

Good and Bad at Games

UK TV : 1983 : dir. Jack Gold : Portman Quintet / Channel 4 : 95 min
 prod: : scr: William Boyd : dir.ph.:

.....
 Anton Lesser; Martyn Stanbridge; Dominic Jephcott; Laura Davenport

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: NFT Bulletin Nov 94

Halliwell's Television Companion review:

"Yet another manifestation of the English public school writer's obsession with public schools (this time by William Boyd, using public school plot number 4e, revenge by victim on oppressors in later life). For C4's Film on Four."

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"As a boy in a distinguished British public school, Cox is continually humiliated by the boisterous Niles. Ten years later they meet again by chance, and Cox sees his opportunity to exact revenge. The British public school

continues to be a welcome subject for film-makers, and Gold too employs all the dramatic connections the theme offers. **Good**"

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"A film for television written by the novelist William Boyd, clearly very angry about public schools and their product; equally clearly he has a lot of excellent ideas but he hasn't shaped them into a coherent whole and the ending is particularly weak. He has two endings since he has two stories, then and now,

with the same actors¹. Cox (Anton Lesser) ragged back then, plans revenge on Alistair (Dominic Jephcott) through the aid of "Wog" (Martyn Stanbridge) who despises Cox but who isn't, as a grown-up, as much a part of the other set as he would like to be. You may think twice about paying school fees after this.
* "

NFT Bulletin – Nov/Dec 1994 – review:

"The "Violence and Young Minds" season comes at the end of Young Minds' eight-month campaign to raise awareness about the effects of different forms of violence on the mental health of children. The films in the season are diverse, but they all deal in some way with the issue [*sic*] of violence, from the humiliating physical bullying in "**GOOD AND BAD AT GAMES**" to the warmth of Truffaut's portrait of an emotionally neglected teenager in "**LES QUATRE CENTS COUPS**"..."

"Writer William Boyd described his screenplay as, in part, "an investigation of the ways in which one's years at public school can haunt and shape one's adult life". As the action alternates between school life in 1968 and the lives of the former pupils 10 years on, bullied schoolboy Cox's obsessive quest for revenge in adulthood lends dramatic testimony to the enduring effects of routine bullying."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

¹ Groan...

No further information currently available. First broadcast on December 8th 1983. Wouldn't it be ripping – just for once – to see a public school film where the 14/15-year olds were played by 14/15 year olds? Malcolm MacDowell was 25 when he made “**if....**”, Richard Attenborough was 26 (playing a 13-year old!) in “**THE GUINEA PIG**”, Mickey Rooney was 22 in “**A YANK AT ETON**”, and the list goes on and on – just look at the “pupils” in “**ANOTHER COUNTRY**”. Continental films are not much better in this regard, even though they're otherwise more ready to use young actors in serious dramatic roles.

Channel 4 has produced quite a few films of direct interest to the archive, including its very first – “**P'TANG, YANG, KIPPERBANG**”. In 1983 they also made “**ACCOUNTS**”, about the demise of a poor Scottish farming family.

The NFT's “Violence and Young Minds” season included everything from “**TERMINATOR 2**” and “**LORD OF THE FLIES**” to “**LOLITA**”, which indicates the elasticity they were applying to the term “violence”. “**LOLITA**” – “a tale of paedophiliac obsession” as they calmly describe it – has nothing whatever to do with violence, except as defined by the sex abuse industry, and it's sad to see the NFT bowing so lazily to that agenda.

The *tabula rasa* view of children – that they're innately non-violent until they learn hatred and aggression from their elders and wider culture – is, so far as I'm aware, both unproven and untestable. There's no reason to suppose that aggression, competitiveness and other unfortunate attributes are not simply innate to our species. By the time a child is old enough to begin bullying his/her siblings, destroying furniture, or hitting out in vexation at a parent, it's all too easy to claim that this behaviour was subconsciously imbibed during infancy. What observation shows, on the contrary, is that the present generation of children, who have been subjected to less physical violence than any children in history, seem if anything **more** aggressive than their counterparts of generations before. Schools are **more** violent places, not less, now that children are no longer beaten there, and bullying continues to thrive, though sometimes with more murderous weapons. A received wisdom can be amazingly foolish, for all that it is widely accepted.

See subject index under [BOARDING SCHOOL / PUBLIC SCHOOL](#), **BULLYING** (which two concepts have always been largely synonymous) and **VENGEANCE / VIGILANTEISM**.