

TBI Scripted

Television Business International

Issue #11 October 2018

The magazine celebrating television's golden era of scripted programming

LAGARDÈRE STUDIOS DISTRIBUTION
PRESENTS



ARCTIC CIRCLE

EVIL IS CONTAGIOUS



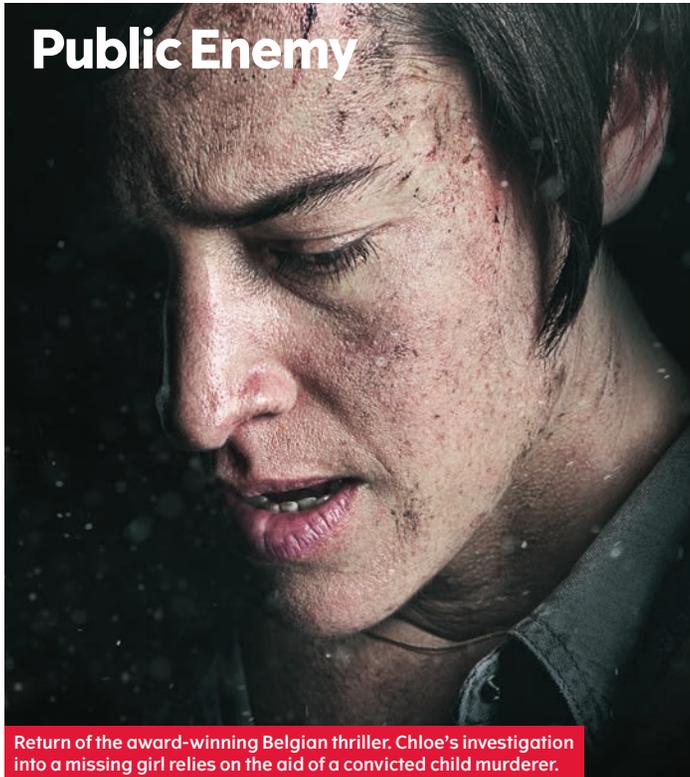
BAVARIA FICTION

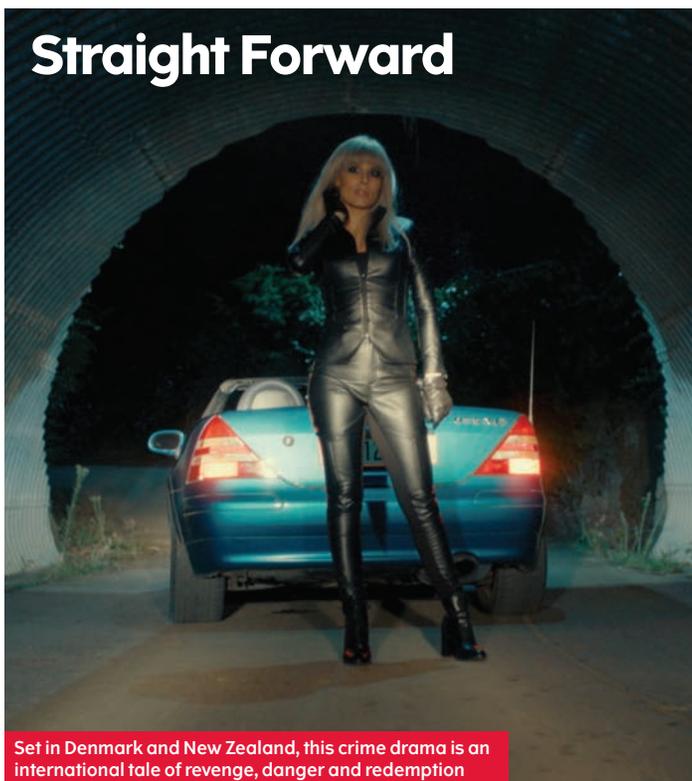
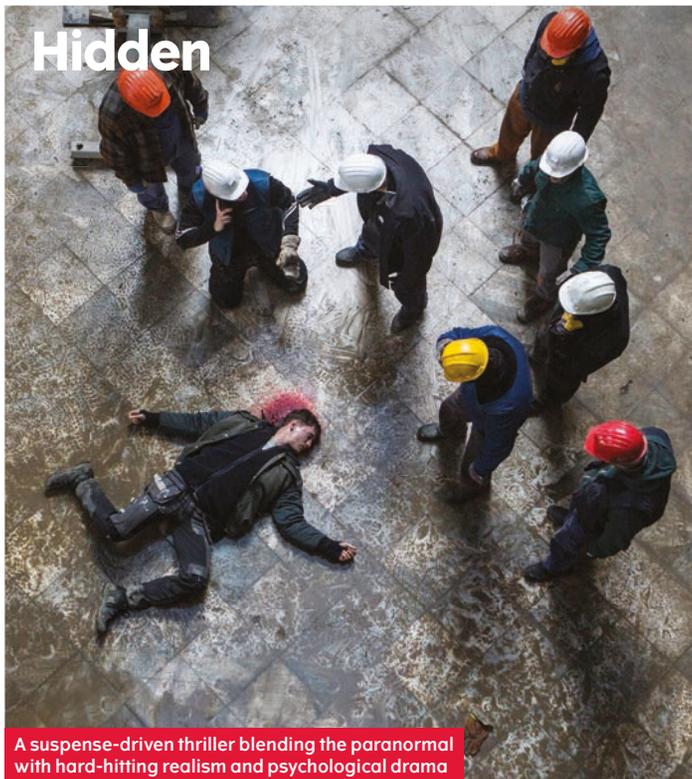


Lagardère
STUDIOS

DISTRIBUTION

Banijay Rights presents...





THE BUREAU

NOW 4 SEASONS

40 X 1 HOUR



YOU'VE BEEN HACKED

AWARD WINNING FRENCH PHENOMENON SERIES

TOP
The Fidjars
Productions

CANAL+
CREATION ORIGINALE



SUNDANCE NOW



RTL CRIME



svt**

movistar+



CANAL+
SERIALE

rtbf

NEW BOOTH AT MIPCOM
R9.A5 RIVIERA 9

federation
entertainment



4



8



10



16



20

22



24

26

Contents

4	In the spotlight: Simon & Stephen Cornwell
8	Genre focus: football drama
10	Channel focus: Denmark's DR
14	The making of... <i>Sick of It</i>
16	Script to screen: <i>MotherFatherSon</i>
20	Hulu and Channel 4's <i>The Bisexual</i>
22	Starz and Liberty Global's <i>The Rook</i>
24	Viaplay's <i>Hidden</i>
26	A+E's <i>Project Blue Book</i>
28	Writer's room: Rory Haines & Sohrab Noshirvani

TBI Scripted

Editor Manori Ravindran • manori.ravindran@knect365.com • @manori_r
Managing editor Kaltrina Bylykbashi • kaltrina.bylykbashi@knect365.com • @bylykbashi
Sales manager Michael Callan • michael.callan@knect365.com
Art director Matthew Humberstone • matthew.humberstone@knect365.com
Marketing manager Abigail Dede • abigail.dede@knect365.com
Commercial director Patricia Arescy • patricia.arescy@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 • **web:** www.tbivision.com
 Printed in England by Wyndeham Grange Ltd, Southwick, West Sussex BN4 4EJ
 © 2018 Informa UK Ltd All rights reserved
Reproduction without permission is prohibited



In the spotlight: Simon & Stephen Cornwell

The brothers and Ink Factory founders discuss the changing face of television and bringing their father's stories to new audiences. Andy McDonald reports



Stephen and Simon Cornwell set up production company The Ink Factory in 2010, with a core part of their strategy to adapt the work of their father, the acclaimed author John le Carré.

The company first found success with film projects including le Carré adaptation *A Most Wanted Man*, and *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, based on the novel by Ben Fountain. The Ink Factory's first move into the TV space came with *The Night Manager*, a 2016 co-production with

the BBC and ABC, and the three companies have teamed up again for a second le Carré series, *The Little Drummer Girl*, which debuts this autumn.

LA-based Stephen, whose background is in Hollywood screenwriting, and London-based Simon, who came from venture capital firm Amadeus Capital Partners having started his career in TV, discuss their route into TV production and how to make IP work for the small screen.

How we got into TV production

Stephen Cornwell: From an Ink Factory perspective, we always felt that TV was going to be very much part of what we are doing. We got into that process with *The Night Manager* – that was the first project that we identified as one that would work wonderfully in longer form for television.

Simon Cornwell: We'd already been doing a number of projects under our own steam before *The Night Manager*, but it certainly was our first piece of television. I think it was a wake-up call to us, commercially but also creatively, about the potential of television and the power of long-form storytelling when you're dealing with big novels.

Working in the 'golden age' of TV drama

StC: I think the rules of what is a feature film and what is television have in many ways evolved and changed, and there are many components to that. The question of whether something is television or feature, across the industry, has merged. That open-mindedness, certainly from our perspective, is a really exciting thing. You can look at storytelling, at a narrative you're exploring, at the characters and the audience, and you now have a much greater license to think how that story is best told.

I think that inevitably is really exciting for talent, so you're getting much more fusion from the feature space into the TV space. You're seeing the barriers break and you're seeing a creative explosion from the potential that offers. You're seeing opportunities in the way audience finds story and story finds audience that weren't there before, and that's creating this golden age.

The dramas that influenced us

SiC: This is history at this point, but we shouldn't underestimate what a ground-breaking show *True Detective* was in terms of the recent re-birth of close-ended, long-form storytelling. [It had] the notion of telling a truly authored story over six or eight hours that had a real point of view and distinction to it that also left the audience satisfied at the end. You didn't feel that you were just being set up for the next series. I do think that *True Detective* at one level is very different from anything we've ever done, but it opened up old creative storytelling and fundamentally it opened up what Steven was talking about previously, which is uncompromising cinematic storytelling on television.

How we bring new content to the slate

SiC: A lot of what we're doing is based around author and creator relationships. It's quite rare for us to think in terms of adding a single title to our slate. We tend to think in terms of adding a relationship with an author or storyteller to what we do. Then working with that storyteller to deliver something exciting to the screen – big or little. If I pick an example like *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, that's based on a novel by Ben Fountain. We are continuing to work now with Ben on other projects. We love his writing, we deeply admired his book, but it's also really important to us to almost play a role in shepherding the way that an author's work is treated.

StC: In terms of the research and development of a project, we will be very engaged in making sure the worlds we're building and the characters we're building are grounded in the same way that the author has strived to ground those characters and realise those worlds in their work.



L-R: Simon and Stephen

Responsibly managing father John le Carré's on-screen legacy

SiC: We feel a responsibility, frankly, to all the authors we work with to bring their work to fresh audiences in fresh ways. I think it's a hallmark of great writing that it does stay fresh and contemporary. If you take our adaptation of le Carré's *The Little Drummer Girl*, that's a book that was written around 37 years ago, yet it remains incredibly fresh – and not only in terms of the political issues tackled still being relevant, but the characters are incredibly fresh and dynamic.

We have a young female protagonist at the heart of the story working to define her role and her place in life. Putting that on screen will, I hope, take our audience into places that are interesting and different from where we are today, but at the same time, very relevant and familiar in terms of the issues of identity and of self-discovery that people are dealing with today.

StC: If you take le Carré or other great storytellers, there's incredible opportunity for a new audience to discover these stories. That opportunity is really exciting and, as Simon says, you are bringing to the audience a story that many of them are discovering for the first time and certainly in a new way. If you watch *The Little Drummer Girl*, you almost never feel it's a story that's set in the past. You feel it's a story that resonates in the now, in the present.

The advice we've been given about producing television

SiC: I think the only advice I've ever had is not to do it. When we were setting out to make *The Night Manager*, the advice that we were given pretty consistently was you won't be able to sell it because there's no market for limited series. And if you do sell it, you won't get much of an audience and you'll lose a lot of money. We had a different view and [thought that] the world was changing. I think you have to have the confidence to respect wisdom which is founded in good sense, but not to respect so-called wisdom which is founded in 'that was how people used to do things'. As Stephen knows, if anybody working on one of our projects really wants to annoy me, what they say is: 'That's how we do things in television'.



The importance of being forward-thinking

StC: If you look at where we are today, the way people are watching and who the big players are – it was pretty much unimaginable 10 years ago that an online sales company that started by selling books or a DVD distribution company would be predominant providers of original programming. The landscape has shifted, the appetites have shifted, and I think the way things have been done is not the way that they will be done.

From our perspective, we have to be very careful not to trust in our own rules, either. We constantly have to be aware that we have to up our game creatively, that we have to be more distinct and more original. Also, the commercial models are shifting and the audience is shifting and we need to stay ahead of that. Any time we get complacent, any time we think the equations of two, three or four years ago work today, we'll get caught out. We have to be forward thinking.

SiC: If you're trying to make one of the half dozen shows each year that people really talk about, there is no formula for that. The only thing you can be confident of is that it's going to be different from the things that caught audiences' attention the previous year, and it's going to be pretty damn good.

How to reach younger audiences

SiC: I think AMC and BBC were the right people at the right time [for *The Night Manager* and *The Little Drummer Girl*] and they've been fabulous partners. We're doing a number of projects with them. There are other projects that we're working on or developing that are probably very good projects that ought to see the light of day first in a streamed environment – either because that's where the audience is or because of the tone and the nature of the show.

Something which is exercising me a lot at the moment is how to reach younger audiences. I have to keep pinching myself because I'm 61 years old and in the street outside I tend to think of myself as one of the older people around. When we make a BBC show, I must remember that I am slightly younger than the average viewer who's going to watch my show. [A 2017 report by the BBC Trust said that the average age of BBC One and BBC Two viewers is 61 and 62, respectively. BBC Two controller Patrick Holland recently confirmed the channel's average is 59].

StC: The real question is how you engage with what I believe is a very engage-able younger audience with narrative and storytelling and platforms that they are going to use. That's where the potential, excitement and future is. You obviously don't want to discount all the existing and established audiences – we love them – but where is that next generation and how do we speak to them?

The IP and talent we'd most like to work with

StC: We are already engaged with and in the process of doing some author relationships that we very much hope will come to fruition, which speak to IP that we would love to be working with. In general, we are always looking for both established author relationships and new author relationships. You can build wonderful talent relationships around great storytellers, and if you're lucky you will be able to achieve wonderful results. I think storytelling is one of the core essentials of humanity and if you can focus on that, the rest follows. What we know is that great stories are always going to be wanted and there's always going to be an audience for them. **S**



SPITFIRE

20x1 HOUR



NEW BOOTH AT MIPCOM
R9.A5 RIVIERA 9

federation
entertainment

Graphic design: colatrop.com

Tales of the beautiful game

Memories of the World Cup may be long buried, but there's a raft of football dramas cropping up to satisfy demand for the sport. Nick Edwards reports

While the highs and lows of this year's World Cup are now a distant memory, the appetite for football drama is still at fever pitch across the international TV market. Industry insiders are noting many high-profile projects in the pipeline, and some have already graced European screens in 2018.

This year, dramas based on football have broken through in a major way – one high-profile example being the Beta Film and Red Bull Media House production *The Net*, an ambitious title that will feature series from five different territories.

The aesthetic element of football – athleticism and the lavish lifestyles of some players, for example – lends itself well to the visual medium of TV, and provides everyday escapism for many. The main challenge is that while a real game of football can be exhilarating, the stakes are hard to match in its fictionalised form.

The way to bring dramas about football to life is to make the fate of characters rest in winning a match, title, league and so on. “If [the character has] argued with their father in the morning and they are supposed to take the decisive penalty in the game later that evening, it becomes much more than just a penalty for the audience,” says Vegard Stenberg Eriksen, executive producer of *Home Ground* (*Hjemmebane*), an NRK series that follows the fortunes of the female coach of a successful women's team who is recruited by a failing Norwegian national league men's team.

Her ensuing fight against the entrenched attitudes of a male-dominated world and the

challenges this brings to the relationship with her daughter are played out in parallel with the on-pitch action.

One issue is that while football is incredibly popular with much of the population, many hate it with equal vigour. But *Home Ground*, which kicks off its second season in early 2019, has cleverly managed to address this problem. “The majority of Norwegian families are in some way connected to football. It had to be a series for all of them. The female coach brings in other aspects than football, which we all can refer to in our daily life,” says Vegard, who also produced *Mammon*, the NRK thriller that played a part in introducing the world to the brilliance of Norwegian TV drama.

Sabrina Amerell, a Berlin-based screenwriter, is also co-writing a comedy about a female football agent for Munich-based production company H&V.

The comedy uses the sport to discuss contradictions in society.

“In contrast to the structure in football associations, where you mainly meet men, the fans are completely diverse. People from all backgrounds, gender, age and sexuality watch the games together. Real men are allowed to cry and players constantly change their hairstyles,” she says. Amerell couldn't be better qualified to work on the show: her father was a former Bundesliga manager, referee and official.

French-Belgian show *Champion* is another football title from the region's public service broadcaster RTBF. Based around Soulimane Romeyda, an international football star who is also known as “El Magnifico”, the show focuses on his struggles now that he has left



the game. His career has shown him the heights of what the sport has to offer and is now showing him the depths: no club, no sponsor, the law after him, and worst of all, he is also turning 30.

While *Champion* has many comedic elements (some of the actors are well known comedians from the region), it also has a serious sub-text: “When you are taken from your parents and school at the age of 12, and by the age of 16 you have a huge amount of money, you never think about what you would do if you lost everything. So, what would you do if it happens? After all, you can't even cook,” says the show's producer Cedric Vantroyen.



Exploring societal issues can make a sport drama work and potentially benefit society if it is done well and reaches the right audiences.

“The football environment is, in a way, a ‘dinosaur’ culture,” says Vegard. “We visited a lot of clubs and profiled people in the football society who said it is impossible to believe there will ever be a female coach in the national league. The same society still thinks there are no gay people playing football. Of course we have seen women playing lead roles in shows such as *Homeland*, *The Killing* and *The Bridge*, but we don’t often see that representation in family shows that are accessible to young

children.”

While the Flemish part of Belgium has already enjoyed success with shows such as crime drama *Salamander*, which sold into BBC Four, *Champion* is a milestone for the industry in the French region, and is gaining a great deal of interest from foreign buyers. But at the time when it was broadcast on RTBF,

it did not get the audience figures it hoped for. “The channel thought it would be good to have a drama about football in the quiet period between the Champions League ending and the grand opening of the World Cup,” says Vantroyen, “But it would have done better out of season. There was too much football.” **S**

Liberty: DR's last international drama?



Sophie Grabol

Ahead of the news that DR is to cut spend on international drama and focus its efforts on regional content, Nick Edwards reports on what may well be the last of big international investments in the genre at the Danish broadcaster

With shows such as *The Killing*, *Borgen* and *The Bridge*, Danish national broadcaster DR showed the world that countries outside the US could make TV drama worthy of the 'golden age' we all now enjoy.

The broadcaster has again raised the bar with drama *Liberty*, which looks at the subject of aid through the lens of Scandinavian expats living in Tanzania in the 1980s – a first for DR that is also symbolic of an era of change.

However, budget cuts of 20% threaten to impact DR's drama output as the channel is forced to halve its TV portfolio. As it looks to strengthen regional content and scale back international drama, the future of scripted at

DR looks increasingly unstable, and *Liberty* could be one of the public broadcaster's last big bets.

Famous for commissioning original screenplays, the drama marks the first time DR has adapted a book, taking on the beloved novel by Jakob Ejersbo. The five-part series is also the channel's first official mini-series, deviating from the long-running three-parters it is known for. Filmed in South Africa, as a stand-in for Tanzania, it is also the first time a DR series is not set in Scandinavia, and the cast and crew – which includes celebrated Swedish director Mikael Marcimain and Danish-born Hollywood A-lister Connie Nielsen, who most recently starred in *Wonder Woman* – are equally international.

The subject matter is also new. The DR shows that made the channel famous internationally looked internally at Denmark. *The Killing* and *The Bridge* were both crime shows set in beautiful cold climates but to the outside world they seemed to critique Scandinavia's social model of government. The other big hit of this era, political drama *Borgen*, tackled the Danish political system directly.

Similarly, the generation of DR dramas that followed

supports you, then suddenly you find yourself with complete freedom, and that is really hard. There's only one person to regulate you and that's yourself – your own moral code that may erode," says Leth.

This year has also seen *The Bridge* come to an end on DR. Sources tell TBI that one of the main reasons *Liberty* was commissioned is because *The Bridge's* final season was only eight episodes (as opposed to the standard ten episodes), leaving budget for a new project.



Connie Nielsen

– such as *1864*, *Legacy* and *Follow The Money* – all explored new areas of Danish life. *Liberty* furthers the focus again by considering how Scandinavians operate away from home.

"In some ways it's a tale of reversed integration, we talk about refugees in the press: how they keep their traditions and keep together with their own community. But when we arrive in Africa, what do we do? We meet up with all the Scandinavians and drink schnapps," says producer Karoline Leth.

But in *Liberty*, things get much worse than simply holding on to provincial habits, and we see the exploitation of aid money on an industrial scale, sexual abuse and more.

While the story explores the worst of all colonising countries, the drama is also a story about Danish character.

"When you are growing up in a society that is very strict and you have a welfare system that completely

But the success and stature of DR's output now creates challenges that would be the envy of many channels. "DR has become this well-running drama machine that spits out shows that are sort of different, but they are all well-acted, well-written and well-directed," says Sofie Grabol, who stars in *Liberty*. "But when they got involved with *Liberty*, it was not just different – it was going in an opposite direction to their previous successes."

Liberty was also one of the last show's head of drama Piv Bernth commissioned following the 'golden years' she oversaw. She has now left to form an independent production company and is working with Karoline Leith on a project for HBO that starts shooting next year. Bernth is succeeded by Christian Rank, a former producer with commercial rival TV2 who took over in February.

It is over 20 years since DR's drama department was first overhauled and directors and photographers from the world of film and theatre were invited to



The Bridge



The Killing



Borgen

work there. In the 1990s, executives from DR visited the sets of America's multi-episode, character-driven series, such as *L.A. Law*, *24* and *NYPD Blue* to study the US model of making TV drama. A couple of years later, Lars Von Trier made *The Kingdom* (1994), a melancholy miniseries about life in the neurosurgery ward of Copenhagen's largest hospital that was heavily

influenced by the David Lynch series *Twin Peaks*. Veteran Danish actors and directors were teamed up with the younger generation to make an ongoing serial in the style of *NYPD Blue*. *Taxa*, which ran from 1997 to 1999, took place in a central taxi office and focused on the lives of the drivers and their customers.

The fledgling industry was beset with problems but *Taxa* showed Danes that they were capable of producing great TV drama. By the time crime drama *Unit One* was broadcast in 2000, these problems had been smoothed out and it was a hit with audiences and critics alike, winning the best foreign drama Emmy in 2002. In the first five years, a legacy of award-winning drama was made – *The Kingdom*, *Taxa*, *Unit 1*, *The Protectors*, *The Eagle* and *Nikolaj and Julie*. The hefty investment in Danish TV drama meant that, much like America's golden age of TV, the lines between what is considered film and TV started to blur.

Coming from a country with a population of under six million, DR created TV drama that is considered to be amongst the best in the world. Not only were series such as *The Killing* and *The Bridge* sold to hundreds of territories, but for a period, they were the hottest remake properties in Hollywood. Indeed, Nordic noir is still highly sought after and imitated by foreign channels and streaming services. It has also had a social impact. Its iconic lead characters, such as Sarah Lund in *The Killing* and Saga Noren in *The Bridge*, are all female, and Denmark's progressive gender equality laws meant that women also occupy important behind-the-scenes roles.

But today, under Christian Rank, the TV landscape is drastically different, and appointment-to-view drama is harder to achieve. With roughly 15 dramas launched in Denmark last year, the public has a vast array of choice on many different platforms.

However, changes are afoot at DR. In September, the broadcaster revealed that around 400 staff will be affected by budget cuts, and that channels DR3 and DR Ultra would become digital platforms by 2020 and culture channel DRK would merge with DR2. The move have resulted in an outcry from the Danish media community and opposition politicians who have labelled the cuts a "historical degradation of Danish radio and television".

The cuts will also significantly affect the drama department, which is "seen as having become too big," says Rank, speaking to TBI at the Series Series festival in France, noting that the division is "seen as taking opportunities away from the private sector, which was never the aim."

The exec must now adapt DR's drama output to this new arena and some sacred cows must be slayed.

The first of these will be to find partners outside of DR. This could be "independent production companies



Charlie Karumi

or OTT collaborators,” he says, “if they make sense”.

Working with other production teams makes financial sense if, with less money, DR wishes to produce series with the same level of production values they are famous for. It also makes practical sense; “it doesn’t matter where the camera comes from” says Rank. The more acute challenge will be to retain the quality of artistic excellence. The ‘One Vision’ method developed by DR’s drama department – itself partly inspired by America’s showrunner model – where ultimate artistic decisions ultimately fall to one person has been credited with its success.

This model of production has allowed creators time, trust and the freedom to create, and was taken up by many screenwriters who were used to a more precarious existence and relished in the new method of working, which they considered to be the ultimate luxury.

“This we should keep”, says Rank. But what may change is the long-term security that some DR writers have become accustomed to.

“We won’t automatically commission three seasons at a time as we’ve done in the past. We’ll do one season at a time and see if there’s more story to tell.”

What Rank will focus on is the ‘trust’ between DR and the creator. This means the role of producer will become enhanced, and they will be the individual who maintains the integrity of the writer or director’s vision when collaborating with outside partners.

“It’s important that the producer fully shares, understands and carries out the vision of the show, because that will allow them to be the best guardian and agent for the show in all collaborations and aspects of the creation. In that sense, the producer’s task is to ensure that the [shared] vision is carried out,” he says.

“It feels like the end of an era,” he continues. “The golden age of five or six writers that defined DR previously – I don’t think it will be like that [going forward].”

The hour long ten-episode series model, that the Danes also adapted from the America’s ‘showrunner’ model, is also no longer sacrosanct.

“We may do mini-series,” says Rank, referring to the traditionally British style of TV storytelling where a single writer or director makes a self-contained short series of episodes [such as *Liberty*] and also, reflecting on how social media has changed viewing habits particularly for younger viewers, he says the broadcaster is also exploring short-form content.

“We may do a series of three-minute episodes,” he explains.

Rank still believes the role of a public broadcaster is “to talk about society” but not in the same way as before. He believes that DR “had a tendency to step up on a box and explain the world to its audience. We forget TV is an emotionally relevant medium,” he says.

“Our mission is not to tell the truth but to let audiences experience how the truth feels.” **S**

Karl Pilkington looks to drama

Sick of It director and co-writer Richard Yee tells TBI how he convinced *The Idiot Abroad*'s Karl Pilkington to take on the challenge of scripted drama in a two-part role reflecting his everyday conversations with himself

S*ick of It* is the new Sky drama about London cabbie Karl, a man attempting to get over a break-up as he struggles with his troublesome inner voice – or who Karl Pilkington might have been had he never met Ricky Gervais, according to Yee.

“I started talking to Karl about it two years ago, trying to convince him to come out of retirement,” says Yee. “It’s been a slow process.”

Yee is co-founder of Me + You Productions, the outfit behind Pilkington-starring travel docs *An Idiot Abroad* and *The Moaning of Life*. He convinced Pilkington, who has never written or acted in a series before, to build on a character that reflected the relationship he has with his inner voice – and pick up a pen.

The series started life as an ensemble comedy. It was never meant to star Pilkington, but as the actor gained confidence in his writing it inevitably became more about him.

“It was kind of scary for him to begin with,” says Yee. “We needed to demystify the writing process by just getting him to put anything he could on the page.”

Pilkington went from agreeing to a cameo, to playing the lead’s uncle and finally becoming the main character, or more accurately, two main characters.

Yee says the series recreates many of the best bits that made Pilkington a star in the first place. “When we were making *An Idiot Abroad*, a lot of the best material actually came out of the interviews we did with him straight after a shoot, where we would get his thoughts on what just happened. We wanted to work out how to get that into a narrative.”

The project has also been new for Yee, who wanted to try something that would compete with today’s high-end international drama. The writer-director has worked with scripted before on the Emmy-winning *Hoff The Record*, but he says he wanted to move on from the mockumentary genre entirely.

“I just wanted it to have a more distinctive feel and shoot it like a drama with cinematic value.

“I guess it’s kind of scary at times. Even though I was probably the most inexperienced person on the set, I knew the material better than anyone else there,” he adds. “There are times when you’re thinking – there’s lots of writers who’ve spent years and years slogging and not getting anything made, so it was kind of exposing knowing you’d never done this before.”

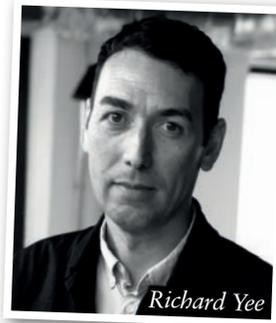
Despite this, Yee says he was not afraid to make *Sick of It* an ambitious project. Reference points were taken from major titles coming out of SVOD services, rather than comedies that have come out of the UK in the past. “You might as well really go for it, because if you fail, you fail. There’s nothing worse than hedging your bets and playing it safe, only to find it’s not even good in the end,” he says.

Looking to the future, Yee admits he’s looking to move from half-hour comedies to hour-long dramas. Taking inspiration from shows across FX, HBO, Showtime and the SVODs, he says he’d like to attempt something similar in the US.

When it comes to the international appeal of *Sick of It*, Yee notes that he’s not worried about sales, purely because of Pilkington’s popularity worldwide. *Idiot Abroad* has been sold globally, along with follow-up series *The Moaning of Life*.

“Audiences relate to him as a put-upon person who doesn’t understand the world, and there is a lot of sympathy for him as well,” he says.

“We’ve been in small villages in the Philippines and people will see Karl and shout ‘idiot, idiot.’” **S**





AUTONOMIES

IN A COUNTRY DIVIDED, ONE ACT CAN SPARK A REVOLUTION

A NEW DYSTOPIAN DRAMA 5 x 45'



VISIT US AT MIPCOM, STAND R8.C9, RIVIERA 8

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

[@KeshetIntl](https://twitter.com/KeshetIntl) [f KeshetInternational](https://www.facebook.com/KeshetInternational) [@KeshetInternational](https://www.instagram.com/KeshetInternational)





MotherFatherSon

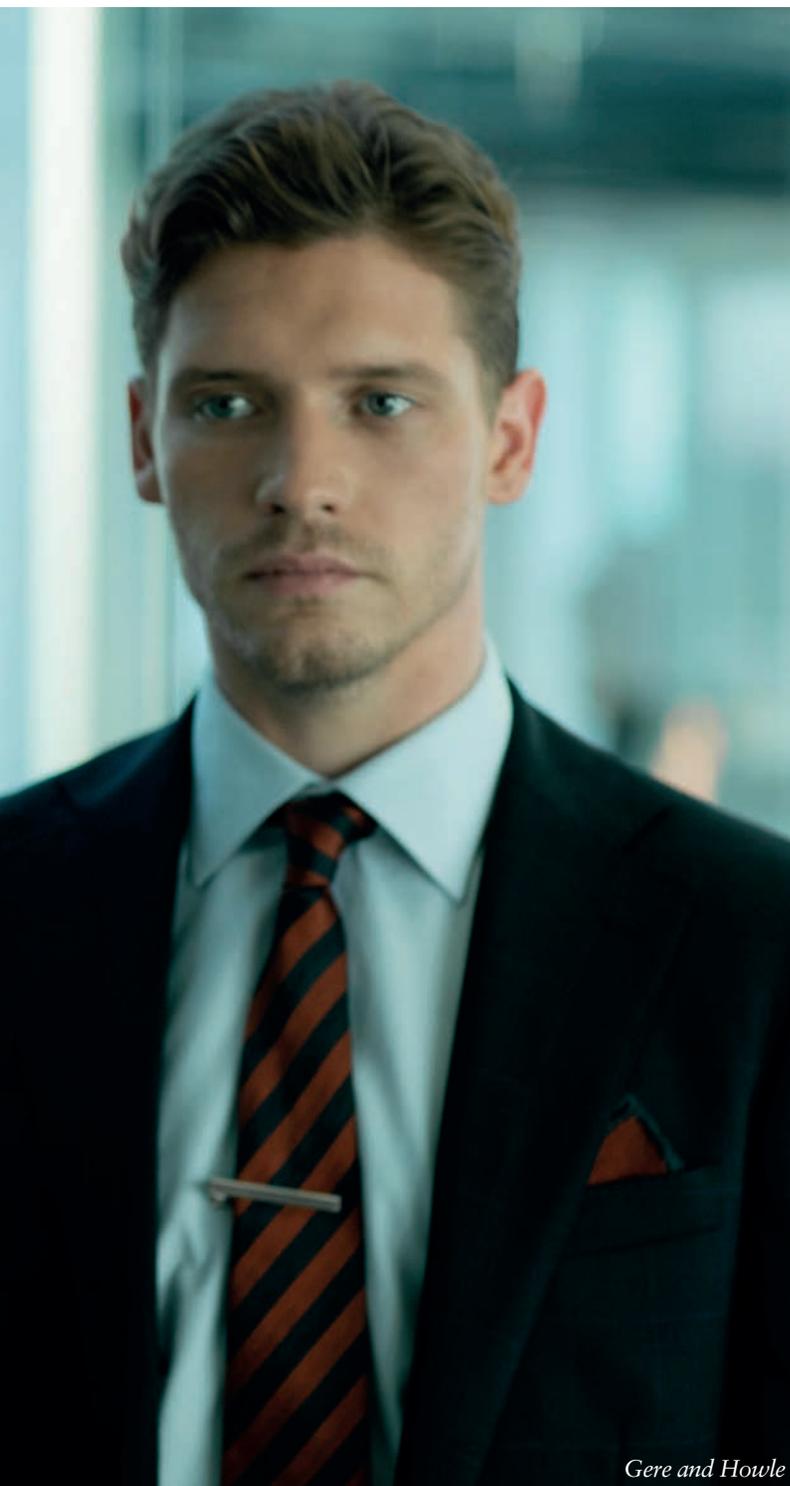
Luring Richard Gere to television after a 30-year break, BBC Two's *MotherFatherSon* examines family, power dynamics and the turbulent media world

Act 1 BBC drama veteran Hilary Salmon had worked previously with writer Tom Rob Smith on the critically acclaimed BBC Two drama *London Spy*, so when the prolific novelist and screenwriter came to the broadcaster with *MotherFatherSon* – a new international drama with a hot-shot American media mogul at the forefront – it was an immediate ‘yes’ on her part.

“Tom is one of the most original authors around at the moment.

London Spy showed his potential in that respect,” she says. “Meanwhile, it completely fits the BBC Two brief: it has got scale, sophisticated writing and, in many respects, it is quite novelistic.”

The drama features Max (Gere), a charismatic self-made American businessman with media outlets in London and around the world, who may see his world implode as his son Caden’s self-destructive lifestyle spirals out of control. Meanwhile, his estranged ex-wife Kathryn looks on.



Gere and Howle

“The title *MotherFatherSon* is absolutely at the heart of the series. All of Tom’s work, including *London Spy* and many of his novels, have that at the heart of them,” says Salmon.

“Those stresses and strains within a family are both functional and dysfunctional: the son that’s jealous of his father, the father who’s not proud of his son and the mother that’s trying to protect them. It’s something he is fascinated by and is absolutely at the heart of this.”

In focus

Format: 8 x 60’

Cast: Richard Gere, Helen McCrory, Billy Howle, Sarah Lancashire

Exec producers: Hilary Salmon, Elizabeth Kilgarriff, Alan Poul, Tom Rob Smith

When Rob Smith was selecting the stage on which to put the trio, it was something that had to be epic, and with enough scale to make it into a series that people would want to turn to and that wouldn’t feel is purely domestic, according to Salmon. The series was initially intended for HBO, so an international element was always apparent.

“He decided he wanted the father to be a powerful businessman. He wanted to put him in the world of media, having been influenced by the phone-hacking scandal from a few years ago. However, he didn’t want to do that story directly and instead made the background of the story that this man’s empire might be under threat because of an investigation,” she adds.

While all of Rob Smith’s work is political, it’s light touch. “There’s politics running through all of his work but it never feels ‘issuey,’” says Salmon.

Act 2 Rob Smith’s work is heavily character-led and it was important to him to bring in a heavyweight lead. Securing Richard Gere not only solidified the epic nature of the series he was looking for, but it also ensured international appeal.

“He’s a household name around the world and is still making movies, so an international audience is inevitable,” says Salmon.

When the BBC Studios Drama exec producer received the script, it encouraged those developing the programme to think of someone who could play a charismatic, powerful, American businessman in his late sixties.

“The names you start to think about who could play that part are those films stars we’ve all grown up with,” says Salmon. “I found myself sending emails to agents with the most extraordinary names on the subject line, who I would never think of approaching normally for a British TV piece. Richard engaged with it very quickly, loved the scripts and spoke to Tom.”

Coaxing the mega star, who recently starred in films such as *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and *The Double*, out of his TV retirement was no easy feat. “He took quite a long time to make the decision to come on board, but it was really because it’s been 30 years since he did television,” says Salmon.

“For him, the piece that was going to bring him in had to be very special and he had to believe in it and what it wanted to say, but he also had to believe that he could do something special with that part and that it wasn’t played before – that he would be challenged and excited by it.”

The star will be joined by *Peaky Blinders*’ Helen McCrory playing the part of his ex-wife and *Witness for the Prosecution*’s Billy Howle as his son Caden, who is the editor of one the major national newspapers owned by Max.

With such a powerful family at hand, the story also inevitably turns to politics and the media impact on elections. *Happy Valley* star Sarah Lancashire will play the leader of the opposition, a suspicious character who introduces a form of populism to her politics.

However, the focus always remains on the bond between the characters and their relationships.

“It’s very different from *Press* where you feel that’s all about the journalists and how they get their stories and how they compete,” says Salmon. “It’s a story about the press and politics, but it’s almost more about the manifestation of power than the details of how journalism works.”

“It’s interested in power play, whether it’s Max having power over his son and the man he wants him to be, or the power that the media can have over the direction that politics takes,” she adds.

Act 3 In the first episode, the audience will meet the trifecta of Max, Kathryn and Caden in their separate worlds.

Max is flying back to the UK on a business trip to work through an issue with his publications, while Caden is struggling with a job he gained too early in his life. He’s got a drug problem, no companions and is brought in as a tragic character. Meanwhile Kathryn is distant from it all, having left her ex-husband a decade earlier and never having

the chance to raise Caden.

“We deal with the fact that an election is going to be called and we meet the leader of the opposition. We set up the idea of this investigation into the newspapers, so there’s a real pressure in the world that we’ve gone into,” explains Salmon.

“At the end of the episode, Caden suffers a really unexpected physical breakdown as a result of the drugs and the stress he’s been under. Everything changes then because their son may lose his life – or worse, he may expose business secrets.”

The first cut has already received kudos from BBC commissioners, according to Salmon, who is in-between filming in London.

“We rarely feel like we’ve been in the same place for two days running and London’s a really difficult place to shoot in. But, somehow, we’re on schedule,” she says.

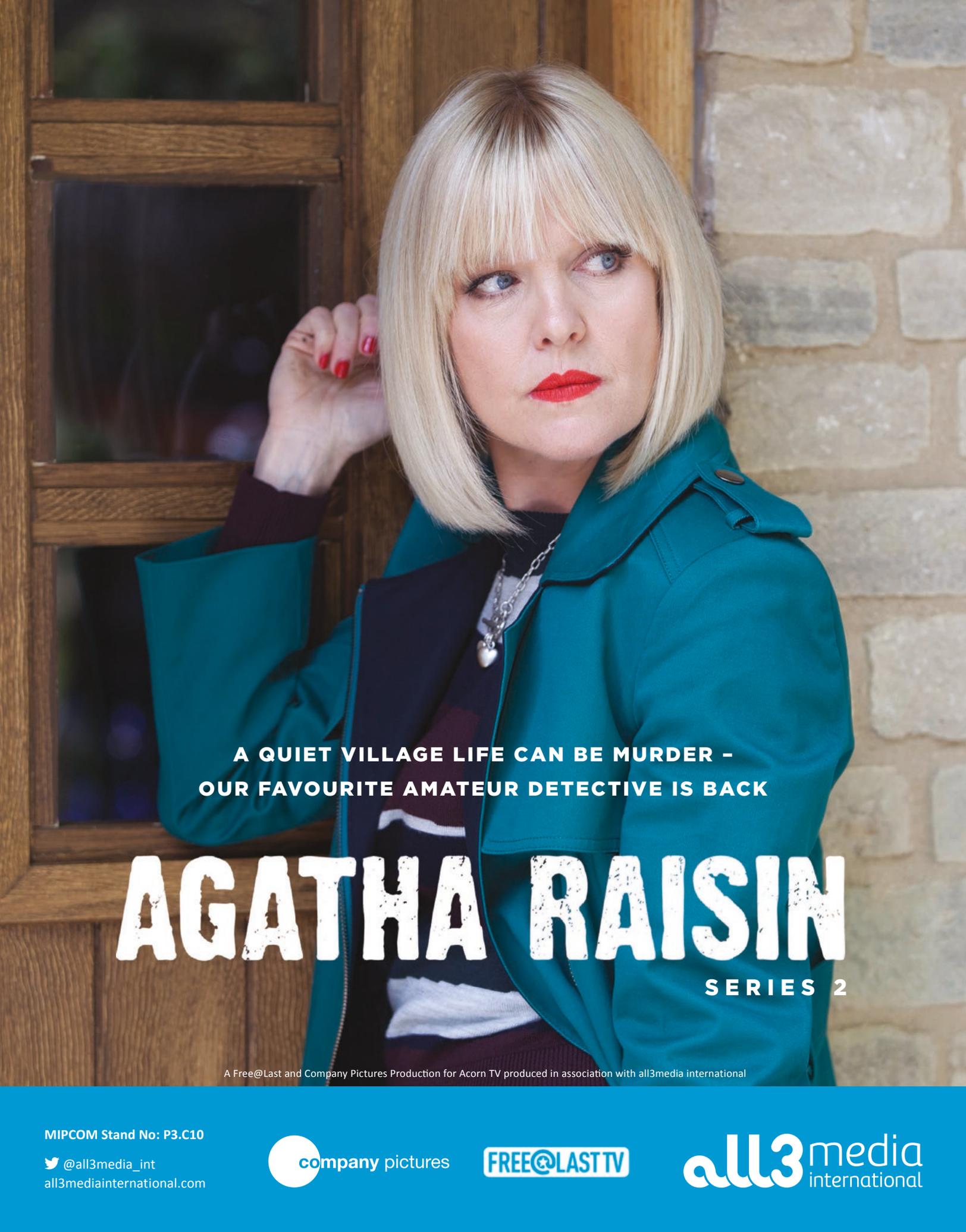
Filming will also take place in Seville, Spain, which doubles as Mexico City.

“Max is setting up another media empire there having recently married a younger Mexican heiress, so his new wife Sophia who’s pregnant is from there and he’s decided to start a new business,” explains Salmon.

The series will debut in the UK on BBC Two in spring 2019. “I think it’s gripping, and that the cast will draw people to it. I’m also hoping that quite a broad range of audience will come for that cast.” **S**



Helen McCrory



**A QUIET VILLAGE LIFE CAN BE MURDER -
OUR FAVOURITE AMATEUR DETECTIVE IS BACK**

AGATHA RAISIN

SERIES 2

A Free@Last and Company Pictures Production for Acorn TV produced in association with all3media international

MIPCOM Stand No: P3.C10

 @all3media_int
all3mediainternational.com





Transatlantic triumph

Channel 4 and Hulu's UK-set comedy *The Bisexual* sees American indie darling Desiree Akhavan make her mark in the serialized drama space for the first time

Desiree Akhavan burst onto the indie scene with her 2014 feature film *Appropriate Behaviour*, in which she played Shirin, a woman struggling to live up to Iranian cultural ideals while navigating her gender and identity. She one-upped herself earlier this year, when her most recent film, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

The actor-director has followed up with a number of starring roles

in dramas such as HBO's *Girls* and Channel 4's *Flowers*, but with six-part series *The Bisexual*, she makes her writing debut in the serialized drama space.

Produced by Hootenanny – the comedy label owned by Jane Featherstone's Sister Pictures – the show centres on New Yorker Leila, who is trying to adjust to life in London having left a ten-year relationship with girlfriend and business partner Sadie (British actor Maxine Peake).



In focus

Distributor: All3Media International
Producer: Hootenanny/Sister Pictures
Broadcaster: Channel 4/Hulu
Concept: A transplanted New Yorker navigates dates with both men and women in London

After moving out of her and Sadie's beautiful shared apartment, Leila rents a room from a neurotic novelist (Brian Gleeson), with whom she forms an unlikely bond, and who helps her navigate a new life dating both men and women while coming out as bisexual to her gay friends.

Akhavan co-wrote the drama with long-time collaborator Cecilia Frugiuele.

The project's transatlantic flavour is indicative of an openness by

audiences towards multinational characters, most recently seen in BBC America's *Killing Eve*, which stars *Grey's Anatomy* star Sandra Oh as an American agent working in London.

Similarly, it's unlikely viewers will think twice at the American Akhavan starring in the UK-set drama.

"As actors from around the world flock to work with UK producers and our audience increasingly consumes content with a global scope, there is an expectation that international stars will be central to UK productions," explains David Swetman, VP of acquisitions at All3Media International.

"*The Bisexual* is set in one of the most diverse parts of an incredibly diverse city so it's completely natural to have an American star at its heart.

Swetman points out that the distributor got involved in *The Bisexual* shortly after the C4 commission.

"We're always looking to invest in fresh and distinctive programming, and we're excited to work with independent, award-winning producers, so collaborating with Sister Pictures, Hootenanny and Desiree Akhavan was an opportunity not to be missed," he says.

"Desiree gives a unique and unflinchingly honest view of contemporary dating which is both funny and moving. We're confident *The Bisexual* will cut through a crowded marketplace."

The exec calls Hulu – which boarded *The Bisexual* in 2017 while steadily building up its originals slate with hits such as *The Handmaid's Tale* – a "really constructive partner that completely shared Desiree's creative vision for the series".

"Their support and enthusiasm for the program right from reading the first script made them a great partner for the show," he says.

Earlier this year, All3Media International pre-sold the title into France's Canal+ and Australian SVOD service Stan, while Sky Network has picked up the show for New Zealand.

"We're confident the show will appeal to audiences in a range of territories," says Swetman, highlighting that the distributor will target both platforms and channels. **S**



Paranormal Activity

Female-led spy thriller *The Rook* has a built-in fan following

Lionsgate and Liberty Global's paranormal spy thriller *The Rook* centers on a woman who wakes up in a park with complete amnesia, unable to remember her background or identity – and unconvinced it is her own. She eventually takes on the government agent identity of the body she inhabits in order to understand the paranormal forces at work that want her dead.

"*The Rook* explores issues of identity, memory and false memory, as well as betrayal by family, friends and colleagues," explains Lionsgate Television chairman Kevin Beggs.

"Perhaps most relatable to audiences around the world will be the fact that our protagonist, Myfanwy Thomas, is a consummate outsider – desperate to fit in, yet intrinsically and physically unable to do so."

The drama – which Lionsgate had previously placed at Hulu – is to air on Lionsgate-owned cable channel Starz in the US next year, and across Liberty Global's European platforms and Liberty Latin America. Lionsgate will distribute it elsewhere.

"After Hulu decided it wasn't quite the right fit for them, we turned to Starz, which we had recently acquired," explains Beggs.

"With its strong female lead characters, and robust and interesting mythology, we thought the show could be perfect for them. They were very interested, so we continued to develop the script and tailored it to the platform, and eventually landed the series a production order."

The show is based on the novel by Australian author Daniel O'Malley, underlining the importance of literary IP to television in the current drama landscape.

"In a 500 scripted series universe, IP with a built-in fan following is critically important. It is not the only way to develop and launch a series, but it's becoming the norm rather than the exception," says Beggs.

The show, which is currently in the final stages of production in London, is one of the first originals out of Liberty Global, which has a minority stake in Lionsgate.

"Liberty Global is part of the Lionsgate extended family and an investor

in our company. In the last several years, they have launched a variety of content initiatives and actively sought out original programming to complement their carriage agreements," says Beggs.

"*The Rook* appealed to them on many levels, including the fact that it was a UK production. As they read scripts and the original source material, we quickly moved into a co-production and distribution conversation."

According to Beggs, the show will appeal to commercial broadcasters, premium platforms and streamers.

"We have a phenomenal cast that includes Emma Greenwell, Joely Richardson, Olivia Munn and Adrian Lester as well as other terrific British actors. The source material is wildly compelling, and our creative team is second to none, including showrunners Karyn Usher and Lisa Zwerling, Stephen Garrett, and playwrights-turned-TV-writers Sam Holcroft and Ali Muriel."

Lionsgate Television's extensive slate of drama includes *Dear White People* and *Orange Is The New Black* for Netflix, as well as OWN drama *Greenleaf*, Hulu's *Casual* and CMT's *Nashville*.

Beggs spearheaded internal committee Lionsgate 360 in order to better integrate the studio's film and TV operations, and examine how to exploit intellectual property across multiple platforms, including video games. **S**

In focus

Distributor: Lionsgate

Producer: Lionsgate, Liberty Global

Broadcaster: Starz (US), Liberty Global (Europe, LatAm)

Concept: A woman with extreme amnesia looks to uncover the paranormal forces that want her dead



WHERE SERIES BEGIN

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
LILLE / HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

SERIES MANIA FORUM

LILLE GRAND PALAIS
France

Save the date
MARCH 25-27 2019

www.seriesmania.com forum@seriesmania.com [@FestSeriesMania](https://twitter.com/FestSeriesMania)

Occupied producer Yellow Bird's latest is a Stockholm-set urban fantasy

Nordic noir grows up

Supernatural thriller *Hidden* originates from Modern Times Group-owned Nordic streaming service Viaplay, the home of such international hits as *Black Lake*, Scandinavia's answer to *The Shining*, and Keanu Reeves-starring American-Swedish comedy *Swedish Dicks*.

Produced by Swedish *Occupied* producer Yellow Bird, *Hidden* is based on Filip Alexanderson's critically acclaimed novel *Förstfödd* and draws extensively on Scandinavian myths and Nordic legends.

The drama is set in modern-day Stockholm, where a man (*The Crown* and *Das Boot*'s August Wittgenstein) working on a building site suffers a traumatic fall, and is declared dead at hospital only to come back to life.

Once revived, he realizes that he can regenerate himself and never die – he is one of the mysterious 'Hidden'. But in order to understand his new identity, he must set out to understand more about the mysterious clan he is now a part of.

Hidden will TX on Viaplay across Scandinavia alongside a linear broadcast on Swedish broadcaster TV3, while Banijay Rights will sell the show everywhere else, with the exception of Germany where it will air on Tele München.

"What's interesting about *Hidden* is that it is not your traditional Scandi noir crime thriller," explains Caroline Torrance, head of scripted at Banijay Rights.

While the exec notes that there is still a vibrant market keen to lap

up the latest in Nordic noir, "the region is starting to branch out. We saw that with the supernatural drama *Black Lake* and now with *Hidden*, which is an urban fantasy," she says.

The distribution arm of Banijay Group has been involved in the 8 x 45-minute drama "right from the very beginning" at the earliest stages of the development cycle, as the series was "a bit more expensive than a traditional crime series, and more of a challenge to fund."

Its fantasy element appeals to a younger audience, though it will be slightly more male-skewing, says Torrance.

The distributor also hopes to replicate the commercial success it enjoyed with the wide-selling *Black Lake*, which landed on AMC's SVOD service Shudder, BBC Four and a host of other channels and platforms.

Banijay Rights is "talking to everyone" for *Hidden*, which has also drawn particular interest thanks to actor Izabella Scorupco, who starred in James Bond film *GoldenEye*.

While *Hidden* is entirely in Swedish, Torrance says a number of other Scandinavian dramas in Banijay's catalogue include a number of languages – a useful driver of co-productions "if people are prepared to be flexible about different languages."

Other shows in Banijay Rights' MIPCOM catalogue include revenge drama *Straightforward*, crime show *The Truth Will Out* and family saga *The Restaurant*. The distributor will likely have content from Yellow Bird's new UK division at next year's Mipcom. **S**



Hidden

Distributor: Banijay Rights
Producer: Yellow Bird
Channel: Viaplay/TV3
Concept: A man declared dead after a tragic fall comes back to life, only to find he is part of an otherworldly group that can never die

SAVE THE DATE

BERLINALE SERIES & DRAMA SERIES DAYS

EUROPEAN FILM MARKET
BERLINALE CO-PRODUCTION MARKET
BERLINALE TALENTS

11–13 FEB 2019

series@berlinale.de
www.dramaseriesdays.com



Distributor: A+E Networks Int'l
Producer: A+E Studios
 Production in association with
 Compari Entertainment
Broadcaster: History
Concept: The true story of a US
 astrophysicist who investigated
 UFOs for 20 years



On the back of the sustained success of *Vikings*, History has been aggressively edging into the scripted arena, looking to create what Eli Lehrer, executive VP and GM of History, calls an “epic and consequential” drama slate.

Executive produced by Academy Award-winner Robert Zemeckis, UFO thriller *Project Blue Book* is set for a US premiere this winter on the channel.

The 10 x 60-minute title stars *Game of Thrones*' Aidan Gillen, and is based on the true, top secret investigations into UFOs and related phenomena conducted by the United States Air Force from 1952 to 1969.

“Last year, *The New York Times* uncovered a secret Pentagon program that studied UFOs and released UFO film footage from an F-18. But that story began decades earlier with Project Blue Book – the true story of astrophysicist Dr. J. Allen Hynek, who investigated UFOs for the Air Force for 20 years and walked away saying the UFO phenomenon was real, and that Project Blue Book was a cover-up operation,” explains Lehrer.

“The idea that the military and the government isn't telling us the full truth about this phenomenon feels incredibly relevant.”

Forrest Gump and *Flight* director Zemeckis has been on board for the series from script stage, according to Lehrer.

“I think he was excited by the idea of producing a drama series about the UFO phenomenon for History, because it is real history – Dr. Hynek was a real person, and Project Blue Book existed.

“The show asks big questions, while at the same time working as a drama and as a thriller – that's a compelling mix.”

The drama has a “heavy visual effects component” and care has been taken to recreate the 1950s in an authentic way, says Lehrer, who notes that the “spine” of any History drama series will always be fact-based.

“That doesn't mean we won't do fictional or composite characters on a drama series if that's the best way to tell the story,” he says.

“There are some projects we develop that we call ‘core history’ that very much stick to the facts religiously, and others where you're telling a dramatic story that reflects real, iconic events and consequential moments.”

History, which has also enjoyed success with medieval drama *Knightfall*, is now in discussions around two-hour-long scripted events on the channel.

The business increasingly produces through its in-house production unit A+E Studios, but is also open to co-productions, says Lehrer.

“Given how crowded the scripted landscape has become, it's vital to curate the stories we're telling,” he says.

“What makes something a History drama? It can't be just because it really happened. The dramas we produce are ultimately a conversation with an audience, and a History drama really has to have something to say that's relevant to today, with a bold voice from a visionary like a Bob Zemeckis.” **S**

**IF IT'S
ASIA
IT'S SAFE!**

MEET US AT MIPCOM BOOTH P-1.C23
www.asiatvforum.com

MARINA BAY SANDS | SINGAPORE

4 DEC 2018
ATF Leaders' Summit

5-7 DEC 2018
Market. Conference.
Networking Events

Held in
conjunction with:

An event of:

Produced by:

Supported by:

Held in:



SINGAPORE
MEDIA
FESTIVAL



Writer's Room:

Informer's writer duo on contradictory characters

Consider all angles and perspectives of a character to write more nuanced and textured stories, say Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani, the writers behind BBC One drama *Informer*, about a second-generation Pakistani man who goes undercover for the British counter-terrorism police.

It is early evening, and the two of us are having dinner with a police contact and his wife somewhere in the sprawling suburbs of London. Over a few glasses of wine and a takeaway curry, our contact tells us what he can about his work handling confidential informants. Frequently, our questions stumble into uncomfortable territory and he tells us, matter of factly, "I can't go into that."

Redactions aside, on a pure research level, it's an incredibly useful conversation and will go on to inform certain aspects of our show. But what really fascinates us is the way our contact switches roles as his young daughter drifts in and out of the room. Instantly, he is no longer the all-knowing, mysterious police contact – he is now a doting father.

This act of compartmentalization taught us something crucial about the main police character in our BBC One show *Informer*. His day-to-day existence is completely built around insulating the different corners of his life from one another, and this burden doesn't stop when he gets home.

From the minute we set out to write the series, we knew that research would form the backbone of our story. All too often, movies and TV sensationalize the War on Terror and the way it is policed, fabricating elaborate plots that aren't reflective of the reality we see on the front pages.

We wanted to tell a story that avoided easy tropes and instead pulled everything from real life events and research.

But books and articles can only paint part of the picture. The meetings, dinners and coffees is where we would find the really good stuff – the little bit of texture that helps you write a scene, or a throwaway line that



helps you build out a storyline.

That's the difference between learning a statistic and dialing into a unique perspective; the difference between hearing an anecdote and meeting a character.

There's an old saying: if you want to feel like an expert about something, read a book. If you want to feel like you know nothing at all, read two. The idiom certainly rang true with our research. The more people we met, the more we began to see the issue from perspectives that would often contradict one another. Multiple police contacts would explain to us that they would never do it this way or that, only for another to tell us, 'this is exactly how we do it.'

This became a central challenge to writing *Informer*. We set out to dramatically balance multiple conflicting perspectives, highlighting the complexity of the story.

It's an unusual place to find yourself in modern drama, but our show is completely driven by two characters, both of whom we're rooting for, but who often find themselves with conflicting goals. For one to win, the other has to lose.

In a world that feels increasingly divided along political and ideological lines, our hope is that the show will introduce audiences to perspectives they haven't considered before, but which they will ultimately find human and relatable.

Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani's writing credits include feature film *The State*, which was picked up by 20th Century Fox in 2016. *Informer* is currently in post-production and will air on BBC One. It is distributed by All3Media International. 

There's an old saying:
if you want to feel like
an expert, read a book. If
you want to feel like you
know nothing, read two.

mip®

Driving the content economy

miptv®

8-11 April 2019
Cannes, France

mipdoc®

mipformats®

6-7 April 2019 - Cannes, France

mip®cancun

14-16 November 2018
Cancun, Mexico

mipchina
HANGZHOU

5-7 June 2019
Hangzhou, China

mipcom®

14-17 October 2019
Cannes, France

mipjunior®

12-13 October 2018
Cannes, France

Interested in our events?
Contact us for more information

VISITORS: mipvisitors@reedmidem.com

EXHIBITORS: sylvia.ferreira@reedmidem.com

BUYERS: yi-ping.gerard@reedmidem.com

MIPTV®, MIPDoc®, MIPFormats®, MIP®China, MIPCOM®, MIPJunior® and MIP®Cancun are registered trademarks of Reed MIDEM - All rights reserved

 **Reed MIDEM**
A member of Reed Exhibitions

FROM THE PRODUCERS OF
VERA AND **SHETLAND**
AND THE WRITER OF **UNFORGOTTEN**

DARK HEART

SOME WOUNDS
NEVER HEAL

itv

STUDIOS
GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT

Brand New Drama