



**"There is no disputing the fact that I am a violent killer under certain circumstances. The victim is the dirty platter after the feast, and the washing up is a clinically ordinary task. It would be better if my reason for killing could be clearly defined, i.e. robbery, jealousy, hate, revenge, sex, blood lust or sadism. But it is none of these."**

**Dennis Nilsen**





# CONTENTS

## 7 - CAST AND CREW

### 9 - **COLD DISCOMFORT** (2020)

by Jo Botting

### 13 - **A VERY, VERY PERSONAL EYE:**

An Interview with Writer/Director Fhiona Louise (1990)

by Mansel Stimpson

### 21 - **'I HAVE NO TEARS FOR THESE VICTIMS':**

How the Papers Reported Dennis Nilsen's Crimes (2020)

by Jeff Billington

## 34 - **ABOUT THE RESTORATION**

## 35 - **PRODUCTION CREDITS**





# *Cold Light of Day*

1989 | United Kingdom | 16mm | 1.37:1

## **CREW**

Written & Directed by **Fhiona Louise**

Produced by **Richard Driscoll**

Director of Photography **Nigel Axworthy**

Music by **Paul Stuart Davies**

Edited by **Leroy Stamps**

Special Effects/Prosthetics by **Pilar Leon** and **Suzi Wright**

## **CAST**

**Bob Flag** Jorden March

**Martin Byrne Quinn** Joe

**Geoffrey Greenhill** Chief Inspector Simmons

**Mark Hawkins** Young Man

**Andrew Edmans** Stephen

**Jackie Cox** Julie Stay

**Bill Merrow** Albert Green

**Clare King** Prostitute

**Paul Jay** Grandfather

**Debbie Manship** Mother

**Gary Ewell** Young Jorden

**Lol Coxhill** Priest

**Joe Owen** Detective Taylor

**Carlos Downie** Pick up in café

**Malcolm Rogers** Forensic Officer

**Ken Say** Police Officer #1

**John Baxter** Police Officer #2

**Louis Hausler** Rent Boy

**Paul McLaine** Dyno Rod Man





## Cold Discomfort (2020)

by Jo Botting

As I write this piece on British micro-budget serial killer exposé *Cold Light of Day*, the Ted Bundy biopic *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* (Joe Berlinger, 2019) is doing the rounds of UK cinemas. On its release in May 2019, the film's star and co-producer Zac Efron approached the press junkets with a clear message about the film: that it doesn't in any way attempt to glamorise the notorious multiple murderer. Yet surely the casting of a former teen-idol belies that claim and conforms to America's tendency to sensationalise and add gloss to even the most gruesome of true-life tales.

Not so in British cinema. While we are just as fond of a macabre true crime retelling, we much prefer ours on the downbeat, seedy side. When Hitchcock returned to London to make *Frenzy* in 1970, his screenplay was from an Arthur Le Bern novel but woven into it were memories of some historical figures. With strong links to the director's much earlier London film *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1927), a Jack the Ripper-esque tale based on Marie Belloc Lowndes' 1913 novel, *Frenzy's* neck-tie strangler evokes infamous killers Neville Heath and John Christie. The same year, Christie got his own squalid screen outing, *10 Rillington Place* (Richard Fleischer, 1970) and in both films the arduous task of disposing of the bodies is enough to put anyone off committing murder. More recently, *The Orchard End Murder* (Christian Marnham, 1980) made another sordid foray into the genre, the body's concealment in a pile of rotting apples leading back to the potato truck in *Frenzy*.

*Cold Light of Day* earns its place in this trajectory of Brit-grubbiness, with a strikingly accurate recreation of the 'flat of horrors' (as named by the *Daily Mirror*) where creepy celeb Dennis Nilsen dispatched his victims. Although the film's protagonist goes by the name of Jorden March, it makes no attempt to disguise its origins in Nilsen's history, via Brian Masters' 1985 book *Killing for Company* based on extensive conversations with the killer. Like Nilsen, March lives in a dingy North London bedsit and works at the local Job

Centre, his social life divided between a gay pub and a greasy spoon with plastic bottles of brown sauce on Formica tables. The pub is his 'pick up' place, while the caff is where he wines and dines his new friends ("Coffee is it these days? Used to be a cup of tea"), until they begin to take advantage of his good nature. Because Jorden March is good-natured, despite his crimes (the press dubbed Nilsen 'the kindly killer'). He takes in homeless young gay men, gives them food and a bed to sleep in, then strangles them with a tie (another echo of *Frenzy*?) and carefully dismembers them. But he's kind to the old man in the flat downstairs, who is doddery and childlike, a hint of the lonely future March could be headed for. Perhaps to avoid this fate, he finds a way to keep his friends with him, or bits of them at least, under the floorboards of his studio flat.

March's victims are portrayed as thoroughly repellent characters and while his methods of dealing with them are indefensible, it is possible to have some empathy with his attitude towards them. The film's attempts to explain his illness, with flashbacks to his grandfather's death (filmed around Durdle Door in Dorset rather than the Aberdeenshire coast where Nilsen grew up) and references to his own confused sexuality, don't quite succeed, though the film aims at creating atmosphere more than providing psychological depth. French magazine *Positif* called the film out on this, comparing it unfavourably to *The Honeymoon Killers* (Leonard Kastle, 1970), which was based on the 'lonely hearts murders' in 1940s America. *Cold Light of Day*, says the reviewer, "lacks a sense of the tragic" and tells its tale without lyricism. The reviewer was clearly hoping for greater insight, mentioning Kieslowski's *A Short Film About Killing* as an example of a film that successfully employs point of view; yet one British critic countered this perceived lack by comparing the film's sense of detachment favourably to that in the work of Robert Bresson.

Writer/director Fhiona Louise had trained at the Royal College of Art and was performing at the Actor's Studio when she met producer Richard Driscoll at an audition. He already had one feature, *The Comic* (1985), under his belt; she was keen to direct and, impressed by her determination, Driscoll got

together the funds on credit cards. On the film's release, Louise refused to reveal exactly how tiny the budget was, saying "I don't think it's that relevant. It shouldn't be a factor in whether the film is good or not." The film can't hide its budgetary restrictions, and nor does it attempt to; it's the original vision of its director which marks it out, a vision perhaps born in equal measures from inexperience and creativity yet no less compelling for that combination.

Much of the film's publicity focused on its director's youth, gender and physical attributes, and the unlikely choice of subject matter for a 21-year-old woman. Louise was taken aback by the obsession with her looks and offended by journalists asking such inane questions as "Is it difficult being blonde?" Still the youngest woman ever to direct a British feature, Louise identified the prospects as very bleak for first-time directors in the UK in the late 1980s. Things presumably got bleaker since, despite the film's success, it remains her only feature. At the time of its release she had several irons in the fire, most notably a planned documentary about Candida Royalle, the famous porn star turned feminist filmmaker. This was never made, nor were the other projects mooted. Louise's last credit is an appearance in a short film entitled *Sleepwalker* (Jon Jacobs, 1993).

Driscoll hired Bray Studios for the shoot, which was available cheaply as it was about to close down. The news reports about Dennis Nilsen, arrested in 1983, had haunted Louise as a child and her cinematic interpretation of the events reflect her youthful impressions of the gruesome facts. The casting of Bob Flag as March was a godsend; he not only had the ability to really inhabit the character but is an actor with incredible physical versatility. Though the wig he's given to wear is less than convincing, he pulls off a remarkably accurate impersonation of Nilsen, conveying his downbeat reticence and restraint, even in the face of the bullying police detective.

Flag is probably best known for his embodiment of Orwell's Big Brother in the feature version of *1984* (Michael Radford, 1984), which he beat over 100 other actors to get, but his portrayal of Jorden March was the role of which

he was apparently most proud. Flag had performed with David Bowie in the 1960s, done stand up and straight acting and moved into film and TV in the 1980s, with small roles in *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987) and *Eat the Rich* (Peter Richardson, 1987). His performance renders the act of killing banal and tedious. Louise was surprised by the BBFC's reaction to the film: "They were offended by the masturbation scene and the drug scene, but they weren't offended by the taking of life... or the prostitution scene," she told one magazine. In fact, she confessed to finding disconcerting the whole notion of a group of upper-middle class people deciding what the rest of the population can watch.

The film premiered at the Piccadilly Film Festival on 24 June 1990; this was the forerunner of the BFI's Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, now BFI Flare. The Cambridge Film Festival showed it the following month and it began a two-week run at London's ICA cinema from 3 August. Abroad, it was selected for the Venice International Film Festival in the Film Critics' Week. That year's festival was a good one for female directors with Jane Campion winning several gongs for *An Angel at My Table* while *Cold Light of Day* managed to scoop one of the smaller awards.

One critic compared Louise's visual approach to that of Campion in the way that both ignore standard framing, observing that "the characters [...] seem imprisoned by the dark surround of the screen as surely as they are entrapped by life". Less insightful reviewers put this down to "clumsy camerawork" that "even contrives to exclude characters from the side of the frame". The unusual framing is partly explained by the fact that its low budget meant it was shot on 16mm film with no funds to blow it up to 35mm.

The film's sound design also elicited much attention, Mark Kermode suggesting that the "ominous clanging noises [are] meant to depict the blockage of March's mental plumbing", an observation made mockingly which actually describes it rather well. It's also presumably there to foreshadow the imminent blockage of March's actual plumbing. The soundscape created

for the film is remarkably effective, if rather unconventional. It is present in the opening sequence, in which the film's title is represented in a shot of dawn over London, featuring the River Thames and St Paul's Cathedral with the sound of bird song and uncanny thudding noises over the top. Into this ominous scene, the title intrudes onto the screen. Other disembodied sounds intrude on the police interrogation scene, with talking and typing noises heard in the background emphasising the routine nature of his situation.

The festival recognition notwithstanding, the polarisation of views on the film typifies the press reaction. Some appeared offended by what they deemed the filmmakers' unforgiveable lack of skill. *Time Out's* Geoff Andrew and Kermode in *NME* took delight in trashing it, dubbing it "ludicrous" and "risibly inept" respectively. Meanwhile, those who 'got it' included Kirsty McNeill in *City Limits* ("a powerful and disturbing work"), Mansel Stimpson in *What's On in London* ("one of my most exciting cinema experiences this year") and *Variety* ("Bob Flag is thoroughly convincing as the killer").

Dennis Nilsen was sentenced to life in 1983; in May 2018 he died in prison at the age of 72. It's unlikely that he ever saw *Cold Light of Day*, but would he have recognised himself in the film's retelling of his story? The insight it gives the viewer into his internal world is perhaps the most accurate imagining of his motivation. The obsession with true crime shows no sign of abating and *Cold Light of Day* offers a chilling excursion into the mind of a serial killer.

***Josephine Botting is a Fiction Curator at the BFI National Archive and regularly features in DVD extras and commentaries. She has a PhD in film from Royal Holloway, University of London.***





## **A VERY, VERY PERSONAL EYE (1990)**

### **An Interview with Writer/Director Fhiona Louise**

by Mansel Stimpson

***The following interview, originally published in the August 1, 1990 edition of What's On magazine was conducted on the eve of Cold Light of Day's short theatrical run in the UK.***

"It's one of my favourite films. The colours in it are superb." The comment comes from the young but remarkably talented Fhiona Louise, and it is her response to my observation that her first feature film as writer and director, *Cold Light of Day*, reminds me of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*. She is clearly pleased I should think the comparison apt. In addition her comment is very revealing.

Although its storyline may put *Peeping Tom* into the category of horror movies, its admirers rightly tend to think of it as more than that. So the Powell picture is very relevant to *Cold Light of Day*, despite the fact that Fhiona's film about a mass murderer is very definitely *not* a horror movie.

Although fictional names have been used, Fhiona's screenplay is derived from the case of Dennis Nilsen who, in 1983, was found guilty of killing a series of homeless young men. Even now debates about his pathology continue, but Nilsen's closeness to a grandfather who died and whose dead body he saw (aspects represented in Fhiona's film) suggest that childhood experiences were a key factor. In childhood too lies the source of the motivation given to the fictional killer viewed with pity in Powell's *Peeping Tom*. Isn't this a parallel?

"It is," Fhiona agrees, "and with more murderers. I researched so many when I was doing this film, and the pattern is very, very similar. Incredibly.

But Nilsen's background is not all that different from other people's – particularly in the film industry. I notice a lot of people have that: no father, bad relationships – we end up making films! So one may think it's by chance that one man in that set-up becomes a murderer.

"Certainly, Nilsen developed a neurosis after his grandfather died. In terms of his communication with others, he became almost like an autistic child. He was very cold. But, when I was writing this, it came to me that every child goes through a phase of questioning or moroseness. I don't know anyone who at the age of ten or eleven hasn't written poetry about death. So I wasn't sure with Nilsen whether this was a factor or not. I'm saying: is this a factor? Leaving it open. How does someone become a murderer? What are the factors behind it? I was questioning that."

The other link with *Peeping Tom* is the visual quality – which is why it was revealing that Fhiona should comment on the colours in Powell's film. At this point an important factor emerges. "I'm trained as a painter," says Fhiona, explaining how she saw the images and colours in her own film. She was very clear as to the film stock she wanted to use, a cold stock.

"The reason why it's cold in *Cold Light of Day* is because I wanted to push people away from it; I didn't want them involved." But the coldness of the stock can highlight certain colours as in the scene which shows the murderer throwing a victim's blue scarf off the Charing Cross railway bridge.

"It was a conscious decision to have that: the blue scarf and the vertical lines of red railings. The red and the blue were violent. And it was a very, very conscious decision to film on that bridge.

"And actually, while we were filming, somebody jumped off the bridge, which was an incredible shock. Very, very strange how life throws things up at you. But, in saying that, when the police came, they mentioned that it was the fourth that week. And that relates very much to the Nilsen thing. I mean the

reasons why he got away with it for so long were that most of these lads were homeless. And, though that's not really studied in the film, that's very much a feeling behind it."

Returning to the look of the film, I comment on the unorthodox compositions which often relegate people to the very edge of the frame, virtually cutting them off. Fhiona is fascinated by my reaction that this suggests entrapment of the characters by life. She had not consciously planned it from that viewpoint, although dramatic points were being made through the compositions.

"All the framing was very much to keep people on the outside. I decided not to have any tight shots at all – there are about two in the entire film. To have space in between the characters was really to show there was a separateness between them – Nilsen trying to reach out and overcome that gap. But if you saw my paintings, you'd see it's very much like some of these frames. There'll be half a body on the foreground, but it'll be what's in the background that I'll be focusing on. It's my style. I've had no training and nobody to say *that* is unorthodox and *this* is the right way to do it."

To get her own vision across. Fhiona found she had to be stubborn. "Certain things, I could say, yes, that's the reason I did it, but mostly it's because it's powerful to me. But I'm not a technical person: *Cold Light of Day* was basically my training in filmmaking, and it's primarily reflective of my painting. Individual scenes could be individual paintings very easily."

Here lies the special quality of Fhiona's work, but she is totally honest about her inexperience as a director and admits to limitations due to a race against time. She concedes that a few shots went wrong and there was no time to reshoot. She is planning to direct further films as well as developing her other career – that of an actress – in a first feature by Jon Jacobs. Meanwhile, *Cold Light of Day* is due to be shown at several film festivals including Edinburgh. The most common question she will encounter is doubtless one I included myself: what made her choose this of all subjects for her debut film?

"A very, very personal reason. When Nilsen was caught, I was 16 or 17. A very close friend of mine knew his last victim very well, the drug addict. My friend had taken him off the streets, but he wasn't trained as a social worker and couldn't cope with someone who was on hard drugs. So, basically, he had to let him go. The boy didn't keep in touch.

"Then a year or more later he found out he'd been murdered by Dennis Nilsen and he blamed himself. He just went to pieces, and trying to get him to face up to things started my interest. And when I read the press coverage I was absolutely astounded. I mean one headline that comes to mind was 'Commie Bastard Kills 17'. I just couldn't believe that people could be this insensitive. It was almost made a joke of. The messages behind it were totally overshadowed."

But those messages get through in *Cold Light of Day* and inform the dedication which is written up at the film's close: "For those too sensitive for this world."

***Reprinted with the author's kind permission.***







bloody alert reveals mass killings

# 17 BODIES IN GRAVE HORROR IN GARDEN

Saturday February 12 1983

CRANLEY GARDENS N10

# THE MAN ACCUSED

former PC  
ees court  
lay on  
rge of  
der

...HERRER, IAN BLACK,  
...and MICHAEL PARRY  
...police... Dennis  
...in will appear in  
...its London today  
...der.



## Big hunt goes on for bodies



## der charge man CHAINS



## Nilsen: Four more murder charges

CIVIL servant Dennis Nilsen faced four new murder charges yesterday

BY ALISTER MARTIN

# HOUSE OF HORROR CLUE TO MISSING TOURIST

ONE of 13 bodies believed to be buried at the house of horror may be that of a missing tourist.  
Kenneth Oskenden, 26, vanished in London three years ago, two days before he was due to fly home to Canada.  
Yesterday

By GEORGE WEBBER



SEVENTEEN people are believed to have been butchered by a serial murderer.

All the victims are thought to be young male deaths.

At the time of the murders, the bodies were kept in cold storage.

By GEORGE WEBBER

Named

One of the bodies was found in a house in Cranley Gardens, N10.

A house in Cranley Gardens, N10, was the scene of a murder.



## **'I HAVE NO TEARS FOR THESE VICTIMS': How the papers reported Dennis Nilsen's crimes (2020)**

by Jeff Billington

On Tuesday 8th February 1983, a plumber investigating a blocked drain at a Muswell Hill house discovered that it was packed with what appeared to be flesh. The next day, the police confirmed the findings, and arrested tenant Dennis Nilsen, who immediately told police he had killed many more people. At this time, the British newspapers were mainly occupied with the kidnapping of the thoroughbred racehorse Shergar. This changed on Friday 11th. The cover story of the *Daily Mirror* shows how quickly the grisly details of the case emerged – the *Mirror* was also the first paper to name Nilsen:

### **17 BODIES IN MURDER HORROR**

Seventeen people are believed to have been butchered by a mass murderer. All the victims are thought to be young male down and outs. They were strangled, their bodies were cut up and boiled. A grisly search for the remains of the victims was under way yesterday after two heads and a hand were discovered at No. 23 Cranley Gardens, Muswell Hill, North London. A further 14 victims are believed to have been murdered three miles away at 195 Melrose Avenue, Willesden Green. [...] Police were first alerted on Wednesday when a plumber found the rotting remains of three adults blocking a drain at the house in Cranley Gardens. [...]

One of the dead was identified yesterday as Stephen Neil Sinclair, 20, of no fixed address. Police believe the killings may have been carried out by a homosexual, or somebody with a grudge against them. The man helping with inquiries was named last night as former policeman Dennis Nilsen.

*The Daily Mirror*, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February 1983

**The *Mirror*, whose reporting team included future 'spin doctor' Alastair Campbell, got the scoop after they were approached by Michael Cattran, the plumber who first discovered the crime and alerted police. In this extract from Friday's edition, Cattran describes the scene he found at the bottom of the drain:**

"I pulled out lumps of flesh the size of my fist and strips of flesh that looked as though they had been cut from an arm. [...] There was a bit with hair on it. The flesh was so white and there was such a lot of it. I was trying to think what sort kind of animal it could be. As I was prodding around, I thought, it's obviously not a dog, there's no fur. It's not a chicken – not that much of it. It was all bruised up and eventually I got to thinking that it had to be a body." [...]

Mike and [colleague] Gary decided to make a further check when it got light. "But," said Mike, "When I went back on Wednesday everything had been washed out. I was determined not to be proved wrong about what I had seen so I climbed down to look for more. [...] I reached down the pipe and there was some more there – bits of what could be fingers and strips of flesh. I lined the fingers up with my own and thought they could be that bit from the palm to the first knuckle and other bits up to the second joint."

*The Daily Mirror*, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February 1983

**After being formally charged, Nilsen himself dominated the front pages on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February. The *Mirror*, remaining ahead of the other tabloids, located his mother in Scotland. She supplied a number of images of a younger Nilsen, including an oft-reproduced image from his short time as a police officer in the early 70s – most initial reports described him as an 'ex-PC'. She was also interviewed, though offered little insight, having barely seen Nilsen since he joined the army at age 16. Tucked away in the corner was a brief piece which suggested Nilsen's crimes might have been detected sooner:**

## **HUMAN REMAINS FOUND IN 1981**

Plastic bags containing human remains were spotted only a few hundred yards from the house in Melrose Avenue 18 months ago. Medical graduate Robert Wilson [...] found one bag lying on the pavement near a lamp-post rubbish bin. Parts of what appeared to be human remains were spilling out of the bag. Other similar bags were in the bin.

*The Daily Mirror*, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February 1983

***The Daily Express* focussed on Nilsen's army career, worrying whether the royal family may have been in his vicinity:**

## **POLICEMAN WHO WAS ONCE A COOK AT BALMORAL**

[Nilsen] served as a cook in the Army Catering Corps from 1961 to 1972. During that time he worked in the kitchens at Balmoral, preparing food for the Queen's military bodyguard. A senior Army officer said last night: "That meant he cooked for the troops, but he would never have been close to, or cooked for, any members of the Royal Family."

*The Daily Express*, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February 1983

**At this point, Stephen Sinclair was the only victim to be named, and Nilsen was charged initially with his murder only, though other counts were added before the case began. On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February, the *Mirror* reported some grim findings at Nilsen's former home:**





### **GRAVE HORROR IN GARDEN DIG**

Police searching for 13 suspected murder victims found fragments of smashed skulls in a gruesome burial patch last night. They said that this was the most significant find yet at 195 Melrose Avenue, Cricklewood, North London. The fragments were discovered by police cadets, eight of them girls, in and around the house garden.

*The Daily Mirror*, Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February 1983

**The time between his remanding in custody at the Old Bailey and the start of his trial in October was spent in Brixton Prison. Newspapers, prevented from covering the case in a manner that may prejudice a future trial, simply factually noted that Nilsen had been refused bail, and that he repeatedly fired and rehired his legal team – although there were a few column inches devoted to the passing of Nilsen’s dog, Blip. There was no mention of Nilsen’s troublemaking in prison, such as refusing to wear a uniform and emptying his chamber pot on prison officers.**

**The trial began at the Old Bailey on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October, and papers were keen to report both the grisly details of Nilsen’s crimes, and the detached manner of his confession:**

Dennis Andrew Nilsen, aged 37, told police he had stored the bodies under his floorboards before cutting them up and either burning them or flushing them down the lavatory. Asked how many he had stored at one time, he replied: “I don’t know. I didn’t do a stock check.”

On the opening day of his trial at the Old Bailey yesterday, Nilsen denied six counts of murder and two of attempted murder. The jury was told that psychiatric evidence would be called by the defence to show that he had acted with diminished responsibility and was, therefore, guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter.

*The Guardian*, Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 1983

**The prosecution largely relied on Nilsen's own testimony, as well as that of three men who escaped his clutches. The first to give evidence was Douglas Stewart, who revealed another missed opportunity for the police:**

Douglas Stewart, aged 29, told the court how he had called police in November 1980 and complained to them that Dennis Nilsen had tried to kill him in his flat in Melrose Avenue. [...] During the night, something told him to wake up. "He (Nilsen) was leaning over me with his knee on my chest and he had my tie round my neck. I tried to fight him off."

He subsequently managed to escape from the flat and run down the road to a telephone box. Two policemen came in answer to his call and took him back to the flat, where Nilsen told them that they had been having a lover's quarrel.

*The Guardian*, Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 1983

**The next day, Paul Nobbs and Carl Stottor gave similar evidence of Nilsen's attempts to kill them. Collectively, they verified that Nilsen would loudly call after those who escaped, in order to make it appear to neighbours that there was a simple domestic dispute. The prosecution used this evidence to demonstrate that Nilsen was acting rationally and was therefore 'of sound mind'.**

**Nilsen's dispassionate tone was as horrifying as the gruesome details of his crimes – "It amazes me that I have no tears for these victims. I have no tears for myself or those bereaved by my action," he told the court. Nilsen also spoke of the power he felt during his killings:**

"It was as easy as taking candy from a baby. I remember thinking: 'You will have no more troubles squire.' I felt I was doing [the victim] a favour. I felt his life was one long struggle. [...] I thought I was in a quasi-god role. I thought I could do anything I wanted while people next door and upstairs knew nothing of it."

*The Daily Mail*, Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 1983

***The Guardian* reported one particularly alarming piece of Nilsen trivia:**

He told police that his favourite piece of music was 'O Superman' by Laurie Anderson. "It has a hypnotic, trance-like effect on me. I listened to its full eight minutes 10 times one night. I was compelled to play it over and over and I couldn't stop myself until the Bacardi ran out, followed by my senses not long after."

*The Guardian*, Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 1983

**The lengthy experimental piece by New York-based performance artist and musician Anderson was a surprise Number 2 hit on the British charts in 1981.**

**Nilsen's defence rested on his psychiatrist's attempt to demonstrate that he was suffering from a personality disorder:**

Dr James MacKeith described Nilsen's life-long loneliness, his drinking bouts and blackouts, and his obsession with nakedness and unconsciousness which led him to masturbate by the corpses of his victims "as a symbolic goodbye." Nilsen was paranoid and unsure of his own identity and desperate for the attention of others, he said.

*The Guardian*, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 1983

**The prosecution refuted this defence, and on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, the jury retired to consider their verdict. This took some time, requiring them to spend a night in a hotel, and the verdict arrived late on Friday 4<sup>th</sup>.**

Mass killer Dennis Nilsen was last night given eight life sentences by an Old Bailey judge with the recommendation that he serve a minimum of 25 years. After an overnight retirement the jury of eight men and four women brought in guilty verdicts by a majority of 10-2 on all six murder charges. [...]

As he was led from the dock Nilsen turned to his solicitor and said that the sentence was much less than he anticipated. "They found me normal," he said to solicitor Ralph Haeems. "So everyone out there must be abnormal."

*The Daily Express*, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 1983

**Nilsen was sentenced to life with a recommendation he serve at least 25 years. Just a few weeks later, he was back on the front page:**

#### **RAZOR ATTACK ON KILLER NILSEN**

Mass murderer Dennis Nilsen was attacked by a razor slasher in jail yesterday. His face was a mass of blood from a deep four-inch gash. The wound was so bad that a plastic surgeon was called to Wormwood Scrubs from nearby Hammersmith Hospital to stitch it. [...] One prisoner freed last month said: "The tension in the Scrubs is unbearable. It's only a matter of time before someone cuts him to pieces."

*The Daily Mirror*, Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1983





Nilsen made occasional appearances in the press for the remainder of his life, being frequently shifted between prisons after annoying inmates, prison officers and governors alike. He controversially re-entered the public consciousness in 1993 when British terrestrial television screened an interview with Nilsen as part of the programme *Viewpoint '93 – Murder in Mind*. On 27<sup>th</sup> January, *The Daily Express* noted that a government injunction against broadcasting the interview was overturned just three hours before broadcast. In October 2001, he made headlines again after complaining about the censorship of several pornographic magazines to which he subscribed – an indignity his lawyer claimed was ‘inhuman and degrading’, and which the European Court of Human Rights dismissed outright. Finally, Dennis Nilsen died on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2018, aged 72.

*Jeff Billington is a freelance film writer and researcher, and booklet editor for the Powerhouse Indicator series.*





ON DUTY: Nilsen in P.C.'s uniform

**Dennis  
Andrew  
Nilsen**

**CHARGED  
WITH**



**MA'Night of terror  
in Nilsen's flat'**



JOKING: The camera civil servant in night with...

**Jury sent  
for night  
in hotel**

Continued from Page One

then was necessarily mad because of the way he killed. He had listened to a programme on the radio in this hotel. You might have heard people outside court say that a man who could do things like this must be mad. That is why you have seen wanted to go by the evidence to court. He said the lane they had to drive was where Nilsen had an abnormality.

**Nilsen sl  
by  
then home to d**

to the stars. As he sat in the armchair round his neck and strangled him. Nilsen, 29, from Glasgow, was for him. Allen had arrived in London. He became a drifter and hadn't Nilsen police found parts of his body near a other home.

his final victim was Scotman Sinclair, 29, a heavy drinker who having Gross Road and after a meal police raised the flat the hair of the flat the...



**who was on  
Balmoral**

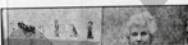
**MY SON DENNIS... THE KILLER**

**I won't abandon him and I will  
always write, says his mother**

**Jury se  
for night  
in hotel**



by NIGEL BURNAN  
Distracted, Nilsen



**Contact**  
Mr. Nilsen, 29, is a heavy drinker who having Gross Road and after a meal police raised the flat the hair of the flat the...

**Contact**  
Mr. Nilsen, 29, is a heavy drinker who having Gross Road and after a meal police raised the flat the hair of the flat the...



**I saw myself as a sort of god**









## ABOUT THE RESTORATION

*Cold Light of Day* has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.33:1 with mono audio.

All restoration work was carried out at R3Store Studios in London. The original 16mm AB negative was scanned in 2K resolution on a Scanity and the film was graded on Digital Vision's Nucoda Film Master. Picture restoration was completed using Digital Phoenix and PF Clean software and the original mono mix was remastered from the original mag reels.

This restoration has been approved by director Fhiona Louise.

Restoration supervised by James White, Arrow Films

R3Store Studios: Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Nathan Leaman-Hill,  
Rich Watson, Jenny Collins

All materials used for this restoration provided by producer Richard Driscoll.

## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**  
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**  
Technical Producer **James White**  
Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**  
QC **Alan Simmons**  
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**  
Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **Visual Data Media Services**  
Design **Oink Creative**  
Artist **Gilles Vranckx**

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Alex Agran, Dean Brandum, David Childs, Richard Driscoll,  
Bob Flag, Jon Jacobs, Steve Munroe, Andrew Nette,  
Martin Byrne-Quinn and Jon Robertson.

**Extra special thanks to writer/director Fhiona Louise  
for her invaluable assistance with this release.**



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