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**TRIGGER POINT**



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## BRAND NEW ITV DRAMA - TRIGGER POINT

Vicky McClure and Adrian Lester star in new ITV drama *Trigger Point* which turns the spotlight on counter terrorism policing and the extraordinary work of the Metropolitan Police Bomb Disposal Squad.

Written by Daniel Brierley and produced by HTM Television, *Trigger Point*, is a high-octane six-part thriller series which focuses on the officers who risk their lives daily on 'the long walk' towards danger. For them, death is always just a heartbeat away.

Vicky McClure (*Line of Duty*, *I Am Nicola*) plays front line officer Lana Washington, who is an experienced bomb disposal operative, known as an 'Expo' and Adrian Lester (*Life*, *Trauma*) plays Joel Nutkins, who works alongside her. Both ex-military, the pair are close, having served together in Afghanistan.

When a terrorist campaign threatens the capital over the summer, the Expos are at the forefront of urgent efforts to find out who is behind the bombings before fatalities escalate....

Further cast includes Mark Stanley (*Honour*) as DI Thom Youngblood, Warren Brown (*Luther*) as Karl Maguire, Kerry Godliman (*After Life*) as Sonya Reeves, Cal MacAninch (*Des*) as Lee Robins SC019, Manjinder Virk (*Midsomer Murders*) as Samira Desai SO15 and Ralph Ineson (*The Capture*) as Commander Bregman.

*Trigger Point* was commissioned for ITV by Head of Drama, Polly Hill, who oversaw production from the channel's perspective.

Jed Mercurio executive produces the drama alongside Jimmy Mulville (*Derry Girls*, *Bloodlands*, *Flack*) Mark Redhead (*The Murder of Stephen Lawrence*, *Bodies*, *Bloodlands*) and Jessica Sharkey (*Derry Girls*, *Bloodlands*) for HTM Television, with Julia Stannard (*Vanity Fair*, *War and Peace*, *The Great Train Robbery*) producing.

The series is directed by Gilles Bannier (*Marcella*, *Tin Star*, *Spiral*) and Jennie Darnell (*Line of Duty*, *Holby City*, *Death in Paradise*).





HTM Television is co-owned by Jed Mercurio and Hat Trick Productions. Jed is best known for creating and writing *Line of Duty*, *Bodyguard*, *Critical*, and *Bodies*.

*Trigger Point* is Daniel Brierley's debut television drama commission. He is a screenwriter with several short films to his credit including *My Face Is In Space*, *Checkpoint* and *Graceland*.

Daniel began working with HTM Television following his involvement with a TV bursary scheme, funded by the industry body, ScreenSkills, which aimed to encourage top screenwriters to mentor and develop new writers of their choice. Jed Mercurio mentored Daniel Brierley and *Trigger Point* is a direct result of the scheme.





## WRITER DANIEL BRIERLEY

### **Where did the idea come from for Trigger Point?**

I've got two young children who basically never sleep, so I never sleep either! As such, I've become quite obsessed with YouTube and I've even got to the stage now where I'm too tired to decide what I'm going to watch, so I let it choose for me. That's how I came across a 1970s BBC documentary called *The Long Walk* about bomb disposal operatives in Northern Ireland, and it was incredible. I've always been fascinated by the mindset of people approaching danger, the people who run towards the problem rather than run away from it, because that's counter to all our human instincts. If I saw something dangerous in the street, I would turn and walk in the other direction, so these operatives were training themselves to suppress something really natural. I thought that was a really fascinating jumping off point for a drama and I wanted to get inside their mindset.

### **It seems amazing that a drama hasn't been made about this before.**

Definitely. I assumed there would be a thousand bomb disposal TV shows already, but I don't think there are, so it was just very fortunate that I came up with this idea when I was already talking to Jed Mercurio about other things. He was a great person to be able to bounce the idea off and it went from there really.

### **How did you come up with the characters of Lana and Joel?**

Lana is the centre of the story for me, she's real, vibrant and complicated. She really fits in with the central paradox of the story, how do you train yourself to be this cool in the face of danger and then survive in the real world and have relationships? For me you can't really have Lana without having Joel, they are part of a double act. He's the only one who sees all the sides of her - she never has to pretend around him and he gets her. They have this symbiotic relationship and they both complete the other. So I couldn't have Lana, who is raw, vulnerable and wears her heart on her sleeve, without having a character like Joel who is the opposite.

### **How much research went into telling this story?**

Once I'd had the initial idea, I spoke to Jed, who gave me the number of an expo, who he worked with on *Bodyguard*. I spent some time with him at a secret base in London and really got some insight into the technical elements of the job. Most importantly for me, I got to understand who they were and how they did their job: the pressures, working shifts, sleeping on sofas etc. I spent a lot of time in the locker room with them.

## WRITER DANIEL BRIERLEY

I didn't go out on any active ops because the insurance would have been crazy, but I've seen them training and the surprising thing for me was that the prospect of a bomb was so banal to them because they've been training their entire life for this. And it's juxtaposed with the extreme boredom of sitting and waiting - these guys aren't called out of their office unless there is extreme danger.

It was really challenging to write a script with so many technicalities in it, because it's not my world, but I wanted to be honest about what they do and our expos really chipped in and helped me out, draft after draft. That meant I could really just let my imagination flow and then come back to the experts and ask if certain things could really happen.

### **Were you mindful that the subject matter of *Trigger Point* is quite sensitive?**

Of course, we knew that we were dealing with subjects that are real and raw, and it was important to make sure we gave enough balance and a fair portrayal of all sides. The series is set in London during a terrorist campaign and a hotly contested election, so we really had to make sure it felt real while also being sensitive. There was a duty to be honest and to show things how they really are.

I've been in London for 20 years now and I remember 7/7, London Bridge and Parson's Green, so you tap into those tensions, the memories of the first time getting back on the tube, or seeing the 38 bus in pieces. There's so many things happening around the world all the time and for writers we have to tap into it.

### **This is your first ever TV script, what an achievement!**

It still really feels like a dream and I genuinely don't know how to react. I feel like any moment my mum is going to shake me awake and tell me it's time for school. There have been a few close-run projects, with shows nearly getting made but falling through, so it feels surreal that this is happening, especially as I worried the pandemic might stop it being made.

I've been working as a journalist and TV producer up until now, just about make enough money to survive, so *Trigger Point* feels amazing. It's been an enormous learning curve for me - there are moments when I've written so many drafts of the same episode that I feel like I'm going blind, but my script editors are amazing, they've just helped me so much.



## WRITER DANIEL BRIERLEY

### **Can you tell us more about your relationship with Jed Mercurio?**

I got chatting to him at the Edinburgh TV Festival years ago and we stayed in touch, then I pitched him this idea. He's wonderful, very funny and I get on very well with him. I think we have similar taste in stories, so that helps, and he's a great mentor. He and the other execs give me feedback on every draft and he understands the story in a very profound sense. We've got some cliffhangers in the series and that is very much a Jed thing! I was also lucky enough to do some story sessions with John Yorke, who told me that if you can end the story with people wanting more then that's exactly what you have to do.

### **You must be thrilled with the casting for *Trigger Point*?**

It's crazy, I did genuinely write this with Vicky McClure in mind, so to have her and Adrian Lester as Lana and Joel, it's astonishing. Hearing this cast read my lines out loud was just so surreal - seeing sets erected, streets closed off, catering vans arriving, whole estates shut down and people hanging around just because YouTube decided that I should watch one clip at 2am, it's amazing! I now feel guilty too, because I've discovered fantastic new actors and I want to make their roles much bigger!

### **Do you see it as a returning drama?**

Very much so, because Lana is such an involving person and throughout the first series she's really finding herself. There are lots of places for her to go as a character and I really want to follow her journey. Plus, the world of bomb disposal and counterterrorism is a really exciting one for a drama. I hope the audience is drawn into the world we've created, and that it feels tense, exciting and real.

### **Where and when do you write your scripts?**

It's been so full on, and I find it difficult to work at home, so I have an office in Hackney that I go to every day, which is lovely. I try to make it as much of a nine to five job as I can, but at some points I've been writing 24/7. I remember going to see my mum and dad with the kids one weekend and I didn't say a word to them, I spent the entire time working and rewriting. When we wrapped filming I suddenly had time to think for the first time in three years, and it felt very strange!

### **Have you given your family a sneak preview of the series yet?**

I've shown my partner the first three episodes and she's a big fan. I saw my mum a couple of weeks ago and I was going to show it to her, but she doesn't really like scary stuff, so I'm not sure if she's going to watch! She's really into a show called *Hudson & Rex* about a dog that solves crime, so if I could do a live action Scooby Doo instead my mum would be so happy!





## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, JED MERCURIO

### **How did you get involved with *Trigger Point*?**

The project started when I mentored the writer, Daniel Brierley through UK ScreenSkills. They asked if I would mentor a writer through their bursary scheme, and so I suggested that candidates could pitch their ideas and we would help to develop one. Daniel's idea just stood out as the most commercial and it feels like such fertile territory for TV drama.

### **How much research goes into a drama like this?**

Bomb disposal feels like it's a very closed world, so straight away we wondered how you would access information about it. Obviously, there are lots of security considerations, so you can't just look up this stuff online without getting a knock on the door! We had a bomb disposal advisor on *Bodyguard*, a working expo who was excellent and incredibly helpful to us on that series, so I just put Daniel in touch with him. He went to their headquarters and training facilities, and got a crash course in the things that bomb disposal officers do, and the kinds of operations they might be called out to in London.

Over the years I've always benefited from the input of really good advisors. Certainly on *Line of Duty*, we've always tried to follow procedure to the letter of the law, to coin a phrase! When I spoke to Daniel about developing *Trigger Point*, he was also really keen that we at least attempted to represent what would happen in the real world.

### **How would you describe your role on this series?**

When I first set up the production company, HTM Television with Jimmy Mulville, we wanted to develop untapped talent and new voices. Daniel has done quite a lot of writing, but he'd never created his own TV show before, so it was really about being a facilitator, putting him in touch with the right advisors and talking to him about his plan. We talked about how the first episode needs to introduce the main characters while being a really dynamic piece of storytelling.

He's bright, receptive and hard-working, so it was mainly just talking. Daniel did all the writing - he would generate all the storylines and write the drafts of the script, then I would give my feedback, but I wouldn't interfere too much. I might suggest specific ways to approach a scene, but generally I shared notes with him in the same way that I would like to receive them as a writer, giving my reaction. We talked about the challenges of getting through the story and dealing with the basics of what people expect from a thriller, which is jeopardy, mystery and twists and turns. The art is in making the twists as unexpected as possible...

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, JED MERCURIO

### **Has it been hard to take a step back?**

I've really enjoyed it actually. Having the opportunity to work with great new talent and established leading actors has been great, and I just enjoy making television. I still have shows that are my own, things that I write and run personally, but being part of the team and collaborating has been enjoyable. Sometimes I think, "I'm glad I don't have to write that scene or do those rewrites!"

### **Was it important to spotlight a female character in this male world?**

In terms of the gender balance within the world of explosives officers, it is absolutely a very male-dominated environment. But we all know professions should be more gender balanced and there should be a much more level playing field for entry to these roles. So it feels like a good statement to have a female lead - there are women who do occupy these roles and as we go forward there will be more. There's no real gender specificity to Lana, she doesn't carry out her role in a feminine way, she's just a professional. I think it's really important in terms of representation. If we showed the world as male-dominated it might be sending the wrong message to people who might be considering that career.

### **What makes Vicky so perfect for the role of Lana?**

We talked about Vicky straight away. We needed someone who was just totally authentic, someone you would completely believe in everything that the character does and her name came up in the very first conversation about casting. Everybody said, "Vicky McClure would be great" and then they all just looked at me! So I just asked her and she said she'd love to read the script. We were incredibly fortunate that she responded to Daniel's writing and the ambitions for the series. Obviously, she's at the top of every casting wish list in British TV, so the fact that she said yes is a real coup for the series.

### **Did you miss Martin [Compston] and Adrian [Dunbar] on this project?**

There's still plenty of contact with them, they're never far away and there's always something going on in the WhatsApp group! Every now and then Vicky sends them a picture to make them jealous. They're really supportive of each other's careers anyway, and they give each other so much banter, love and support.

### **Are you worried that people will try to compare *Trigger Point* to *Line of Duty*?**

We went into the series with our eyes open, because both me and Vicky are involved and we take that on board. It's obviously clear that I haven't written it, and Vicky is playing Lana Washington an explosives officer, not DI Kate Fleming. It's much more of



## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, JED MERCURIO

an explosives drama than a police series, so I think there are plenty of distinctions. I just hope that fans of *Line of Duty* give *Trigger Point* the opportunity to see if it's their kind of thing.

### **What were the biggest challenges involved in making the series?**

Shooting on location in London was challenging, as were the special effects required. Getting access to film in London is always hard because it's a big bustling city, and then on top of that, when we say we want to blow things up there's an incredible amount of paperwork!

### **Were you mindful of how you handled the more sensitive storylines in *Trigger Point*?**

Yes, we don't want people to become nervous about terrorist threats or to feed into anxiety, but we do recognise that in big cities these threats to national security do exist. So the way that we approached it was to try to imagine a credible real world threat and a credible way in which that would be investigated. That's really the mystery side of the story.

So we have the danger, the excitement and all the tension from the fact that in every episode our main characters are dealing with devices that might blow them up. But on the other hand, the big hook of the series that drives you is the mystery of who is behind this, because it's not immediately clear what the purpose of the terrorist campaign is. And that is something that's very different from the real world, because usually it becomes clear fairly quickly. So dealing with a situation in which the terrorists don't want people to know who's behind an attack felt like a really interesting area for drama.

### **Do you see *Trigger Point* as a returning drama?**

Yes, we would love the opportunity to do more because we just feel it's one of those areas that hasn't really been explored, particularly in terms of the world we live in now, it feels topical. If we're fortunate enough to be successful, and the audience likes it in sufficient numbers, then we'd relish the opportunity for another series. You just never know what the audience is going to say, but I hope people appreciate the quality of the storytelling, connect to the characters and want to know what happens next. If you can give them an hour of entertainment and they want more at the end, then that's the absolute high point of your job.

**Vicky McClure is *Lana Washington***



# VICKY McCLURE IS LANA WASHINGTON

## **When did you first hear about *Trigger Point*?**

I got a text from Jed, who is obviously a good friend now after many years of working together. He also sent the script through the official channels and I was fascinated by it, because bomb disposal is an area that I don't know very much about and something I don't think we've seen an awful lot of on screen, apart from if people have seen *The Hurt Locker*, which is a great film.

I'll take any opportunity to work with Jed, not only because he's a friend, but also because he's incredible at what he does, and I love the fact that he's supporting new writers like Daniel. So I didn't need any convincing to say yes - I knew it was going to be a really fun, interesting and intriguing job. It's dynamic, it's action-packed, it's full of brilliant characters and it will put you on the edge of your seat waiting for the next explosive situation. I'm really excited for people to see it.

## **Did Lana immediately appeal to you as a character?**

Yeah, she's a great character and when it comes to bravery, you're talking about Lana. She's carrying trauma and her life is pretty messed up, which is really appealing as an actor because you want to play real, layered characters. It feels like we're dealing with somebody going through a lot of life's tough times and it's nice to be able to find strength in flawed characters.

As we go through the series, she becomes more lost as she tries to work out who is planting these bombs and why it's getting closer to home. The way in which the story unfolds is quite surreal. And then in the middle of that she's got her own personal issues to deal with, and she's scared because she's losing her instinct. This show is fascinating because it takes place in a very short space of time, and it's very fast paced. She's trying to keep people safe and she's losing her head a little bit.

## **Did you get involved with many stunts?**

I was really keen to do the action scenes that come with the show, and I knew that playing an expo would be quite a challenge physically. I didn't actually expect it to be quite as challenging as it was, but I got through it and I did most of it myself. I was really game. The few things that I didn't do are mainly scenes with erratic driving because of Covid restrictions, even though I always say, "Didn't you see me in *Top Gear*? I know what I'm doing!" I felt really safe with incredible support and amazing professionals with me at all times. It was very impressive what the guys could do with some of the explosions too.

## **Were the action scenes tough-going at times?**

Physically, it was a challenging job - when you see me running from a bomb I haven't just done it once, there have been many takes! People will tell you that I'm not a gym fanatic by any stretch of the imagination, so when I'm out of puff on screen that's



## VICKY McCLURE IS LANA WASHINGTON

genuine. In some ways it's nice to see that on telly, because what I did learn is as even though expos are heavily trained and Lana is fit, there's not a lot of activity every day - a lot of time is spent sitting around and waiting for that call.

Another challenge was that the drama was set in a heatwave. I expected it to be boiling in London over the summer, but it was one of the worst summers ever after an initial bit of sun! That didn't go in our favour, but luckily we had incredible people around us that could make it feel like a boiling hot summer's day when it wasn't - that's film-making!

It was a bit of a funny process, because we were meant to film in 2020 and the pandemic delayed us, so I did wonder if it would ever happen. We were there waiting in the wings, thinking, "I really hope *Trigger Point* happens!". I genuinely had the best time making it. It was tricky and hard, but I like it when things don't come easy because it means you care about them. I feel a real sense of pride in what we achieved.

### **How useful was it to speak to real expos?**

We had a lot of support from people that are the real deal, real expos. There's some artistic licence in there to create the drama, but I was always speaking to them, they were on set every day. I found it fascinating. There were things that felt like absolute madness, like taking my helmet off as I approach the bomb, but then they explained to me that it could impair your vision, or it could knock the device if it slipped, all these logical things, so you need to take it off to actually work properly around the device. I was learning a lot all the time and I just loved being able to access all their knowledge. We put it into the show as much as we could.

### **There aren't many female expos are there?**

No, I remember speaking to the guys who said it's a different ballgame in the army, but there's only a very small number of expos working with the Met, and none of them are women as far as I'm aware. But there would be a lot of female expos in the army.

I've read scripts over the years where I've thought, "I really like this script... I'd really like *his* part though." So I like that this is a story about a female expo, and it's completely possible because there are female expos in the army.

We were talking about the big bomb suit that I wear in *Trigger Point*. It's the real thing and it weighs more than I do, but we made a choice not to take the weight out of it - it's insane, but I wanted to feel it, and I'm making a TV show, I have the option to





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take it off when we're not shooting. But I remember our expo saying that his female colleague wore it for way longer than he did, and I had a bit of a wry smile on my face, thinking, "Well that's how we roll!" Woman are bloody strong and I was proud to be able to play a strong woman, physically and in many different ways.

### **How would you describe Lana's relationship with Joel?**

They served together, they go way back and have a longstanding friendship. I remember us talking about whether anything romantic ever happened between them, but we came to the conclusion that it didn't, and that's the beauty of it. When they were away from home in the army they only had each other, and they were like family, that's how much they meant to each other. It's quite an army mentality. I can't say I have any kind of understanding of that extreme pressure, I don't, but I think I understand what that relationship is like, just from working away as much as I do as an actor. I'm such a homebody and I hate that part of the job, that's always been the bit I struggle with the most. Me, Adrian [Dunbar] and Martin [Compston] are a good example of colleagues becoming family on *Line of Duty*, and Nut and Lana are very much that to each other, they have that shorthand.

Nut's having issues with his family life and Lana lives in a very different world. She doesn't have children, and she's quite non-committal with the guy she's seeing. I hope you instantly get the sense of that friendship between Lana and Nut, the jovial side of it and how well they work together. I loved working with Adrian Lester, he's one of the greats.

### **Were you mindful of some of the sensitive subject matter in *Trigger Point*?**

It's that fine line - the series is made for entertainment, but some of it is really harrowing. We're really aware that expos are real people and they're not commonly spoken about. We hear about the other emergency departments when there are terror attacks, but when it comes to expos, I was very unaware of their work. They are so brave and the respect I have for the armed forces is incredible. I couldn't do it, I just know I couldn't. So yes, we were really careful and as considerate as we could be.

### ***Trigger Point* clearly has a special place in your heart?**

It was an incredible job and I'm really proud of it. It was a brilliant cast of people and the crew really did look after each other. It was a tough shoot and there were a lot of elements to get right, building a whole new world.

I have never been on a job quite that big, which I suppose would shock people, because you think *Line of Duty* is the same. But I can lean on Martin and Adrian a little bit on that series, where they'll have an interview scene without me and that means I've got four days off. *Trigger Point* was the first time I've felt like a crew member, when I'm there every day all day. I was massively



# VICKY McCLURE IS LANA WASHINGTON

invested in the show and I gave it my everything.

**Having worked on a long-running hit for many years, is it exciting to be at the very beginning of a brand-new show?**

Yes, it's always exciting because you can start from scratch and create new characters. Jed was great from the start, telling me to embrace it and make it my own, and our writer Daniel was really responsive. So it really was a collaboration, and we had room to create something that felt different, which is the beauty of starting from the beginning.

**This is a mini *Line of Duty* reunion, with you and Jed working together again. Do you think Adrian and Martin felt they were missing out?!**

I don't think there was any FOMO, not that they've told me about! The thing is, when we do *Line of Duty*, Jed is on set every day - it's his baby, he writes it, he sometimes directs it, he produces it, the whole shebang. That's not the case for *Trigger Point*. He was there a lot of the time, but it was a very different sort of relationship. But I'd be lying if I said we didn't send Martin and Adrian a few selfies on set together, saying hi! On my very last day, Jed was there with his *Line of Duty* coat on which I thought was very fitting.

It's a very different show though, it's incomparable. There's a lot more action in *Trigger Point*, it's an explosive show. And I don't really feel anything like Kate when I'm in *Trigger Point*, we certainly don't look the same. I'm always really up for reinventing a look. I wear absolutely no make-up in this, my hair is in a scrappy little ponytail and it was important for me to feel like a real person.

**You had a punishing schedule on this job, did you have down time at the weekends?**

It was amazing because I really felt like a crew member. I organised a big Greggs delivery at the end of the shoot for everyone, that's how much I loved them! I had such a special time with everyone. I was really nervous about Covid though, and I was determined not to shut the show down or disrupt filming. It's impossible to avoid coronavirus as we all know, so basically my weekends were spent indoors. I really missed that time in the industry when we'd go out for drinks after a big week - that's all gone now because you just can't take that Covid risk.

I was really careful to not be out and about, but I did go to the GQ Awards, because I had to have one night out while I was in London. That was followed by five days of anxiety worrying I had caught it, but I hadn't. I felt very lucky to hold down a show like this, it's what you dream of as a young actor. I wanted to do them all proud and I didn't want to affect people's jobs or health. It's a lot of responsibility when you can't be replaced, so I lived like a nun!

Adrian Lester is *Joel Nutkins*



## ADRIAN LESTER IS JOEL NUTKINS

### **What did you find exciting about *Trigger Point* when you first read the script?**

Mainly that I'd never seen anything like it in a drama series on television. I also really wanted to work with Vicky, plus Jed and I have been circling around each other for a while - whenever a role came up in one of his shows that I would be applicable for I wasn't available to film, but the stars aligned on *Trigger Point*.

I really enjoyed acting out all the technical requirements needed to look like a member of a bomb disposal unit. We had a couple of sessions with a real expo, where they talked us through loop circuits, trigger points, charge and the detonator. Learning what all these terms meant was fascinating.

### **Had you met Vicky before?**

No, we hadn't crossed paths in any way at all really, but we knew of each other's work. We first met when we were going in for some expo training and advice. Vicky's just brilliant - no airs or graces. She is a complete professional, who gets the job done. She's a good person to work alongside and a great team leader. She's got her eye on every detail, every change in the script has technical and character ramifications for further episodes. She kept the logic clean across all of it making sure she did the best job possible. There were sections of the script where we had the room to improvise which is always much better than sticking rigidly to dialogue, especially when things become fast paced and she was up for it, she was great.

### **How would you describe Nut and Lana's relationship?**

Nut wants to do things properly, to follow the rules. To be safe and do things by the book. Lana can be a little bit of a maverick - there is a slight tension. You get the sense that he's a little bit older, he has been doing the job for longer, he goes by the book, whereas she's impulsive.

I really enjoyed creating the relationship with Vicky. We wanted to make it clear how well Nut and Lana get on, so we listened to music together, cracked jokes and shared silly dances, just making up stuff to help the piece along. We were learning little moves and handshakes, some of which transferred onto the screen. Nutkins has a sort of gallows humour about him, so we laughed a lot and had a giggle. That energy had to be there to create something really believable as we gave life to their relationship.

### **He is dealing with a difficult situation in his personal life, isn't he?**

Yes, he's got a complex home situation. He and his wife are estranged, but they're starting to make their relationship work,



## ADRIAN LESTER IS JOEL NUTKINS

and he has a daughter too. Inside this warm, jokey character there is someone who is sad, who has got complicated personal problems to deal with -there's a lot more going on there, and you just get a little glimpse of that.

### **How challenging was it to get into the mindset of an expo, someone who walks towards danger?**

We talked to the real bomb disposal guys on set and you realise that this life is just a job to them. Most of the time they're called out it is to deal with false alarms, like suspect packages and bags that have been left somewhere. It's rare that you'll get an actual device. They see themselves as consummate professionals who have a job to do. Thank God there's a large group of our society who take pride in the fact that they go out to work every day to make sure that people feel better and are safer, that's the expos but it also includes police and paramedics.

Never in a million years could I be an expo. It's exciting, but you spend all your time waiting and when you get a call it's very tense, you're slowly checking wires and scanners. I'm not good at waiting, I'd go a bit crazy, but it's a fantastic job they do. And because I've never seen their roles depicted on TV it was a fascinating experience to find out about them and play one. I have so much respect for what they do, I take my hat off to them. But not my helmet, cos that would be dangerous.

### **What was it like wearing the protective bomb suit?**

Nightmare! We were shooting in the middle of a heatwave to begin with. We were chugging water and sticking on the vests, the backpack and the helmet. The hair and make-up artists were supposed to add sweat to us, but every time they checked they'd say we were fine as we were. I felt sorry for the costume team as continuity was tough to keep track of.

Helmets, gloves, vests, visors, ear-pieces, backpacks all going on and coming off at various stages as we moved from one scene to the next. And of course we shot the whole thing out of order.

### **Did you like the idea of playing an action hero - it seems like an unusual role for you?**

I see what you mean. I got cast as the suave, smooth-talking Michael Stone in the BBC drama *Hustle*, and once your persona gets cemented in the audience's minds as a certain kind of character, it's hard for them to fully accept you doing anything else, which is weird. So a lot of my work has been circling that kind of role. I have trained for years in Martial Arts and whenever I get the chance I indoor climb and cycle through London. When *Trigger Point* came up I was happy to jump on board because it's a very different character. Both Vicky and I speak in our own accents and there isn't a shirt or tie in site.

### **Did you enjoy filming in London?**

Yes, it's rare to get the chance to shoot in London now. All of episode one was shot on an estate in North London. Lots of the

## ADRIAN LESTER IS JOEL NUTKINS

residents who live there were paid by the company to help and take part in the scenes. It's a huge amount of disruption for them but they were very good about it.

### **What do you hope the audience will most enjoy about *Trigger Point*?**

I don't think viewers will be disappointed - the whole team has been desperate to take care of a strong developing storyline, not insulting the audience's intelligence, drip feeding them information as much as they can. Lana and Nutkins are kept on their toes throughout the story. There are lots of twists and turns, giving the audience the idea that the characters are dealing with a threat that is cleverer than them, which always makes for a good thriller.

**Eric Shango is *Danny***





## PRODUCER JULIA STANNARD

### **What first excited you about *Trigger Point*?**

My agent sent me the script for episode one and it was just such a compelling read, I couldn't put it down. It was so thrilling and such a different piece of drama for television, exploring a world that we really haven't seen on TV before. There's *The Hurt Locker* on the big screen, but no TV shows, and the world of the expo is incredibly dramatic. I knew it would be a big challenge to make, but I immediately wanted to do it.

### **How much research went into bringing the script to life?**

Masses! I always want to get right inside the story and find out the reality of the lives we're trying to portray. We worked closely with two expos, one still working in the field and one who has stopped. We had a lot of meetings with them, going through the scripts, asking about their work and home lives. We were still ringing them during ADR (after filming had wrapped), to check whether they would use particular phrases. I'm in awe of them and the work they do.

We also talked to a retired senior officer in the Met about the counterterrorism side of the storyline, to make sure we told that side of the story as accurately as possible, so the characters don't feel like clichés.

And then we felt it was important to talk to a clinical psychologist about how someone like Lana does her job - how can you be the person who walks towards the bomb when everybody else wants to run away? What does it do to you as a human being? That's one of the most fascinating parts of the story, the personal cost of the job.

### **From your research, did you get the sense that there aren't many women in Lana's job?**

It's not common at all. I think in the army it is, but not in the world of expos working with the police. It's a very unique world, and female expos are very rare. For example, with the protective suit Vicky wears, we couldn't find one made for a woman. The suit is so heavy and difficult to move and to walk in, there are also physical problems for a woman in that role. I think it's important to explore what it's like to be a woman doing a job like that, very much in a man's world. It's also a job that's all about confidence, because if you lose your nerve then it's over.

### **You must be proud of the casting in this series?**

We always wanted Vicky to play Lana, I can't imagine anyone else playing her, she's amazing. Lana's just so likeable and no matter how hard her job is, you want to be with her, and Vicky has that quality. She's such a brilliant actress, and she's been in amazing ensemble pieces, but she's 100% centre stage in *Trigger Point*. The poor thing hardly had a day off, it was just so full on for her. Her story gets even more complicated as the episodes continue.

## PRODUCER JULIA STANNARD

We worked with Des Hamilton for our casting, who is very into naturalism and street casting. We followed that through with our background casting too. Episode one is largely set on a council estate and 90% of the crowd are played by real residents. We hired somebody to spend a week there befriending people, and by the end of filming quite a few of the residents said it had been such a positive experience because they'd met their neighbours for the first time and made new friends.

### **How did you source the specific props needed for this drama?**

We relied on the advice of the expos for the specific tools of the job, and we used a wonderful special effects company, who made the prop bombs for us. They looked after all the explosions and we always tested those on camera. But the big protective suit that Lana wears at the beginning of episode two and the bomb disposal robots you see throughout are both the real deal.

We borrowed the suit from the London expos, they brought it to set for us, and the robots are the ones they use too, so we had to book them in advance along with an operator. We wanted to portray this world properly and people are so savvy nowadays, everybody's googling everything, so if a prop like that isn't right then people will catch you out very quickly. All of those things have massive budget implications, but we had to get all of that equipment right.

### **How did you achieve the explosions?**

We wanted to do as many of the explosions on camera as possible, rather than in post-production, and the first explosion of the series was one where we knew we only had one take. But we tested it, we'd seen it, and by the end I wasn't worried, because our special effects team was so professional, we knew it would work. Some things we did have to do in post-production because we couldn't risk damaging certain buildings.

### **There's a big scene in episode two set in a mosque. Were there any difficulties filming in such a sacred building?**

No, I'm determined that if a scene is set in a specific location then that's the starting point for where you film it. It's quite an important story as well, about how people immediately want to demonise certain people in society and make assumptions, which we do explore. So I felt it was a story that we could decently take to the owners of the mosque and explain our position. Of course, they wanted to see the script and they were happy that it was a responsible drama we were making. They were very happy to have us there, really supportive. We had to avoid filming around lunchtime prayers, but we worked around each other's needs brilliantly. We used the real worshippers to be our background artists as well.

## PRODUCER JULIA STANNARD

### **Was it challenging to find the right locations for this drama?**

It was really difficult, probably the hardest thing about the whole production to be honest. We had to put filming on hold for a year, and then there was a COVID backlog of filming after lockdown, so we were in competition for locations all the way through the shoot. We really wanted to shoot in London itself though, because it's a London story about a terrorist attack on the capital.

### **There's some sensitive subject matter in the drama, were you mindful of that?**

Yes, you have to be careful that you're not using sensitive issues just to tell a good story - for me that would be irresponsible. We have to take a responsible approach as dramatists, so we were constantly checking each other and checking that we felt we were doing due diligence on how we were portraying the characters and the storylines.

### **Does this series have anything in common with *Line of Duty* at all, given that Jed and Vicky are reuniting?**

The phrase "high octane thriller" comes up a lot! We didn't want to be derivative in any way though, so we made a point of not casting people that have been in *Line of Duty*... and an awful lot of actors have been in that series over the years. *Trigger Point* is original.

### **Are there exciting twists and turns to look forward to?**

Yes, we hope we leave the audience looking forward to the next episode. I haven't produced a thriller like this for a very long time, so it's kind of a new experience for me. I feel I've learned a lot about the concept of 'the cliffhanger' from Jed, I've had a tutorial at the hand of the master of that genre, that's for sure!

### **Do you see *Trigger Point* as a returning drama?**

That's the idea. It's certainly a concept that we feel we haven't exhausted. Every day of an expo's life is potentially exciting and thrilling, so it's ripe for drama. I'm really looking forward to sharing *Trigger Point* with the world, I'm optimistic about how people will respond to it.



# Mark Stanley is *DI Thom Youngblood*



# EPISODE SYNOPSIS

## EPISODE 1

In the middle of a summer heatwave, Explosives Officers (“EXPO”) Lana Washington and Joel Nutkins are called out to a Metropolitan Police counterterrorism operation at a London housing estate to investigate a potential bomb factory and a suspected bomb maker, Andy Phelan.

There is no sign of the bomb maker, but his wife and young daughter have been restrained and his wife forced to call in the bomb threat. She is now fearful for her husband’s safety. The assailants broke in using Phelan’s keys, which are now missing, leading to a race against time to locate Phelan and his vehicle.

Washington and Nutkins successfully defuse an improvised explosive device, but its complexity suggests they’re dealing with sophisticated terrorists. Until the suspect is located and detained, EXPO remain on high alert.

As the police evacuate residents from the estate, EXPO find evidence of an even deadlier terrorist threat and must work against the clock to save as many lives as possible.





**Manjinder Virk is *DI Samira Desai***



## CHARACTER CREDITS

Vicky McClure - Lana Washington

Adrian Lester - Joel Nutkins

Mark Stanley - DI Thom Youngblood

Warren Brown - Karl Maguire

Kerry Godliman - Sonya Reeves

Kris Hitchen - John Hudson

Ewan Mitchell - Billy Washington

Manjinder Virk - DI Samira Desai

Cal MacAninch - Inspector Lee Robins

Ralph Ineson - Commander Bregman

Nadine Marshall - Marianne Hamilton

Pippa Haywood - Dr MacAndrew



# PRODUCTION CREDITS

Written and Created by	DANIEL BRIERLEY
Executive Producers	JED MERCURIO MARK REDHEAD JESSICA SHARKEY JIMMY MULVILLE
Directed by	GILLES BANNIER JENNIE DARNELL
Produced by	JULIA STANNARD
Director of Photography	NICK GILLESPIE
Line Producer	ALISON B MATTHEWS
Casting Directors	DES HAMILTON JO HARRIS GEORGIA TOPLEY
Hair & Make Up Designer	RED MILLER
Costume Designer	ROSALIND EBBUTT
Sound Recordist	KIERON WOLFSON
Production Designer	ANNA PRITCHARD
Editors	PEGGY KORETZKY DAVID I'ANSON
Music By	CHRIS ROE







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