

R3 Nuit Blanche SCRIPT v3

CAST:

Chris Yates – writer

'Shadow' – graffiti artist

AL Kennedy – novelist

Mason Currey – writer and researcher

Sukhdev Sandhu – author and critic

Dr Aliyah Rehman – sleep researcher

David Rooney – historian of timekeeping

With echoes of Virginia Woolf, HP Lovecraft, Glenn Gould, Franz Kafka

R3 PRES INTRO

Now on BBC Radio 3, our SUNDAY FEATURE asks: why are some people at their most creative at night? Artists and writers reveal their nocturnal processes, in NUIT BLANCHE.

0'00" PRE-MONTAGE

CHRIS-01: At the beginning it is very uncertain that I'm going to maybe even write, even complete a paragraph. I think it's a miracle if I can get that first paragraph, that first sentence done. The first hour or two of a night's writing are difficult, you know, it's a challenge. It's a struggle. And it might take me hours, literally 3, 4, 5 hours just to write a paragraph. But once I've cracked that, once I've, you know, the current is going, it's just like a stream.

MUSIC: 'Nights Introlude' – Nightmares On Wax

WALKING FX

0'40" OPENING MONTAGE

SHADOW-01: The night has like an honesty about it. There's just like, it's a more honest time, for sure.

CHRIS-02: Time slows down at night, and the imagination sort of broadens.

ALISON-01: I quite like when the daylight goes, because then I kind of relax a bit.

SHADOW-02a: The night-time is our time...

ALIYAH-01: ...some of us are naturally owls, and some of us are naturally larks...

SHADOW-02b: ...and that's our time to kind of, act how we want to act.

SUKHDEV-02: There are those who sleep and there are those of us who are alive, and are creating. While the world sleeps, we actually make something!

CHRIS-10b: If you're a writer or an artist... you can completely disconnect from the rest of the world. So it's got to be the best time to work.

1'40" PROG TITLE

NARRATOR:

"Nuit blanche" – a name used around the world for all-night arts festivals. "Nata e Bardhe". "Baltā Nakts". "La Noche en Blanco". "The White Nights" – or, "Light Nights" – the nights around midsummer when, in areas of high latitude, it barely gets dark.

MUSIC fades

2'00" CHRIS – PREPARATION

FX kettle filled, gas hob on

CHRIS-03: A cup of tea is quite important to me before I start to write. In fact, I would say that's an essential, it can be, um, Ceylon tea. It can be Camomile, I won't drink coffee. I don't want to have that fizz in my head. I need to keep things at a level.

FX – RADIO 3 'AFTER DARK' starts playing on kitchen radio whilst kettle boils

NARRATOR:

10pm. A cottage in Wiltshire.

2'40" CHRIS INTRO + MUSIC SOUNDTRACK + NOTEBOOK / PEN

CHRIS-04: My name is Chris Yates. I'm a writer. I write about this landscape that I live in, which happens to be a rather beautiful place. And, tonight I'm hoping to crack a chapter that has stalled me in mid flow – chapter 11 of a book that was commissioned many years ago now, too many years ago... and tonight could be the night that I complete this chapter, this one problematic chapter. It's been weeks and weeks now. It's a sort of chapter you could do in an evening, in an afternoon when everything's going well. Things have been going well, and yet this has been troubling me. But – because it's such a perfect night – there's been storms earlier, it's very calm now, the rain's gone, there was an owl just now cooing up behind the house – everything is perfect. And it's leading me to this line in the

chapter, which is the knot I'm in. And then hopefully by the end of this night, I will have finished!

FX: REACHES FOR CD – LOADS CD

MUSIC: MORTON FELDMAN – Piano and String Quartet

CHRIS-05: Unlike some writers who have to have complete silence, I will sometimes set the scene with music. In fact, I'm very particular about the soundtrack to my chapter. This chapter, it began with Morton Feldman's piano and string quartet, a transparent piece that lasts for... rather a long time, and hardly changes, never rises above a whisper. Absolutely perfect for the mood of this chapter, which is about a rather magical, ethereal bird, a winter bird, a winter visitor. So, yes, the music is important. Sometimes I can find the word much more easily with that sound behind me.

MUSIC: MORTON FELDMAN – Piano and String Quartet (continues)

CHRIS-06: I'm very particular about the position of my notebook on my desk, I have to get that in the right position. I write long hand with a pre-war pen. 1930s pen, I just like the action of the nib... just, the way it sort of cuts across the page, something satisfying about it...

FX OF CHRIS WRITING ON THE PAGE

...crossfades into...

5'30" SHADOW

FX SPRAY PAINT / TRAFFIC

SHADOW-03: I think, rarely I start with a plan, it's more on just a feeling.

MUSIC: DJ Shadow – Midnight In A Perfect World

NARRATOR:

11pm, Dundee city centre. Shadow. Graffiti writer.

SHADOW-07: The town's looking fairly lively tonight actually. People usually don't really pay attention to you, they're kind of drunk, so if you're sober you have a better spatial awareness. So you've got more knowledge in that moment, and more power. You just kinda need to avoid people, that's all. (DRUNK PEOPLE IN DISTANCE) **WALKING, DISTANT TRAFFIC**

FX SPRAY PAINT

SHADOW-04: Shadow! It was just a name that I chose when I was young – like yeah, Shadow! That sounds cool, and – it was never night-related or anything, I just thought it sounded – well maybe, in my head at that time – I thought yeah! Going out at night and painting! And now, I'm like, slightly embarrassed to tell people what I write!

MUSIC: DJ Shadow – Midnight In A Perfect World (continues)

SHADOW-05: When I'm walking around these alleyways I'm looking for CCTV, any obvious cameras, any smaller – just checking the coast is clear, really. You kinda have to be wary of your surroundings. You never really know what is here and what isn't here. **GETTING CANS OUT – SPRAY FX**

7'35" CHRIS – ON BEING DISTURBED

...crossfades back to...

FX OF CHRIS WRITING ON THE PAGE

CHRIS-07: I like working at night because I hate being disturbed. I've always been very fond of that story about the person from Porlock who came knocking on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's door, just as he was in the middle of his bliss with his greatest poem, Kubla Khan, this unwelcome guest that he didn't even know, And he couldn't get back to that trance that he'd been in, that writer's trance – I like that story because, if he'd been working at night, it wouldn't have happened!

FX OF CHRIS WRITING ON THE PAGE

FX CLOCK CHIMES TWELVE

8'20" CHRIS – MIDNIGHT – DESCRIBES TONIGHT'S PROBLEM

CHRIS: The time now is midnight. I've written four, five versions of this moment in my encounter with a Hen Harrier, a female hen harrier.

MUSIC: Arnold Schoenberg – Verklarte Nacht For String Orchestra (Adagio)

CHRIS: I'm trying to describe the fact of this bird coming towards me, showing me her face, and it didn't even veer. It didn't even flinch when it saw me, it just kept going past me, and I'd got my fact, and now I see how I've got to say it. Not overdo it, not get too excited about it, and make it as clear as possible to the reader that a Hen Harrier is this beautiful ethereal bird that has a face like an owl, but not much of an owl! It's that kind of – and that's the problem. I don't want to make too much of it.

Each version is nearly right, each version is not right, I won't be happy until I can read it to myself and it just flows. And it's got that lightness of touch that a Hen Harrier has, this lovely buoyancy. It has to have that same kind of buoyancy, that same kind of – not necessarily fragility, but there's a kind of grace about it. I want the grace to be in the writing, but that's going to be difficult, but I'm getting there. I feel it coming and I'm still very close to my subject. I can feel it. It's still approaching me from a distance... it's like the bird itself. It's coming towards me. It's closing. Closing. I can nearly see it!

MUSIC UP: Arnold Schoenberg – Verklarte Nacht For String Orchestra (Adagio)

10'20" HP LOVECRAFT QUOTE

NARRATOR:

H.P. Lovecraft said – “At night, when the objective world has slunk back into its cavern and left dreamers to their own, there come inspirations and capabilities impossible at any less magical and quiet hour. No one knows whether or not he is a writer unless he has tried writing at night.”

10'45" AL KENNEDY – MAIN SECTION

ALISON-04: On the good nights, on the nights when a piece knows who it is, what it is and is anxious to be out in the world without me – I can work for hours, until dawn, without knowing. I'll be in places and with people – I'll even *be* people – who've never existed. And when I come back from that I'll be tired, but also rested. I'll have been puzzling at syllables and thinking about rhythm and plot points and all that, but I will also have almost been asleep. And that happens at night, of course it does.

NARRATOR:

12.30am, Essex. A L Kennedy. Writer.

ALISON-03: I'm hopefully two thirds of the way through a novel at the moment, which is sort of a two hander. The main text is written by a very normal person who's a primary school teacher, but there are inserts that are written by somebody else, who's just a thing of darkness, a dark man who does dark things! And I had to get into his head space, and I get lent a cabin in the woods over in America. And I started writing in this cabin in the woods, and mainly wrote his bits just at night. Because it's impossible to sleep in that cabin because it's in the woods and it's made of wood. So it makes a lot of noise if anything steps on it or jumps on it in the night, and everything in the wood that wakes up at night jumps on the cabin. So it's kind of horrifying. So you aren't going to sleep cause you just think you're going to be murdered. That seemed to help. Cause it took about three months to really think, “oh, okay, that's how he says things”. And now, if I am – yeah, I'm doing more blocks of him now, and I will do him at night.

12'45" CULTURAL HISTORIAN (INTRO + SAMUEL JOHNSON EXAMPLE)

MUSIC: Matt Berry – Music For Insomniacs (Part 1)

MASON-01: I'm Mason Currey and I'm the author of the 'Daily Rituals' books. In my research, I found that throughout the centuries, there have been writers and artists, composers and musicians who found that they could only do their creative work late at night.

MASON-02: In the pre-electricity era, Samuel Johnson wrote late at night, he was sort of a procrastinator. I mean, he loved to talk, loved to go to the Tavern and meet with other intellectuals and have long, passionate debates. And, as a result, he had no time to write

during the day. So it was only when he returned home from these long days and evenings chatting and making the rounds of London literary life that he could buckle down and get to work ... and apparently by candlelight, because there was no other way to do it.

MUSIC: Matt Berry – Music For Insomniacs (Part 1) – continues

ALISON-02: I don't have an awful lot of light, because I don't particularly like light. I have one of those Edison bulbs in my study, sort of a golden light rather than an office light. Whenever I've had to work in an office for any reason with that really headachy overhead – strip lights are the worst. That just makes me want to die! So I don't have a lot of light. I quite like when the daylight goes, because then I kind of relax a bit.

14'10" SHADOW – 1AM – DARKNESS / VISIBILITY / FEELS SAFER

NARRATOR:

1am, Dundee.

SHADOW-08: Sometimes it's hard painting at night, because you can't see that well, you get lost and you have to wing it a little bit! **DISTANT TRAFFIC / SPRAY FX**

NARRATOR:

Shadow. Graffiti writer.

MUSIC: Matt Berry – Music For Insomniacs (Part 1) – continues

SHADOW-10: It is quite a confusing space to exist in, because I guess the typical nature of graffiti is like a dog marking its territory – I have been here, notice me! – and I guess that is what the goal is. But, it's a difficult one for me, like, existing as a trans person makes me super visible in my day to day life, and on the regular. I walk through town and I am anything but ignored! I am noticed tenfold for my appearance and how I look, rather than for what I do at night.

SHADOW-11: You feel so visible during the day, as a queer trans woman. Whereas you go out at night, and you're kinda like, freer ...

WALKING FX

SHADOW-12: It's definitely, once it becomes way darker, that it feels more safe, because at night is when people are in their beds. It's now near 1 o'clock, and that's the best time for people like me to go out and do my thing.

WALKING FX

16'00" CHRIS – 1AM – GOING WELL

CHRIS: It's now 1 o'clock, I have reached a point where I now have only two versions of what was a five version centrepiece to this chapter. And I think I've reached the line when I'm going to be satisfied. And I feel optimistic, more optimistic now, about this particular moment in the chapter, I'm going to get it done by 2 o'clock. This could be the night's work over. Or not! (laughs)

MUSIC: Glenn Gould – Bizet: Nocturne in D Major, WD 55

MASON-03: The Canadian pianist Glenn Gould tended to follow a very nocturnal sort of existence. He said, "I tend to emerge along with the bats and the raccoons at twilight" ...

****GLENN GOULD CLIP from CBC documentary – TOTAL DURATION 25'’****

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zxqq7DyJ0zE> @ 1'47"

(NOT TRANSCRIBED)

MASON: ...he would generally sleep until the late afternoon. And then he would often make a few phone calls to sort of wake himself up. And then if he was recording, he would arrive at the studio at about seven in the evening and work there until one or 2:00 AM. And, um, if he wasn't recording, he generally stayed in his apartment. He would read and make endless to-do lists and study scores and listen to music until early in the morning.

MUSIC: Glenn Gould – Bizet: Nocturne in D Major, WD 55 (continues)

17'40" SUKHDEV – 2AM – FORBIDDEN – BOHEMIAN

SUKHDEV-03: Until about two o'clock in the morning, I'm still in yesterday mode. I'm still living out the fag ends of yester evening!

NARRATOR:

2am. New York City.

SUKHDEV-04: My name's Sukhdev Sandhu, I'm the author of 'Night Haunts' – a book about people who work through the night, in London. And I'm the director of the Colloquium for Unpopular Culture at New York University.

MUSIC: GLENN GOULD / Bizet – disappears

SUKHDEV-05: When you're growing up, it's hard to imagine the night as your own. Night is forbidden territory. Go to sleep, go to sleep! Night – the idea that it's this zone of creative play or of invention, self-reinvention is something that's really hard to conceive. If anything, night to me, when I was growing up, was a place of coercion, of labour, of exploitation to some extent. My mother, when she lost one of her jobs, the only work she could get was doing piece work in the garment trade. At home. And, the work she needed to do was 14 hours a day, seven days a week. And it was 98 hours a week. And I remember being shocked when she told me she was being paid 14 quid for the whole week. And to do that, in addition to washing children's clothes, making sure they're in school, was to work into the

night. The money wasn't much, and she wanted to save money on electricity, she wanted to save money on bulbs, so she often worked with ambient lighting from the street. And this is her in her fifties. So she's wrecking her eyes, but the intricacy of that kind of seamstress-ing, means that you're turning yourself rapidly arthritic. So for me, the idea that the night could be fun was a very alien concept. It took me a long while to imagine that there could be such thing as a Bohemian night.

19'35" HISTORY / NO CHOICE BUT TO WORK AT NIGHT

MUSIC: Chopin – Nocturne No 1 In B-flat Minor Op9 No1 / Elisabeth Leonskaja

MASON-04: Two writers I found, separated by a century or so, who both when they were teenagers had responsibilities caring for their family members during the day. And then they started writing at night because it was the only time that they weren't busy, and then they just sort of stuck with it their whole lives, because that was the habit they had developed. So that was true of George Sand, the 19th century French novelist... she had cared for her ailing grandmother while she was a teenager. So that's where she first developed the habit. George Sand, she said that she produced a minimum of 20 manuscripts pages, nearly every night of her adult life. And, um, that she – as an adult, it wasn't unusual for her to slip out of a sleeping lover's bed to begin a new novel in the middle of the night. And um, she also claimed that in the mornings, she couldn't even remember what she had written during these late night writing sessions! And then, a hundred years later, James Baldwin, you know, very different writer, as a teenager, his father was this kind of absent and difficult figure, um, kind of took on the responsibility of taking care of his siblings and started writing at night cause that was the only time that he could get the time to himself and he kept it up throughout his whole life.

MUSIC: Chopin – Nocturne No 1 In B-flat Minor Op9 No1 / Elisabeth Leonskaja (continues)

CHRIS-10a: When I was a single father of four children, it wouldn't have been possible for me to do this. And I was a single father for... 12 years. But, now I'm on my own, I can make my own decisions about when I want to work. I will always work at night.

ALISON-05: Night solves all of your problems. People go to bed. They don't call, or email – even the planes stop for a bit. And you can be alone with that thing, that lump of words, that way you have to earn your living which also has to feel like... joy! And a triumph of imagination. Or something. I mean, obviously, the more you need peace, the more stuck you are, but – you know – eventually you'll get unstuck. And meanwhile... at least you've got peace.

MUSIC: Chopin – Nocturne No 1 In B-flat Minor Op9 No1 / Elisabeth Leonskaja (ends)

22'00" TRANSITION – SHADOW

SHADOW-13: We are about four hours in, so... I'm feeling calm, but energised. I've got in my rhythm. It's good to be in your zone, especially at this time when streets are completely

empty... so, yeah. We're just moving through it. And the seagulls are doing their best to keep us company! (laughs) **QUIET, SEAGULL FX**

22'35" CHRIS – 3AM – ENERGY DIP

SILENCE

CHRIS-11: It's nearly 3 o'clock. And the energy that I was conscious of an hour ago seems to have drained away. I don't really know why this has happened. I'm not particularly tired and don't feel like my bed yet. I need to change my mood. I need to stop thinking about how terribly this line is going. I need to give up the idea that I might give up!

FX CLOCK CHIMES THREE

SILENCE

23'15" SUKHDEV – 3AM SILENCE LONELINESS

SUKHDEV-06: The silence at 3 o'clock can feel really crushing. The loneliness can feel overwhelming. You're thinking about all the things that are assailing you in life. And dawn feels impossibly far away. So even in the quietest night, even in a rural hum where maybe there's a bit of a breeze, some sort of leaves, maybe a sort of distant fox... it's often at 3 o'clock in the night that I'd think about listening, what I can hear and what I can't hear, and what it would take for me to hear the dream world of the sleeping, the vocalization of the sleeping world, but also the noises, the silent screams of other people around me, around the world, around a city, who are up at that time.

24'15" CHRIS + SHADOW – 3.30AM – STILLNESS OUTSIDE

MUSIC: Doris Day – In The Still Of The Night

CHRIS-12: I'm going to step outside now, take in the night air... and change the scene. I need to get back to where I was. I can't do it by staying with it. I have to remove myself from it. Start afresh, and by stepping outside, that'll happen. In fact, I can hear an owl as I speak! It's sort of beckoning me. Yes. I'm going to go outside. Change the energy...

FX RUSTLING / DOOR OPENS

MUSIC: Doris Day – In The Still Of The Night (continues... fades out)

CHRIS: ... out into the darkness. And the night sky is clear. It's half past three, the stars glowing very softly up there. It's a semi hazy sky, but I can see the silhouette to the yew tree to my right, the apple tree to my left. And further away in the distance, the skyline is a wood. And there is sound. I can hear movement in the tops of the trees that lean over the

house. It's like someone breathing very softly. And the air is very fresh. It's rained earlier, so there's a real freshness. The garden is smelling very sweet...

SILENCE

SHADOW-14: When you're in places like this, abandoned, but still in the middle of a populated place, the silence in here is thick.

SILENCE

SHADOW: I come here and I see this frame, the framing of things, the trees, the street lights, the windows, people's neon lights on – I just wouldn't see this if I wasn't out painting, and doing these sorts of things at this time of night.

MUSIC: Doris Day – In The Still Of The Night (fades back in)

CHRIS-13: Oh – and a bat just went straight over my head! (laughs) Just this rather dim silhouette, but close, very close to me.

CHRIS: And now we shall go back in again, and I shall finish that page!

MUSIC: Doris Day – In The Still Of The Night (ends)

27'05" ALIYAH – SLEEP RESEARCH / WHY ARTISTS? / REM SLEEP

ALIYAH-02: I'm Dr Aliyah Rehman, I'm a teaching associate based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. And I'm also a member of the Strathclyde Sleep Research Unit which is based at the University of Strathclyde. And I'm interested really in all things sleep!

ALIYAH-03: There was a study looking at art students in comparison to business students, and the art students reported feeling more creative after 10pm and having a preference to going to bed later. They felt full of ideas and more creative then. Some of that is just to do with, it's quieter at night, and there's a lot less going on and you're not at work or you're not wherever you are. So you have the time to think, perhaps in a more peaceful environment, and be creative.

MUSIC: Matt Berry – Music For Insomniacs (Part 2)

ALIYAH-04: There's other things to do with – one of the interesting ones is, one of the types of sleep that we have is called REM sleep – so, rapid eye movement sleep, it's associated with memory and more vivid dreams, the really bizarre ones that we have, so when we wake up in the morning, we remember them. It's a stage of sleep that's very active. Your brain is as active during REM sleep as you are when you're awake. So there's a lot going on in your brain. And some people think that if you're awake in the early morning hours – so like, 4:00 AM, 5:00 AM, 3:00 AM – perhaps there's something going on there, and maybe that's the time when you actually, if you're not in REM sleep, maybe you're feeling creative.

28'20" CHRIS + SUKHDEV – 4AM – DRIVEN / DREAMS / KAFKA

MUSIC: Matt Berry – Music For Insomniacs (Part 2) (continues)

NARRATOR:

Virginia Woolf wrote: “The evening hour gives us the irresponsibility which darkness and lamplight bestow. We are no longer quite ourselves.”

CHRIS-14: You should be dreaming at four in the morning, three in the morning or wherever, when those deep times come. And I think sometimes the dream mechanism... I think that's where the words come from, sometimes.

SUKHDEV-07: For me, night is mostly about 3 o'clock to 5.30. That's when you know you're in it for the long haul. You've got into a groove, and you can't, or you don't want to let go. You feel in the zone, like a traveller, you're delving both kind of deeper into yourself, into the wellsprings of your own imagination, but you're also questing outwards. You're driven and you're fervent...

CHRIS: ...you enter that zone, and you begin to recognize the moments when it's coming. And so you make sure you don't make another cup of tea then, you know, this won't come back, stay with it, stay with it. Even though it's hard...

SUKHDEV: ...and then maybe you're a bit hungry. You look out the window, and there are not so many lights on, and everyone else seems to be sleeping. They seem, somehow, non-productive. They seem like corpses. Who are these people who don't seem to be having peak experiences like you are?! Deep as you are into your artistry? And in a completely horrible narcissistic way, you feel really fertile, you're on the edge of your own skin, grappling with your own imagination and the shaping of that into something that is legible, or usefully illegible...

CHRIS: ...it will come, just keep writing, keep writing, stay with it. And then that dream thing happens. Or, you connect, you access the dream door, and the words come out.

ALISON-07: There's a certain quality about the late night stuff that's quite trippy and intense, so it's very good if you're doing something trippy and intense, because you can borrow the atmosphere. And quite often the ends of my books are trippy and intense! So that's also why I'm doing things in that way.

MUSIC: Matt Berry – Music For Insomniacs (Part 2) (fades out)

CHRIS-15: I was reading Kafka's diary, and he's writing the story 'The Judgement'. And he starts at 10 o'clock in the evening and he finishes the entire story at 6 o'clock in the morning. And he says that he can hardly move, his legs are so contorted under his desk. It takes him an age, and it's an agony to straighten them up. And he just says to himself that

he's created this thing, just because he forced himself through the night. He got to that stage where he said "it was as if I was advancing across water, and the words just arose".

MUSIC: Korla Pandit – Clare De Lune (fades in)

MASON-05: Proust, you know, the French writer, he famously kind of retired to his bedroom, went out very seldomly and, his schedule was to sleep during the day and write at night. And he worked in bed lying almost completely horizontal with his head propped up by pillows, writing by hand, with this sort of weak green shaded bedside lamp. This is only working light. And he said, "after 10 pages, I am shattered", (laughs) but it's like, you almost needed the process to be sort of miserable. There was something – he felt like there was value in the suffering that went into the work.

31'45" ALK – ALL-NIGHTER

ALISON-06: Pulling an all-nighter... I mean, I suppose occasionally? I don't think any doctor would say "this is a good idea", but, just occasionally – you know, it takes a year to write a novel. Within that year, just staying up madly for three nights... I mean, that's okay. You know, I just try not to argue with what I'm working on, in case it goes in a huff. And if it's saying "nah, stay up, come on, come on"... cause basically I'm not going to sleep. So I might as well just get up and do it!

MUSIC: Korla Pandit – Clare De Lune (ends)

32'20" SPACE + IMAGINATION + TIME (5AM)

CHRIS-16b: When I'm writing at night I often lose track of time, completely. And that is when very often your imagination starts to work.

MUSIC: MORTON FELDMAN – Piano and String Quartet

CHRIS-16a: Space – dimensions, generally – enlarge at night. And that is good for the imagination because it allows you to imagine that you have more freedom to express yourself, in a way that is sometimes impossible when things crowd in on you during the day, when the phone starts to ring, someone's coming around anyway. But all that's gone at night. There is just one thing to concentrate on, which is this great space, this huge blank canvas. That's a great sensation. And some people don't understand that, they don't feel it. They never get it, but I savour it. That's where my energy comes from. And that's how I can write until the birds start to sing.

33'25" TIME & CLOCKS

SHADOW-16: Time only really starts to come into it if the sun starts to come up, or if I'm out with someone else and they have something to do. For me, really, the time doesn't really matter, but just how the environment is, is what matters.

MUSIC: MORTON FELDMAN – Piano and String Quartet (continues)

DAVID-02: The clock on the wall, or the watch on our wrist, seems like it's there to make our lives easier, to coordinate our lives. But really, it controls us.

34'05" STANDARDISATION OF TIME

DAVID-03: I'm David Rooney, author of 'About Time, A History of Civilization in Twelve Clocks'.

DAVID-04a: The Standardization of Time was a practice that took several decades to come into full effect. By the end of the 19th century...

DAVID-04b: ...people had become absolutely used to the idea that "time" meant time by the clock, not time by the sun and the patterns of daylight and darkness. And by the turn of the 20th century, most people had really bought into this idea that we could and that we should be controlled by clocks, because what that was really doing was making us better people.

MUSIC: MORTON FELDMAN – Piano and String Quartet (disappears)

DAVID-05: There was a set of Victorian moral concerns – particularly alcohol consumption and factory working conditions, particularly in the textile industries in Lancashire, where people started to use clocks to enforce changes in behaviour. The idea of having drinking up time, time beyond which you weren't allowed to drink alcohol in pubs, was really very interesting. The fact that you could standardize people's behaviour, you could tell people that they'd had enough to drink. But it wouldn't be the government doing the telling, it would be clocks.

35'25" TIME – TRANSGRESSION / REBELLION

MUSIC: Bauhaus – Dark Entries

DAVID-07: One act that people can take, if they're trying to resist the tyranny of the clock and standardization, is to transgress against when it's deemed "proper" to be up and about, to be awake, to be working. And if there's this equation between daylight being proper and clean and cleansing, then moving into the margins, moving into the shadows, or moving into the night could be seen as an act of resistance against those moral codes and norms.

MUSIC: Bauhaus – Dark Entries (continues)

SUKHDEV-10: I did have an impression that, if you're one of those people maybe who goes to university, or maybe likes to have bits of paint spattered over your clothes, and it's okay,

or maybe you have spiky hair, then the normal rules don't apply. The clock doesn't apply. And, almost one of the definitions of being a Bohemian to me was that you make your own time. When you're younger, you want to sort of feel like you're not one of them. You're not wannabe be adults. You're not one of those square people. And one of the areas by which you demarcated yourself was in relationship to the night.

CHRIS-17: I do not live by the clock. I live according to another time. And that time, the pace is – it's like the pace is mine to command.

DAVID-08: Do I consider myself a clock watcher? Actually, the answer is, pretty much yes. I've got clocks all over, and I'm absolutely dictated to by them. Maybe I should feel bad about that! I mean, at least I'm aware of it, but it's so profoundly embedded in modern society, in all of us, that it's really hard to resist it entirely. And I've got nothing but respect for the people who manage to do so much better than I do.

CLOCK WINDING + TICKING FX

MUSIC: Bauhaus – Dark Entries (ends)

37'25" SELF-DOUBT

CHRIS-18: When I write my first book, nearly 40 years ago – it's still in print by the way! – when I wrote my first book, I was much more confident than I am now. And, I've written thirteen books now, and I'm much less confident now. I'm much more concerned about the form of the book, about the feel of the book – is this readable? Is it decent? Is it rubbish? This uncertainty only really arises in the day. It never happens at night. At night, I'm a Superman!

FX WALKING

SHADOW-18: I come out at night – it's like having a superhero identity, or an anti-hero identity. It's not like I go out and do good things – I spray paint on people's walls and stuff, so it's like being an anti-hero in a way, because I don't directly hurt people but I may cause people annoyance.

SHADOW-19: but... I go out and paint for me. I go out and paint for my emotional wellbeing, for my mental wellbeing. You know, it benefits NO-ONE, me going out and painting. It benefits me less, because I put myself in these sort of situations. But, I go out and paint for me, for even other writers to see, people that exist within the space that I exist within. It's for us.

SHADOW: Hiya – can I get a portion of chicken pakora and chips please? ...

39'15" DUKE ELLINGTON / TRANSITION TO MORNING

MUSIC: Duke Ellington – New World a-Comin' (Live)

<https://www.discogs.com/Duke-Ellington-Solo-Piano-Concert-1964/release/13781678>

MASON-06: Duke Ellington – you know, he was always on the road, and he would compose late at night in his hotel room, and he liked to have a piano in his hotel room if he could, so he could wake up in the middle of the night and go to the piano. But if he couldn't have a piano in his room he would go use the piano in the hotel ballroom or the bar or the dining room. And, sometimes he would stay there all night long with the kitchen staff, you know, cleaning up around him, just him and the hotel staff, uh, you know, vacuuming. He said he liked to have some vacuuming noise in the background. I always found that a really lovely image, Duke Ellington in the hotel ballroom! And he also said, uh – I found a quote where he's apologizing to a reporter for showing up late for their interview – and he said, “you know how it is, you go home expecting to go right to bed, but then on the way in you go past the piano and there's a little flirtation, it flirts with you. So you sit down to try out a couple of chords. And when you look up, it's 7am!”

MUSIC GRADUAL FADE INTO...
FX – BIRDSONG

40'30" NIGHT BECOMES MORNING

SHADOW-20: The sun will be starting to come up within the next half hour or so, the buses are beginning to make their early morning moves – and, we have run out of paint! Saw the first police van we've seen all night, right now, as we're wrapping up! Tomorrow morning begins the journey around to see the spots that we've painted tonight in the daylight, and get photos.

MUSIC: 'Nights Introlude' – Nightmares On Wax

CHRIS-19: The morning very often brings truth. Very often it's a hard truth! Very often it's embarrassing in the morning when you read it again, other times you think – nailed it. Absolutely nailed it!

ALISON-08: No first draft is any good! Anything you read that I've written, if it's in a novel or a short story, I will have rewritten it – I can't even imagine how many times. And daylight is great for rewriting, because you've done the imaginative flowy bit. And now you have to do the grinding, inevitable bit. And you need a lot of light to look at all of the mistakes. You need a lot of daylight.

MUSIC UP

SUKHDEV-11: It's hard when you have spent time in night-time to go back to your day world, cos it mostly seems rather bland and sedate. People don't seem to have the same wild-eyed fire in their eyes – or if they do, you can't see it!

MUSIC UP

SHADOW-21: Now, I'll probably go home, I might have a cup of tea to wind down, apologise to my partner for being out so long – try and get back in the good books there! (laughs) – and then eventually go to bed!

NARRATOR:

In 'NUIT BLANCHE", we spent the night with: "Shadow", A L Kennedy, Mason Currey, Sukhdev Sandhu, Dr Aliyah Rehman, David Rooney... and Chris Yates.

CHRIS-20: It's getting towards, I suppose sunrise now. We'll soon be able to see lights through the windows. I've written 500 words – of those 500 words, maybe 300 will be usable. That's all right. As far as I'm concerned, that's an achievement, and I've got closer now to where I want to be.

**MUSIC: 'Nights Introlude' – Nightmares On Wax (fades out)
FX kettle filled, gas hob on**

CHRIS: It's not resolved, but it is resolvable now. I'm happy where I am. It's been a good night, it's not been wasted. Soon the sun will come up...

FX – RADIO PLAYS R3 BREAKFAST

CHRIS: ... now is the time for a cup of tea, and then it's time for bed.

CHRIS-21: And tomorrow night, I'll finish it. Possibly! (laughs)

43'37" ENDS – R3 PRES OUTRO:

NUIT BLANCHE was produced by Steve Urquhart. It was a Far Shoreline production for BBC Radio 3.