



## Our Friends in the North (BFI TV Classics)

*Mick Eaton*

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Our Friends in the North (1996) is the kind of epic drama that has ensured the BBC's peerless worldwide reputation for seriousness and excellence. In nine parts, it tells the life stories of four friends - Mary (Gina McKee), Nicky (Christopher Eccleston), Geordie (Daniel Craig) and Tosker (Mark Strong) - from adolescence to middle age. Their personal triumphs and crises unfold against the backdrop of massive social and political change in Britain - in particular the rise of Thatcherism and the dwindling of socialist ideals. Technically outstanding, *Our Friends in the North* is truly a 'state of the nation' drama but one which explores its large themes as well as more specific ones (domestic violence, corruption in the police and local government, iniquities in the criminal justice system) while developing its central characters with exceptional subtlety and finesse.

Michael Eaton traces the history of *Our Friends in the North*: its origins in Peter Flannery's 1982 play and the long road to TV adaptation. Eaton has conducted lengthy interviews with Flannery and others, and his book provides extensive insight into the often-labyrinthine ways in which TV drama is commissioned and produced. He goes on to locate the series in the genealogy of quality television drama and reflects on whether *Our Friends in the North* could ever be made today. Did the series bring an end to the golden age of British TV drama--and, if so, what have we lost in the process?

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