND', the film is a landmark piece in Bollywood cinema, using a story about a mother's relationship with her sons to evoke greater issues affecting society at large. For MI21, the Academy

Award-nominated three-hour epic has been trimmed down to a 45-minute presentation, to be accompanied by a contemporary reinterpretation of the soundtrack. The score will be performed live by turntablist DJ Tigerstyle, backed by an ensemble featuring keyboards, electric cello and drums, seeking to create an engaging mix of music and visuals that will highlight the film's social and political themes, which are still perceived as relevant today. Kicking off in Edinburgh and London in August, the project will move onto Brighton, Bristol, Coventy and Bridlington, before a proposed international tour in 2010.

Appearing on September 9 at the Colston Hall in Bristol is Laurel and Hardy's Comedy Mayhem, an evening of shorts and live performances celebrating the 80th anniversary of the double act's leap from silent to sound film. Arranged in collaboration with Bristol's **Slapstick Silent Comedy Festival**, the evening will be hosted by comedian Sanjeev Bhaskar, with a special appearance from OUR GANG actress and Laurel and Hardy co-star Jean Darling. The event will feature a screening of *DOUBLE WHOOPEE*, with a premiere of a new score, performed by The Emerald Ensemble, as well as the Oscar-winning talkie short *THE MUSIC BOX*. Also on the bill are various other Laurel and Hardy shorts, chosen by Bhaskar, as well as live performances from Darling, and The Matinee Idles, an *cappella* vocal group who count among their number actor Paul McGann. The mix of music and comedy, both live and on screen, should be a real treat; and proceeds from the event will fund the next Slapstick festival, to take place in January 2010.

For more information on MI21, visit [www.kalaphool.com](http://www.kalaphool.com)

For more information on Laurel and Hardy's Comedy Mayhem, visit [www.slapstick.org.uk](http://www.slapstick.org.uk)

