



**NIGHTMARES & DAYDREAMS – A CENTENARY  
CELEBRATION OF SCREENWRITER NIGEL KNEALE**

# **Nineteen Eighty-Four + Panel Discussion**

We screen the restored version of this famous and much-discussed drama to celebrate its first official release on BFI Blu-ray (released on 11 April). The original broadcast proved highly controversial but the BBC quickly made the decision to proceed with the repeat performance a few days later, and it was this version that was recorded for posterity.

Following the screening, our invited guests will discuss Nigel Kneale's career, and his influential adaptation of George Orwell's enduring dystopian masterpiece, illustrated with rare clips – some of which are extras on the new BFI Blu-ray release.

Nigel Kneale's adaptation of George Orwell's most celebrated novel was one of the most controversial television programmes of its time, and marks a key transitional moment in the development of television drama in Britain.

Orwell's warning of a totalitarian future – with one eye on the Soviet present – was just six years old when Kneale and producer Rudolph Cartier (in modern terms, the director) enacted it for the small screen, and audiences and critics were unprepared for the brutality endured by its hapless hero, Winston Smith. Like all TV drama of the time, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was broadcast live, but it made unusually extensive and imaginative use of filmed inserts – 14 in total. These sequences bought time for the more elaborate costume changes or scene set-ups, but also served to 'open out' the action – showing us both the desolate 'prole sector' and the apparently idyllic woods where Winston (Peter Cushing) and Julia (Yvonne Mitchell) have their first illicit meeting – while speeding up the drama by reducing the average shot length.

This unusual freedom helped make *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the most expensive TV drama of its day, but other, less costly features were just as striking. The careful use of close-ups, accompanied by recorded voice-over, allows us a window into Winston's inner torment (and demonstrates Cushing's grasp of small screen performance) as he struggles to disguise his 'thought crimes', while effectively representing Big Brother's frightening omniscience. In the torture sequence, Cartier condenses days, perhaps weeks of relentless humiliation into a few minutes by periodically fading to black, slightly reframing the shot, then fading back in. Throughout this sequence, Winston is hidden from view while we watch his persecutor, O'Brien (André Morrell, whose coolly menacing performance is at least equal to Cushing's). This enhances our shock when the abject figure of Winston is finally revealed, stripped of all humanity.

Audiences today are used to far stronger stuff, but in 1954 the drama caused outrage among MPs and some sections of the press. The BBC took threats against Cartier's life seriously enough to provide him with a bodyguard. Support, however, came from an unlikely quarter, when the Duke of Edinburgh announced that he and the Queen had 'thoroughly enjoyed' the

broadcast. This endorsement, and the publicity generated by its opponents, ensured that the programme attracted a massive audience – the largest since the Coronation – when transmitted a second time (again live) four days after its first screening.

**Mark Duguid, BFI Screenonline, [screenonline.org.uk](http://screenonline.org.uk)**

## **The Panel**

**Samira Ahmed** is an award winning journalist and presenter of the Radio 4 flagship arts show *Front Row* and *Newswatch* on BBC1.

**Jon Dear** is a writer and critic on TV and film. He has written for the BFI - including their celebrated Flipside range of Blu-rays, *Fortean Times*, *Horried Magazine* and *Curious British Television*. He also contributed to *We Don't Go Back: A Watcher's Guide to Folk Horror* and Royal Holloway University's Forgotten Television Drama project.

Jon is the co-host of the Nigel Kneale Podcast, BERGCAST as well as Due Signori in Giallo. His forthcoming work includes contributing to the third volume of *Play for Today* on Blu-ray, and a commentary for the long awaited Blu-ray/DVD release of Rudolph Cartier and Nigel Kneale's celebrated adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Jon is also the curator of the Nigel Kneale Centenary celebration on 23 April.

**Kim Newman** is a critic, author and broadcaster. He is a contributing editor to *Sight and Sound* and *Empire* magazines. His books about film include *Nightmare Movies* and *Kim Newman's Video Dungeon*. His fiction includes the *Anno Dracula* series, *The Hound of the D'Urbervilles* and *An English Ghost Story*. He has written for television (*Mark Kermode's Secrets of Cinema*), radio (*Afternoon Theatre: Cry-Babies*), comics (*Witchfinder: The Mysteries of Unland*) and the theatre (*The Hallowe'en Sessions*), and directed a tiny film (*Missing Girl*). His latest novel is *Something More Than Night* (Titan Books). His website is at [www.johnnyalucard.com](http://www.johnnyalucard.com). He is on Twitter as @AnnoDracula.

**Douglas Weir** is Technical Manager at the BFI where he supervises film remastering and restoration projects for BFI re-releases in cinema and on DVD/Blu-ray.

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### **NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR**

*Production Company:* BBC

*Produced by:* Rudolph Cartier

*Adapted as a television play by:* Nigel Kneale

*[Based on the novel] By:* George Orwell

*Models and Effects by:* Bernard Wilkie, Jack Kline

*Designer:* Barry Learoyd

*Incidental Music Composed/Conducted by:* John Hotchkis

*Narrator:* Richard Williams

#### **Cast**

Peter Cushing (*Winston Smith*)

Yvonne Mitchell (*Julia*)

André Morell (*O'Brien*)

Arnold Diamond (*Emmanuel Goldstein*)

Donald Pleasence (*Syme*)

Campbell Gray (*Parsons*)

Hilda Fenemore (*Mrs Parsons*)

Pamela Grant (*Parson's girl*)

Keith Davis (*Parson's boy*)

Janet Barrow (*woman supervisor*)

Norman Osborne (*first youth*)

Tony Lyons (*second youth*)

Malcolm Knight (*third youth*)

John Baker (*first man*)

Victor Platt (*second man*)

Van Boolean (*barman*)

Wilfrid Brambell (*old man/thin prisoner*)

Leonard Sachs (*Mr Charrington*)

Sydney Bromley (*waiter*)

Janet Joye (*canteen woman*)

Harry Lane (*guard*)

Roy Oxley (*face of 'Big Brother'*) \*

United Kingdom / BBC tx 12.12.54

106 mins

\* Uncredited

Pre-order *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Dual Format Edition). Nigel Kneale's influential adaptation of George Orwell's will be released on 11 April.

[www.shop.bfi.org.uk](http://www.shop.bfi.org.uk)

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**NIGHTMARES & DAYDREAMS**  
**A CENTENARY CELEBRATION OF SCREENWRITER NIGEL KNEALE**

**The Abominable Snowman**

Mon 28 Mar 20:50; Sat 23 Apr 14:50

**Wuthering Heights**

Sat 2 Apr 15:10

**Missing Believed Wiped: Out of the Unknown: The Chopper**

Sun 3 Apr 18:00

**Nineteen Eighty-Four + Panel Discussion: Nineteen Eighty-Four and the legacy of Nigel Kneale**

Mon 4 Apr 18:30

**Seniors Free Matinee: Quatermass and the Pit + discussion**

Mon 11 Apr 14:00

**The Year of the Sex Olympics**

Tue 12 Apr 18:10

**First Men in the Moon**

Fri 15 Apr 14:30; Wed 27 Apr 20:50

**The Woman in Black**

Sun 24 Apr 14:40

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