

David Renwick: The Comic Philosopher



With the imminent arrival of the new series of **Jonathan Creek** (1997 - present), **BFI Southbank** takes a look at the career of its multi-award winning writer **David Renwick** throughout January and welcomes him on-stage on 27th January.

Renwick has won three **BAFTA** awards and has also received a **Writers' Guild Award**, a true testament to his talent as a writer and his unique comic style and vision. Renowned for his views on how his scripts should be performed (and having directed episodes of *Jonathan Creek* himself), he admits that his actors are discouraged from arbitrarily changing his lines, because he places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of comic stress and verbal rhythms. This season aims to provide a flavour of the diversity and originality of Renwick's writing, including a selection of his early work with long term-writing partner **Andrew Marshall**.

Best known for writing television comedy **One Foot in the Grave** (1990-2000), Renwick is someone who understands the craft of writing comedy, with material ranging from the highly political satire of **Whoops Apocalypse** (1986) to his own intensely personal, strange and quirky worlds created for *One Foot in the Grave* and **Love Soup** (2005 - present).

His penchant for a well constructed plot has also enabled Renwick to develop his other favourite form, the murder mystery, as seen in *Jonathan Creek* and several adaptations of **Agatha Christie's Poirot** (1989 - present). His trademark ability to draw together a seemingly unrelated series of incidents and coincidences to produce devastatingly funny consequences is shown in **One Foot in the Algarve** (1993).

David Renwick in Conversation + Love Soup: There Must Be Some Way Out of Here

This opening episode of *Love Soup* (2005) set the scene for two people seeking that one special soul-mate. They never meet, but through their inner thoughts and alienation from the world around them we know they are destined for each other. Using this conceit, Renwick again articulates fears and worries common to us all. Prior to the screening, the writer will give an illustrated career interview and take part in a Q&A.

BBC-Cinema Verity 2005 Dir Christine Gernon With Tamsin Greig, Michael Landes, Sheridan Smith 60min
Wed 27 Jan 20:15 NFT1 Joint ticket available with *One Foot in the Algarve* £12.90, concs £9.65 (Members pay £1.40 less)

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Renwick & Marshall

Renwick and long-time writing partner Andrew Marshall together created some of the best comedy of the 80s and 90s, and we can trace much of Renwick's development from this collaborative period. *End of Part One*, moving between the highly political and the surreal, here affectionately lampoons the BBC magazine show *Nationwide*, with items on the Enoch Powell Party and World War Three. *Hot Metal* offers a brilliant satire on the tabloid press and is as relevant to today's redtops as it was in 1986. *If You See God, Tell Him* provides a bittersweet climax to the tale of pensioner Godfrey Spry (Richard Briers) who lives his life through the fantasies and slogans offered by the advertising he sees on television. Renwick's trademark dark humour and deep humanity are skilfully used to create an aching funny but devastating critique of consumerism.

End of Part One (Series 2, Ep 4 LWT 1980 Dir Geoffrey Sax 25min) + *Hot Metal: Beyond the Infinite* (LWT 1986 Dir David Askey 25min) + *If You See God, Tell Him* (Ep 4 BBC 1993 Dir Marcus Mortimer 45min)

Tue 5 Jan 20:45 NFT3

Whoops Apocalypse

Newly elected US President Barbara Adams' problems are increased when Peter Cook's British PM tries to reclaim a colonial island after invasion. As the Russians become involved and the PM's sanity cracks, the world teeters on the brink of WW3. Preceded by the final episode from the TV series that prompted the feature film (*Whoops Apocalypse: Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun* LWT 1982 Dir John Reardon 26min), in which Renwick & Marshall's chillingly anarchic script charts the madness in the White House, No 10 and the Kremlin that leads towards mutual nuclear destruction.

UK 1986 Director Tom Bussman With Peter Cook, Ian Richardson, Rik Mayall, Loretta Swit 91min 15

Tue 12 Jan 18:10 NFT3

One Foot in the Grave

The first ever episode sees Victor Meldrew made redundant and quickly spirals into the now familiar Renwick territory of misunderstandings and disasters. Plus a vintage episode that contains some of Renwick's finest conceits as, lost in the strangely sinister English countryside, Victor discovers an old persons' home where the residents are being mistreated. In the final episode, we're asked if Margaret can learn to forgive the person who killed Victor in a hit and run. A suitably enigmatic ending to a series that refused to be categorised.

Alive & Buried (BBC 1990 Dir Susan Belbin 30min) + *Hearts Of Darkness* (BBC 1994 Dir Susan Belbin 30min) + *Things Aren't Simple Any More* (BBC 2000 Dir Christine Gernon With Richard Wilson, Annette Crosbie, Hannah Gordon, Paul Merton 42min)

Fri 15 Jan 18:10 NFT3

Agatha Christie's Poirot

Two Poirots that show that Renwick's ability is not confined solely to comedy, and that a passion for the plot-driven murder mystery format also underpins his work. In *Wasps' Nest*, jealousies abound and passions run high when a fashion model leaves one lover to be with another – and murder must surely follow. *Tragedy at Marsden Manor*, a classic adaptation, involves fear of the supernatural and appeals to Renwick's fascination with magic and the black arts.

Wasps' Nest (LWT 1991 Dir Brian Farnham With David Suchet, Hugh Fraser, Peter Capaldi 55min) + *Tragedy at Marsden Manor* (LWT 1991 Dir Renny Rye With David Suchet, Hugh Fraser, Philip Jackson 55min)

Tue 19 Jan 18:10 NFT2

Jonathan Creek

When a rock star finds himself chained to a radiator in his own house and is accused of abducting a teenage girl he's never met, the puzzle is set. A classic from Series One, containing all the winning ingredients of humour, mystery and that essential lateral thinking from our eponymous hero. In *The Tailor's Dummy*, a fashion designer leaps to his death after being attacked in print by a vindictive columnist – Jonathan Creek pieces the plot together with a parrot and a Groucho Marx trick from *Duck Soup*.

No Trace of Tracey (BBC 1997 Dir Sandy Johnson With Alan Davies, Caroline Quentin, Ralph Brown 60min) + *The Tailor's Dummy* (BBC 2003 Dir Christine Gernon With Alan Davies, Julia Sawalha, Maureen Lipman 60min)

Fri 22 Jan 18:20 NFT2

One Foot in the Algarve

Victor, Margaret and Mrs Warboys head for Portugal, and a holiday disaster like no other. One of the few successful attempts to take a comedy series outside its normal environment, this one-off special works on so many levels – a murder mystery, a love story, a morality tale of thwarted greed and, above all, an hilarious comedy exploiting all of Renwick's glorious misunderstandings and visual puns. Simply one of the finest crafted and executed TV comedies.

BBC 1993 Dir Susan Belbin With Richard Wilson, Annette Crosbie, Doreen Mantle, Peter Cook 95min

Wed 27 Jan 18:15 NFT1 Joint ticket available with **David Renwick in Conversation** £12.90, concs £9.65 (Members pay £1.40 less)

Booking information

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Tickets for ALL FREE screenings and events but must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

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