



IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Celluloid Screams and Live Cinema UK presents: *Ghostwatch*

Content warning: this is a live immersive event and may contain loud and sudden sounds, strobe lighting, smoke, and jump scares throughout.

On Halloween night, 1992, 11 million viewers tuned into the BBC to watch what they believed to be a live broadcast from a haunted house in Northolt, London. The rest, as they say, is history. Audiences were terrified, switchboards were inundated with complaints, and the BBC disowned the show. But underneath the mania and controversy lies a fascinating and often deeply disturbing exploration of how trauma and abuse can haunt both the mind and the body. *Ghostwatch* superfans Celluloid Screams and immersive cinema pioneers Live Cinema UK present a one night only 30th anniversary live cinema experience, resurrecting the original spirit of the broadcast for a hauntingly-good immersive celebration of the paranormal, Parky and Pipes. With a Q&A with director Lesley Manning and writer Stephen Volk, peek behind the curtains, and re-enter the glory hole...

Michael Blyth, bfi.org.uk

‘It’s Pipes, Mum... Pipes is here.’ To British TV viewers of a certain vintage, this innocuous line is enough to send an icy volt of fear down the spine. Broadcast by the BBC on Halloween night 1992, *Ghostwatch* purported to be a live broadcast from a Northolt council house haunted by a malevolent spirit, nicknamed ‘Pipes’ by the unfortunate Early family – single mother Pam and daughters Kim and Suzanne.

Ghostwatch was in fact a scripted drama by Stephen Volk, fronted by familiar personalities playing themselves (Michael Parkinson, Sarah Greene, Mike Smith and Craig Charles) and filmed some months before for the Screen One slot. Many viewers failed to notice the cast list printed in the *Radio Times* or the Screen One logo and Volk’s writing credit as the programme started (late additions insisted upon by nervous BBC executives). Many were terrified long after realising that this was an elaborate fiction.

Spurred on by a minority of angry viewers, the press whipped itself into such frenzy at the supposed psychological trauma inflicted by the BBC’s ‘deception’ that comparisons were drawn with Orson Welles’ infamous 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. As a result, the programme has yet to receive a repeat broadcast, and in the decade between the original transmission and the BFI’s DVD release in 2002 a veritable *Ghostwatch* cult sprang up.

Ghostwatch really gets its claws into you by playing the long game, lulling the viewer into a false sense of security by drawing on the mundane tropes of live TV. Here we have awkward repartee between studio and outside broadcast; prank phone calls from the public; a satellite link-up with an American sceptic. The first fleeting appearance of Pipes by the curtains in the girls’ bedroom some 20 minutes in provides the first shock. But parapsychologist Dr Pascoe (played by Gillian Bevan) swears she can see nothing on the playback. What’s going on?

The jovial atmosphere gives way to a drip feed of increasingly sinister information: mysterious disappearances; a pregnant dog butchered in the nearby playground; a kindly spiritualist medium whose hands were permeated with the stench of blood after failing to ‘lay the ghost’. The climactic revelations about Foxhill Drive, delivered in two chilling calls to the studio, reveal the secret of the boarded-up ‘glory hole’ under the stairs – one focus of the phenomena now plaguing the Earlys. Hoax or no hoax, as the end credits rolled, and ‘Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells’ and co were scribbling their missives to the *Daily Mail*, I felt exhilarated.

British TV has an illustrious history of putting the frighteners on us going back to the 1950s and Nigel Kneale’s *Quatermass* series, into the 1970s with the BBC’s *Ghost Story for Christmas* strand and Kneale’s ingenious updating of the period ghost story, *The Stone Tape*. *Ghostwatch* can sit proudly alongside such classics.

Watching it again now, what’s striking is how ingeniously plotted, designed and edited it is (can you spot all of Pipes’ subliminal appearances?). It’s a testament to the programme’s legacy that all the key players contributed to the documentary *Ghostwatch: Behind the Curtains* [available to watch for free at the BFI Mediateque]; director Lesley Manning even came on board as co-producer. For *Ghostwatch* Manning dispensed with Screen One’s traditional 16mm film format, shooting on videotape and using the latest technology, including infrared cameras. The language of television has rarely been so effectively deployed.

Beyond its impact on a generation of writers, filmmakers and kids with overactive imaginations, *Ghostwatch* offers a reminder that the BBC can take risks, even if the organisation has been prone to reactionary panic at executive level. Volk’s ‘massive séance’ is the perfect metaphor for the shared experience of television at its most powerful.

Simon McCallum, bfi.org.uk, 4 December 2013

SCREEN ONE SPECIAL: GHOSTWATCH

Director: Lesley Manning
©: BBC
Production Company: BBC Films
Executive Producer: Richard Broke
Producer: Ruth Baumgarten
Associate Producer: Derek Nelson
Production Manager: Jacmel Dent
Location Manager: Kate Power
Assistant Floor Managers: Theresa MacInnes, Adam Richards
Resource Co-ordinator: Michael Chislett
Continuity: Charlotte Blair
Casting Adviser: Michelle Guish
Written by: Stephen Volk
Lighting: Clive Thomas
Camera Operator (2nd Unit): Dave Hill
Lighting Gaffer: Brian Johns
Video Effects: Dave Jervis
Visual Effects: Steve Bowman
Graphic Design: Iain Macdonald
Editor: Chris Swanton
Designer: Ken Starkey
Location Operative Supervisor: Dave Rogers
Construction Manager: Mark Collisson
Costume Designer: Jackie Vernon
Make-up Design: Caroline Noble
Music: Philip Appleby
Sound Design: Winston Ryder
Sound Supervisor: Alan Machin
Sound Assistants: Paul Ostwind, Phil Gibbins
Psychic Consultant: Guy Lyon Playfair

Cast

Michael Parkinson (*presenter*)
Sarah Greene (*reporter*)
Mike Smith (*phone-in presenter*)
Craig Charles (*interviewer*)
Gillian Bevan (*Dr Lin Pascoe*)
Brid Brennan (*Pamela Early*)
Michelle Wesson (*Suzanne Early*)
Cherise Wesson (*Kim Early*)
Chris Miller (*cameraman*)
Mike Aiton (*sound recordist*)
Mark Lewis (*Alan Demescu*)
Linda Broughton (*Yvonne Etherly*)
Katherine Stark (*Wendy Stott*)
Derek Smee (*Arthur Lacey*)
Roger Tebb (*local TV presenter*)
Colin Stinton (*Dr Emilio Sylvestri*)
Keith Ferrari (*ghost*)
Ruth Sheen (*Emma Stableford*)
Diana Blackburn (*Sandra Hughes*)
Brendan O’Hea (*Kevin Tripp*)
Mark Drewry (*anonymous man*)

BBC1 tx 31.10.1992
UK 1992©
91 mins

Produced by Live Cinema UK and Celluloid Screams – Sheffield Horror Festival. Supported by National Lottery and BFI Film Audience Network.

Discover more ghostly delights including feature documentary *Ghostwatch: Behind the Curtains* in our free Mediateque.

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Celluloid Screams and Live Cinema UK presents: Ghostwatch + Q&A

Fri 28 Oct 20:20

Viy

Fri 28 Oct 20:45; Tue 8 Nov 20:50

Creature from the Black Lagoon (3D)

Sat 29 Oct 11:40; Tue 1 Nov 20:50

A Nightmare on Elm Street

Sat 29 Oct 18:30; Wed 30 Nov 20:50

Candyman

Sat 29 Oct 20:45; Thu 17 Nov 20:50 (+ intro)

Nightbreed – Director’s Cut

Sun 30 Oct 15:10 (+ intro); Sat 12 Nov 20:35

28 Days Later

Mon 31 Oct 18:00 (+ Q&A with director Danny Boyle); Sat 26 Nov 20:45

Kuroneko (Yabu no naka no kuroneko)

Mon 31 Oct 21:00; Fri 18 Nov 18:15

I Walked With a Zombie

Tue 1 Nov 18:10

Us

Tue 1 Nov 20:40; Sat 19 Nov 15:10; Tue 29 Nov 20:40

The Autopsy of Jane Doe

Wed 2 Nov 18:10; Sat 26 Nov 20:40

Let’s Scare Jessica to Death

Wed 2 Nov 20:45; Sat 19 Nov 20:45

Blacula

Thu 3 Nov 20:55; Sat 26 Nov 13:00

Cronos

Fri 4 Nov 18:30; Sat 19 Nov 12:10; Sun 20 Nov 18:30

Fright Night

Fri 4 Nov 20:50; Tue 22 Nov 20:40 (+ intro)

Possession

Sat 5 Nov 20:20 (+ intro by author Kier-La Janisse); Sun 27 Nov 15:30

Ganja & Hess

Mon 7 Nov 18:00; Sat 26 Nov 15:20

La Llorona

Mon 7 Nov 21:00

Frankenstein

Tue 8 Nov 18:20; Sun 27 Nov 13:00

Inferno

Wed 9 Nov 20:40; Sat 26 Nov 18:20

The Entity

Fri 11 Nov 17:55; Tue 15 Nov 20:30

Nosferatu (Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens)

Sun 13 Nov 15:50 (+ intro by Silent Film Curator Bryony Dixon); Sat 19 Nov 14:10

The Skeleton Key

Mon 14 Nov 20:45

Def by Temptation

Wed 16 Nov 18:10 (+ intro); Sat 26 Nov 18:10

Jennifer’s Body

Sun 20 Nov 15:15; Mon 21 Nov 18:00; Fri 25 Nov 20:45

Pontypool

Mon 21 Nov 20:30; Sun 27 Nov 12:20

Under the Shadow

Wed 23 Nov 20:40; Tue 29 Nov 18:10

Ouija: Origin of Evil

Thu 24 Nov 20:40; Mon 28 Nov 18:10

Pet Semetary

Fri 25 Nov 18:15; Mon 28 Nov 20:40

Good Manners (As Boas Maneiras)

Sun 27 Nov 18:10; Wed 30 Nov 20:25

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS EVENTS

City Lit at BFI: Screen Horrors – Screen Monsters

Thu 20 Oct – Thu 15 Dec 18:30-20:30

Beyond Nollywood World Premiere: Inside Life + Q&A with director

Clarence A Peters

Sat 29 Oct 14:00

Matchbox Cine presents House of Psychotic Women

Sat 5 Nov 17:50

Son of Ingagi + Panel Discussion

Wed 9 Nov 18:10

Live Commentary with Evolution of Horror, Brain Rot and The Final Girls

Sat 19 Nov 18:00

Big Monster Energy

Tue 22 Nov 18:30

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