

# The Big Heat

Director: Fritz Lang. USA, 1953. 86min. (12)

With: Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, Lee Marvin



wimbledon  
filmclub

Essentially a 1950s B movie, *The Big Heat* has since attained enduring classic status. It is directed by one of cinema's true greats, Fritz Lang, who grew up in fin-de-siecle Vienna and attended art school at the time of 'decadent' artists such as Gustav Klimt. This and his study of the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud informed his cinematic work.

After serving in the Austrian Army during WW1 Lang became a major figure in the German film industry, with works such as *Metropolis* and *M* extending the boundaries of the new art form: his influence is hard to overstate. Shortly after the Nazis attained power Lang left Germany, having refused an offer from Goebbels to become the head of a new Nazi production company. Like other emigres from Hitler's Germany such as Billy Wilder and Ernst Lubitsch, he made a new home and career in Hollywood. While Lang's Hollywood period varied in terms of both success and quality, it included works now seen as definitive examples of the 'film noir' genre which he helped create: notably *The Big Heat*, starring Glenn Ford & Gloria Grahame.

Grahame's later life as a fading starlet was depicted in the 2017 biopic *Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*. When screened by WFC, the audience requested that the club screen one of Gloria's films. *The Big Heat* is widely held to be the high watermark of her acting career.

*"As moving as anything in Lang's oeuvre, Gloria Grahame is heart-breaking as a gangster's moll ... The Big Heat represents a triumph in the fight against fate"* Senses of Cinema

*"Sci-fi films, serial killer movies and film noir ... he helped invent them all. Fritz Lang was one of the giants of cinema."* BFI

**Preserved in US National Film Registry, 2011.**

**Post-screening Q&A with Peter Evans, Emeritus Professor of Film Studies at QMUL.**

***The BAFTA-nominated animated short FILM NOIR (2005) will be shown before the main screening; we welcome its director Osbert Parker who joins us tonight.***

You can rate the film by a show of 1 - 5 fingers (5 = top) at the door on the way out. A committee member will be noting the scores.

You can also comment on: Twitter @wfc screenings ; the WFC Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WimbledonFilmClub/> ; or by email to [info@wimbledonfilmclub.com](mailto:info@wimbledonfilmclub.com)

Please dispose of these notes yourself or take them with you. Thank you!