

# PRESS PACK

HEATHER ANN  
FOSTER

JASON  
CONNERY

STEPHANIE  
BUTTLE

## URBAN GHOST STORY



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meets "The  
Exorcist" "  
*VARIETY*

"Trainspotting  
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Foster as the  
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*Daily Mail*

"genuinely  
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*The  
Independent*

Living Spirit Pictures Presents

JASON CONNERY STEPHANIE BUTTLE JAMES COSMO ELIZABETH BERRINGTON NICOLA STAPLETON introducing HEATHER ANN FOSTER as LIZZIE  
Director of Photography JON WALKER Editor EDDIE HAMILTON Costume Design LINDA HAYSMAN Production Design SIMON PICKUP  
Associate Producer IAN HIERONS Executive Producer DAVID HARDWICK Screenplay CHRIS JONES and GENEVIEVE JOLLIFFE  
Producer CHRIS JONES Director GENEVIEVE JOLLIFFE

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# LIVING SPIRIT

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email [mail@livingspirit.com](mailto:mail@livingspirit.com) Web Site [www.livingspirit.com](http://www.livingspirit.com)

"Packed with spine-tingling thrills, 'Urban Ghost Story' is one of the most intelligent British horror films in years...

'Urban Ghost Story' manages to create a truly disturbing sense of unease and anxiety... .  
Don't see it alone."

Carlton Popcorn

"Urban Ghost Story is one of the most credible studies of spectral obsession ever committed to celluloid. the film establishes a disturbing mise en scene that keeps one rooted"

Film Review

"...genuinely chilling moments... Heather Ann Fester is an astounding young talent"

Dreamwatch \*\*\*\*\*

"...utterly electrifying... Heather Ann Fester illuminates Urban Ghost Story with compelling intensity."

Uncut

"...impressively chilling and emotionally articulate ... Scary, subtle and smart..."

Film Four

"...performances are uniformly outstanding and Jolliffe's direction is low key but right on the money."

Darkside Magazine

"Ken Leach meets 'The Exorcist'"

VARIETY

"Trainspetting out of 'The Exorcist'"

Sunday Times

"Jones and Jolliffe show they can multiplex with the best"

VARIETY

"A shrewdly judged chiller that boasts a brilliant, moving performance from newcomer Fester as the troubled Lizzie"

Daily Mail

"genuinely haunting work"

The Independent

# URBAN GHOST STORY

## Short Synopsis

After an ecstasy induced car accident, 12 year old Lizzie lies dead on the roadside - slowly she is taken into *the light* - but is pulled back to earth when she is revived by the doctors. Lizzie feels sure that during the 184 seconds that she lay dead, something latched on to her and came back into her world. The nightmares and visions that follow only crystallise her belief that she should have died in the crash...

Then the disturbances start, at first merely tappings and bad smells - *but soon the activity escalates*. Lizzie seems to be the focus, but according to others, she's just playing games for attention. Only when Kate, her mother, is confronted with inexplicable events does she face the possibility that they may be the victims of a poltergeist infestation. The family have no option but to ask for help, but everywhere Kate turns she is met with ridicule or a brick wall of civil servant red tape. Finally, Kate's plea is answered by a newspaper journalist from the local press with his own hidden agenda - he brings in all manner of 'experts' - parapsychologists, spiritualists, Christians - all of whom offer their services whilst championing their own individual theories for the unexplained phenomena.

As the Fisher household is invaded by battling investigators, Lizzie continues to experience terrible nightmares, recurring apparitions of the crash and visions of a hell in which she is sure she is damned to spend eternity. Ultimately, Lizzie has to accept that she should have died in the crash, or face up to the demons of her past...

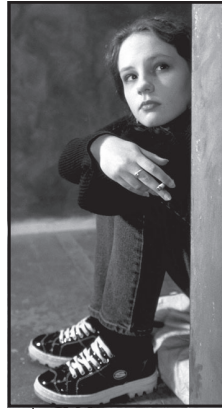
# URBAN GHOST STORY

## Long Synopsis

### Preface

Urban Ghost Story is a supernatural drama set against a Glaswegian backdrop of urban decay and poverty. Based upon several documented poltergeist cases in the UK, *Urban Ghost Story* examines not only the obvious disruption a poltergeist infestation would cause, but also that of the often obsessed investigators, researchers and theologians.

It is documented fact that poltergeist infestations are more likely to occur around an adolescent female who comes from a stressful home, and who has recently sustained a trauma of some kind. This has led many to the conclusion that poltergeist activity is driven by inner and frustrated emotions, such as, in our case, guilt. . .



lived there since before Lizzie was born - she hates it but has never found a way of leaving. She's struggling too, the accident involving Lizzie has had repercussions, not least the pending inquest hanging over them, and Lizzie's near suicidal state of mind.



Adding to Kate's problems is the close friendship Lizzie has developed with Kerrie, a sixteen year old drug addicted single mother who lives in the same tower block. Lizzie spends her afternoons there, escaping school and the realities of her troubled life. In Kerrie, Kate sees herself as she was twelve years ago; and even more worrying to Kate is the knowledge that Kerrie is what Lizzie could easily become in a few years time - a single mother on drugs, stuck in the poverty trap.

### Synopsis

After a tragic car accident in which her best friend is killed, twelve year old Lizzie lies dead on the floor for 184 seconds... she is taken into 'the light', but is pulled back to earth when she is revived by paramedics.

Months later and some degree of normality has returned to the Fisher home. They live in a rundown area of town in a flat halfway up a tower block. Twenty eight year old Kate has



When furniture starts moving of it's own accord, and strange noises are heard, Kate's first thought is that the strange events are

orchestrated by Lizzie as a cry for attention. But as the activity escalates, Kate has to face the possibility that they may have a poltergeist infestation.

She has no option but to ask for help.

Everywhere she turns she is met with ridicule or a brick wall of civil servant red tape, and finally Kate's only hope is a local





newspaper journalist - he claims to have seen and photographed a UFO, so Kate is sure that he won't scoff. He doesn't, but he does exploit the situation by writing salacious stories and printing 'lurid' ghostly pictures.



At the inquest into the car accident, Lizzie, as a passenger in the car, is exonerated, cautioned and released into her mother's care. Lizzie still isn't happy, she is guilt ridden and feels sure that during the 184 seconds that she lay dead, something latched on to her spiritual aura and came back with her into this world.

For the sake of a good story, journalist John Fox brings in experts from all fields - first parapsychologists who take over Kate's flat, and then the spiritualists, Mr & Mrs Ash who claim Lizzie is damned to hell. They all offer their own theories for the unexplained phenomenon in the Fisher household, but their intrusion causes concern for the childcare workers who constantly hover over Kate and her family.



Meanwhile a bond develops between John and Kate - a bond which the fatherless Lizzie dislikes. All the time Lizzie continues to experience terrible nightmares, recurring visions of the crash, and visions of hell in which she is sure she is damned to spend eternity.

Just when Kate is beginning to feel close to John, she discovers that he faked his famous UFO photo, and has also faked photos of Lizzie with a bogus 'phantom'. She feels betrayed and throws him out of her life. This shakes John badly, forcing

him to take a good long look at himself, reviewing his priorities.

Kate can no longer cope with the daily intrusions and experiments, whilst Lizzie edges ever closer to insanity. Kate takes action and begins to throw the scientists out, the tension reaches its peak... and the banging returns - but this time it isn't the poltergeist, it's a raid by the police who

suspect Kate of child abuse - they have come to take the kids away.

Lizzie has had more than she can take and tries to escape through the bathroom window to the outside of the tower block where she clammers over to the outside of the balcony.

The pigeon wire she is hanging onto cannot support her, and she falls

down half the length of the building. As Lizzie hangs in limbo, her very real near death experience triggers a series of flashbacks of the car accident - finally the awful truth hits her - she was driving when the car crash happened - she is responsible for the death of her friend, Kevin - as the details come vividly flooding back, Lizzie is left hanging between life and death... Out of nowhere, a hand reaches out, her only hope of being saved. The hand belongs to Kevin's

mother, the boy who died in the accident - Lizzie must decide

whether to ask for forgiveness and take her hand, or drop to her death and return to 'the light' where she felt she belonged...



# PRINCIPAL CAST

**John Fox** - Jason Connery

**Kate Fisher** - Stephanie Buttle

**Lizzie Fisher** - Heather Ann Foster

**Alex Fisher** - Alan Owen

**Kerrie** - Nicola Stapleton

**Quinn** - Andreas Wisniewski

**Loanshark** - Billy Boyd

**Minister** - James Cosmo

**Mrs Ash** - Elizabeth Berrington

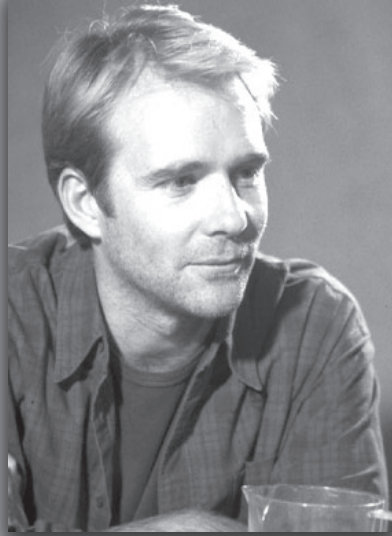
**Mr Ash** - Kenneth Bryans



## Introducing **Heather Ann Foster** as **Lizzie Fisher**

Native Glaswegian, Heather Ann Foster plays the central guilt stricken character of Lizzie in *Urban Ghost Story*. Even though this is Heather's first major role in a feature film, she has produced a stunning performance, capturing the tapestry of guilt, stress and anger that courses through Lizzie's veins. Heather was attracted to the project by the complexity of the character and was signed after meeting director Genevieve Jolliffe during a casting call in Glasgow.

Heather is no stranger to the film business as her father is a renowned camera operator and has taken parts in other films and TV productions such as *Taggart*. "I would jump at the chance of doing another feature film" commented Heather, "as I love the way it works. I'm just not looking forward to going back to school when we complete shooting!"



## **Jason Connery** as **John Fox**

Jason Connery plays journalist John Fox, a local newspaperman who has no qualms about making up stories and faking his photographs for a front page. When the Fisher family turn to him for help he suspects their story is a fake but goes along with them as he sees his opportunity to hit the headlines once again.

Jason is best known in the UK for the TV series Robin Of Sherwood , as well as Jeremy Freeston's Macbeth. He has recently returned to the UK with his American wife Mia Sara and new-born son. Urban Ghost Story is his first film since his return and he was excited about the character of John Fox as he is so far from the type of character he usually plays. Jason was particularly attracted to the contemporary and gritty setting for Urban Ghost Story, with down to earth characters and the general low key feel of the piece.

*"The screenplay is very tight - and it's a very different kind of ghost story to what people are used to"* comments Jason. As Jason has a baby son, he was delighted that his character needed to be tired, run down, and generally worse for wear!



## **Stephanie Buttle** as **Kate Fisher**

Stephanie Buttle plays Kate Fisher, once a heroin addict, now a young mother of two struggling to bring up her kids in the worst part of town. Described as a teenage thirty year old in the screenplay, Stephanie's onscreen presence and charisma is ideal for Kate - a mixture of strength and vulnerability. Steely eyed and tough as nails, Kate fights her way through the cycle of poverty in the film to a resolution which forever changes the character.

Stephanie was enthralled by the screenplay, *"Not only was it a good, strong and truthful character to play, but it was also a very frightening story."*

Stephanie trained at the Arts Educational Schools in Tring and London, and has appeared in feature films such as George Sluzier's *Crimetime*, Stephen Poliakoff's *The Tribe* and *Wavelengths*.



## **Nicola Stapleton** as **Kerrie**

Nicola Stapleton plays Kerrie, barely older than Lizzie, she is half mother figure and half best friend. She has lost her way in life and is unfortunately dragging Lizzie down with her. She recognises a rival in Kate, as a woman who has escaped the downward slope in which she finds herself, and is jealous of her relationship with her family. When Nicola read the script for *Urban Ghost Story* she was immediately attracted to the part of Kerrie, as the character encompassed all the elements that Nicola enjoys playing - sympathetic, feisty and a mixture of powerful emotions. Nicola also appreciated the importance of a character like Kerrie as an image for young girls. As a public figure, Nicola is aware of the influence that she has and wanted to show how hard it is to bring up a young baby by yourself.

Nicola started her career at the age of six, her many credits include the feature films *Courage Mountain*, 'Audrey's Daughter' in *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *The Penance*. Nicola's many television appearances include the regular role of 'Mandy' in *Eastenders*.



## **James Cosmo** as **the Minister**

Seasoned Scots actor, James Cosmo, represents the only anchor of Christian religion within *Urban Ghost Story*. He's no ordinary Minister either, but a reformed gangster with a chequered past. He acts as a voice of reason for the increasingly paranoid and distressed Lizzie as she battles with her fears of retribution and damnation.

James Cosmo is an accomplished actor who has appeared in many major feature films and TV shows, including *Braveheart*, *Emma* and *Trainspotting*.





**Andreas Wisniewski**  
as Quinn

Born in Germany of Polish descent and star of Hollywood action pictures such as *Die Hard*, *The Living Daylights* and *Mission Impossible*, Andreas plays the neurotic parapsychologist Dr Quinn. Determined to explain the forces at work within the poltergeist infested Fisher household, Quinn Represents the 20th Century religion of science - "*If it can't be explained it doesn't exist*" ponders Quinn.

Andreas has been involved in the development of *Urban Ghost Story* from embryonic stages, brainstorming and helping with script revisions. The main attraction for Andreas was working with creative film makers and not inside the often staid environment of Hollywood features. " I think Quinn is a control freak" comments Andreas, "and he's probably a serial killer too - maybe that's for the sequel!"



**Elizabeth Berrington**  
as Mrs Ash

Elizabeth plays Mrs Ash, the spiritualist who is brought in by Glasgow Post reporter John Fox. Mrs Ash provides the 'other world' element to the story, believing that Lizzie's spiritual aura has been breached, allowing the demons that inhabit the flat to gain entry into Lizzie. Mrs Ash believes there are three entities in the council flat, the first a young boy who she's passed on to the other side, the second a man who's mentally subnormal, banging things about, and the third - a demon.

Elisabeth brings sincerity to her part, taking the character of Mrs Ash away from the cliched image of spiritualists, through a comical yet frightening seance. Elisabeth has worked with Mike Leigh on two of his films, *Naked* and the oscar nominated *Secrets and Lies*.



## Genevieve Jolliffe

### Director, Co-writer

After producing Living Spirit's first two features, for which she went into the Guinness Book Of Records for Britain's youngest feature film producer (aged 20), Genevieve has jumped into the Directors chair for their third, *Urban Ghost Story*. 'I have always wanted to direct and I saw producing as simply a means to an end' comments Genevieve.

Producing two feature films before directing gave Genevieve an insight into the management of films which greatly helped when it came to tough decision making. 'I'm very grateful for my experience in production as I could easily identify whenever we hit an unmoveable problem and instantly work on a solution.'

'I wanted my first feature to be much more than just a scary movie, I wanted it to ooze a creepy atmosphere whilst remaining firmly in reality. Ghost stories are only genuinely chilling when you feel that they could be true - hence the heavy reliance on research and true events within the story. Spirituality and the paranormal have always been extremely interesting to me, especially as my grandmother was a medium - I grew up with spiritual conversations all around me. It was vital that the characters and environment in the film rang true, and that the events in the plot never strayed away from the reality of reported poltergeist infestations.



## Chris Jones

### Producer, Co-writer

*Urban Ghost Story* marks the third feature film for Chris Jones, but the first as a producer. 'It's been a new experience for me and I now fully appreciate the on-set job of a producer, perhaps best described as production therapist and executive trouble-shooter'.

'The movie came about when Genevieve and myself decided to make a scary movie, not a horror movie, but a genuine chiller. We felt that this could only be achieved through reality, and after a few months research we had come up with the concept of *Urban Ghost Story*, a paranormal tale rooted firmly in Glaswegian reality. Having also directed two feature films previously I was in a very strong position as I could make decisions based not only on the financial position of the movie, but also from a creative perspective. I was also able to work as second unit director, fixing problems as they arose on-set without ever having to hold up the main unit. This was a great advantage to the production.'

'Urban Ghost Story is very much a 'ghost story', but it's not what most people will expect. I was adamant from the start that we make the kind of movie we wanted to make and not to pander to what distributors were telling us we needed to do. The final movie is everything I had ever hoped it could have been, and a little more too.'

# Jon Walker

## Director Of Photography

*Urban Ghost Story* is the third feature film shot by Jon Walker for Living Spirit. Producer Jones, Director Jolliffe and DoP Walker all studied at the same film school in Bournemouth before leaving to make their first movie. Since then, Jon's collaborative skills in story development, script editing and picture editing have left an indelible mark, not to mention his photography - "We have always collaborated, I see it as my job to be a springboard for good ideas, devils advocate for bad, and a tough audience in the cutting room."

"The look of the movie was essential, and my job was often made easy by Simon Pickup's detailed and colour co-ordinated production design. From day one we decided to go for a very real world, not the glossy blue light of Hollywood epics, but the cold light of a Glaswegian winters morning - very hard in appearance. From a lighting point of view I always approach each scene asking myself how I can enhance the story whilst doing something visual that hasn't been seen in the movie before."

# Simon Pickup

## Production Design

Simon Pickup wrote to Living Spirit looking for design work - but his unique vision, dedication and enthusiasm so much impressed the Living Spirit team, that Simon was hired as the Production Designer. Simon liked the screenplay very much, especially the environment in which it is set. "It's moody and atmospheric with an inherent *greyness* that created very clear images in my head."

"Lizzie I found particularly interesting, she typified the mood of the film, and she was a mystery that unfolds throughout the plot. There was a uniformity to the plot, characters and locale, that allowed me to create a world that befitted the story, without every resorting to tactics that would be visually 'obvious'"

Over a period of weeks, Simon collated a small library of photos, mainly of details such as water pipes, peeling wallpaper and mildewed walls - "This research was essential, eventually leading to the decision to create a green biased colour palette for the movie. I'm very proud of the look of the film, especially now that I know audiences have responded, perhaps only on a subliminal level, to the feeling of urban decay." Simon trained at the London International Film School, specialising in design and art direction.

# Eddie Hamilton

## Editor

Eddie Hamilton is the film editor for *Urban Ghost Story*. Like Genevieve's, Eddie's life was changed when he saw *Star Wars*, and it has remained his life's ambition to edit exhilarating big budget action movies. He trained to be an Avid editor in broadcast television before reading Jones and Jolliffe's book, *The Guerrilla Film Maker's Handbook* after which he e-mailed them to find out whether the position of editor was available. When they asked him why they should hire him he replied "You won't find anyone with more energy and enthusiasm, and I'm sure I will live up to your expectations". He was hired.

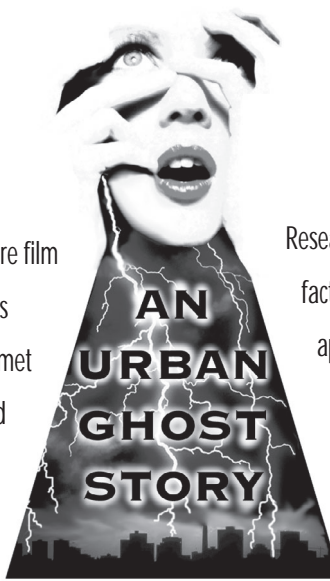
Eddie was on board without having seen the screenplay for *Urban Ghost Story*, and when he eventually read it, he was captivated. "The relationships that fascinated me, how various characters represented Lizzie's past and future, and I was intrigued to find out what happened. I loved the mystery and the ambiguity, the fact that you have to evaluate the evidence and come up with your own answers."

Eddie swears by computer based non-linear editing, "Avid allows you to edit as fast as you can think, you don't have to wait for anything. During the shoot I would have a scene edited twenty-four hours after it was shot, and the day after the shoot wrapped we had our first assembly."

# PRODUCTION NOTES

*Urban Ghost Story* is the third collaborative feature film for the Living Spirit Pictures stable, and from Chris Jones and Genevieve Jolliffe. Jones and Jolliffe met at film school, and after producing several award winning shorts, left to produce their maiden feature film, *The Runner*, an American action thriller. This was followed by *White Angel*, a serial killer thriller starring Peter Firth, which premiered as the centrepiece of the London Film Festival as well as collecting several International Film Festival awards and accolades.

After watching a chilling documentary about poltergeist infestation, Jones and Jolliffe recognised a new slant on the 'ghost' genre - reality. 'If you believe what you see is real, it makes it all the more frightening' comments Chris Jones, 'that's why whenever anyone tells a real ghost story, if the mood and ambience is right, the tale can be spine tingling. Everyone knows someone who claims to have seen a ghost, everyone has at least one good supernatural tale, and everyone likes to hear other people's spooky tales.' Comments Genevieve Jolliffe, 'It was important for us not to develop the screenplay in a way that would go down the Hollywood route with high end special effects - these movies have been done extremely well, and with budgets far exceeding ours. The secret for us was to capture that *late night, story telling in a candle lit room with friends and a bottle of wine atmosphere* - to create something new.'



Research began - 'We discovered several fundamental facts very quickly' remarks Jolliffe, 'poltergeists do appear to actually happen - they are real. They often last weeks or months and do not seem to bare any connection with what most people would call a classic haunting. Often they occur in places not associated with ghosts, such as council houses or

flats for instance. More importantly, we became aware of a very strong link between poltergeist activity and pubescent girls, who come from oppressive backgrounds and who have experienced a recent trauma - this gave us the foundation for 12 year old Lizzie, the central character in our movie. Investigators can often be as upsetting as the poltergeist, invading and taking over whilst championing their individual theories, often landing in either the scientific camp or the spiritualist camp.'



Visits to spiritualists for a private session of clairvoyance, and an evening on a genuine haunted house ghost vigil all helped fill out the characters of the people who become involved in the story. 'We didn't see any ghosts, nor did we expect to, but that didn't stop the experience being anything less than terrifying!'

Over twelve months of writing, the screenplay grew organically, moving away from a classic 'ghost movie' developing into a



gritty hard hitting drama. 'This wasn't something we had planned' explains Genevieve, 'but it's where the characters in the movie were taking us. The



poltergeist moved away from centre stage and became a metaphor for the central theme of the film... guilt.'

January 1997 - Living Spirit move into Ealing Film Studios where they continued to develop the project, and move it into pre-production.

Executive Producer David Hardwick came onboard and a deal was struck whereby he would supply the production finance.

*Urban Ghost Story* officially moved into pre-production.

Glasgow was the chosen setting for *Urban Ghost Story* providing a dynamic and gritty history for the characters in the film. 'It seemed the natural choice for the setting' says Jolliffe, 'there's a genuine cinematic quality to the city and the people.' Even though *Urban Ghost Story* was to be set in Glasgow, the interior sets where most of the film would take place were to be built at Ealing Film Studios in London.

Production Designer Simon Pickup was hired to give the film it's unique look, 'Right from the start Chris and Genevieve wanted to create something with visual flare. We talked about the movie, then opted for a colour palette from which everything in front of the camera would be drawn. This was a predominantly pale green colour, emphasising a sense of urban decay and a cold and empty feeling.' Set building began on Stage 4 at Ealing in August '97.

Pivotal to the movie was Lizzie, the guilt ridden little girl who survives the terrifying car crash at the beginning of the film. After a casting call in London, it became



apparent that a Native Glaswegian would have to play the part. After interviewing over 100 young actresses in Glasgow, Living Spirit met Heather Ann Foster. Not only did Heather fit the physical appearance of Lizzie in the screenplay, but she was a superb young actress. 'I had no idea what the film was about when I read for the interview, and the enormity of playing the lead role in a feature film didn't really sink in until I actually got on set - at first I was extremely intimidated by the huge crew, lights and cameras - Genevieve was great though, she talked me through it and pretty soon, turning up for shooting was just the



thing I did on a day to day basis. It was very depressing when I had to go back to school!'

Kate Fisher, the mother character was equally important - described in the screenplay as a 'teenage thirty year old', she needed to be tough yet vulnerable. After seeing many high profile actresses, Living Spirit plumped for Stephanie Buttle as she typified Kate in both appearance and performance. 'I had read the screenplay for *Urban Ghost Story* and loved it. What appealed to me most was the fact that the characters seemed very real, enduring problems with which I could identify. It was also good to see a strong female presence in the film without it deteriorating into the clichés usually associated with strong female characters'.

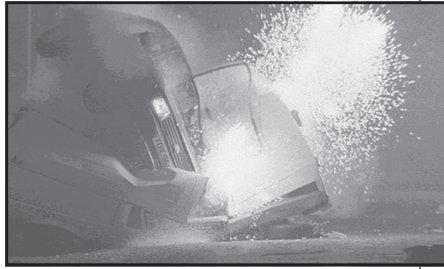
Last up was the part of John Fox, the journalist who exploits the families position in the story. 'When Jason Connery walked through the door, we knew we had found our John Fox' remarks Chris, 'he simply oozed the sex appeal and star qualities the character required.'





Shooting began August 18th 1997 and wrapped five weeks

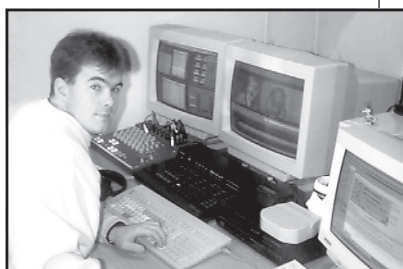
later. The crew were drawn from new and emerging talent, 'everyone on the crew was there



because they wanted to be, not just because of the money - that made for a creative and productive working experience for everyone. The energy was incredible, even the cast picked up on it and went the extra mile whenever the occasion called for it.'

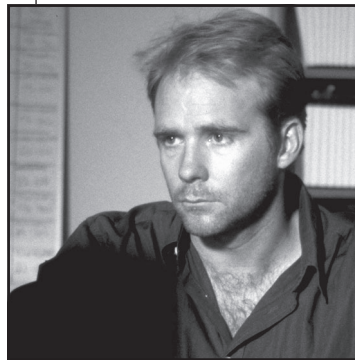
A further week of shooting on location in Glasgow was also required as well as a completely independent stunts and effects shoot. Terry Forrestal, top stunt co-ordinator and long time friend of Chris and Genevieve's came in to work on the spectacular high fall from the tower block and car crash at the end of the film. 'These two stunts were the climax to our movie and we knew we had to create something special,' comments Jones, 'and Terry was the man to get the job done. Whilst the jump from the building was spectacular, the car crash was much more dangerous. It was a nerve wracking two days, but what we got on the night was breathtaking.'

Editing also took place at Ealing Film studios where Eddie Hamilton cut the picture on Avid. 'Cutting a project like this has been a great experience. Working with Chris and Genevieve is a real baptism by fire as they are both very passionate, often with opposing views - this leads to a lot of fraught discussions,



but the end result is always the right one - it may seem odd, but I think if you have to fight very hard for your vision, you soon work out whether it's truly right for the film, or just another idea that should be ditched.'

Music was produced by Rupert Gregson-Williams, brother of Harry who wrote the score for Living Spirit's second feature film, White Angel. A contemporary and spiritual feel was



required, a feel that Rupert captured with a rich mix of ethnic drums, melancholic piano and haunting female vocals. The final audio mix took place at Britain's foremost dubbing theatre at Twickenham Film Studios.

Dubbing Mixer Tim Cavigans job was to create the acoustic world in which the characters lived, a thick, dark and broody mixture of Eraserhead style mechanics and Alien landscape winds.

## Facts regarding the so called 'poltergeist' phenomena.

**Poltergeist** activity is usually preceded by a trauma, such as a car accident, divorce or family death.

**Poltergeist** activity usually surrounds an adolescent female approaching or entering puberty. This is by no means a certainty, activity has been reported around all ages and both sexes.

**Poltergeist** activity usually builds over a period of time, peaks in severity and dies back. This can be weeks or years.

**Poltergeists**, in some cases, appear to be driven out by some ceremony, religious, spiritual or scientific of significance.

**Poltergeist** activity is not necessarily related to a ghost or legend, it can move around with victims or can remain in one location.

**Poltergeist** activity can appear in any location, castle, house, shop, pub. It is not location specific.

**Poltergeist** activity can manifest itself in a variety of ways - moving objects, teleportation of objects, spontaneous fires, writings appearing on walls, bangings and noises, shyness whilst under investigation, levitation of victim(s), general unease on behalf of the victim(s).

**Poltergeist** activity falls into two distinct groups - first, it is connected to a classic haunting where the poltergeist activity is simply part of the 'haunting', the 'ghost' may move things around for instance. Secondly, where the activity is connected to a person or place and does not display any haunting traits, such as phantoms or spectres, nor does it adhere to a legend.

## Theories For Poltergeist

There are four main theories explaining poltergeist phenomena

### Religious

The belief that the activity is being caused by an unclean spirit or demon that has entered the victim. Fundamentalist Christians believe that



this invasion is more frequent than we would think, and contrary to popular religious reports, exorcisms and prayer meetings to cast out unwanted demons are common place. Perhaps not as dramatic as portrayed in some films, but nonetheless, they do take place. Devil worship is usually cited as a cause, but according to the church, this activity is much rarer than the tabloids would have us believe. What is commonplace, is the misuse of so called occult practises - astrology, Ouija boards, seances, divining etc. - they are all gateways for demonic entry.

Four stages of manifestation have been identified by the church. The first stage is *Infestation*, where the entity or demon seems to move things around at random. The second manifestation is *Oppression* where the entity or demon is in a position to affect the well being of the victim, spiritually, physically and mentally. The third stage is *Possession*, where the demon or entity takes control of the victim, fighting for *It's* hidden agenda, commonly assumed to be the possession of the soul, but not necessarily so. The fourth, and final manifestation is *Death*.



### Spiritual

The belief that the activity is caused by the spirit of a deceased person or 'lower entity' that has

not moved on to the next plane of existence, has not 'passed into the light'. The activity is attributed to anger or frustration on behalf of the spirit at not being able to come to terms with a violent or sudden death, or at not being able to communicate with the family or persons under siege for instance. 'Lower entities' or demons can also inhabit the other dimensions where spirits are believed to exist, and can also contribute to poltergeist activity. Mediums are used to 'persuade' the spirits to move onto the next plane of existence, or to simply leave the victims alone. In the case of serious demonic possession, spiritualists will seek an exorcism.

Whilst Spiritualism and Christianity may seem like they occupy the same theological ground, Christian doctrine is very specific about the fact the communing or claiming to commune with the dead or spirits is not divine, and therefore the work of the devil. The Bible states that anything claiming to be spiritual that is not God, or a messenger of God, is unclean and evil. Use of Ouija boards, seances and clairvoyancy, widely practised and used in the Spiritual movement, is strictly forbidden in Christian religions. Spiritualists are more tolerant of their differences with Christians. Other variations on the spiritual theme include voodoo, witch doctor curses etc.

## Scientific

The belief that the activity is entirely caused by some natural mechanism of the mind, as yet unexplained by science - commonly referred to as Psychokinesis (PK), the ability to move objects with the mind. Telepathy, the ability to see or hear things with the mind, is also claimed to explain hearing voices or sounds in an alleged haunted house. Whilst the scientific explanation is attractive in this technological day and age, there is no real evidence, although the theory is awash with almost overwhelming circumstantial evidence. Most scientific



investigations have been carried out by very dedicated amateurs whose techniques and practises are far from a laboratory environment. The common conditions for poltergeist infestation (presence of pubescent girls, recent family trauma for instance) are commonly hijacked by PK investigators as proof of some kind of psychological trigger for PK - it should be noted that these conditions could also be regarded as a clear gateway for demonic infestation. Various conspiracy theories have included top secret government agencies using PK to carry out political assassinations, effect government and elections, convening with beings from another planet etc. The connections with these kinds of groups often invalidates the claims of so called scientific investigations.



## Fraud

In the cold light of day, this is perhaps the most tangible explanation. Religious and Spiritual theories rely heavily on belief, citing evidence that is extremely circumstantial or pure philosophical presumption. The

scientific data is equally shaky, there is a noticeable lack of photographic, electronic or audio evidence. What evidence does appear, tends to support the theory for fraud even more.

Sensational cases such as the *Amityville Horror* and the *Smurl Poltergeist* have all been connected with book and movie deals, often netting the alleged victims, thousands. It cannot be denied that most cases are probably fraudulent. Some cases appear to have started as a genuine infestation, but turned into fraud once the spirits were expected to perform for the media, the *Enfield Poltergeist* being a prime example. However, there are some cases where there are credible witnesses and no apparent gain for the victims, indeed, genuine suffering. No matter how few or far between, in those instances, one must look to the three other explanations, or indeed other theories, for a solution.

# LIVING SPIRIT PICTURES Ltd MAJOR PROJECTS COMPLETED

## Urban Ghost Story

(feature film 90mins UK cert 18)

Ken Loach meets The Exorcist in this unique blend of gothic ghost story set against a brutal Glaswegian backdrop. Thirteen year old Lizzie and her best friend Kevin were both killed in a tragic car accident, but Lizzie was revived at the scene... and with her she brought an entity.

Smash hit at the 1998 Edinburgh Film Festival, collecting critical acclaim for both its creators and cast.

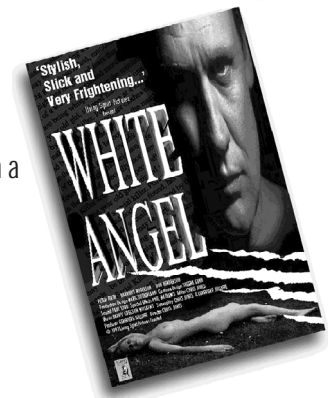


## White Angel

(feature film 97mins UK cert 18)

Serial Killer thriller starring Academy Award nominee Peter Firth, Don Henderson and Harriet Robinson. *White Angel* studies the differences between murder and manslaughter through the relationship between a serial killer looking for redemption and an author with a dark secret to hide.

Premiered as the Centrepiece of the London Film Festival in October '93, *White Angel* went on to win several International Festival awards. *White Angel* was given a UK theatrical release on 15 screens.



## The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook

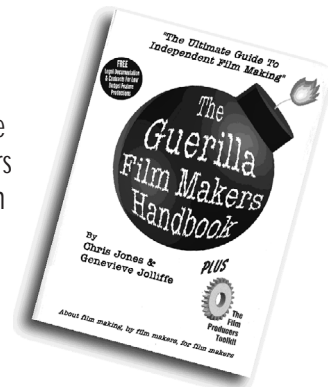
(published by Cassell Plc, 650 pages ISBN 0-304-33854-0)

...The ultimate guide to film production in the UK... The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook is a no nonsense guide to making your first film in the UK. Crammed with hot tips, interviews with experts and a producers toolkit, the Guerilla Film Makers Handbook is an essential tool for film makers of any experience. Now in it's second edition.

"comprehensive and invaluable...a revolutionary read which will inform and inspire in equal measure"

\*\*\*

Empire March '97

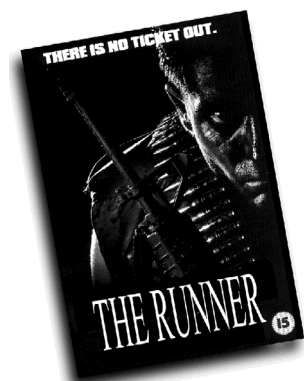


## The Runner

(feature film 92mins UK cert 15)

Thriller starring Paris Jefferson, Terence Ford and Ivan Rogers. Set in the near future, a war torn Persian Gulf is ravaged by wars and teeters on the edge of nuclear exchanges. Kath Hanzaker and her ace ENG team lose a man in the field and decide to take a week long survival course - but things go wrong when the paranoid ex marines running the course become convinced nuclear war is imminent, and there's only room in the bunker for two...

Co produced with EGM film international, *The Runner* was sold internationally.





# Full Credits Listing

Urban Ghost Story

A Living Spirit Picture

A Jones / Jolliffe Production

Director Genevieve Jolliffe  
Producer Chris Jones  
Screenplay Chris Jones &  
Genevieve Jolliffe  
Director Of Photography Jon Walker  
Editor Eddie Hamilton  
Music Rupert Gregson Williams  
Executive Producer David Hardwick  
Associate Producer Ian Hierons  
Casting Catherine Arton  
Production Design Simon Pickup  
Costume Design Linda Haysman  
Makeup & Hair Design Xanthia White

## Cast

Lizzie Fisher Heather Ann Foster  
Kate Fisher Stephanie Buttle  
John Fox Jason Connery  
Minister James Cosmo  
Kerrie Nicola Stapleton  
Mrs Ash Elizabeth Berrington  
Quinn Andreas Wisniewski  
Loan Shark Billy Boyd  
Social Worker Siri O'Neal  
Mr Ash Kenneth Bryans  
Mrs Miller Carolyn Bonnyman  
Alex Fisher Alan Owen  
Coroner Stephen MacDonald  
Teacher Julie Austin  
WPC Tomkins Nicola Greene  
Civil Servant Rachel Colles  
Smart Nicolas Von Schlippe  
Mr Miller David Haddow  
Chemist David Walker  
George Richard Syms  
PC Goodwin Andy McEwan  
Henchman 1 Ken Whitfield  
Henchman 2 Eric MacLennan  
Doctor Catherine Neal  
Grant Christopher Howell  
Students William Maud  
Jack El-Eini  
Adam Schofield  
Keiren Mahon  
Nicholas Deschamps  
Police Tom Hillenbrand  
Michael Gravistock  
Simon Parr  
Ashley Cameron  
Kevin Aaron White  
Lizzie Stand-in Nicola Ball  
Baby Jack Joss Castell-Gydesen

Production Manager David Higginson  
Assistant Producer Carmen Dyer  
Assistant Producer Claire Moore  
Production Assistant Simon Reglar

1st AD Grietje Besteman  
2nd AD Stephen Clarke  
3rd AD Maria Sanz-Estevé

Script Supervisor Lawrence Jackson  
Legal Assistant Gemma Reece  
Glasgow Location Manager Brian Horsburgh

Camera Operator Stuart Roweth  
Camera Operator (2nd Unit) Martin Gooch  
Camera Operator (3rd Unit) Peter Bathurst  
Focus Pullers Jay Polyzoides  
Andrew Wiggins  
Clapper Loaders Robin Horn  
Mathew Brady

Production Sound Recordist Steph Baldini  
Assistant Sound / Boom Operator Trevor Moore

Gaffer Aidan Spencer  
Best Boys Frazer Alaric Lee  
Joseph Alberti  
Sparks Greg Bassett  
Simon Alderdice  
Key Grips Craig Gillings  
Kornel Dunin-Brzezinski

2nd Camera Unit Grip Brian Maher  
Extra Unit Camera Operators Ian Franks  
Simon Paul  
Jay Polyzoides  
Extra Unit Clapper Loaders Genevieve Atlas  
Claire Parkinson  
Brian Maher

2nd Unit Director Chris Jones

Make up Artist & Hair Stylist Sarah Alexander  
Assistant Costume Designer Nadine Hindi  
Costume Assistant Lucy Sampson  
Wardrobe Assistants Zoe Marshall  
Lesley Wallace

Art Director Alice Norris  
Construction Manager Mark Sutherland  
Set Decorator Chris Burridge  
Props Master Anna Lobbengberg  
Standby Props George Siougas  
Leading Scenic Artist Stephen Martlew  
Scenic Painter Howard Wakefield  
Construction Assistants Carl Francis  
Graeme Wilson  
Idoia Acha  
Miranda Bowen  
Daphne Braasch  
Simon Dawe  
Shay Leonard



Story Consultant Jon Walker  
 Storyboard Artist Alex Fort  
 Stills Photographer Margaret Zakovicz  
 Audio Design Eddie Hamilton  
 SADIE Audio Workstation  
 Documentary Maker Denise Rose  
 Lizzie's Stand in Nicola Ball  
 Tutor Chaperone Adam Armstrong  
 Driver / Runner Jonathon Dibley  
 Runners Rhett Coxhill  
 Vicky Dowding-Monrose  
 Assistant Executive Producer Jagjit Singh Banwait  
 Financial Advisors Ian Carr  
 Ony Carr  
 Robert Young  
 Stunt Co-ordinator Terry Forrestal  
 Stunt Engineers Bickers Action  
 Brian Naughton  
 Paul Bickers  
 Dave Bickers  
 Special Effects Dave Beavis  
 Lizzie Stunt Double Danielle Da Costa  
 Rigger Andy Weller  
 Ambulance Services Supplied by Capital Ambulance & Paramedic  
 Fire Engine Services Supplied by Service  
 S.E.C. Fire Protection Limited  
 Prosthetic Effects Phil Mathews  
 Stuart Conran  
 Foley Artist Diane Greaves  
 Foley Assistant Simon Cox  
 Foley Mixer Trevor Shawcross  
 Foley Mixed at dB Post  
 Digital Film Services Cinesite  
 Animator Kevin McGowan  
 Digital Effects Producer Matthew White  
 Titles and Opticals Dave Gurney  
 Soho Images  
 Colour by Soho Images  
 Film Timer Ken Rydon  
 Negative Cutting by Tru Cut  
 Negative Cutter Vaughn Mullady

Legal Services Hammond Suddards Solicitors  
 Insurance provided by Aegis Insurance Brokers Limited  
 Camera Equipment supplied by ARRI Media  
 Additional Camera Equipment by Ice  
 Grip Equipment supplied by Grip House  
 Lighting Equipment supplied by Michael Samuelson Lighting Ltd.  
 Post Production Facilities supplied by Affordable Avid Hire

Sound Re-recorded at Twickenham Film Studios  
 Sound Re-recording Mixer Tim Cavagin

Additional Music Guy Fletcher  
 Vocals by Carmen Daye  
 End Titles Marimba performed by Frank Ricotti  
 Music Score Mixed at R G Bar G  
 Music Score Recorded at Snake Ranch Studios, London

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Thanks to  
 Gerry Humphries at Twickenham Film Studios  
 Helen Tulley at Hammond Suddards Solicitors  
 Robin Clarkson at Essential Pictures Limited  
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 Chris Fowler at The Creative Partnership  
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 South Acton Working Mans Club  
 St. Mellitus Church  
 Maggie Phelan  
 Radio Clyde

The Producers would like to thank the Glasgow Film Office  
 for their kind assistance with the making of this film

'Vesti La Giubba'  
 'I Pagliacci'  
 Leoncavallo  
 Licensed by Electrerecord - Selected Sound Carrier

"Watching"  
 Performed by Moreau's Island  
 Written by Kathy Andrews  
 Produced by Pat Collier  
 Licence courtesy of Optimum Music Management  
 © 1997 Optimum Music

"Divine Indifference"  
 Sleeveless Hearts  
 Written by Jerry Wellens  
 Produced by Sleeveless Hearts  
 © 1996 Heartless Productions

"Clyde 2 Jingle"  
 Written by Muff Murfin  
 Published by Happy Face Music  
 © 1996 Clyde 2

"MTV"  
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Filmed at Ealing Film Studios and on location in Glasgow  
Made by Living Spirit Pictures '97 Ltd.

Dedicated to Scar

Visit us on the web  
[www.livingspirit.com](http://www.livingspirit.com)

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# MOVIE STILLS

Accompanying this press pack you should find an interactive CD about Urban Ghost Story - this CD contains video clips, music you can play it in your standard CD player), stills and a wealth of information about the production. Also contained on the CD are thirty high resolution images for colour and black and white publication. They are scanned and saved using Kodak's Photo CD format and are both Mac and PC compatible. These images remain the copyright of Living Spirit Pictures, but you are granted a licence to reprint them should they be used in connection with the publicity of Urban Ghost Story.



IMG01.PCD

Kenneth Bryans plays Mr Ash... "there are three entities in this house"



IMG02.PCD

Mr and Mrs Ash begin the seance



IMG03.PCD

James Cosmo plays the reformed minister who offers Lizzie spiritual guidance



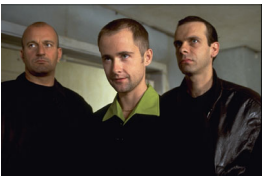
IMG04.PCD

Nicola Stapleton plays Kerrie, the drug addicted mother who tempts Lizzie down a road or recklessness



IMG05.PCD

Lizzie is afraid of whatever is on the other side of the door



IMG06.PCD

The Loanshark, played by Billy Boyd, and his two henchmen



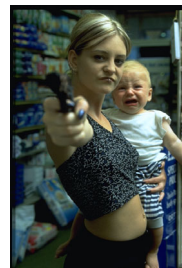
IMG07.PCD

Stephanie Buttle plays Kate, protecting her family from the entity



IMG08.PCD

Elizabeth Berrington plays Mrs Ash, the psychic who protects Lizzie from the demons



IMG09.PCD

Nicola Stapleton as reckless Kerrie as she robs a chemist to fuel her drug addiction



IMG10.PCD

Heather Ann Foster as Lizzie... haunted in the basement of the tower block



IMG11.PCD

Kerrie's overdose



IMG12.PCD

Stephanie Buttle as Kate, tough as nails mum



IMG13.PCD

When I died I saw a light... I think I was supposed to go into that light"



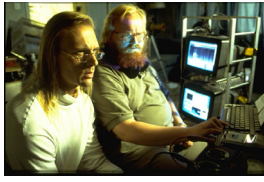
IMG14.PCD

Kerrie finds herself alone in despair



IMG15.PCD

Andreas Wisniewski as Dr Quinn, the parapsychologist



IMG16.PCD

Quinn and Smart continue monitoring the haunted flat



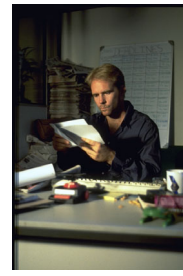
IMG17.PCD

Lizzie... I'm bleeding...



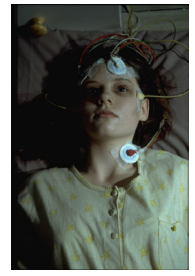
IMG18.PCD

Jason Connery as journalist John Fox, trying to console Lizzie



IMG19.PCD

Jason Connery as the journalist with a hidden agenda



IMG20.PCD

Lizzie undergoes continuous examinations



IMG21.PCD

Kate turns to local journalist John Fox for help



IMG22.PCD

Jason Connery as John Fox, the disreputable journalist



IMG23.PCD

Heather Ann Foster as Lizzie, the haunted and trouble twelve year old



IMG24.PCD

Stephanie Buttle as the desperate Kate Fisher



IMG25.PCD

John Fox gets a cold reception from the troubled Lizzie



IMG26.PCD

Lizzie, alone at night, begins to hear the banging



IMG27.PCD

Lizzie and Alex clutch each other as the entity attacks



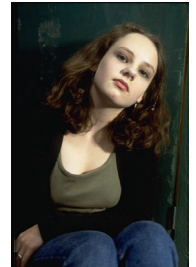
IMG28.PCD

Lizzie watches helpless as her home is invaded by unwanted investigators



IMG29.PCD

Lizzie looks through her treasure chest of memories



IMG30.PCD

Heather Ann Foster as Lizzie, the centre of the poltergeist activity



# VARIETY

21st September 1998

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## URBAN GHOST STORY (SUPERNATURAL DRAMA - BRITISH)

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A Living Spirit Pictures production. Produced by Chris Jones. Executive Producer, David Hardwick.

Directed by Genevieve Jolliffe. Screenplay, Chris Jones, Jolliffe. Camera (Fujicolor), Jon Walker; editor, Eddie Hamilton; music, Rupert Gregson-Williams; production designer, Simon Pickup; art director, Alice Norris; costume designer, Linda Haysman; sound (DTS stereo), Steph Baldini, Tim Cavagin; second unit director, Jones; stunt co-ordinator, Terry Forrestal; associate producer, Ian Hierons; associate assistant director, Grietje Besteman; casting, Catherine Arton. Reviewed at Edinburgh Film Festival (Focus on British Cinema), Aug. 25, 1998. Running time: 86 min

John Fox ..... Jason Connery  
Kate Fisher ..... Stephanie Buttle  
Lizzie Fisher ..... Heather Ann Foster  
Minister ..... James Cosmo  
Mrs. Ash ..... Elizabeth Berrington  
Kerrie ..... Nicole Stapleton  
Social Worker ..... Siri O'Neal  
Quinn ..... Andreas Wisniewski  
Loan Shark ..... Billy Boyd

---

By **DEREK ELLEY**

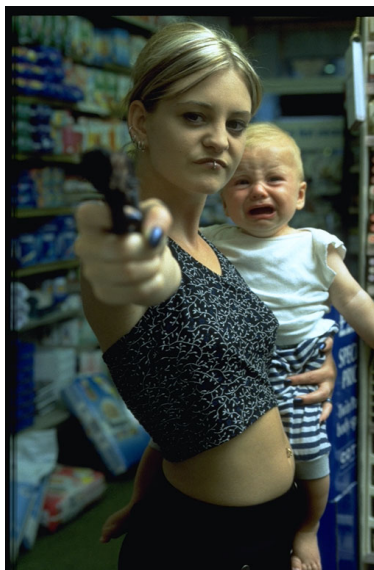
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Ken Loach meets "The Exorcist" in the Glasgow-set "Urban Ghost Story", a dank, often creepy and decidedly gritty spin on a familiar genre that packs several shocks of it's own. This third and best outing by young Brit film making duo Genevieve Jolliffe and Chris Jones ("The Runner", "White Angel") could scare up limited business in selected release in the hands of an inventive distrib.

The pic is one of the few in the current British Renaissance to make a positive virtue of its shoestring budget rather than end up looking like a threadbare imitation of more heftily funded commercial fare. By setting the story of supernatural possession in a grungy Glasgow setting,

and making social-realist drama part of the whole equation, genre enthusiasts Jolliffe and Jones have come up with a thoroughly of it's kind movie that doesn't require elaborate f/x (even if they'd had the coin).

Glaswegian Heather Ann Foster is perfect as Lizzie, a wan 12-year-old who almost died after being involved in a drug-induced car crash when joy-riding with her friend Kevin. Lizzie lives with her feisty mom, Kate (Stephanie Buttle), and younger sister and bro in a cheesy apartment building on the wrong side of town, deserted by their father and threatened by loan sharks.



GLASGOW GHOULS: "Urban Ghost Story" screened in Edinburgh

Lizzie starts seeing and hearing things, and the furniture starts moving of its own volition. The police and a bossy social worker (Siri O'Neal) are no help, so Mom approaches local journo John (Jason Connery) to publicize the family's plight. Pretending to be sympathetic, John gives the story the full tab treatment, intending to reveal it as a hoax later on. But when some university parapsychologists move in on the situation and conduct scientific tests, everyone slowly becomes convinced Lizzie and her mother are not just con artists after a new government apartment. Shot in cold and grubby-looking colors, with a distinct sickly-green tinge, the movie plunges the viewer

right into the heart and head of it's main character, with most of the background drama coming from the mother's battles with disbelieving authority figures and her wary relationship with the cynical journalist. It's a clever, often potent blend of British kitchen-sink drama with fantasy elements that gains added resonance by being set in gruff, rugged Glasgow, (At the Edinburgh fest prem, Jones rightly noted that the story would never have worked in middle-class England.)

In fact, apart from some establishing shots, the movie was actually shot in southeast England, with all interiors filmed at Ealing Film Studios. Sets by production designer Simon Pickup are a major contributor to atmosphere, convincingly evoking the family's hand-me-down, lived-in apartment and the block's menacing corridors with drunks slouched by the elevator. Rupert Gregson Williams' ambient score is a further plus, and even the blowup from Super-16 works in the pic's favour. The mix would hardly have worked without the well-tuned casting, with almond-eyed Foster exactly right as the taciturn Lizzie, Buttle a terrific screen presence as the tough and wiry mom, and Connery low-key but natural as the unshaven reporter. Andreas Wisniewski brings some humor to the role of a manic university researcher, and Nicola Stapleton looks straight off the streets as a teen druggie single mother.

Jolliffe, in the helming chair for the first time, with Jones this time producing, comes up with a smooth moving package that dips slightly in the middle and rushes its fences at the end but generally succeeds in its modest ambitions. Most interesting is the fact that the filmers are capable of delivering a far slicker package than that called for by the material: When a couple of more in-your-face sequences are briefly required in the last reel, Jolliffe and Jones show they can multiplex with the best of Blighty's wannabes.



# URBAN GHOST STORY

Staring Jason Connery, Heather Ann Foster, Stephanie Buttle, Nicola Stapleton. Release JUNE



After an ecstasy induced car accident, 12 year old Lizzie (Heather Ann Foster) lies dead on the roadside. She is slowly pulled "into the light" but forced back down to earth when she is revived by doctors. Lizzie feels sure that during the 184 seconds she lay dead,

something latched on to her and came back into her world.

The disturbances start, at first tapings, scratchings and bad smells pervade the home, but soon the activity escalates, forcing those around her to make a decision: is Lizzie pretending, or has she

really been possessed? Enlisting the help of a cynical journalist (Jason Connery), Lizzie's mum, Kate (Stephanie Buttle) needs to protect her family from the evils of the real world and the realm of the spirit.

The title can tell you an awful lot about what this movie contains, but it fails to get across the powerfully disquieting nature of the supernatural spliced with the desperately earthbound. A setting of the worst of urban decay and social deprivation in Glasgow may not win much favor with the city's tourism industry, but it produces a sense where you can find horror in both the tale of possession and the story of a family in social crisis. From the outset, the family are beset by demons from all sides: the shadow of heroine addiction and drug abuse hangs over the lives of all who share the grim confines of the tower block: the Furies appear in the guise of a sub-human debt collector and his two lesser devils: and the specter of a life with no hope haunts the cityscape like a dark angel. When the "real" demons make their presence felt, they are already somewhat dimin-

ished by the pain the inhabitants of flat 13b have been through: the car accident that Lizzie was involved in killed her best friend, Kevin, and ripped the world of his parents apart forms the central stem of everything that flowers from it.

Although the spiritual possession thread drifts on and off throughout, it serves its purpose as an imaginative hook and delivers some genuinely chilling moments, but ultimately it is the freeing of Lizzie's own spirit and that of her family that provides the crucial exorcism.

As an actress, Heather Ann Foster is an astounding young talent who brings to mind her namesake, Jodie Foster in *Taxi Driver*, a child on the verge of premature womanhood brought about by her shocking journey through adolescence. The rest of the cast provide a solid wall of believability and help, in conjunction with the impressively grimy set, to mark this movie out as a force to be reckoned with.  
OOOOO (out of five)  
Simon John Gerard

Dreamwatch Magazine June 2001

# URBAN GHOST STORY

\*\*\*\* (4 stars)

## STARS

Jason Connery, Stephanie Buttle, James Cosmo, Elizabeth Berrington, Nicola Stapleton, Heather Ann Foster

## DIRECTOR

Genevieve Jolliffe

## SCREENPLAY

Chris Jones and Genevieve Jolliffe

## CERTIFICATE

15

## DISTRIBUTOR

Visual Entertainment

## RUNNING TIME

1hr30mins

## OPENING DATE

July 13

**Does exactly what it says on the tin**

**Urban Ghost Story** starts promisingly.

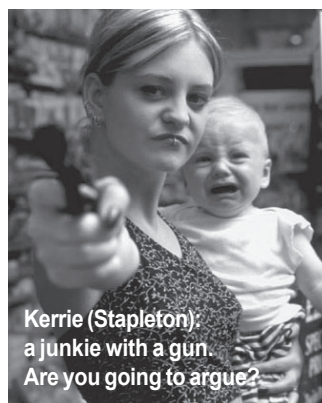
With the sound of an aria on the soundtrack, a car flips onto its side and bursts into flames. We then cut to a black screen and complete silence, a merciful calm punctuated by a pinpoint of light that offers the prospect of some kind of redemption. Then - bam! - Lizzie Fisher is forced back to life on the road of a wet, carnage-strewn street in contemporary Glasgow.

The 12-year-old daughter of a single-parent family, Lizzie has been out joyriding with her friend, Kevin, who now lies in the morgue. Plagued by guilt, Lizzie climbs into her own interior world, spending hours in the bath-room with the sound of heavy metal crammed into her ears. Lizzie is not an atypical problem child, the product of a broken home, living with her 28-year-old mother, a mixed-race step-brother and the junkies who haunt the corridors of their graffiti-scarred high-rise.

Then, if these social blights were not enough, she and her brother Alex are visited by an unseen force that, at night, scratches the walls and pushes the furniture around. At first, Lizzie's mother accuses her of playing pranks, but soon even she realizes that they've got more

than poverty and drugs to worry about...

The result of considerable research into the phenomenon of poltergeist activity, *Urban Ghost Story* is one of the most credible studies of spectral obsession ever committed to celluloid. With its urban milieu, naturalistic performances and poetically framed tableaux, it is both visually vivid and psychologically tenable. Newcomer Heather Ann Foster is excellent in the rather difficult role of the alienated Lizzie, but she is given sterling support from Stephanie Buttle as her mother and Nicola Stapleton as her junkie friend Kerrie. It is

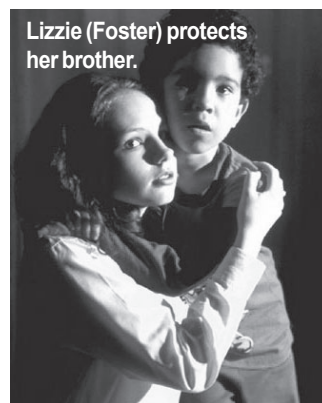


Kerrie (Stapleton): a junkie with a gun. Are you going to argue?

## Film Review August 2001

the film's social realism that makes its supernatural overtones all the more believable and thus so chilling. At times it's hard not to side with the cynicism of newspaper reporter John Fox (a grizzled Connery) or, indeed, the police. But as the circumstantial evidence builds and the imagination is left to play its own tricks, the film establishes a disturbing *mise en scene* that keeps one rooted to the possibility of an otherworldly evil presence. If Ken Loach had directed *Poltergeist*, it may well have turned out like this. And that's a good thing.

James Cameron-Wilson



Lizzie (Foster) protects her brother.

## URBAN GHOST STORY

director: Genevieve Jolliffe  
 cast: Jason Connery, Alan Owen,  
 Heather Ann Foster,  
 Stephanie Buttle  
 duration: 88 minutes

**If your grandmother is a medium, it seems logical that one day you'll make a film about a girl in a haunted block of flats.**

"I was used to coming down to breakfast and hearing all about the ghosts that she met last night," explains Genevieve Jolliffe, director of *Urban Ghost Story*.

Jolliffe and her film-making partner Chris Jones met at Bournemouth Film School 12 years ago. Disillusioned by the experience, and with bigger things in mind, they dropped out to form Living Spirit Pictures. Their first feature, *The Runner*, earned Jolliffe a place in the

record books as Britain's youngest feature producer (at 20), and their second, *White Angel*, gained much critical attention. Now comes their third, which sees Jolliffe making her directing debut, with Jones producing. "I was so eager to get in there and get directing" she says. "I was a little nervous on Day One, but after that I was in my element". Jones is more pragmatic about his role: "Producing is like cleaning toilets - it's thankless, creatively dead and boring".

With finance in place, they set about building their story "Poltergeist had already done it brilliantly, so we didn't want to go down that route," says Jolliffe. Jones concurs: "As soon as you see something, it ceases to be scary. Horror should be about being chilled, not grossed out". To research the film, Jones spent time with "scientists" whom he describes as "really interesting, but so far out there..." "We're talking real X Files territory".



To create the tension without effects ("No bright lights and gateways to Hell"), sound and music were employed. "We spent weeks designing the sound," says Jones. "We wanted the building to be an organic character that almost breathes." With the movie in the can, the duo began doing the festival rounds, which Jones describes as "life-blood for an independent film". After that, however their sales agent

went into liquidation and the film sank into legal limbo. Thankfully all that is now behind them, and *Urban Ghost Story* can finally be seen on screen in all its non-gory glory.  
 Justin Bowyer

*Urban Ghost Story* is released on 13th July, 2001.

Empire August 2001



## URBAN GHOST STORY

RELEASED: JULY 13    CERTIFICATE: 15  
 Running time 90 mins.

Director Genevieve Jolliffe

Cast - Jason Connery, HeatherAnn Foster, Stephanie Buttle, James Cosmo

Twelve-year-old Heather Ann Foster lives in a grim Glasgow tower block with her single mother, Stephanie Buttle. Lizzie is already on the social services 'at risk' list, while Kate has to cope with a violent loan shark, aggressive social services and general squalor. On top of this, the ghostly flat is blighted by poltergeist phenomena. Convinced they are haunted, Kate appeals to reporter Jason Connery, who sees the story's potential but believes it's a hoax to get the family rehoused. This neat Brit-flick provides a strong contrast with films like *The Exorcist*, in which visitations bother those too well-off to have other problems. Not only can the family not afford to leave their haunted flat, but they are forced to rely on the manipulative journalist and his semi-cracked parapsychologist or spiritualist.

\*\*\* Kim Newman

## URBAN GHOST STORY

Directed by Genevieve Jolliffe

Starring Heather Ann Foster Jason Connery, Stephanie Buttle

Opens July 13, Cert 15, 90 mins

**Uneven, but intriguing, Brit horror flick.** This supernatural chiller has a rather different locale for poltergeist visitations: a grimy tower block flat in Glasgow. And by twinning modern kitchen sink drama with understated gothic horror, *Urban Ghost Story* mostly succeeds by subverting both.

After a drug-fuelled joyride accident, 12-year-old Lizzie (Foster) briefly dies on the roadside. After being revived by doctors, she begins experiencing paranormal goings-on. Convinced something has latched onto her from the other side, Lizzie and her mother Kate (Buttle) search desperately for help. They're met with ridicule and bureaucratic indifference, until a manipulative journalist (Connery) steps in and offers help. As battling psychic investigators invade the household, Lizzie's strange experiences and recurring visions of the crash escalate. Between the supernatural encounters, grim manifestations of sink estate living, from drug problems to snooping social services, are depicted in commendably unsentimental detail.

Occasionally, *Urban Ghost Story* is unsure of itself and the script flat, but it's swept along by Heather Ann Foster's utterly electrifying performance. Whether portraying a sullen and bewildered schoolgirl or showing knuckle-white terror, Ann Foster illuminates *Urban Ghost Story* with compelling intensity. In particular, the closing harrowing scenes, where the full consequences of her joyriding escapades hit home, have real lasting power. An intriguing and inventive film.

Neil Davenport

Uncut August 2001



Edinburgh  
Film  
Festival

She was the youngest-ever producer of a feature film. Now Genevieve Jolliffe is dragging ghost stories back into fashion.

She talks to Dan Glatster

# High rise horror



It has the tried and trusted ingredients of the ghost story: furniture skittles across rooms, pipes creak and croak behind walls, chains rattle, breezes blow through doors and, most of all, there is a strong smell. Something fishy is going on in the block of council flats in Glasgow that plays host to *Urban Ghost Story*, the directorial debut of 27-year-old Genevieve Jolliffe, and one of the more accomplished British films screening at the Edinburgh Film Festival.

Jolliffe has some knowledge of the paranormal. "My grandmother was a medium, so I grew up listening to some very strange conversations around the breakfast table. She lived with us, but she also had her group of friends who would gather round. She used to come down in the morning and tell us who had come to visit in the night"

Seventies trends such as the

Ouija board also played a part in Jolliffe's formative years. "When the Ouija board came out it was like a game. As a kid it was a very normal thing to do, but as I got older it started to seem not quite so normal, and stopped being a game.

The sense of spookiness caused by the Ouija board might have been exacerbated by Jolliffe's surroundings. "I grew up in a hotel on the Isle of Wight. In winter it was empty. It was wonderful when all the visitors had gone, being able to charge around and choose which room you were going to play or sleep in, but at night it was terrifying. While shades of *The Shining* may inform Jolliffe's experiences, it is *The Haunting* that is a stronger influence on her work. "It was just terrifying. You don't actually see anything, it's all to do with the sound. It's about capturing that feeling when it's late at night."

The otherworldly presence in *Urban Ghost Story* shakes and rattles and makes a general nuisance of itself at around 3am each morning. The presence is connected in some way with 12-year-old Lizzie, recovering from the trauma of an Ecstasy-fuelled car crash which saw the boy next door killed and Lizzie herself die for three minutes.

"A lot of the cases we came across doing the research into poltergeists for the story happened in very small flats or council houses," says Jolliffe. "A lot of them happened in not very nice places. The other thing that a lot of them had in common was that there was some kind of trauma involved."

As well as introducing something from the *Other Side*, Lizzie's trauma attracts the ghoulish from this side: A journalist exploits the headline potential of a family he judges to be exploiting the ghost story to

jump the housing queue, while a group of earnest academics and a medium, complete with purple light and a painting of Dougal, the spiritual guide, all want a piece of the action. But while scary things happen, the audience - and the characters in the story - never know if there really is something out there or if Lizzie, marvellously played by a beatific Heather Ann Foster, is moving the things around herself as her trauma takes control of her. "You can take your own conclusions at the end, and that's what we wanted to stress," says Jolliffe. "Everyone has their own opinions - spiritualists, mystics - and you can look at all of them and agree with them. It all comes down to Lizzie's guilt about the crash."

Meanwhile the social services are having little truck with the possibility that the Third Entity - the demon - may have entered Lizzie during her brief death,

preferring the more mundane possibility that a lot of drugs are being taken and the child should be placed in care. Certainly the heroin chic squalor in which Lizzie and her mother, a radiant Stephanie Buttle, live would suggest that something should be done. But the mother's entreaties to the authorities to get them out of their haunted home are met with the retort: "Unless you have a real problem there's nothing we can do."

The tension is well handled by Jolliffe, who adeptly introduces the audience to her own uncertainties about the paranormal. For a feature debut it holds great promise for the future from a woman who already has a lengthy track record in films.

After six months at film school, Jolliffe left to become the youngest ever producer of a feature film. *The Runner*, when she was just 20. *The Runner*, however, caused not a few problems. "We got into so much debt with that film that the only way we could think of to get out of it was to make another film."

The resulting *White Angel* led to events that are almost worthy of a film. "We were arrested for making *White Angel*. We went on television to promote it and the interviewer seemed to be under the impression that the film had done really well in the States. It was a small film, with a budget of £11,000, which hadn't opened anywhere, but we weren't going to correct her. Unfortunately a tax man was watching, and he had us placed under surveillance. We seemed to be living this lifestyle, jetting off to festivals, saying we'd taken millions, but there was no money going through our accounts. One day they raided our house and took us down the local nick. We were on bail for six months. It was like a Monty Python sketch. They impounded the film, froze our accounts, our landlord chucked us out. It was a huge nightmare."

But the experience proved profitable, Jolliffe and producer and co-scriptwriter Chris Jones wrote *The Guerilla Film-Maker's Handbook*. "We thought we should put it in a book to warn others", she says. "Mind you, I was quite resigned to six months in Holloway and was actually looking forward to it. I thought it might make interesting material for a film."

Instead Jolliffe moved on to the neglected genre of the ghost story. Like the legendary tales surrounding the filming of *The Exorcist*, some things did go bump during the filming. "We shot most of it on a sound stage, so it wasn't too spooky, but lots of people would come in and say strange things had happened to them, which was nice to hear everyday."

*Urban Ghost Story* screens at the Edinburgh International Film Festival on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.



# The Scotsman

25<sup>th</sup> August 1998

## Urban Ghost Story

A drug-fuelled teenage joyride is the unlikely catalyst for this modern horror film with a social conscience. Lizzie (Heather Ann Foster, an impressive newcomer) survives the car crash which kills her boyfriend, but going back to the Glasgow tower block she calls home does not provide the expected rest and recuperation.

Furniture moves by itself and strange noises suggest the presence of poltergeist activity in the flat, but could it just be disturbed aftershocks on a young mind? Stephanie Buttle is the hard-pressed mother and Jason Connery the cynical tabloid journalist on the case, as medical and eventually spiritual help is called on for answers. Although, in the end there is perhaps not quite enough story to go round, Genevieve Jolliffe's film makes its point about the demoralisation of the urban disenfranchised while delivering a fair quotient of chills. She makes excellent use of suggestive sound and provides an impressive action finale all done on a tiny budget. Jolliffe must be Hollywood-bound before too long

(TJ)

## THE LIST

### GLASGOW & EDINBURGH

There's a moment in *Urban Ghost Story* that perfectly sums up the film's mix of the modern and the Gothic: Glasgow teenager Lizzie dons her Walkman headphones and uses drum 'n' bass tunes to ward off ghostly intrusion. With her low budget debut, Genevieve Jolliffe hijacks the horror movie, using its conventions - banging on walls, moving furniture - to great ambiguous effect. Is Lizzie the subject of supernatural possession, or is her strange behaviour the result of a trauma-inducing, Ecstasy-fuelled joyride which ended in tragedy? In *Urban Ghost Story*, Ken Loach meets *The Evil Dead*. (Miles Fielder)

### URBAN GHOST STORY

Chills from *The Exorcist*, *The Evil Dead* and Poltergeist register in *Urban Ghost Story*, but genre conventions (banging on walls, Slamming doors) are cleverly, employed ambiguously to astute effect. In the aftershock of a tragic ecstasy-fuelled joyride, Glasgow teenager Lizzie starts having hallucinations. Is home haunted, or are the frightening effects just par for the course of living in a rundown high-rise flat? A shrewdly judged chiller that boasts a brilliant, moving performance from newcomer Foster as the troubled Lizzie.

**The Scottish Daily Mail/ The Mail on Sunday in Scotland  
Edinburgh International Film Festival Preview**

### ARE BRITS COMING OR GOING?

**The image of Cool Britannia may have taken a pasting from *The Avengers*, but a new batch of British films show that we are capable of doing another Monty, if we don't try too hard. By Liese Spencer.**

"Two films that escape scenic clichés to explore a very different physical and psychological "British" landscape are Genevieve Jolliffe's *Urban Ghost Story* and Michael Winterbottom's *I Want You*. Set on a grim, high-rise estate in Glasgow, Jolliffe's film filters kitchen sink social realism through horror films such as *The Poltergeist* and *The Exorcist* to produce genuinely haunting work.

**Liese Spencer, *The Independent* 26<sup>th</sup> August 1998**



## Urban Ghost Story (15)

director: Genevieve Jolliffe

cast: Alan Owen, Heather Ann Foster, Jason Connery, Stephanie Buttle

duration: 88 minutes

After a vodka and Ecstasy induced car crash leaves 12-year-old Lizzie (Heather Ann Foster) clinically dead for three minutes, strange things begin to happen...

The Glasgow high-rise council flat where she lives starts to feel colder than it ought to, there's a weird presence in the bedroom and objects start moving around of their own accord. When the strange occurrences start to become more frequent, the family turn to the local newspaper for help, where Jason Connery's dodgy hack offers to assist them, provided he gets a scoop, of course.

Packed with spine-tingling thrills, 'Urban Ghost Story' is one of the most intelligent British horror films in years. It treats its poltergeist subject matter very seriously, offering an array of paranormal, psychological and religious explanations for the infestation: Lizzie's demons could be manifestations of survivor's guilt, pubescent angst or - worst of all - they could be real.

Skilfully employing the restraints of a low budget to its advantage, 'Urban Ghost Story' manages to create a truly disturbing sense of unease and anxiety without one special effect or bucket of blood.

Not since 'Candyman' has a horror film used the urban inner-city landscape to such terrifying effect - with the result that the true horror here isn't demonic power, but man-made squalor. Since it faces up to such inner-city realities with so much courage, the film's cop out, upbeat finale lets it down, spoiling the steady build up of tension that precedes it. But the rest of this genuinely creepy, disturbing film is so good you'll be willing to forgive the makers for bottling the conclusion. Don't see it alone.

review by Jamie Russell  
June 2001

Carlton Popcorn.com



### Film Fact:

*In 1992 co-writer-director Genevieve Jolliffe went into the Guinness Book of Records as the youngest ever film producer for her work on The Runner. She was 20.*



**An ambitious and intriguingly ambiguous depiction of paranormal phenomena in a grim Glasgow high rise. No FX and no gore, just an unsettling supernatural drama that's both credible and creepy**

Despite budget restrictions and the prosaic simplicity in its title, **Urban Ghost Story** is an impressively chilling and emotionally articulate account of the fall-out that accompanies a pubescent girl's conviction that she shares her home with a poltergeist.



### Film Quote

*When I died I saw a light. A bright light like a tunnel. I think something's coming back for me. I cannae see it but I know it's there in the shadows. Always just out of sight.*  
*Lizzie (Heather Ann Foster)*

Lizzie (Foster) is the ghost-faced and glassy-eyed 12-year-old haunted by memories of the drug-induced car crash that left her best friend and, for three minutes herself, dead. Trapped in a disintegrating Glasgow tenement and consumed by survivor's guilt she seeks solace in her goldfish and punishing *gabba* techno. But neither struggling single mum Kate (Buttle) nor drug-addicted mate Kerrie (Stapleton) can explain the sudden onslaught of psychic phenomena that visits the flat. Driven to despair by their vocal plumbing and nomadic furniture the family go to manipulative hack John Fox (Connery.) He invites a succession of dodgy ghost-busters into the flat, all of whom exploit the family according to their own agenda.



**Press Quote**  
*Ken Loach meets The Exorcist.*  
*Variety*

Writer-director Jolliffe refuses ever to identify the source of the terror and consequently **Urban Ghost Story** is infused with a sense of creeping anxiety. Rather than focusing on the poltergeist, Jolliffe concentrates on Lizzie and so, like **Carrie** or **The Shining**, the film is as much concerned with psychological as psychic turbulence.

Heather Ann Foster is extremely confident as the dazed-looking Lizzie while the pervasive realism ensures that those shocks it does deliver pack a hefty kick. Scary, subtle and smart, a film that understands fear has as much to do with what you don't show as what you do.

www.filmfour.com