

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
September 1994

ALAN CLARKE: TELEVISION ON THE EDGE

September 16 - 30, 1994

An exhibition of works by Alan Clarke (1935-1990), one of Britain's most original and controversial directors of the 1970s and 1980s, is on view at The Museum of Modern Art from September 16 to 30, 1994. **ALAN CLARKE: TELEVISION ON THE EDGE** features twelve films as well as a documentary about the filmmaker. Known for stark and lucid depictions of the lost souls of Britain's Thatcher era, Clarke made only three theatrical feature films (including *Rita, Sue, & Bob Too* (1987), which was released in the United States), focusing the majority of his work on projects for television. Shot in 16mm from scripts commissioned from both established writers and newcomers, these works are filled with anger and outrage, and are unflinching in their depictions of violence.

Highlights of the exhibition include the original version of *Scum* (1977), which, although commissioned by the BBC, was banned because of its violence; *Made in Britain* (1983), which features a brilliantly confrontational portrayal of a skinhead by Tim Roth in his debut; *The Firm* (1988), in which Gary Oldman gives a chilling performance as a murderous thrill-seeking father, set to the music of Perry Como; *Road* (1987), which is based on Jim Cartwright's 1986 play about life in impoverished Northern England, and includes David Thewlis in a small but pivotal role; and *Christine* (1987), a

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story of teenage heroin addicts that is low-key in its approach, yet alarming in its impact.

Also being shown are two works written and directed by Clarke, and set in Ireland -- *Contact* (1985) and *Elephant* (1989). In both, the strife in Northern Ireland serves as the backdrop, providing a landscape of killers and victims. *Contact* focuses on British soldiers patrolling the border between Northern and Southern Ireland. *Elephant* takes its title from the aphorism which states that for those who live in Northern Ireland, the troubles are as easy to ignore as an elephant in the living room. The film is a commentary on the murders that have become a routine aspect of everyday life there, showing eighteen assassinations, identifying neither victim nor perpetrator.

Providing context for Clarke's works is the documentary, *Director: Alan Clarke* (1991). Made for the BBC, the program chronicles the filmmaker's career, using film clips and conversations with his colleagues to illustrate his unique contribution to film and television.

Born on October 28, 1935, near Liverpool, England, Clarke received several awards for his films including the 1990 Prix Europa for *The Firm*; the 1990 Prix Italia for *Made in Britain*; the 1988 Monte Carlo Drama Award for *Road*; and Best TV Programme at the Locarno International Film Festival in 1985 for *Contact*.

ALAN CLARKE: TELEVISION ON THE EDGE was coordinated by The British Council, London, and The Film Center, Chicago; it was organized by Jytte Jensen, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video.

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For further information or film stills, contact Christine Dietlin, Film Press Representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752. No. 44