

BFI TV Classics press release



Seven Up - Stella Bruzzi
Queer as Folk - Glyn Davis
Seinfeld - Nicholas Mirzoeff

On **29 November**, the BFI publishes three new titles in its TV Classics series of books that celebrate key individual television programmes and series; **Seven Up** by Stella Bruzzi, **Queer as Folk** by Glyn Davis and **Seinfeld** by Nicholas Mirzoeff.

Seven Up – Stella Bruzzi

Seven Up began as a 1964 *World in Action* special made by Granada TV about the lives of twenty (later fourteen) children, from across British society, from public schoolboys to working-class girls from London’s East End.

The idea behind this original film was to test the Jesuit maxim ‘*give me a child until he is seven, and I will give you the man*’ and to see the extent to which a child’s future was determined by the social environment into which they were born. Michael Apted, one of two researchers on the original programme, went on to revisit the children every seven years, producing an iconic series that has won international acclaim, has been screened all over the world and has spawned numerous imitations.

Stella Bruzzi’s illuminating study is the first comprehensive account of the series. It traces *Seven Up*’s origins and production history up to *49 Up*, places it within the context of the history of British documentary, and provides in-depth analysis of the programmes themselves. Interwoven into Bruzzi’s account are invaluable insights from Apted, his series producer Claire Lewis, and two of the ‘children’ – Nick and Bruce.

Queer as Folk – Glyn Davis

When Russell T. Davies’ groundbreaking drama *Queer as Folk* was first broadcast on Channel 4 in 1999, it was both hailed and reviled for its depiction of gay lives. The first fictional television programme in which almost all the characters were gay or lesbian, the Manchester-set series followed the adventures of sci-fi fan Vince, his sexually voracious best pal Stuart and new kid on the scene Nathan. Unapologetically ignoring debates about ‘positive images’, *Queer as Folk* deliberately turned its back on previous angst-ridden depictions of gay life, and featured ribald language and frequent scenes of nudity and sex.

In the first critical study of this groundbreaking and controversial series – both the British original and the American remake – Glyn Davis examines in detail its conception, production, controversial content, marketing and reception.

He situates it in relation to the history of 'gay TV', Channel 4's drama output, 'New Labour' politics, and the 'mainstreaming' of homosexuality in the 90s. He also explores concerns addressed in the series, such as parenting, workplace homophobia, cruising and teenage sexuality.

Seinfeld – Nicholas Mirzoeff

One of the most popular TV sitcoms ever broadcast, *Seinfeld* (1990–98) was ostensibly a show 'about nothing', with its creator Larry David decreeing that it should contain 'no hugging, no learning'. Nicholas Mirzoeff's insightful and engaging study of the series argues that *Seinfeld* was very much about something, as Jerry Seinfeld and his friends Elaine, George and Kramer constantly seek to establish a set of rules for everyday life.

Mirzoeff explores *Seinfeld*'s obsession with 'the rules' in the key areas of comedy itself, dating and relationships and Jewishness, and how to be a New Yorker, wherever you happen to live. He situates *Seinfeld* as an expression of Clinton-era America, from its consistently ironic take on social life and its fixation on how to describe it, to the changing culture of sexuality and ethnicity.

In the spirit of *Seinfeld* itself, this is a reflective, funny and occasionally digressive account of what it is to watch television.

About the authors

Stella Bruzzi is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. She is the author of *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-war Hollywood* (2005) and *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (Second Edition, 2006).

Glyn Davis is Senior Lecturer in Screen Studies at the University of Bristol. He is the editor (with Kay Dickinson) of *Teen TV: Genre, Consumption, Identity* (BFI 2004). His book *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* will be published in 2008.

Nicholas Mirzoeff is Director of the Visual Culture Program at New York University. He is the author of *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (2005) and *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (1999).

For further information and review copies please contact:

Jill Reading, BFI Press Officer

Tel: (020) 7957 4759 or e-mail: jill.reading@bfi.org.uk

Notes to editors

About the new titles

BFI TV Classics titles are published in paperback at £12 each.

Seven Up – 136pp, ISBN: 978-1-84457-196-3

Queer as Folk – 144pp, ISBN: 978-1-84457-199-4

Seinfeld – 144pp, ISBN: 978-1-84457-201-4

About BFI TV Classics

BFI TV Classics is a series of books celebrating key individual television programmes and series. Television scholars, critics and novelists provide critical readings underpinned with careful research, alongside a personal response to the programme and a case for its 'classic' status. Titles already available are: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* by Anne Billson, *Doctor Who* by Kim Newman, *Our Friends in the North* by Michael Eaton and *The Office* by Ben Walters.

Where to buy BFI books

BFI books are available from all good bookshops, from the Filmstore at BFI Southbank, London SE1 and the BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1, by mail order from the Filmstore on 0207 815 1350 or online at www.bfi.org.uk/filmstore

About the BFI

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you. www.bfi.org.uk