

The Nature of the Beast

UK TV : 1988 : dir. Franco Rosso : Cannon / Film Four : 95 min
 prod: Joanna Smith : scr: Janni Howker : dir.ph.: Nat Crosby
[Lynton Deardon, Paul Simpson](#)
 Tony Melody; Freddie Fletcher; Dave Hill; Roberta Kerr; David Fleeshman; Willie Ross;
 George Malpas; Howard Crossley; Jonathan Parkinson; Julian Walsh; Simon Molloy

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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"Ach, gerrit down yer, lad ! When I were your age, that were a Sunday joint fer a family o' twelve! Kids these days..!"
 Lynton Dearden with grandpa Tony Melody. Source: Film Review 1989-90

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"In a small industrial town, where unemployment is rife, a young boy and his friend stalk a mysterious beast that is killing animals. An unsuccessful allegory of social disintegration that stays in the shadow of **"KES"**. Screenplay: Janni Howker, from her own novel. * "

Film Review 1989-90 review:

"The county and the accents may differ - Lancs and Yorks - the story more complex and

sophisticated and the political undertones more positive, but nevertheless this story of a lonely boy is exceedingly reminiscent of Ken Loach's 1969 classic **"KES"**. The background of mean backstreet and bleak moorland, of unemployment and hardship (grim enough to fool my memory into recalling it as a black-and-white film) is common to the two movies. But here the story is more elaborate and has a blurred ending. After his granddad's chickens are mysteriously massacred and sheep on the moor are killed and mutilated with the newspapers christening the killer **"The Beast"**, young Bill Coward (Lynton Deardon) and his

pal Mick (Paul Simpson) set out, armed with a camera pinched from their teacher, to solve the mystery of the moors... Fine characterisation, superbly atmospheric photography and the injection of hard Northern humour adds to the film's assets."

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"The beast is unemployment. There have been eight years of Thatcherism since Franco Rosso's **"BABYLON"**, and as he turns from what it was to be working class, black and British in Brixton to what it is to be working class, white and unemployed in the distressed North of England, the effect of the intervening years can be detected in both the change of location to the colder, stonier climes of Lancashire and the quieter but more desperate responses of his characters. The plainly allegorical tale is from the same school, if not the same class, as **"KES"**. Fletcher (the hero's brother in Loach's film) plays the father of another troubled teenager and school truant, motherless wild child Bill (Dearden), from whose point of view the narrative unfolds. There's trouble't mill. Grandad (Melody) is sacked, Dad joins the picket. Meanwhile a beast roams the moors, descending on the town to kill at night. Superstition is rife, and Bill takes a gun to kill it. The results may be uneven, but the restrained performances are truthful, and the sense of pain and frustration is genuinely moving."

TV Times review:

"This sad and wistful drama of a Lancashire mill town has much of the feel of **"KES"**. The boys here are fascinated not by a kestrel but by the "beast" that has been slaughtering the chickens owned by their alcoholic grandfather."

"Lancashire: 14-year old Bill Coward lives with his father Ned and grandfather Chunder, both workers at the cotton mill where redundancies have been called for. Bill meanwhile plays truant from school and dreams of becoming a "wild man of the moors". He also becomes obsessed with the "Haverston Beast", an unidentified animal that has been savaging livestock, and is determined to hunt down the mystery killer. Screenplay: Janni Howker, from her own novel. "

TV Quick review:

"A lame attempt to portray Thatcher's Britain (remember that?) in terms of a monster pic. Lots of yokel types, cock-fights, picket lines, dole queues and a young lad who roams the misty moors in search of the monster that may or may not exist. * "

"Someone or something is mauling sheep on Haverston Moor, so 14-year old Bill, the fabric of his life under threat, sets out to unravel the mystery. Lynton Deardon is the teenage lead in Franco Rosso's allegorical fable with Tony Melody (you'll know the face if not the name) cast as someone called Chunder."

[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)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Last broadcast Channel 4: 23/5/91. The profound social damage inflicted on Britain during the cold winter of Thatcherism has now begun to manifest itself in a variety of awkward political "issues" her acolytes in New Labour seem incapable of addressing. Nowhere are these more keenly visible than in the eviscerated industrial heartlands of the North midlands, for Thatcher the breeding grounds of the enemy. Millions of working class people voted her repeatedly into power, of course, and it was excesses of union intransigence which gave her an initial mandate, so to a great extent the scourge was self-inflicted. As for the spectre of unemployment, more people are employed in the UK now than in the 1980s, but they are employed in part-time, poorly paid, retail sector jobs without long-term security, while eligibility for state benefits is constantly being

“redefined”, removing large numbers from the unemployment figures. Crude statistics do not compare like with like.

Nothing else is known of [Lynton Deardon](#) or Paul Simpson, though Dearden's face looks very familiar, and perhaps he did other TV work besides.

See also [“KES”](#), subject index under **GRANDPARENTS** and provisionally under **DRAGONS & DINOSAURS**, which encompasses strange mythical beasts of all shapes and sizes. See in particular [“FROG DREAMING”](#), in which Henry Thomas, fresh from “**E.T.**”, played an American orphan in Australia, preoccupied with the legendary beast at the bottom of his local billabong.