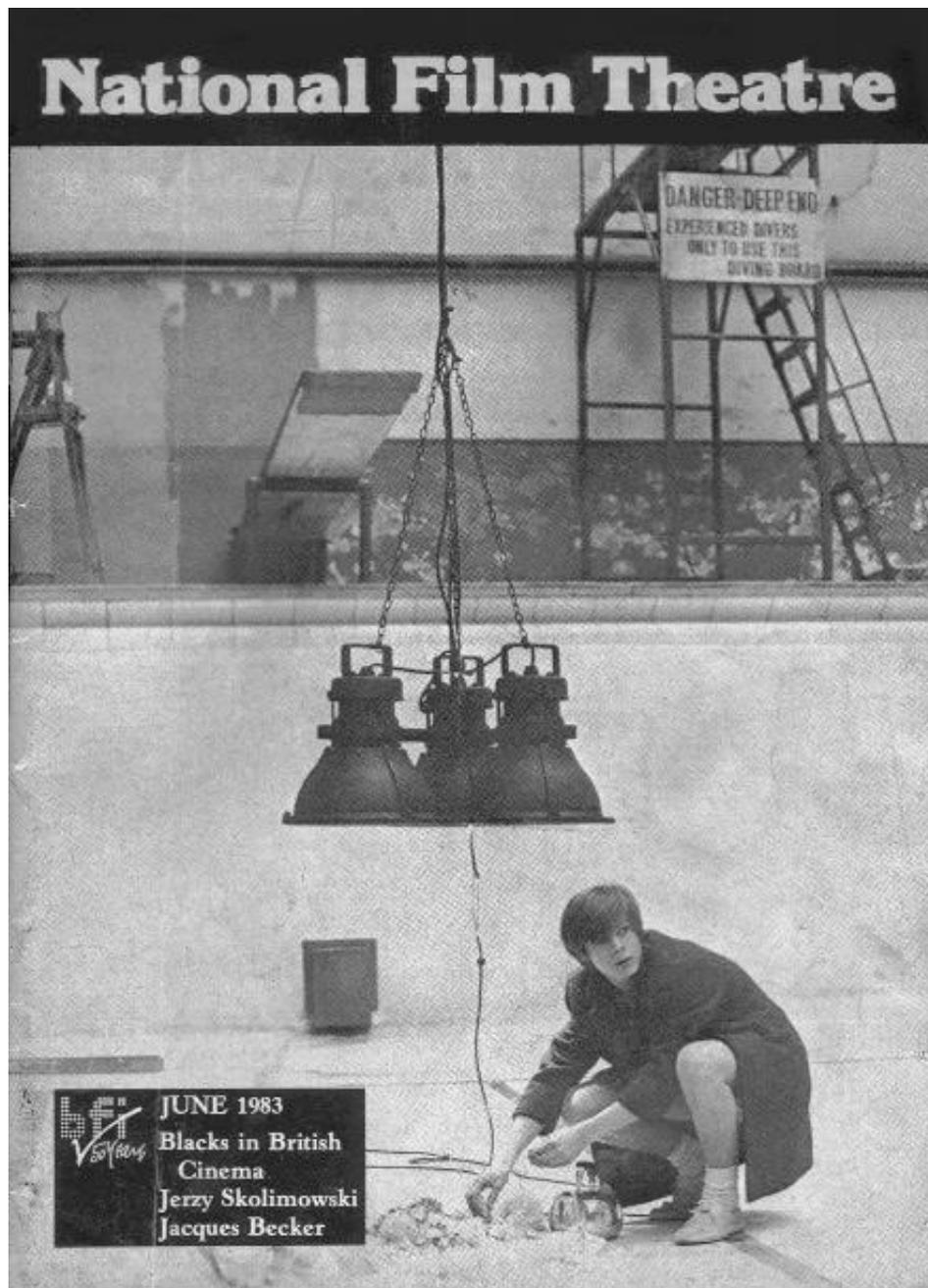
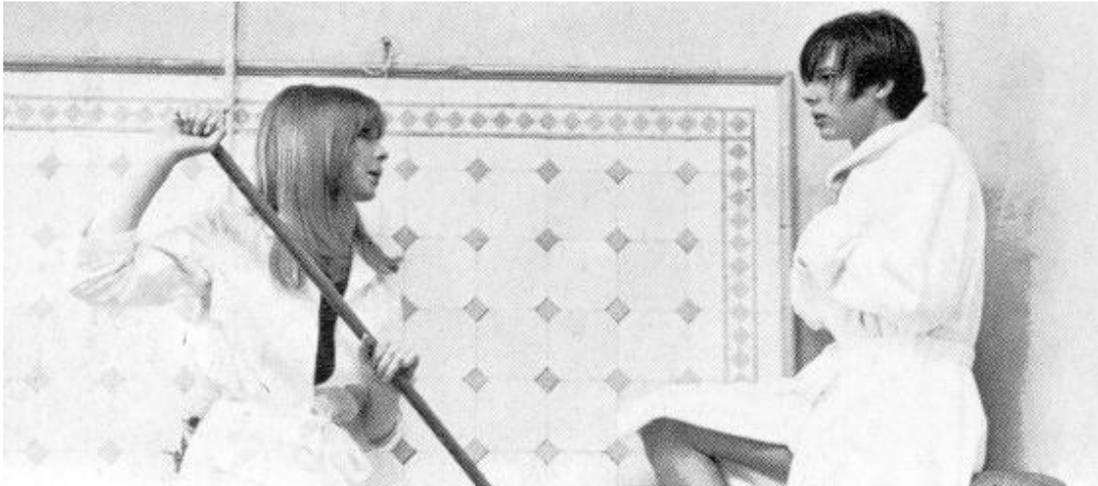


Deep End

East Germany / US : 1970 : dir. Jerzy Skolimowski :
Maran / Kettledrum / Bavaria Atelier / Paramount : 88 min
prod: Judd Bernard : scr: Jerzy Skolimowski, Jerzy Gruza & Boleslaw Sulik
dir.ph.: Charly Steinberger
John Moulder Brown
Jane Asher; Diana Dors; Karl Michael Vogler; Christopher Sandford; Louise Martini;
Erica Beer; Anita Lochner; Anne-Marie Kuster; Karl Ludwig Lindt

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	□	€	Z	☠	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Asher humours the feckless boy Moulder Brown – but adolescent passions run deep and turbulent
 Source: *A Pictorial History of the Talkies*

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 1996 review:

“Innocent 15-year old Moulder Brown, an attendant in a dreary public bath, falls in love with his 20-ish female counterpart (Asher). Well-made tragedy of obsessive love; set in London, with music by Cat Stevens. *** ”

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

“An adolescent falls in love with an older woman, with whom he works at a swimming baths, but his love is not reciprocated. Only when the woman dies in an accidental fall can the boy realise his fantasies¹. A sometimes funny, sometimes gripping, but continually enthralling film with striking visual details. *** ”

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

“Sexual problems of two young people on the staff of a London municipal bathhouse. Interestingly made but rather dreary and vaguely symbolic modern fable. * ”

“A study in the growth of obsession that is both funny and frighteningly exact”
 - Nigel Andrews, **MFB**

The Critics' Film Guide review:

“A 15-year-old (John Moulder-Brown) gets a job in a seedy London bath-house and falls for a fellow employee (Jane Asher). A memorable study of obsessive adolescent love. Even though it has a sly sense of humour, the film is extremely depressing, with a very unswinging view of 60s London. It was therefore underrated; but Skolimowski makes great use of dingy colour and Jane Asher confounds those who say she's just a pretty face. Diana Dors offers a wonderfully over-ripe portrayal of over-ripe, middle-aged sexuality. 7/10 ”

MIXED reviews:

“Often original and pertinent. But the totally unnecessary ending is just too much to swallow” - David Cillard, **Daily Sketch**

“Very Polish in style with lots of highly original comic invention. A comedy of the grotesque and absurd - a rompish, ribald view of worldliness through the eyes of an innocent. But it is far too lightweight to accommodate the sudden and unexpected tragic ending, which spoils everything by hinting at underlying meanings which simply don't exist.”

- Nina Hibbin, **Morning Star**

“Interestingly made but rather dreary.”
 - **Halliwell**

PRO reviews:

“Skolimowski keeps the film alive with quirky incidents.”
 - **Variety**

¹ *inaccurate – see below*

“A study in the growth of obsession that is both funny and frighteningly exact.”

- Nigel Andrews, **MFB**

“The most extraordinary love scene I have ever witnessed on the screen... [in] a film of unusual quality... One of those surprises that make film reviewing such an exciting adventure.” -

Felix Barker, **Evening News**

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

“An idiosyncratic movie, with little human quality but some good jokes and what seems to be some improvisation. Though filmed in Munich, the setting is a particularly seedy London municipal swimming bath, where the new young attendant (John Moulder-Brown) falls for his opposite number (Jane Asher), which means prising her away from both a lover and a (dull) fiancé. The film does not end but stops, on a particularly senseless killing. In English. ** ”

Movies on TV (1987) review:

“Intelligent, powerful fable of a young boy's first love. Moulder-Brown epitomises the adolescent who will not be deterred by the obstacles he faces in courting a nubile bathhouse attendant. His dedicated pursuit sees him overcoming the girl's indifference, as well as triumphing over her fiancé and lover. ***½ ”

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

“Remarkable attempt by Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski to show the initiation of a 15-year old into the mysteries of sex, set mostly in a municipal swimming pool. John Moulder-Brown is convincing as the lad; Jane Asher makes an impressive temptress [*sic*]; Diana Dors has a powerful little cameo as she hugs him to her ample bosom in orgiastic chattering. 33 ”

The Time Out Film Guide review:

“Set in a decidedly unglamorous and unswinging London, Skolimowski's sex comedy posits a beautifully bizarre and totally unsentimental education for his adolescent hero, employed at a run-down swimming baths and obsessively pining for colleague Asher.

Often very funny, tainted perhaps by a whiff of misogyny, and blessed with a thudding soundtrack from early Can, it's a brief and highly original delight.”

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

“Though its main locale is a rather seamy London public bath, director Jerzy Skolimowski has avoided tawdriness by a sympathy in, and awareness of, the excessive but essentially pure actions of his love-smitten boy whose good looks make him prey for all types of women who come for their public ablutions.²

The film gives the British scene a twist due to Skolimowski's treatment of the tangled desires of a young boy whose need for love goes to a rather vulgar, but enticing fellow worker at the baths. John Moulder Brown has the deep voice of the time between puberty and manhood and the childish yet dedicated pursuit of his first deeply troubled reaction to a woman. Skolimowski keeps the film alive with quirky incidents.”

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

“A young man working in a London bath-house becomes obsessed with a beautiful female co-worker, which eventually leads to disaster. Offbeat drama with realistic performances by the cast. Rated "R" ***½ ”

The Virgin Film Guide review:

“This quirky black sex comedy is the story of a boy's bizarre and unsentimental education.³ Moulder Brown plays Mike, a handsome 15-year old whose first job has him working in the men's section at a seedy bathhouse in a decidedly unswinging London. He meets a fellow employee, sexy 23-year old redhead Susan (Asher) who teaches him the ropes and gets him to agree to refer his male clients to her in return for her female clients so that they can both earn better tips.

He soon learns to exploit his looks by flirting with the women and encouraging them to fantasise about him. Mike develops an enormous crush on Susan but, looking upon him as a boy, she rejects his advances by telling him she

² “Essentially pure actions”? - Absurd

³ recognise that form of words? Thought you might..

is engaged. However, her constant teasing drives him wild and her affair with the swimming instructor infuriates him. Crazy with his obsessive love, he plots to break them up.



Very alluring no doubt.. Some of us would sooner swim with Moulder Brown any day, nevertheless... Source uncertain

Polish film-maker Skolimowski, who wrote the screenplay for Roman Polanski's directorial debut, "KNIFE IN THE WATER", here has made a powerful, disturbing film on the sexual awakening of a young boy in a sleazy environment. The film, which has an uneasy sense of humour, is well directed, well acted (especially by Asher), and well worth seeing⁴.
**** "

[no listing in "Rating the Movies (1990)" or "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995"]

⁴ Study all those little language cues for a moment: Moulder Brown can be a "handsome young boy", but Asher requires the epithet "sexy" or "nubile"; in a film about his "sexual awakening", what he conceives for her is an "obsessive love"; she rejects him as a boy (he's five years her junior and fresh out of school) yet he "exploits his looks by flirting with the women" and encourages them to "fantasise about him". Sounds pretty awake already to me. If he'd only taken a job in certain other London baths he'd have had to fend off his "clients" with a long stick!

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Moulder-Brown:

"In his early years John was the schoolboy equivalent of an English Rose: huge, pale blue eyes blinked demurely through a fringe of fair hair, and he couldn't, you'd think, have said boo to a goose. But he was more than just a pretty face, and when he graduated from modelling to acting, and gained in experience and confidence, a touch of scornful pride crept in which made him less sweet and more complicated.

Most often, though, he was cast in sincere, sympathetic roles which didn't call for huge displays of temperament - and got abundant work as a child, including several leads with the Children's Film Foundation. In the 1969 co-production of "THE BOYS OF PAUL STREET" - a remake of the classic Molnar story, filmed in 1934 as "NO GREATER GLORY" - Moulder-Brown was too mature for the leading role, which was taken this time by Anthony Kemp.

However, instead of faltering and fading like the careers of so many well-favoured children, Moulder-Brown's now blossomed. Jerzy Skolimowski gave him two starring roles: as the young swimming pool attendant in "DEEP END" (E Germany/US 70), fatally obsessed with Jane Asher, and as the enterprising nephew of David Niven and Gina Lollobrigida in "HERZBUBE" (W Germany/US 72 - "SEX, LOVE AND MURDER"), a delightful adaptation of Nabokov's "King, Queen, Knave".

He played another love-sick adolescent in "ERSTE LIEBE" (E Germany/Switzerland/Hungary 71), based on a Turgenev story. Robert Young's "VAMPIRE CIRCUS" (71) proved less nourishing than the smaller part of Prince Otto, unhappy younger brother of the Wagner-crazy King of Bavaria, in Visconti's "LUDWIG" (Italy/France/W Germany 72).

He looked suitably sheepish in the appalling "CONFESSIONS FROM THE DAVID GALAXY AFFAIR" (78), but had another prestige lead as Thomas Mann's charming twister in the TV film "BEKENNTNISSE DES HOCHSTAPLERS FELIX KRULL" (W Germany 81)... John Moulder-Brown had further leading roles in "THE GRASS IS SINGING" (Zambia/Sweden 81), "ELLIS

ISLAND" (84) and "KILLING HEAT" (US 84).

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Why should it be so problematic to write of a 15-year old school-leaver conceiving an all-devouring lust for a coquettish female colleague at his workplace? What's all this talk of "essential purity" and "love"? "**DEEP END**" is, inescapably from its very title, a study of sexual obsession, not of romantic wistfulness. It is by the same token a rather po-faced comedy of errors on the theme of adolescence, with all of its self-defeating insecurity, confusion and unhandiness. In some ways, Moulder Brown is indeed an "innocent abroad", looking for the answers amid swinging London and of course, not finding them, merely intensifying his frustrated fantasies. One scene has him escorting a tailor's dummy (substituting desparately for Asher) on the underground.

Finally, he stages a confrontation with her in - inevitably - the deep end of the emptied swimming bath. More out of pity than anything, she relents at last to have intercourse with him there and then, but after all the agonies of anticipation, he is profoundly disappointed by the fleeting banality of sex. "Is that all there is?" he demands, incredulous. They quarrel. She laughs at him. She doesn't have any "accidental fall": in a final gesture of bewilderment and rage he slams a suspended workman's cradle against the wall of the empty bath; it ricochets catching her on the head and killing her outright. Nothing daunted, he lays beside her and returns to caressing her unresisting body as the bath slowly fills again. Necrophilia is only faintly hinted at. He has inadvertently rendered his conquest into another lifeless doll, scarcely more satisfying than the shop mannequin - the climax of the film is his anticlimax, if you will. But he has mastered the elusive object of his desire, and there is consolation in possession.

An "angel/snake" by Holmstrom's amusing classification system of boy actors, Moulder Brown, born in 1953, was – amazingly - 17 when "**DEEP END**" was released. He has the face of a 13 or 14-year old, and it is only when he strips naked for the final consummation scene that you realise he is actually [for obvious legal reasons] older than the role he's playing. He was seen aged 4 in "**DEATH OVER MY SHOULDER**", aged 8 in the Spanish-made "**THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED**", and his other early appearances included "**THE MAN INSIDE**" (58), "**ROOM AT THE TOP**" (58), "**DOCTOR IN LOVE**" (60), "**55 DAYS AT PEKING**" (62, shot down by the Chinese rebels) and "**BECKET**" (63). He joined a young Denis Waterman in "**GO KART GO**" (63).

Jane Asher, for her part, was also in films from the age of 5, in titles such as "**MANDY**" (52) and "**THE GREENGAGE SUMMER**" (60). She's 24 here. She later made a first-rate recording of the two Alice books for BBC radio (available on audio tapes), certainly the most satisfying Carroll adaptation I've come across.

See subject index under **SEX & SEXUALITY** and **SWIMMING / BOATING**.