THE INNOCENTS
Directed by Jack Clayton
UK-US, 1961, 100 mins, Cert 12A

Starring Deborah Kerr, Peter Wyngarde, Michael Redgrave
Martin Stephens, Pamela Franklin

Opening on 13 December 2013 at BFI Southbank, IFI Dublin,
QFT Belfast & selected cinemas nationwide

24 October 2013 – The second of three films to be released by the BFI in cinemas nationwide as part of GOTHIC: The Dark Heart of Film is Jack Clayton’s 1961 feature The Innocents, now widely considered to be one of the greatest of all cinematic tales of terror.

This celebrated adaptation of Henry James’s The Turn of the Screw (1898) was scripted by William Archibald (whose play of the book had been on Broadway) and Truman Capote, with additional scenes and dialogue by John Mortimer.

A brilliant exercise in psychological horror, The Innocents tells of an impressionable and repressed governess, Miss Giddens (Deborah Kerr), who agrees to tutor two orphaned children, Miles (Martin Stephens) and Flora (Pamela Franklin). On arrival at Bly House, she becomes convinced that the children are possessed by the perverse spirits of former governess Miss Jessel (Clytie Jessop) and her Heathcliff-like lover Quint (Peter Wyngarde), who both met with mysterious deaths.

The sinister atmosphere of The Innocents is carefully created – not through shock tactics – but through its cinematography, soundtrack, and decor: Freddie Francis’ beautiful CinemaScope photography, with its eerily indistinct long shots and mysterious manifestations at the edges of the frame; Georges Auric’s evocative and spooky soundtrack; and the grand yet decaying Bly House, with spiders crawling from dilapidated statues, ants from the eyes of dolls, and rooms covered in dust sheets.
But it is Deborah Kerr in the performance of her career – struggling to veil her mounting hysteria under a civilised façade – who makes The Innocents such an intensely unsettling experience. Are the ghosts the products of Miss Giddens’s fevered imagination and emotional immaturity, or a displacement of her shock at the sexually precocious behaviour of ten-year-old Miles? Is she the protector or the corrupter?

Despite a lukewarm critical reception on its original release, The Innocents was passionately defended by Pauline Kael who called it ‘the best ghost movie I’ve ever seen’. And as Sir Christopher Frayling points out in his newly published BFI Film Classic, the film’s reputation has grown steadily ever since, firstly through the plaudits of filmmakers such as François Truffaut, William Wyler and Martin Scorsese, but also through later ‘haunted house’ movies such as The Woman in Black (Nigel Kneale’s 1989 TV adaptation), The Others (2001) and The Orphanage (2007).

We hope to be able to arrange interviews with cast members Peter Wyngarde, Martin Stephens and Clytie Jessop, and Peter Musgrave who worked on the sound.

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Images are available at www.image.net>BFI>Theatrical releases
More details on venues at www.bfi.org.uk/releases
More details on GOTHIC: The Dark Heart of Film at www.bfi.org.uk/gothic

Notes to Editors

- The Innocents is released in selected cinemas nationwide on 13 December 2013 as part of the BFI’s GOTHIC: The Dark Heart of Film, a nationwide celebration of Gothic film and TV.

- New publication: The Innocents by Sir Christopher Frayling is one of eight special edition Gothic BFI Film Classics published by Palgrave Macmillan on 25 October. Frayling traces the development of the film from its genesis in the original novel The Turn of the Screw by Henry James to Jack Clayton’s film. Drawing on unpublished material from Clayton's archive – including Truman Capote's handwritten drafts for the film – and interviews with Deborah Kerr, Freddie Francis, and John Mortimer, he explores how this classic ghost story came to life on screen. RRP £10.99. More details here: www.palgrave.com/bfi/gothic

- Haunted: The Innocents – An exhibition at BFI Southbank
From 31 October – 31 January, BFI Southbank’s Atrium space will be transformed as the Gothic look of the film is replicated in a free exhibition that charts its journey from script to screen. Showcasing the BFI’s extraordinary archive of filmmakers’ papers, designs and photographs, it will feature the costume designs by Motley, unseen concept designs by artist John Piper, pages from the handwritten screenplay by Truman
Capote and stills by Ted Reed, from the personal collection of cinematographer Freddie Francis.

- A special preview of *The Innocents* takes place at Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds on Sunday 3 November during the Gothic Film Festival (31 Oct-3 Nov) which is being held there as part of GOTHIC: The Dark Heart of Film. More details here: [http://gothicfilmfestival.co.uk/whats-showing/#INNOCENTS](http://gothicfilmfestival.co.uk/whats-showing/#INNOCENTS)

- Also released in cinemas nationwide by the BFI as part of GOTHIC: The Dark Heart of Film:
  - *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (Werner Herzog, 1979) - 1 November (Halloween previews 31 October)
  - *La Belle et la Bête* (Jean Cocteau, 1946) – 3 January 2014

**About GOTHIC: THE DARK HEART OF FILM**

GOTHIC: The Dark Heart of Film runs from August 2013 – January 2014 celebrating one of Britain’s biggest cultural exports. With over 150 titles and around 1000 screenings GOTHIC features spectacularly terrifying special events to thrill every corner of the UK. The project also incorporates the longest BFI Southbank season yet (4 months), UK-wide theatrical and DVD releases, an education programme, a new BFI GOTHIC book and a range of exciting partnerships, special guests and commentators. GOTHIC will explore film’s most popular theme, spawning some of the medium’s most iconic, powerful and terrifying scenes and characters whose lasting popularity just refuses to die.

**About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences