

# TBI Scripted

Television Business International

Issue #6 January 2017

The magazine celebrating television's golden era of scripted programming

Gaumont Television presents  
A new TV Series



## THE FROZEN DEAD

Visit us during NATPE

at The Fontainebleau Hotel - Chateau #1516

SEASON 1 : 6 x 52'

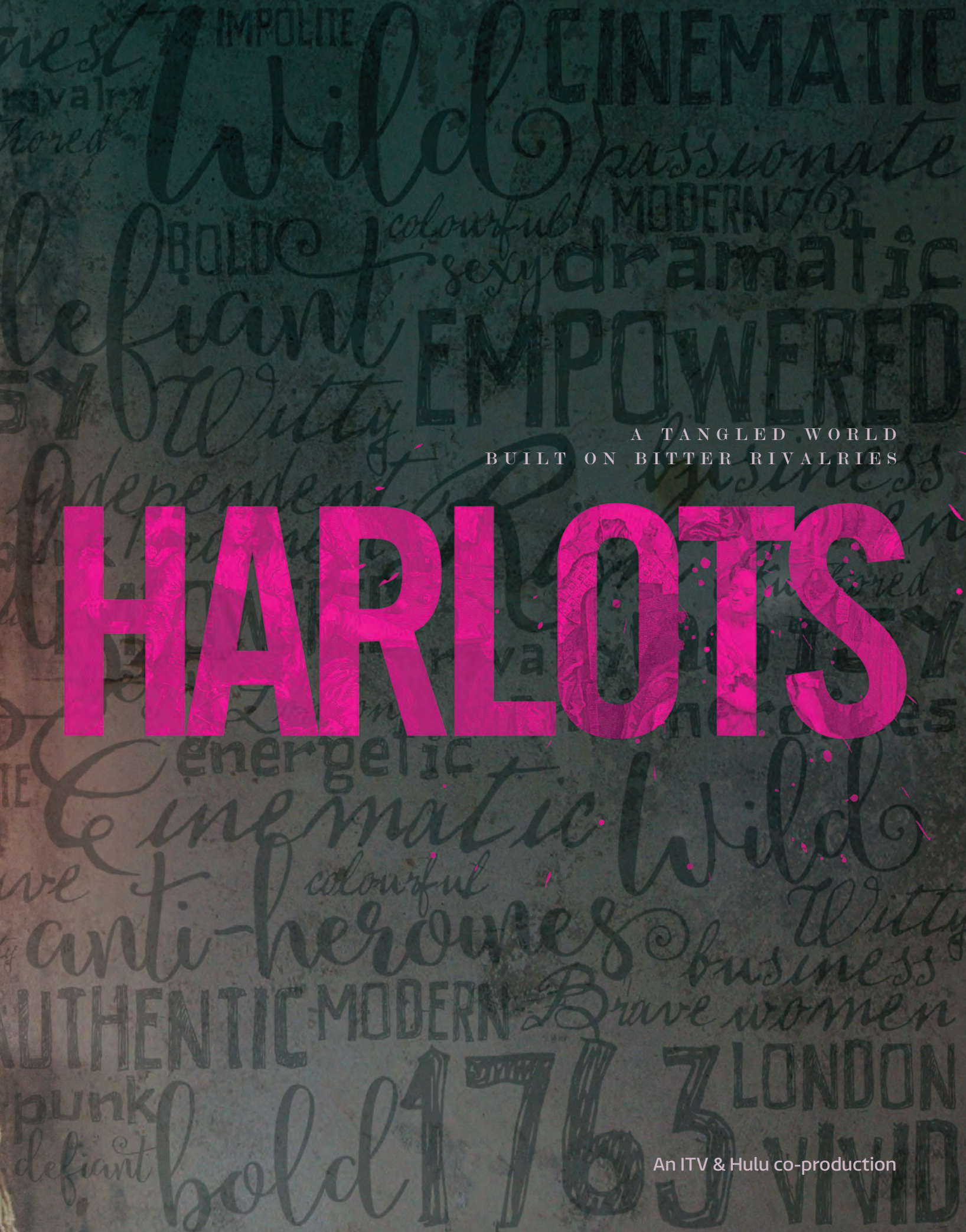




itv

STUDIOS

GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT



A TANGLED WORLD  
BUILT ON BITTER RIVALRIES

# HARLOTS

An ITV & Hulu co-production

# Where Drama Makes It Big.



**mip**tv®

MIPTV market 3-6 April 2017

MIPDoc and MIPFormats 1-2 April 2017

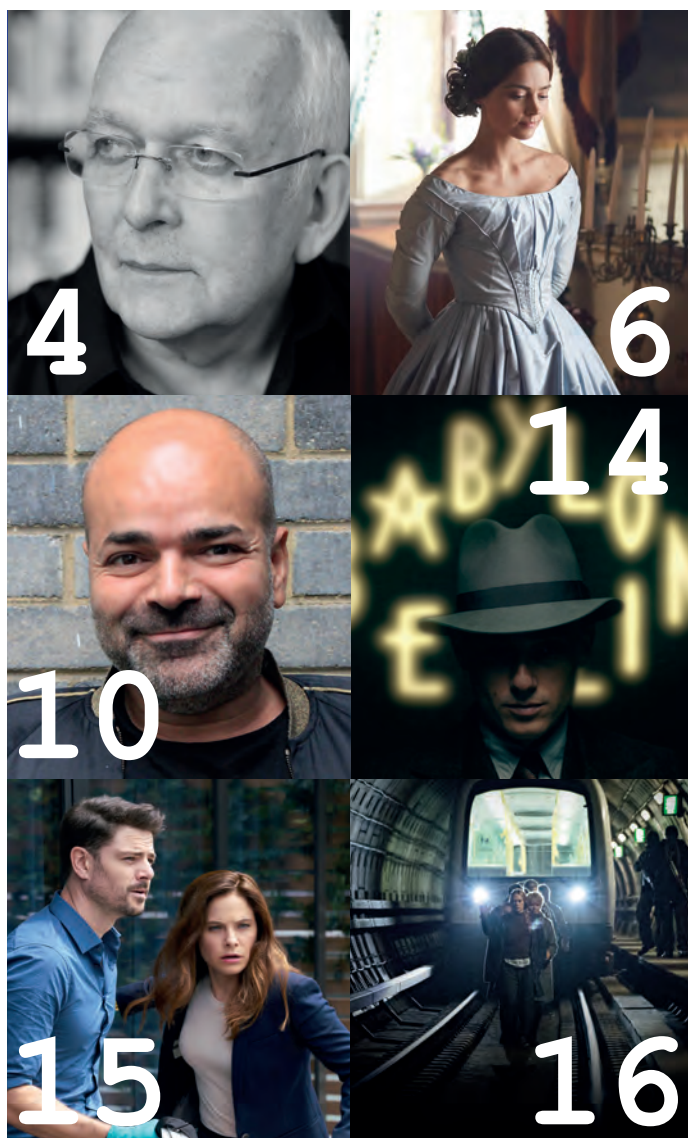
▶ MIPDrama Screenings 2 April 2017

Dial up the drama in a big way with MIPDrama Screenings and Drama@MIPTV. With more than 2,000 buyers in attendance, the best in World Premiere TV Screenings, and conferences exploring the evolution of storytelling, at MIPTV, drama is a big deal.

Cannes, FRANCE

Registration [mip.tv](http://mip.tv)

**mip**® Driving the content economy



## Editor's Note



Often, drama industry journalists follow the money. It's how we know who's making what, what's not going into production and where we think the next hit is coming from. No scripted programme, however, has ever been successful without spending that money on the right creative talent.

That's why in this issue of TBI Scripted, we're focusing on those creative types – the writers, creative producers and actors who actually make the programming that audiences love.

In an exclusive interview, acclaimed British writer Andrew Davies, who turned 80 last year, reveals how he's developed one of the sharpest styles in international drama, as his latest series, a BBC remake of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, goes into production.

We also hear from Ash Atalla, probably the single-most successful comedy writer-producer in Britain right now. The co-creator of *The Office* and the production brain behind *The IT Crowd* and *People Just Do Nothing* tells TBI comedy producers must reinvent the genre in the same way series like *The Wire*, *The Sopranos* and *Breaking Bad*, and more recently *Game of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead*, have done for drama.

Moving from behind the camera to in front of it, Jenna Coleman reveals how she prepared to play a British queen in ITV drama *Victoria*, as part of our wider look at royalty-themed scripted programming.

There's also an in-depth report into *Babylon Berlin*, the biggest-budget German-language drama of all time, in which Beta Film's Moritz van Kruedener talks about the conditions that led to two seemingly unnatural bedfellows – free-to-air public broadcaster ARD and satellite pay TV operation Sky – to co-fund the project.

We also go *Below the Surface*, talking to StudioCanal about its latest Nordic noir, and get the low down on searching Canadian drama *Mary Kills People*, which is for Global Channel and Lifetime in the US.

This all confirms that while a big budget is nice, it's nothing without the right people spending it.

Jesse Whittock

## Contents

4 Scripted interview: Andrew Davies

6 Sovereign drama

10 Spotlight on: Ash Atalla

14 Beta Film's *Babylon Berlin*

15 Entertainment One's *Mary Kills People*

16 StudioCanal's *Below the Surface*

**TBI editorial director** Stewart Clarke • [stewart.clarke@knect365.com](mailto:stewart.clarke@knect365.com) • @TBIstewart

**TBI Scripted editor** Jesse Whittock • [jesse.whittock@knect365.com](mailto:jesse.whittock@knect365.com) • @TBI\_Jesse

**Sales manager** Kate Roach • [kate.roach@knect365.com](mailto:kate.roach@knect365.com)

**Art director** Matthew Humberstone • [matthew.humberstone@knect365.com](mailto:matthew.humberstone@knect365.com)

**Published by** KNect365 TMT, Maple House, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 7AD

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7017 5000 **e-mail:** [tbi@knect365.com](mailto:tbi@knect365.com) **web:** [www.tbivision.com](http://www.tbivision.com)

Printed in England by Wyndeham Grange Ltd, Southwick, West Sussex BN4 4EJ

© 2017 Informa UK Ltd All rights reserved

**Reproduction without permission is prohibited**



@TBI Magazine

**KNect365**  
TMT



# Master's key

With a credit list stretching longer than dozens of other writers combined, 80-year-old Andrew Davies knows the secrets of a good script. He tells Jesse Whittock about his writing process, how he'll save *Les Misérables* from itself, and why he his planning for another productive decade

**A**ndrew Davies has a good shout for screen's most prolific writer of them all. Since writing his first play for radio in 1964, he has penned dozens of television plays, miniseries, long-running dramas and comedies, and a number of feature films.

His filmography includes the first two *Bridget Jones* movies, *Brideshead Revisited* and John le Carré adaptation *The Tailor of Panama*, but it is in television where his longevity is truly felt. His best known creations include the critically acclaimed *A Very Peculiar Practice* (1986-88), the original *House of Cards* (1990), *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), *Game On* (1995), *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* (1996), *Bleak House* (2005), *Sense and Sensibility* (2008), *South Riding* (2011), *Mr. Selfridge* (2013), and *War and Peace* (2016).

The exhaustive list even includes a credit on Netflix's mission-defining remake of BBC miniseries *House of Cards*, though he openly admits his sole participation in the Beau Willimon-penned series was allowing them "to do what they liked with it in exchange for acknowledgment and quite a lot of money".

This year, his reworking of Leo Tolstoy's seminal Russian novel *War & Peace* for BBC One in the UK and A+E Networks in the US was described by one paper as "the greatest TV costume drama of the past decade", which is high praise in an era of many worthy contenders in the historical drama space.

"I have the same kind of process with everything I write," he tells TBI of his writing style. "I try to immerse myself in the work and

feel my way into it. I try to identify with the characters, I very much work through them and what they tell me. In *War and Peace* there were three characters – Natasha [Rostova], Pierre [Bezukhov] and Prince Andrei [Bolonsky] – whose stories resonated most with me, so I focused on them."

Davies is next turning his hand to adapting another classic European novel for the BBC: Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The series is, after *War and Peace*, a second collaboration with Lookout Point, which has been on a roll under Simon Vaughan and Faith Penhale. BBC Studios and The Weinstein Company's television division are also attached.

For Davies, the project is one his most significant, and pressing. "With *Les Misérables* there's a new factor coming in [to my process], because of the fame of the musical," he says. "It's almost a rescue mission to save Hugo's masterpiece from the musical. People think they know *Les Misérables*, but they don't. I'm going to tell that story."

*Les Misérables* will rework Hugo's story about the original anti-hero, Jean Valjean, a criminal with a strong moral code who over many years rises through 19<sup>th</sup> century French society, while attempting to avoid the clutches of a fanatical police inspector, Javert.

"Jean Valjean is an extraordinary character," says Davies. "He's like a tragic Shakespearean hero because he's grappling with the great big questions in life. Is it possible to change from a criminal to a hero?"

Extraordinary characters are synonymous with Davies' work. His version of Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* for ITV in the 1990s

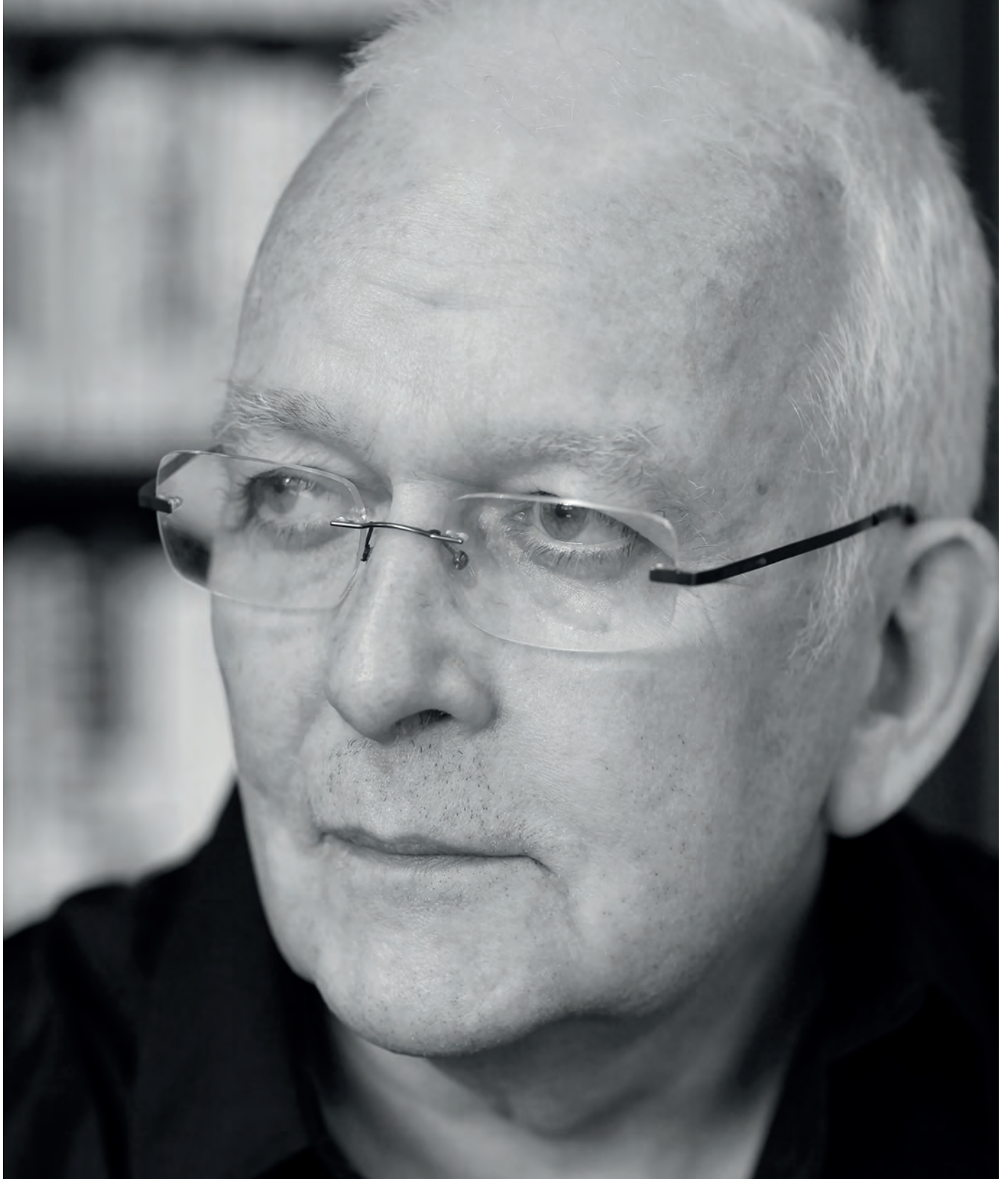
drew huge audiences for his version of the lovable working class criminal, while Francis Urquhart from *House of Cards* – originally created in Michale Dobbs' novels – was the basis for Kevin Spacey's villainous protagonist, Frank Underwood, in the US series.

On the subject of the Urquhart/Underwoods: how does Davies feel about the iconic British character being better known in a disguise? "Francis Urquhart is there for the taking," he responds. "A new version had to be different by virtue of being American. Mine was a right-wing, old-fashioned Tory – an Englishman from Scotland – and it's nice that Beau Willimon made his very specifically Southern and from much more humble roots. I was fascinated by the whole thing."

What is perhaps more intriguing for the Wales-born writer is the platform on which the second *House of Cards* goes out. "I haven't had the experience of working with Netflix, but I would love it," he says, though he notes the process would be a very different experience, both for writer and viewer.

"I like going out on a Sunday night once a week on the BBC, and if [the show] goes well the press writing about it to create a national conversation. Netflix is more private, furtive and mysterious: nobody knows how many people watch it, and people watch it alone when they feel like watching.

"So far there has been space for both styles of watching. When I first starting doing shows such as *Pride and Prejudice* in 1995 it was getting 12 million a week, and *Moll Flanders* did 15 million. Those figures are no longer there, and you're quite happy with five



million and delighted with six. There are so many different ways to watch.”

Davies is open to all of them. Despite BBC Worldwide bringing Davies to Cannes in October at MIPCOM to celebrate him reaching his ninth decade, he has no plans to slow down, seeing opportunity for writers everywhere in the modern high-end drama ecosystem.

“I want to keep going,” he says. “I’ve just turned 80, but I’m hoping to have a very productive decade. *War and Peace* was the first show I’ve done with Faith Penhale, and *Les Misérables* is with her too. Simon [Vaughan] has always been very smart and creative, and *Lookout Point* is now being very much more creative than in the past.

That’s great and it’s one way in which things are changing.

“BBC Studios and ITV Studios seems to be proportionally less important, and a lot of the most interesting ideas are coming from the independent sector.”

The master scribe clearly plans to be around for some time yet. **S**



# Sovereign drama

Top drama producers tell Jesse Whittock about the small screen's enduring fascination with royalty

**T**he £100 million (US\$125 million) budget Netflix's drama *The Crown* was allegedly handed isn't quite the estimated £369 million it's going to take to renovate Buckingham Palace's 775 rooms, but is certainly one of the biggest purses a British production team has had access to.

*The Crown* is notable not only for its huge budget (admittedly for two seasons), but also as being the first American-British production for streaming service Netflix. Andy Harries, managing director and co-founder of producer Left Bank Pictures, says the commission was a direct result of Netflix's deep-dive approach to research.

"They'd run their algorithms on the royals, so they knew exactly what they were getting into and what the appeal is to the audience," he explains. "Netflix needs reach and an older audience. *The Queen* clearly has the appeal across the board, but clearly appeals to that older, broad audience."

"The royal family has always been with us – there's clearly an enduring appeal," he adds. "There's a great fascination with how they survive in the real world. What we are doing with *The Crown* is bringing a level of humanity to them."

*The Crown* follows the life of the current British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II (played by Claire Foy), from her earliest days on the throne in the 1940s and through to the modern day – providing it goes to six seasons Harries and his team are planning.

Being a Netflix show for its global feeds, there is no ratings data. However, the impact has been "immense", claims Harries. Social media and online responses are indeed very positive, while reviews on what has been described as 'the most expensive series ever made' (nb: it's not) have been universally good.

Harries is not surprised the show appears to be an international hit. "Britain had the British Empire, which





*The White Queen*

*The Crown*

creates an enduring international fascination,” he says, adding: “The royal family is not just a British royal family. It’s a perfect show to roll out internationally.”

*The Crown* is just one of a number of recent shows about British royalty. ITV scored big ratings with *Victoria*, another biography of a queen (see page 8), while E! Entertainment and Lionsgate created a lighter, comedic and fictional regal family for its first drama, *The Royals*. Another US-UK coproduction, *The White Queen*, told the story of the War of the Roses from the perspective of influential noble women who experienced the 15<sup>th</sup> century conflict over the rightful owner of the throne.

Emma Frost penned that series, and has now written and produced its follow up, *The White Princess*, starring Jodie Comer as Elizabeth of York. While the original was for the BBC in the UK and Starz in the US, the new show is only for the American cable network.

Frost notes that England of the 15<sup>th</sup> century royal life has played a bigger role in modern drama than is widely known. “*Game of Thrones* is based, in part, on the War of the Roses,” she notes.

“This is a point in history where there was no clear king,” adds Frost. “The lineage had broken down, and various factions were fighting each other. It’s like family warfare on a grand scale – these are people who are related and know everything about each other, but are willing to do awful things to each other for power.”

Shooting has finished on the miniseries, which begins at the end of the noble conflict, with Company Pictures and Playground Entertainment now in the edit.

“*The White Princess* is an incredible opportunity to tell powerful stories about women, and it is rare to have stories of that scale to tell,” she continues. “The stakes are incredibly high, but because these women don’t have overt power in this structure, they are forced to be Machiavellian. It’s similar to *House of Cards* in that sense. Those stakes are incredibly interesting.

“Separate to that, for audiences, the scale and mystery of the royal world hits a voyeuristic nerve. They’re glamorous, intriguing and offer a window into a world we don’t get to see otherwise.”

Just as the popularity of royalty shows no sign of abating around the world, the lineage of royal-themed programming remains intact, too.



# The reign of Victoria

Jenna Coleman on the future of the ITV drama

**I**TV's new period drama, *Victoria*, faced stiff competition when it was put up against BBC One's *Poldark*, ironically from the same ITV Studios-owned prodco Mammoth Screen, as it returned for a second season on September 4. *Poldark* had scored huge ratings in its first season, and bookmakers expected a BBC win despite two excellent results from *Victoria*'s first two episodes. As with the

Brexit and US election, they were wrong.

*Victoria*, which had debuted on August 28 to a 5.3 million (consolidated eight million) audience beat its rival by 200,000, and 1.1 million consolidated. The royal drama went on to beat *Poldark* each week until its end on October 9. The series' consolidated audience was consistently around the 7.5 million mark, representing a huge win for both UK broadcaster ITV and its production studio.

Much of the credit must go to Jenna Coleman, the 30-year-old British actor who plays the titular 19th century monarch. "You never know how people will respond to a new show," she tells TBI. "*Poldark* already had a huge audience – I am a big fan of it – and so it was nerve-wracking. I'm absolutely thrilled, surprised and pleased that both found audiences."

Coleman had taken on the role soon after leaving *Doctor Who*, where she had played the Doctor's companion, Clara Oswald. "I'd just left a big long-running series and I wasn't sure if I wanted to jump straight into another, but ultimately after doing the research and reading the story, there was no way for me to say no," she says of her new role.

Coleman pays tribute to *Victoria*'s writer, former factual TV producer Daisy Goodwin, and Mammoth Screen managing director Damien Timmer, whom she says she worked with closely to develop the Victoria character, and to accurately represent historical facts, balanced with dramatic beats. Asked how involved she was in developing the character, she says: "It was a very collaborative process, and that is a lot to do with how Damien and Daisy work. They want more voices heard. It's more cohesive and productive, and you get more detail that way.

"Daisy is a master," she adds. "This is historical and socially aware, but ultimately human. She had to get the historical accuracy and to pace it, and to make it funny and appeal to audiences of today.

A second season has been commissioned, and with ITV director of television Kevin Lygo recently saying he would like fewer dark crime dramas on the channel, its likely more strong ratings will take it further than that. With Goodwin and Mammoth Screen envisaging a six-season arc following Victoria through her six-decade reign as queen, Coleman may not be there for the entire run, despite ITV and distributor ITV Studios Global Entertainment heavily focusing on her in their marketing materials this year.

"We're trying to work out the future at the moment," says Coleman. "Everything will be based on pacing; it's all about pacing the story in a very satisfying way. There's so much material that if you tell everything in the way you want to it would be spanning about 60 years. I don't envy Daisy having to pick the best bits. There will come a time where I might have to metamorphose." **S**



# NEW STORYTELLING FOR EVERY PLATFORM

**ACTION / SCI-FI**

## MISS 2059

A BEAUTY QUEEN ON AN INTERGALACTIC JOURNEY - WILL SHE SAVE THE PLANET, OR BREAK A NAIL?



12 X 10' / TRT 120'

**THRILLER / DRAMA**

## COLD

A CHILLING DISCOVERY LEADS TO A SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH.



10 X 12' / TRT 120'

**COMEDY / DRAMA**

## MR. STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

HIGH SCHOOL DOESN'T JUST MATTER, ITS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS.



10 X 12' / TRT 120'

OH LEADING BRANDS

VISIT US AT NATPE FONTAINEBLEAU HOTEL, TRESOR TOWER 2, 17TH FLOOR, SUITE 1712

@KeshetIntl f KeshetInternational @KeshetInternational

Catalogue: www.keshetinternational.com Contact us: info@keshetinternational.com



# In the spotlight:



Ash Atalla

Ash Atalla has shows lined up for Sky, the BBC, Channel 4 and is looking at US remakes of Roughcut Television's series. Having redefined comedy by co-creating *The Office*, Atalla tells TBI about the business, his career and plans

**TBI: Which executive helped shape your career?**

AA: One is Clare Pizey, a BBC exec (eds note: currently head of factual entertainment at the pubcaster) who has nothing to do with comedy, but who I used to work with on a show called *Mysteries with Carol Vorderman*. It was Claire who thought my skills would be better suited to comedy, and she helped me secure an internal placement at BBC Comedy. She thought that's what I would do better, but she was probably trying to get

rid of me from her own department! She said, 'you don't seem dry enough for this world of factual television'.

**Who did you look up to when you created Roughcut?**

I guess with Roughcut I wanted to emulate two production companies I knew from when I was younger: Hat Trick and Talkback. They were the ones that looked like they were doing all the cool stuff, they were the names that would come up at the end of all

the shows I would watch, and I quite simply wanted to have a company like that.

**You have a public profile. Is that a help or a hindrance?**

The truth is it's just the right level of profile, as it helps me get things done. I'm 100% not famous, but it is about whether people will take your calls, whether it brings benefit to our staff who need to get hold of someone, and if I can help to open doors. When I can it makes sense to do that. It's not the blind alley of ego.

**Is it important to bring through new talent, on screen and behind the camera?**

I do bring the young generation through and promote quickly from within. That's something I take seriously because it's such a hard business to move around in, it's so incredibly fluid. There's no structure or plan to it. We're not surgeons or lawyers who need years of track record under their belts; I produced a pilot of *The Office* when I was 26, so you can be young and successful.

**At what point did you realise how big *The Office* was?**

It's only in retrospect that I realised that it has had a long lasting impact on my life, and the opportunity it gave me and everyone in it. We were all young, none of us had done very much before. I'd never produced anything, Ricky [Gervais] and Stephen [Merchant] had never written anything, we were really a bunch of first timers. To go from that to being able to get your calls returned overnight was something that felt different.

**It only ran to twelve episodes and two specials. Did it end too soon?**

There was another way of configuring the two Christmas specials – into a series – but there is no sense of longing for what we didn't do on that show. I look back now and it feels a complete and finished body of work. What I don't wear as a badge of pride, especially now I run a company, is this sort of 'only a short run can be perfect' mentality. I think that's a very British angle and the Americans were baffled by it.

**Have the US and UK comedy production styles moved on since that point?**

The world has got smaller, and the Americans, with the rise of the premium cable business and on-demand with Netflix and Amazon, have become more used to that British model, or the two are meeting in the middle at least.

At Roughcut, we take a much more international

approach. A lot of our shows are writing-room written: *Trollied* on Sky 1 has now gone through a lot of episodes, and I think *Cuckoo* will end up being a five-season show. Then there is a show like *People Just Do Nothing*, which has such a specific voice. If you put it in a writer's room, could you make 40-50 eps that would capture that? Maybe with a strong showrunner.

But I think it is very British to say if it has a distinct voice it can only come from one person. I don't buy that. Some of those American shows, the *Seinfelds* and the *Curb Your Enthusiasms*, were written by multiple writers and had multiple showrunners over different series, but felt very specific bits of work.

**Has Netflix changed the game?**

They buy our shows, they show *Cuckoo* and *People Just Do Nothing*, but in terms of British originations not so much. There is some coproduction activity – Amazon with *Fleabag*, for example – but I thought there might be more in that space.

What Netflix has done is allowed American writers to make the kind of comedy show that they used to envy us Brits for: the more offbeat stuff, short runs, and things that feel more niche.

***Cuckoo* was piloted for NBC in the US. What are your US plans now?**

There are a couple of our UK shows that I think lend themselves to a US format. We want another go at *Cuckoo* and we're also interested in adapting *People*





*Just Do Nothing.* People might say it is one of the more English shows we make, but they said that of *The Office* as well. I do think there is an American version and we're doing a bit of work on how that might look.

### **Is there a through-line to the shows you make?**

In the early days it was observing the everyday. I would think about the rooms that we as humans spend most of our time in, and how much time is spent in supermarkets, school, the family home or hospitals.

*Trollied*, which is based in a supermarket, came out of that. I was surprised there wasn't a definitive sitcom based in that world. You don't, however, want to repeat yourself in your career, and we don't need to make one type of show.

### **Where next for you and for Roughcut?**

There are other genres we can push into. The lines between factual television and what we do have become much more blurred. If you look at a show like *The Call Centre* on BBC One, and shows like *The Only Way is Essex*, these are real-life semi-constructed stories. I think that's an interesting area for us at Roughcut, so we're pushing into entertainment.

### **You have also moved into film. What can we expect?**

If we make a film we have international aspirations, so

we wouldn't want to make a small British comedy. We would want to emulate the early work of Judd Apatow, for instance. At a time when everyone is moving from the world of film into television, our calculation is we are already in television, so let's push the other way and see where we get to.

### **Does it follow you could start producing television drama?**

It completely makes sense, and we wouldn't fear straight drama. In the comedy business we can think drama is easy because you don't have to make people laugh, but the skills required are very transferrable in terms of telling stories and working with material.

### **This is a golden age of television drama. Can the same be said of TV comedy?**

Comedy and drama have separated a little bit and I don't know if I do feel this is golden age for comedy. Everyone knows about these big international drama juggernauts and the money that has gone into them. It's almost movie money, and that just hasn't happened in comedy, although you could argue comedy doesn't need it, that there is something about scale that isn't necessarily funny.

Drama has reinvented itself, and so what people expect from drama has changed, and that's to do with that international financing and money. I don't think comedy has yet had its reinvention in same way and that slightly worries me.

### **Is a reinvention of the genre forthcoming?**

My concern is that it is not coming. I think naturalism in comedy and the documentary aspect was a big seachange, and that persists now.

There was a moment when *The Office* and a few others around at that time brought in that doc feel, and *People Just Do Nothing* is in that tradition. Beyond that I don't think there's been a particularly big reinvention of comedy, and I think we have to watch that we don't begin to look too old fashioned in the ways we make comedy, and that the work doesn't feel too contrived.

### **What's next?**

There will be more *People Just Do Nothing* and we hope it's not the end for *Trollied*. We also have *Carters Get Rich* [with James Van Der Beek] for Sky, *Hospital People* for BBC One, and *Stath* for Channel 4, which is about the world of shitty property lettings. We're also working with a big American showrunner on something new.

If I went under a bus, we have a very strong team and slate of shows... Roughcut would survive. **S**

# SERIES MANIA CO-PRODUCTION FORUM

WHERE CREATIVITY MEETS INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

## PRIZE FOR THE BEST PROJECT: 50 000€ CALL FOR PROJECTS!

SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE: FEB 17TH, 2017

PITCHING SESSIONS  
ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS  
NEW: WRITERS TRAINING SESSIONS

## APRIL 18-21, 2017

FORUM DES IMAGES, PARIS

Contact

[forumcopro@forumdesimages.fr](mailto:forumcopro@forumdesimages.fr) / +33 (0)1 44 76 63 20

[series-mania.fr/forum-copro](http://series-mania.fr/forum-copro)

#SeriesMania / @FestSeriesMania



# Berlin bound

Germany is one of the more recent of the international markets to become a drama exporter, and the country's biggest ever series (financially speaking) *Babylon Berlin*, looks set to continue putting the country on the scripted television map.

A 180-day shoot, mostly taking place in the titular German city, wrapped late last year, with the series bowing on pubcaster ARD and pay TV operator Sky Germany thanks to an innovative funding deal.

The story is based on the crime novel series by German bestselling novelist Volker Kutscher and combines fiction with the real history of the end of the roaring 1920s as the Nazi movement gained strength.

"It is the first large-scale series for German television from Tom Tykwer (*Cloud Atlas*)," says Moritz von Kruegener, managing director of series coproducer and distributor Beta Film. "He is working at eye level with the other two directors and showrunners: Henk Handloetgen and Achim von Borries.

"Of course, Tykwer comes from feature films and his cinematic roots are clearly visible in *Babylon Berlin*. What he and his team are doing here looks very much like grand cinema, with one big difference: you can tell the story in much more detail."

The first trailer went down well at MIPCOM. "From the start, it was designed to be a very unusual project, and it is still today," von Kruegener says. "We are shooting 16 episodes at the same time – two seasons of eight episodes. The budget is very close to €2.5 million (US\$2.6 million) per episode; that's €40 million for the entire project. Financing was generated by German players, with two major broadcasters on board, ARD and Sky, and us a coproducer."

It's the first time that Beta Film has invested so heavily in a domestic coproduction, although Kruegener will not divulge the exact level of Beta's investment. "We committed ourselves because we believe in Tom Tykwer and his team of directors, Stefan Arndt from X-Films, and the German coproduction partners," he says. "With *Babylon Berlin*, we are entering new ground. Up until now, recoupment of such a large

budget was only possible with English-language productions. Now, we are backing a German-language series, because we were convinced of the quality. Looking at the early footage proves us right."

Shot in German, the partners expect it to have an impact on international markets. "We have already sold it to all major Scandinavian broadcasters," says von Kruegener. "At the moment we are closing deals in almost all key international markets."

The series' budget and ambition puts it up at the highest end of international drama. "It's the largest production office I've seen in my career, with huge numbers of props and costumes," von Kruegener says. "It has a total of 250 speaking roles within 180 shooting days. A commitment for 16 episodes at once is also something only global players like Netflix have done so far. The equipment available at Studio Babelsberg [in Potsdam, where the majority of footage was shot] is at the same level as of any US studio. The newly-built Berliner Strasse is one of the largest backlots in Europe."

He adds that the on-location shooting was important and gives the show its unique look and feel, with Prague or Budapest often used as Berlin in TV and film.

"Most of the shooting was done in Berlin on location and at the Babelsberg Studio and approximately 30 shooting days were done in North Rhine-Westphalia in west Germany," the Beta boss notes. "When you look at the scenes already available, you see 'Alexanderplatz' really is Alexanderplatz – providing a high degree of authenticity, even for those who are not familiar with Berlin themselves." **S**

## In focus

**The show:** *Babylon Berlin*

**The producers:** Beta Film, X-Films

**The distributor:** Beta Film

**The broadcaster:** ARD, Sky (Germany)

**The concept:** Mega-budget period thriller





# Mary Kills People

*Mary Kills People* is both a cable series and a free TV series, and comes from both a newcomer and from one of Canada's best-known producers. Tonally, it manages to be both light and dark, as it explores the world of assisted suicide.

The series is for Corus Entertainment's broadcast network Global in Canada and A+E's female-skewed US cable net Lifetime, with Entertainment One Television handling international sales.

The Mary of the title is Dr. Mary Harris (*Hannibal*'s Caroline Dhavernas), a single mother of two and emergency room doctor. By night, and with the help of a partner, (*Vinyl*'s Richard Short), she helps terminally-ill patients who want to end their lives achieve that aim.

Shot in Toronto and set in the fictional town of Port Denver, the show sees Mary's life and after-work assisted suicide work become complex when she is attracted to a man (*The Lake*'s Jay Ryan) she is trying to help, and as the police close in.

It's the first show from Cameron Pictures, the fledgling Canada-based prodco set up by *Rookie Blue*'s Tassie Cameron, and her sister and former CBC producer Amy Cameron earlier this year.

The project came out of a spec script from Tara Armstrong, who came to Global's attention after winning the Shaw Media Writer's Apprenticeship Program last year. Holly Dale (*The Americans*, *Dexter*, *Castle*) directs and the show was block filmed, allow her to work on the whole series.

The Camerons say their US cable and Canadian broadcast partners played nice with them, with the worst niggles minor issues over language and the showing of a bare bottom.

Tassie Cameron says: "It's credit to our Canadian broadcaster that it took the risk and was supportive of keeping a cable tone."

For a North American net, the six-episode order falls into the limited,

or event series category. "They are positioning it as event TV," Amy Cameron says. "We're seeing Canadian broadcasters do this to touch on more cable-type content."

In terms of that look and feel, the producers say a lot of decisions ended up being influenced by the theme of water. "Early on we identified that, so it's a big theme of the piece," Tassie Cameron says. "It influenced the colour palate, wardrobe choices and a lot of creative decisions about tone and feel."

The series clearly deals with a dark subject matter head on, and throws up questions about life and death. However, "It's not preachy," Tassie Cameron says. "Mary has a position on the right to die, but as creatives we don't align ourselves with one or the other, and there are alternative positions shows in the series.

"We hope it starts a conversation, but that said it is entertainment. This isn't an 'issue' show." **S**

## In focus

**The show:** *Mary Kills People*

**The producer:** Cameron Pictures

**The distributor:** Entertainment One

**The broadcasters:** Global (Canada), Lifetime (US)

**The concept:** Limited series for both free and pay TV about a single mother and emergency doctor who helps terminally-ill patients to die

# Below the Surface

The Nordics are firmly established as international drama-producing territories, and buyers will soon have a new crime thriller from the region to screen.

*Below the Surface* is exec-produced by Søren Sveistrup (*The Killing*) and Adam Price (*Borgen*), giving it genuine 'Nordic noir' kudos.

The series was commissioned by Discovery Networks Denmark's Kanal 5. Sweden's Kanal 5, TV Norge in Norway and Iceland's RUV all then prebought the series and distributor StudioCanal is about to bring in a major European free TV broadcaster as a coproducer.

The serialised, close-ended story is set in the Danish capital Copenhagen. The drama begins when 15 innocent subway passengers are taken hostage by three armed men.

Running to eight parts, each episode covers a day in the subsequent hostage drama, taking in events on the train and the efforts of a terror taskforce, led by Philip Nørgaard (Johannes Lassen) and Louise Falck (Sara Hjort Ditlevsen). A local reporter Naja Toft (Paprika Steen) acts as a go-between with the police.

France-based StudioCanal has the sales rights, and Katrina Neylon, executive VP of sales and marketing, says the series will land on different platforms internationally.

"It can and will go free-to-air, as well as on cable and SVOD," she says. "With *Below the Surface*, we want to create a fundamentally exciting crime story, but through human portraits, relations and dilemmas. We would also like to provide food for thought and encourage reflection over some of life's greater questions."

Visually, the dark and cramped drama in the subway plays against the beauty of Copenhagen on the surface.

The action is viewed from various perspectives, showing the situation on the train, the work of the police and the Danish Secret Service, the negotiations between police and hostage takers, and the reactions of the families of hostages arriving on the scene.

"It centres around one of the most dramatic of all criminal acts, which

we in this day and age almost inevitably link with terror: a hostage taking," Neylon says.

"There are many elements of hostage taking that are exciting on a fundamental level, but that also present us with the opportunity for taking a look at our society and institutions in a situation that has everyone facing extraordinary pressure.

"How should we react? How will we actually react? Does a hostage taking bring out the best in us, or the worst? The challenges and choices triggered by such a situation will speak to one of the most complex dilemmas the Western world faces: the need of the individual versus the need of society."

The StudioCanal exec says the show has the drive and pacing of a regular linear thriller, but also a layer of characterisation that is more engaging than is typical with shows in the genre. For European viewers at least, some of that engagement comes from the close-to-home setting.

"What is both terrifying and compelling in the concept for this series comes from how close to our own reality it all unfolds," Neylon says. "It's not an American bank, it's not an oil tanker in the Gulf of Aden, and it's not a remote and intangible future. It's in the middle of a European country, and it's right now. It could just as well be happening to us. It's the world we know." **S**

## In focus

**The show:** *Below the Surface*

**The producer:** SAM Productions

**The distributor:** StudioCanal

**The broadcasters:** Kanal 5 (Sweden), Kanal 5 (Denmark), TVNorge (Norway), RUV (Iceland)

**The concept:** Nordic thriller following events in the aftermath of a group of hostages being taken on a Copenhagen subway train

# Zero Fee Music™

**for Your TV Show or Movie Project**

- ♪ **NO Master Use Fees**
- ♪ **NO Synchronization Fees**
- ♪ **NO Direct to Video or DVD Fees**

If you think your project will be broadcast on television over outlets licensed with BMI, ASCAP, SOCAN, etc. you owe it to yourself and your investors to call **ZERO FEE Music** today and pre-qualify it for **FREE Music** with NO Master Use, Sync or DVD fees. We're not talking about music that sounds like it should be free. This is cutting edge underscore used daily on a global basis by Hollywood's major film and TV Studios.

## What's the Catch?

Frankly, none. All you need to provide are the music cue sheets for your qualified projects. *Zero Fee for Film & TV* – it's really that simple! In addition to most TV Shows on the air and in production, many full length independent films and even TV Pilots can qualify for FREE MUSIC from [www.ZeroFeeMusic.com](http://www.ZeroFeeMusic.com)

### ZeroFeeMusic.com FEATURES

- Both Dynamic & Keyword searches
- Easy Playlist creation & exportation
- Auto fill and auto file cue sheet generation and transmission.
- Editor friendly, ready to download playlists of music in today's hot genres.
- Download .wav files in 48khz or 44.1khz (also aiff, Apple Lossless and mp3 320)
- 13,000+ tracks to choose from.
- Master and Sub Accounts available.

## Visit ZeroFeeMusic.com

- Look 'n Listen to *hand-picked*, hot genre playlists
- Try a dynamic search
- Try a keyword search
- Call for more info on joining the Zero Fee Family of producers

001-323-666-7968 - Outside the USA  
800-468-6874 for TV  
866-840-3788 for Film

[www.ZeroFeeMusic.com](http://www.ZeroFeeMusic.com)

**Say "YES"  
to NO FEES**





# EL FINAL —+ DEL CAMINO

AUDIOVISUAL FROM  
**SPAIN**

**rtve**

[www.rtve.es/comercial/](http://www.rtve.es/comercial/)