THE MAGAZINE FOR STUDENTS OF FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

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WEDNESDAY

TOM GRENNAN: A LITTLE BIT OF LOVE
MONEY HEIST
THE GENTLEWOMAN
M3GAN
THE RESPONDER
AMY
WES ANDERSON
BOURDIEU

EMC
MediaMagazine

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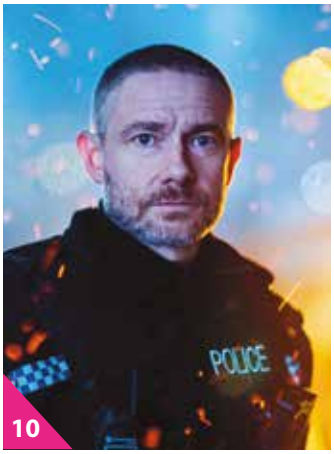

EMC MediaMagazine

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Making the Most of MediaMag

Crime Drama from 2000

On page 15, Jenny Grahame describes the defining cop shows of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. But how has the genre evolved?

There were too many hybrid genre-bending 21st Century crime shows to mention, too many platforms on which to find them, and the genre has fragmented in the search for new and innovative ways of exploring law and order in an online world. But two shows will stand the test of time:

- *Life on Mars* – a surreal post-modern blend of crime, science fiction, time-travel, pop-cultural pastiche of 70s policing, featuring a Sweeney-esque cast and Bowie-inspired soundtrack. 'Fire up the Quattro!'
- *Line of Duty* – the hugely gripping quest of anti-corruption unit AC-12 to uncover the deep-rooted links between senior police corruption and organised crime networks. High drama, paranoia and edgy relationships, with genuinely shocking plotlines. 'Jesus, Mary and the wee donkey'.

Context: The digital 00s onwards

The international impact of 9/11, the Iraq war; a plethora of terrorist threats and incidents. Concerns around the peace process in Northern Ireland. New stop and search powers (Section 44 of the Terrorism Act), seen as eroding civil liberties and community trust. The world goes digital. Concerns about the impact of social media, white-collar and financial corruption, hate crime, political and conspiracy narratives.

Categorising Contemporary Crime Drama

There are many ways of categorising and comparing the various different narrative structures of contemporary UK crime dramas. One interesting route is to explore different types of crime, and the representations, institutions and values underpinning them. Here's a snapshot selection of some of them – you will probably be able to think of many more.

- Cold cases: *Unforgotten*, *Waking The Dead*, *The Missing*
- Forensic investigations: *Silent Witness*
- True-crime/historical reconstructions: *Appropriate Adult*, *Des*, *Boy Blue*
- Shows revolving around a single charismatic rule-breaker, whether cop or villain: Agatha Christie's *Marple* and *Poirot*, *Cracker*, *Inspector Morse*, *Lewis*, *Luther*
- Location-based cases – *Red Riding*, *Broadchurch*, *The Bay*, *Happy Valley*
- Gendered/feminist perspectives: *Prime Suspect*, *Scott and Bailey*
- Political/conspiracy focus: *The Capture*, *The Bodyguard*, *Sherwood*

Pick one of these categories to research and present back to your class. You'll need to investigate one title in depth, and perhaps another one or two in contrast. Most of them are available to watch online. Look at your chosen category in terms of the following questions:

- The visual style of the show – pacy action-adventure, gritty social realism, procedural office-based, location or studio-based, etc.?
- The spoken language of the show – what types of dialogue and vocabulary used; formal, colloquial, sweary, official acronyms and so on?
- The relationships of characters – are they working as a team or individuals? Do you see ollaborative teamwork, partnerships, or individual heroes/villains?
- Representations of the police in their community – are they realist or idealised? Is there a focus on crime-solving or critical perspectives on policing or law and order debates? Protection, prevention, or retribution? Issues of class, rank or status?

Share your research with other groups in the class. What conclusions (if any) can you draw between the types of crime, the characters engaged with them, their communities, and the views of policing they represent? And what can you learn about the range and audience appeal of the genre as a whole?

Crime Drama Pitch

Your team has been invited by the streaming channel Britbox to pitch for a pilot for a new weekday crime drama show which adds something entirely different to the current slate of contemporary crime shows. This will be original and exclusive development for Britbox, which operates across US, Canada, South Africa, Australia and the Scandinavian countries, and is intended to represent current issues and debates in policing and law and order in the UK.

What they're looking for:

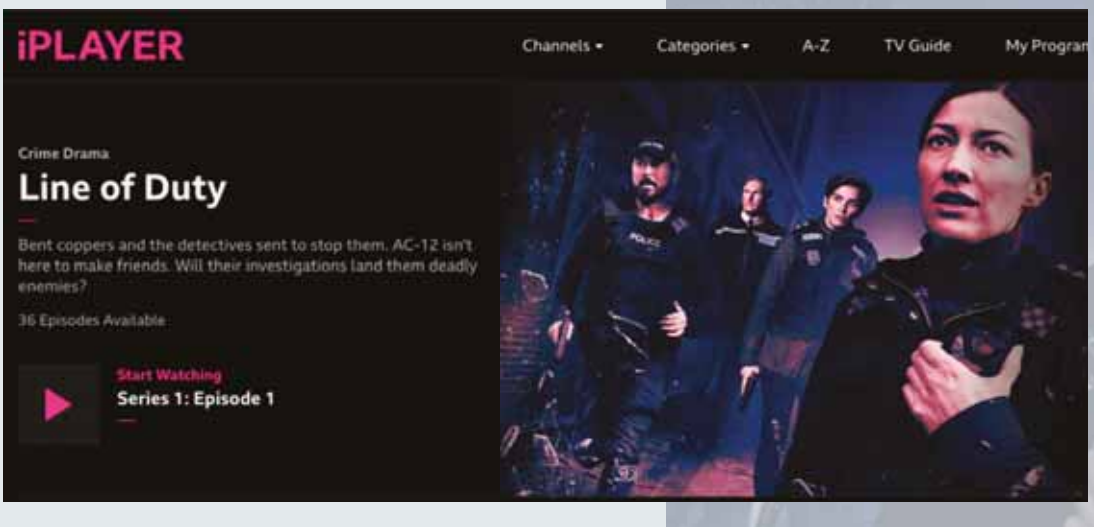
- A show with a genuinely local feel and relevance to your own community – so it must be set in your own local area and include recognisable locations, landmarks and themes
- A potential long-form show which will exist in half-hour episodes, so should be 22 – 25 minutes long
- A clear indication of narrative format – single storyline, multiple interwoven narratives, centred on team or individual
- A summary of the sort of policing and law and order issues to be represented in your show for example county lines, online crime, police corruption, eco- or political activism, local cold case investigation and so on
- Indicative well-rounded characters who will engage and inform Britbox's diverse international audiences
- Awareness of financial implications – there is some flexibility of budget for a really outstanding proposal, but you will need to justify expensive decisions.

What you need to do

Present a five-minute pitch which addresses the points to the left. It must include:

- The USP for your show, and what makes it different and engaging for audiences
- A series of brief character profiles and a sense of how they might develop over the course of the series. Casting suggestions would be useful if 'names' are required
- The regular locations you will use, and their local significance. Visuals (for example moodboards, drawn or photographic images) would be helpful
- A selection of some of the themes or incidents to be covered in your show
- A synopsis of episode 1, in not more than 150 words
- A summary of episode 2, max 75 words
- A drawn or digital storyboard indicating a potential title sequence for your show.

The bids will be shortlisted. If your pitch is successful, you will be invited to present a full written proposal for a pilot episode, which you will go on to produce.



THE MEDIAMAGAZINE STUDENT CONFERENCE

MediaMagazine kicked off the year in style with the return of our annual student conference. Hannah Pettit from Southend High School for Girls attended. Here's what she thought....

On Friday 13th January, Film and Media Studies students from London and surrounding areas attended the *MediaMagazine* Student Conference held at the BFI in London. A range of speakers including up-and-coming producers as well as academics gave informative and engaging talks on different aspects of the media industry, such as film, TV, and music, and ideologies, power and politics.

A packed NFT1 full of eager Media Studies students

All Photographs by Hannah Huggins

Margaret Holborn and Jane Prinsley from *The Guardian*

The first speakers were from *The Guardian* Foundation. We learnt about how *The Guardian* newspaper started out as a weekly local newspaper in Manchester in 1821, and how it achieved its current status as a respected go-to news source in countries all over the world with offices in London, New York and Sydney. Next, we heard about the ownership of the newspaper. *The Guardian* is owned by the Scott Trust, which is the sole shareholder. It has a policy of not interfering in the decisions made by the editors of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* to ensure that journalistic freedom is protected. We also learned that any profits made by the trust are reinvested back into quality journalism which is a unique model for a British newspaper. The speakers then explained some infographics provided by *The Guardian*'s data analysis department. These were particularly interesting, as they provided us with an insight into what people read when visiting *The Guardian*'s website, social media and app at different times of the day and week. In addition to this, we heard about the daily schedule of an employee at *The Guardian*'s offices, as well as some statistics regarding the newspaper's readership globally. Overall, this talk was very informative and useful for students learning about newspapers as part of their Media Studies courses.


Jane Prinsley

> *We were encouraged to participate in a game of* The Guardian*'s 'fake or for real?' social media quiz, an eye-opening and amusing task in which many were surprised to see how much false information gets reported in the media.*
> Emily Monk, Waldegrave Sixth Form


Simon Bird

Simon Bird

The next speaker was BAFTA-nominated actor and director Simon Bird, who is best known for his roles in *The Inbetweeners* and *Friday Night Dinner*. Firstly, he talked about *The Inbetweeners*, describing it as 'unpretentious and funny', 'inter-generational' and very much of its time, while also describing how he landed the role. Next, he went on to talk about his work later in life as a director, and described the common themes running through his work: teenage experiences and parent-child relationships, often expressed with a significant amount of emotional depth. Finally, he spoke about the reality of working in the comedy and television industry and suffering from imposter syndrome, before taking questions from the audience. Again, this talk was very informative, particularly for members of the audience interested in going into the world of comedy, Mr Bird painted a realistic picture of the hardships of the industry and offered some advice on how to break into it.

> *The relentless nature with which you pursue a career in the media industry, was something he mentioned as part of his personal experience. Bird's growth from being on* The Inbetweeners *to shows he now directs is evident; it was highly motivating to be in the same room as him and listen to his story.*
> Victoria Azodo, Southend High School for Girls


Claire Pollard and Simon Bird


Simon Bird with students from Southend High School for Girls

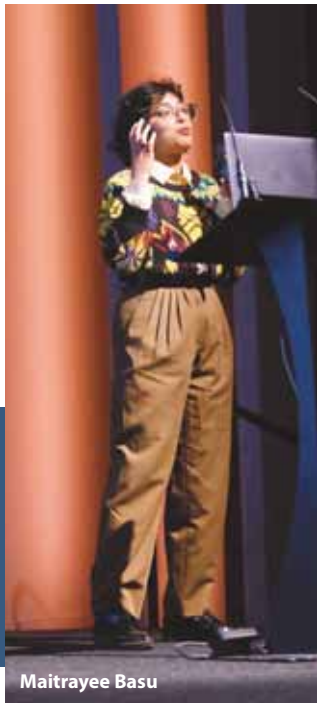
Dr Maitrayee Basu on Janelle Monae's 'Turntables'

After a short break, Dr Maitrayee Basu delivered an extremely engaging and interesting talk on Oppositional Media in Janelle Monae's 'Turntables'. Dr Basu first spoke about Monae – a famous actor, musician, and author, who most recently starred in *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*, the sequel to 2019's *Knives Out*, and described some general features of Monae's work: robots, Afrofuturism, and her repeated message of 'Liberation, Elevation, Education'. Dr Basu then further broke down Monae's music video for 'Turntables' into four themes:

- The American Dream
- Renegade
- 'Table bout to Turn'
- Spectatorship and Witnessing.

For each of these themes, she pointed out scenes and quotes in the video which evidence them. She finished the talk by further explaining the genre of Afrofuturism and concluded that Monae's main message is centred around the politics of hope: change is inevitable. This was one of my personal favourites of all the talks, as I loved how Dr Basu went into the details of the video while also linking it to theorists such as bell hooks and explaining the wider genre and message Monae intends to express.

> *Not only did this lecture give me an incredible sense of identity as a woman of colour, but it showed me the diversity within the range of talks delivered at this conference.*
> Victoria Azodo, Southend High School for Girls



Maitrayee Basu

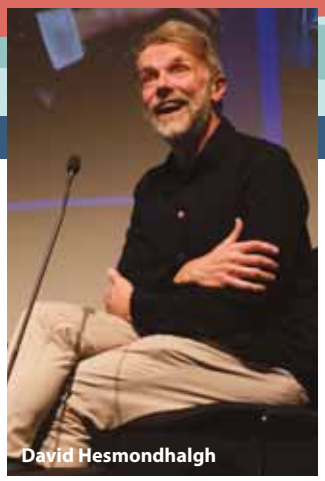
Alex Kayode-Kay

Alex Kayode-Kay

Next, we watched the first half of a screening of *The Ballad of Olive Morris*, a BAFTA nominated short film directed by Alex Kayode-Kay. I was immediately intrigued as the film began, as I found the setting of the record shop and the cinematography very captivating and almost documentary-like, while the message of Olive's defiance against police brutality was clear throughout. There were audible gasps heard in the audience at several of the scenes, even within the first half of the film, proving that such shocking storytelling is necessary to convey Olive Morris's story in a memorable manner. As someone who would one day like to work in the film industry myself, I found this talk very interesting and informative. Mr Kayode-Kay provided background information on Olive Morris and her impact as an activist for black rights, women's rights, and housing rights in 1960s Brixton. He then went on to talk about the themes of race and gender covered in the short film, and described the synergetic cinematography, make-up, costumes, and production team he assembled to perfectly capture the atmosphere of the time period, before taking questions from the audience and giving some advice for aspiring directors.

> *The Ballad of Olive Morris was extremely insightful on key, sensitive issues that black ethnic groups and women of colour experienced throughout history and are still prominent today.*
> Aliyah Williams-Smith, Cardinal Pole Catholic School

> *I really enjoyed watching The Ballad of Olive Morris. I found it a great portrayal of the issue of institutional racism within British society. It portrayed the culture of the time accurately and was a tough watch but a great production.*
> Kelvin Biney, Cardinal Pole Catholic School


David Hesmondhalgh

David Hesmondhalgh

Next, we listened to an equally engaging and charismatic speaker, and one of our set theorists: David Hesmondhalgh. It felt somewhat unusual to be able to speak directly to the person whose theories we use in our essays and to ask him questions. Hesmondhalgh began by talking about the Marvel Cinematic Universe, commenting on the success of the genre. They are the most popular example of a serialised franchise, and despite occasional flops, people still want to know what happens next. This appetite guarantees ticket sales.

He then went on to talk about the 'techlash' (a backlash against big technology companies) and the opaque nature of computer-automated recommendation systems which have direct control over how we spend our time. Finally, he spoke about music streaming (the focus of his current research) and asked whether we think it makes people less inclined to listen to music with which they are not familiar. I found this talk to be quite eye-opening, as I'd never really stopped to think about the everyday actions of listening to music or scrolling through the content my social media suggest to me and how these actions dictate the way in which I spend my free time. It was clear from what Mr Hesmondhalgh said that the impact of this current age of technology that we are living in has yet to be fully felt.

> *Hesmondhalgh talked about how large media conglomerates control the way we listen to music, and how this could affect us as listeners: 'Music helps us bond, communicate,' he explained from the heart. Now, it is controlled by Spotify, YouTube and more. Does this limit the way we find and understand our music tastes?*
> Emily Monk, Waldegrave Sixth Form

April McCarthy and David Hesmondhalgh


Anamik Saha

Dr Anamik Saha on Stuart Hall

The final talk was delivered by Dr Anamik Saha, who discussed another one of our set theorists, Stuart Hall. Dr Saha began by providing some background information on Stuart Hall, one of the most important British intellectuals of the 20th/21st century and a key founder of cultural studies. He was also an important member of 'The New Left', he coined the term 'Thatcherism', and was known as 'The Godfather of Multiculturalism'. Dr Saha then discussed two of Stuart Hall's central ideas:

- That popular culture matters; and
- That media is central to our understanding of 'racial others', in both good and bad ways.

He explored these ideas and explained that popular culture is where we create our sense of selves and belonging and is a place where the powerless can challenge authority. Furthermore, representation in popular culture and the media is significant and is shaped by power, while Black, Brown, and Asian cultural producers can challenge stereotypes through the media they create. Finally, he posed the questions, 'Is this moment of diversity as radical as it seems?' and 'What does it reveal about the current conjecture?' Again, this talk was very useful as it applies directly to our course, and in a wider sense, further validated our reasons for studying media, because, as he put it, it 'helps us understand the nature of power in contemporary society.'

> *Anamik Saha talked about Hall's belief that the media is a space where powerless people can challenge authority, and that it is central to understanding our race: a truly inspirational message.*
> Emily Monk, Waldegrave Sixth Form

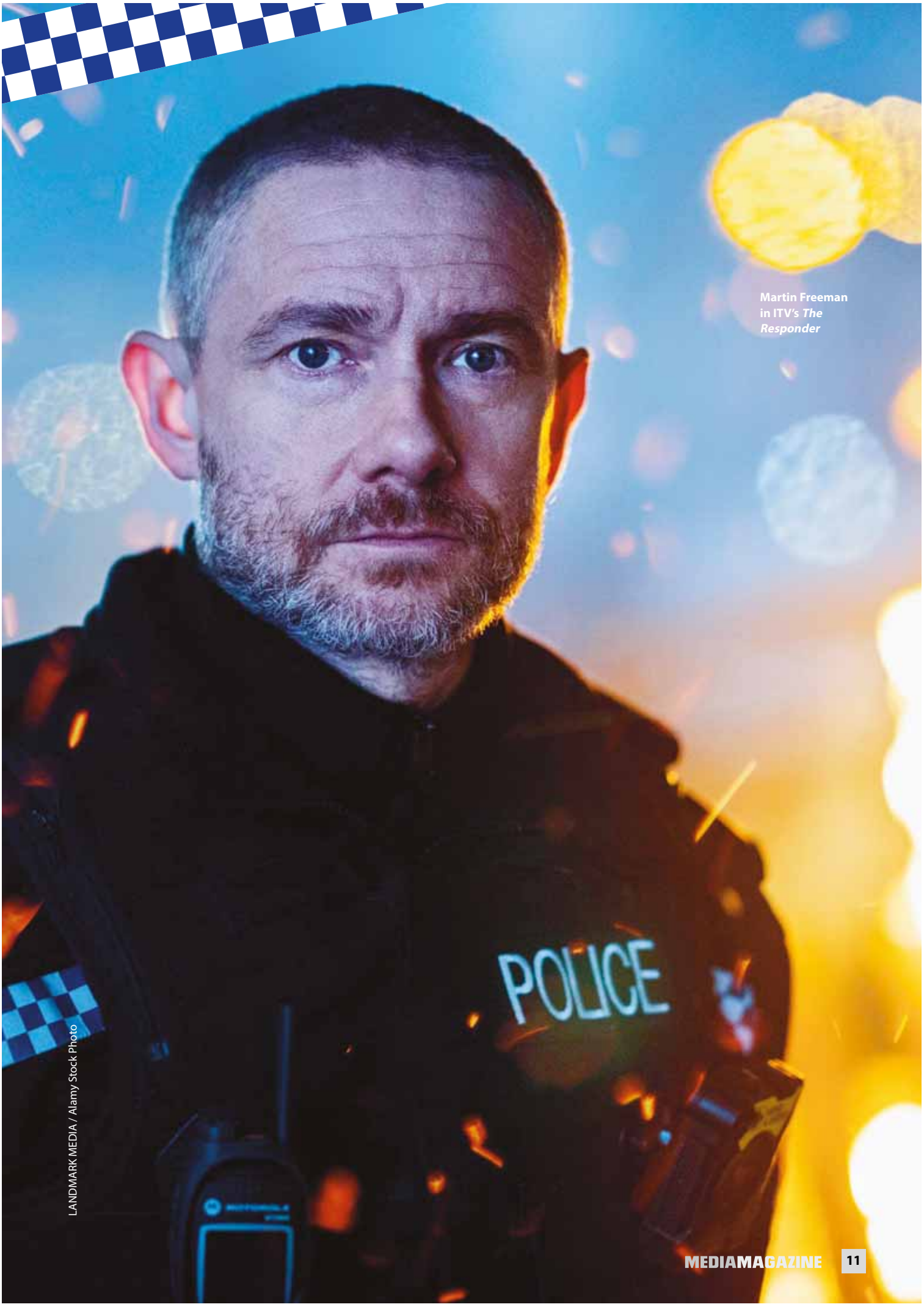
Overall, it was a rewarding and thought-provoking experience that I would recommend to any students of Film or Media Studies. It was both useful and relevant for our courses, as well as eye-opening and informative in terms of our future careers.

Hannah Pettit is a year 12 Media Studies student at Southend School for Girls.

Special thanks to Emily Monk, Victoria Azodo, Kelvin Biney and Aliyah Williams-Smith.

FIRST RESPONSE

In ITV's *The Responder*, flawed and fallible Chris Carson is caught up in a society that's falling apart and a life that's got too many grey areas for comfort: a response to the current state of policing in the UK? Jenny Grahame takes a look at this gripping TV drama in the context of other police procedurals.



Martin Freeman in ITV's *The Responder*

LANDMARK MEDIA / Alamy Stock Photo

Total headf**k: Policing takes its toll on Chris Carson

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

'I wanna talk . . . yeah, but I can't. I'm wrapped up in here, you know? I wanna speak, I wanna speak, I want to believe in you, but I've got another week of nights stretching out in front of me, and I can feel it – I'm gonna crack . . . . I want to be a good bobby, and do good things. I wanna be normal'

Chris Carson is in trouble. Unshaven, red-eyed, exhausted, he's overwhelmed by his punishing schedule of traumatic night shifts, the chaotic lives of the bagheads and petty criminals on the mean streets of his patch, the pressures on his family life, caring for a dying mother, the shame of demotion, the judgement of his peers. He's in the pay of an old friend turned gang-leader/drug dealer who's now calling in his debts. The world is closing in on him, and therapy is too little too late.

Yet by the end of the first episode of *The Responder*, he can shift from claiming 'I can't remember the last time I did something good' to telling his mum 'I did a good thing today for someone who normally doesn't matter'. So, in this toxic environment, what rules were bent, what narrative twists or moral compromises allowed that good thing to happen? And what do Chris's experiences tell us about contemporary discourses around policing?

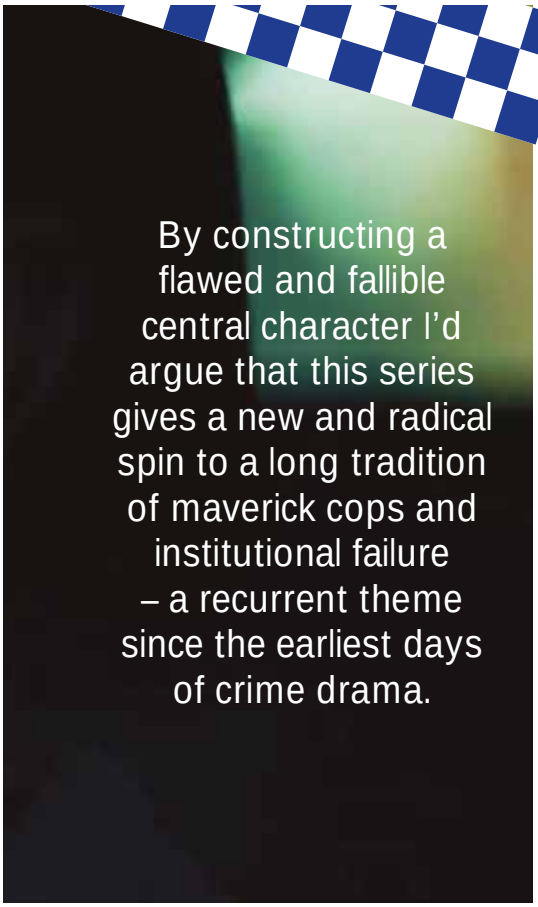
Lines of Enquiry?

On a bigger scale, where does *The Responder* (2022-) fit into the sprawling crime drama genre and also into current debates around law, order and policing as an institution? There are of course, way too many issues to cover in this short article; UK vs US formats; representations of class, gender and urban life; the conflict between policing and family life; the individual vs the team; Chris Carson as compared to, for example, *Luther* (2010-19), *Line of Duty*'s AC-12 team (2012-21), or Catherine Cawood of *Happy Valley* (2014-23). Here, I'm narrowing the focus down to my personal response to *The Responder*, and my sense of what differentiates it from the many other historical variations and hybrids of the genre.

By constructing a flawed and fallible central character I'd argue that this series gives a new and radical spin to a long tradition of maverick cops and institutional failure – a recurrent theme since the earliest days of crime drama, from *Dixon of Dock Green* (1955-76), through *Z-Cars* (1962-78), *The Sweeney* (1974-78) and *The Bill* (1984-2010). If you don't know these series, look them up; they make for fascinating viewing.

Responding in a Time of Disillusionment

There are currently (February 2023), at least six new crime dramas in development in the UK focussing on institutional failings, prompted by recent scandals involving the police: the time has never been more right for a drama about the ethical ambiguity of law and order. Confidence in the police is at an all-time low, with the Sarah Everard case, the exposure of cops such as Wayne Couzens and David Carrick, and the appalling evidence of racism and



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Liverpool, the setting for *The Responder*

Peter Morgan / Flickr

sexism of multiple police authorities nationwide. Coupled with what we now recognise as massive institutional misbehaviour in government, from cronyism to partygate to financial malpractice, it would be surprising if issues of trust, integrity and morality in law and order did not surface as a major theme in current crime drama.

The Responder does not explicitly reference, explain or resolve these shocking realities. Nor does it draw clear boundaries between the ethical and the corrupt. Instead, it subverts many of the conventional tropes of crime drama through a focus on its protagonist's state of mind. A rogue cop under a cloud: tick. Conflicts of interest and loyalty: tick. Massive under-resourcing and failing social services, and a never-ending workload: tick. But here none of these conventional crime drama clichés are black and white; they are given a new spin by their embodiment in Chris Carson, a man who wants to 'do good things' but is both psychologically and practically unable to make them happen legitimately. So, in his call-out to the death of an old lady, we see him casually pocketing tobacco from her handbag, and making himself at home with her soup; yet moments later he's patiently consoling her grandson. He explodes in frustration at yet another callout to a regular trouble-spot, where he violently subdues an aggressor with mental health issues (and an alleged knife) and then acknowledges his inappropriate behaviour in a conciliatory chat with his victim.

Being There: Authenticity and Social Realism

The visual style of *The Responder* feels alternately 'real' and hyper-real. It was written by Tony Schumacher, himself a former police responder in the Liverpool area, with personal experiences of the insoluble pressures of the role, and the inadequacies of the system undermining it. His familiarity with the territory infuses the dialogue, mise-en-scène and locations with authenticity. Schumacher left the force after traumatic beatings and a breakdown. He can thus empathise with Chris Carson as a morally ambivalent but essentially decent cop with instinctive sympathy for his damaged clientele. Unlike previous explorations of police corruption, such as *Line of Duty*, Schumacher's emphasis is not on the collaborative process of holding the corrupt to account. Instead, he observes the pressures and limitations of the system itself on one individual and his network, and thus exposes the consequences of long-term deprivation and failed social policies in the area. Yes, we see the legacy of Thatcherism and the historical failures of local authorities; but we also feel them, through Chris's eyes, on the edge of disintegration; a consequence of the vision of a writer who has actually been there.

Trojan Horses and 'Being There'

In this respect, *The Responder* follows in the footsteps of Tony Garnett, one of the legendary producers of the crime drama genre, whose radical social realist work also exposed the grey areas and moral compromises of public institutions, from housing to social services to unionisation to the failures of the welfare state. In 1992 his *Between The Lines* was arguably the

first UK drama to openly call out bent coppers and the bribery and sleaze embedded in police procedure. He developed a tactic he called 'Trojan horse drama': pitching crime dramas – a hugely popular TV format – to 'smuggle in' political comment and institutional critique, topics and themes that would never otherwise have been commissioned for TV by a national broadcasting system itself policed by conservative governmental values.

In Garnett's outstanding follow-up, *The Cops* (1998 – 2001), the Trojan Horse was the grim impact of social deprivation on crime in impoverished housing estates, exposing police intimidation, physical restraint and drug use as inevitable consequences of the poverty, low expectations and criminality of the environment. Its very first (and must-see!) episode opens with a young WPC snorting a line of coke in a club before racing back to the station late for her morning shift. No conventional heroism or confrontation of organised corruption here – bent behaviour is a human response to the insoluble problems of a hostile environment. The beleaguered cops' unorthodox behaviour is mitigated by the authentic voices of its characters, an observational fly-on-the-wall shooting style and a version of improvised drama-documentary realism which place the viewer non-judgmentally at the heart of the action. As Garnett himself put it:

> **I wanted the audience to willingly give themselves up to the feeling that they were experiencing exactly what it's actually like to go out for a day on a shift, six or eight hours, with a couple of cops, just being there. … we said everything's got to be hand-held and every scene in The Cops has a cop in it. It's as though you're following them around and being with them.**

The Responder extends the strategy of 'just being there' by immersing itself in Chris Carson's point of view. We experience much of his behaviour – his wake-up routine, his search for Casey, his chases through rain-drenched streets – through his own eyes, and his internal conflict is mirrored in the visual style of the cinematography, lighting and editing. Night life on the rainy streets is shot in the bilious orange of street-lights, contrasting with the cool blue of his mother's care-home; the camera lurches from edgy low-angled close-ups to dizzying drone footage of night streets, fragmented by edgy editing and disconcerting music tracks which echo the chaos and agony inside his head. Even the surreal random montage of the title sequence constructs a sense of a life out of control.

Perhaps this is what is original and subversive about *The Responder*. Chris Carson is a good person who does bad things; in every aspect of his working and family life he is forced into moral compromises, bad decisions and unethical behaviours. To fully engage with him, you really do have to watch the whole series – and I urge you to do so. Because rarely has an allegedly corrupt police officer seemed so human, relatable, or so close to being a victim.

Jenny Grahame was the founder of *MediaMagazine* and editor for 16 years.

from the MM vaults

Of Cops and Docs: Tony Garnett talks about television drama – Jenny Grahame *MM1*
An Afternoon with Tony Garnett, *MM60*
Checking *The Bill* – Daisy Monahan, *MM10*
Creativity and Genre in TV Crime Drama – Nick Lacey, *MM33*

The Responder does not explicitly reference, explain or resolve these shocking realities. Nor does it draw clear boundaries between the ethical and the corrupt.

The Best Crime Dramas Over Time

Whichever crime drama set text you're studying, you'll need a feel for the ways the show relates to real-world issues – and that means understanding the social context in which the shows were made, and the ideas about law, order and policing held in society at the time. Here are some of the most well-known or iconic shows you might have heard of but have never had time to watch.

The cosy 50s

Post-war rebuilding, a prosperous Tory government, recruitment drive for the Met; the contrasting threats of American popular culture (e.g. rock'n'roll, teddy boys) the Cold War, and nuclear power.

Dixon of Dock Green

Fatherly, reassuring and utterly straight, PC George Dixon was the original London bobby on the beat and the heart of his West London community – catchphrase 'Evenin' all'. A mainly unproblematic vision of the police as agents of decency – corruption is the work of 'one bad apple'.

The changing 60s

The so-called 'swinging 60s', consumerism and youth culture (e.g. mods and rockers) and escalating drug use; political activism and civil unrest. Government corruption and sleaze. New mobile policing strategies; patrol cars, parking wardens, regional crime squads and Special Patrol Group.

Z Cars

Gritty Merseyside setting, teams of mainly working class cops, dealing with rising crime rate on new urban estates, delinquency, theft and volent behaviour. 16 years of social realism.

The brutal 70s

Ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland, IRA attacks, mainland bombings. International terrorism. Allegations of racism and corruption in the Met. Strikes and civil unrest, rioting at Notting Hill Carnival.

The Sweeney

Meet Regan and Carter of the Flying Squad, heroes of unorthodox and macho policing techniques to combat armed robbery and violent crime in London. Cars and car-chases, casual misogyny and racism, action, swearing and choreographed violence, with a big budget and mainly location shoots, and allegedly authentic police dialogue.

The troubled 80s

Thatcherism; the Falklands War, inner-city riots against poverty and racism in Brixton, Tottenham, and Liverpool. The Miners' Strike, massive unemployment, housing scandals, moral panics about rave and drug culture.

The Bill

Police procedural based in a single station, with huge evolving cast of cops and ongoing storylines over 27 years. Shot on video in Steadicam, it initially attempted to expose the grim reality of everyday policing but became increasingly soapy – and disproportionately violent in its later days.

The pre-millennium 90s

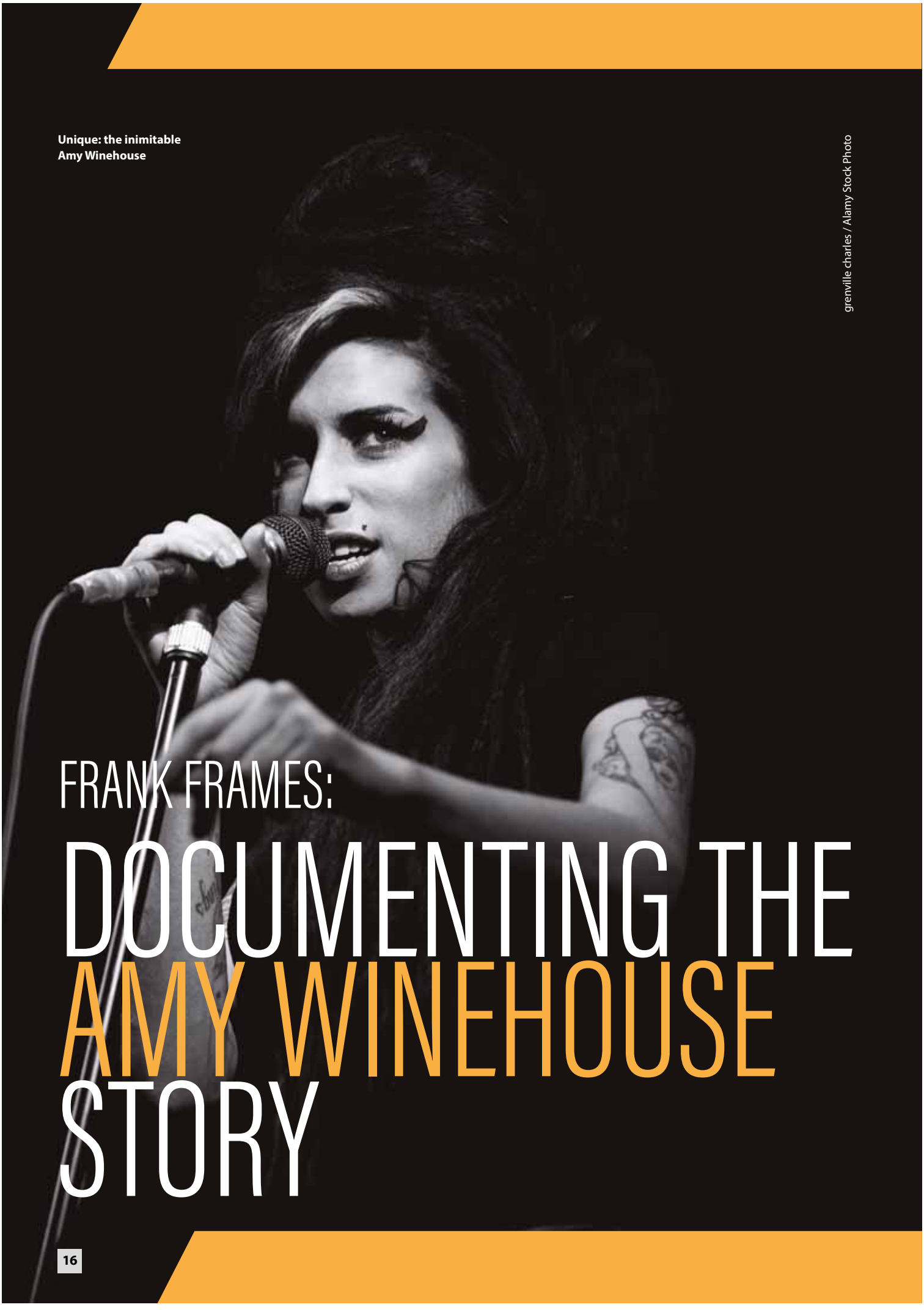
The Gulf and Balkans Wars. Moral panics about impact of video nasties on crime. Serial murder cases such as Fred and Rosemary West. The murder of Stephen Lawrence, shocking revelations of cover-ups and institutional racism in the Met and ongoing attempts to improve the force's image. The Criminal Justice Bill, which reduced existing civil rights including the right to demonstrate, banned unlicensed raves, and imposed harsher penalties for "anti-social" behaviours. Rise in concerns about immigration, delinquency, corruption in public services.

Between the Lines

An ethical but compromised team from the Complaints Investigations Bureau exposes institutionalised corruption within the Met at the highest levels of the police hierarchy.

The Cops

A drama-doc-style exploration of the complex role of policing in lawless Greater Manchester communities, from the conflicting personal perspectives of the low-ranking cops on the beat. *The Cops* and *Between the Lines* are both executive produced by Tony Garnett.



Unique: the inimitable Amy Winehouse

grenville charles / Alamy Stock Photo

FRANK FRAMES: DOCUMENTING THE AMY WINEHOUSE STORY

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Associated Press / Alamy Stock Photo

Kapadia won Best Documentary for *Amy* at the 2016 BAFTAs

Documenting the rise to fame and tragic demise of Amy Winehouse, Asif Kapadia's *Amy* won plaudits for its sensitivity and moments of jaw-dropping pathos. But is documentary making all about just telling the truth? And whose truth gets told? Sue Barnard looks at Kapadia's work in the context of other documentary makers to get the true picture.

Asif Kapadia, the British director behind *Amy* has established himself as a world-renowned documentarist, winning awards for his work documenting the lives of Ayrton Senna (*Senna*, 2010), the titular *Diego Maradona* (2019) and the Oscar winning *Amy* (2015) on the music artist Amy Winehouse. These documentaries showcase Kapadia's unique style of filmmaking, creating what he refers to as 'true fiction', a narrative-driven account of his subjects told through those closest to them. *Amy* is a posthumous documentary on the rise and fall of the young singer songwriter who died at the age of 27. Described by Paul MacInnes in *The Guardian* as 'chronicling her tragic decline from bright eyed prodigy to a doomed tabloid obsession', *Amy* is constructed through the editing together of 100 interviews with family, friends and business associates. Their accounts are a constant presence throughout; their voices laid over found footage that depicts the two sides to Amy's life. From the outset, intimate, very private footage, taken by friends, reveals an insight into the singer that is unfamiliar to her audiences. This is juxtaposed with the iconic public images of the beehived, music legend that she became – chased by paparazzi and performing to thousands – building a picture of why she was so successful but revealing too her vulnerability, her manipulation by men she trusted and her eventual longing for a return to anonymity.

Exploring Documentary

In order to engage fully with the Eduqas documentary unit, students must explore two key areas; firstly 'filmmakers' theories'. This is a term that can lead to confusion but it refers to the filmmaking style and vision of two other documentary filmmakers and how their unique 'auteur' qualities compare and contrast with the chosen focus documentary filmmaker (in this case Kapadia and *Amy*). There is a selection of filmmakers offered for analysis including Kim Longinotto, Nick Broomfield, Peter Watkins and Michael Moore: all incredible filmmakers who

have a distinctive approach to documentary. The second area is technology which offers a great opportunity to study the evolution of the genre and how technical advancements have revolutionised documentary, making it more accessible than ever and allowing for citizen journalism to flourish.

Filmmakers' theories

Peter Watkins and Michael Moore are useful filmmakers to contrast with Kapadia when exploring filmmakers' theories, allowing for some rich conversations on the level of subjectivity that documentary demonstrates (the argument generally being that ALL documentaries are subjective). Kapadia himself is quoted as identifying that

> **There is a misconception that somehow documentaries are real. Everything is fake. Everything is constructed.**

Despite the use of 'real' footage and voiceovers, *Amy* is nevertheless a construction that took three years to put together and encourages the audience to establish a specific viewpoint on key events. Although the emphasis should be on Kapadia and *Amy* in response to these questions, there should be some comparative study made of at least one of these others.

All three filmmakers are 'provocateurs' of varying degrees; they use their work to generate a response in the audience, often critiquing and drawing attention to socio-political issues of the time – Watkins in his docudrama *The War Game* (1966) and Moore in *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 911* (2004) and *Sicko* (2007). Watkins' dramatised, pseudo-documentary style does not rely on found footage or real interviews in the same way as Kapadia, but both are enablers of provocation and attempt to expose social injustice. Moore is perhaps stylistically more similar to Kapadia, using found footage, interviews, emotive music and 'frankenbiting' (stitching together extracts of dialogue to create a coherent line), but while Moore takes a holistic thematic approach, perhaps attempting to offer an illusion of objectivity, Kapadia focuses on one, usually celebrity, subject and through them, exposes problems in society (press intrusion, the pressures of fame and addiction, in the case of *Amy*). Another distinguishing feature is the absence of a guiding voiceover in Kapadia's work and his overall lack of presence: a stark contrast to Moore who is an almost constant presence throughout his films in both the use of his 'Voice of God' and on-screen interactions.

Amy was hounded by the press

Kalexander2010 / Flickr

Tributes from fans in the aftermath of Winehouse's death

Studying *Amy*

As a 20-mark question, there is limited time to analyse a wide range of scenes in order to fully demonstrate an understanding of Kapadia's style. However, it is necessary to carry out some close analysis of scenes from the film within an essay response. The opening scene, for example, is an important sequence in establishing the private world of Winehouse and can be used to explore Kapadia's style. In it we see a teenaged Amy, shown in home video footage at her friend Lauren's birthday party. She performs a fairly provocative rendition of 'Happy Birthday', suggesting both an innate talent for singing and precocious attitude. This is supported by a still image of a teenage Amy with audio of her performance of the jazz classic 'Moon River' recorded with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. A further recorded interview provides us with an insight into her passion for jazz and its legendary performers; Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan and Tony Bennett shown in stills. Kapadia's rejection of an omniscient voiceover to 'guide' the documentary allows the audience to establish their own response to the subject. In doing so their perceptions of Amy Winehouse, perhaps previously forged through negative media coverage, may begin to alter as they are exposed to a young, ambitious and hopeful Amy starting out in her career.

Key Scenes to Consider

St Lucia

The film sets out to expose the role of the media and of specific characters in her life as partly responsible for her descent into addiction and untimely death. 'Villains' are established in the form of Mitch, Amy's father, and Blake, her husband, who are depicted by the film as manipulative, forcing her to perform against her will and instrumental in her seeking solace in drink and drugs. The sequence in St Lucia, where Amy is taking a much-needed break from performing, is preceded by a still image of Amy in her London flat, clearly gaunt, wide-eyed and drugged, staring down the lens of her phone. Kapadia lingers on this image, allowing the viewer to appreciate the horror of the vulnerable and visibly ill Amy. This is followed by footage of a happy, healthy Amy doing cartwheels on the

From the outset, intimate, very private footage, taken by friends, reveals an insight into the singer that is unfamiliar to her audiences.

Fabio Diena / Alamy Stock Photo

Before the storm: a healthy , happy Amy performing in Italy, 2004

beach on the island of St Lucia with her friends. It is at this moment that the audience finds comfort in her as both physically and mentally in a 'better place'; Kapadia plays around with film stock here, creating a sepia-toned nostalgic feel to the holiday sequence. However, when it becomes clear that Mitch has brought along a camera crew to document the holiday, desaturated colours are used as tensions rise and he berates Amy for not wanting to engage with fans who are staying on the resort. Amy is seen pointing to the camera that is filming her during this incident and discussing her frustration with her father.

Recording 'Back to Black'

This is a brilliant scene to analyse as it is a strong example of the fortuitous nature of documentary. Sometimes footage emerges that has been shot by chance; in this case the recording of Amy singing 'Back to Black' in the studio with Mark Ronson, which Kapadia calls 'a beautiful accident'. In the recording booth, Winehouse's lyrics, used as captions over the images, detail the break-up of her volatile relationship with her boyfriend Blake Fielder-Civil. As the camera remains on Amy and she finishes this incredibly powerful song, repeating the dark refrain 'black', she looks up at Ronson and proclaims 'Ooh it's a bit upsetting isn't it?'. This brilliant moment reveals perhaps the 'true Amy', the woman that Kapadia wants us to see, performing one of the songs that helped establish her as an international star, while also bringing about her downfall. This recording and its position both in the film and in her life, can be perceived very much as the 'calm before the storm'; the catalyst for the disruption that follows.

Final Scene

Following a series of positive events that saw Amy recovering from drug addiction, rekindling her relationship with her best friends and singing with Tony Bennett, her idol, the audience are lulled into believing that this is a new equilibrium for Amy. However, in the denouement of the

As the camera remains on Amy and she finishes this incredibly powerful song, repeating the dark refrain 'black', she looks up at Ronson and proclaims 'Ooh it's a bit upsetting isn't it?'

film, a long shot of Camden is depicted with the caption 'Saturday 23rd July 2011': the day of Amy's death. Emotive music begins to play and the shot is followed by footage of Andrew Morris, her bodyguard, leaving her house surrounded by policemen. His heart-breaking voiceover recounts his last moments with her as she confides in him that she would 'take everything back to be able to walk down the street without hassle', reiterating Kapadia's intentions of highlighting the pressures that she faced from press intrusion throughout her career. Further images of forensic teams entering her home, her body carried out by funeral directors and close-ups of fans weeping at the side of the road are again intruded upon by the flashing of cameras from a row of journalists watching the tragedy unfold. An 'expert' voiceover account from Amy's doctor explains that 'her heart gave out' and her alcohol levels at time of death were dangerously high. Footage of mourners gathering for her funeral reveals the grief of her closest friends, family and music business associates. Juliette and Lauren, her childhood friends, comfort each other. Nick Shymansky, her friend and first manager, weeps outside the building. Key music figures such as Mark Ronson and Yasiin Bey (aka Mos Def) are amongst the mourners. Kapadia then chooses to continue playing the sad, emotive music over a montage of clips which depict a smiling, playful Amy. This is extremely powerful in evoking pity and perhaps anger in the spectator, that this enormous talent was destroyed at such a young age. Importantly however, although there is footage of her performing during this montage, the emphasis is not on Amy 'the star' but on a young woman whose humour, incredible ability and innocence has been shattered as she became a victim of her own success.

> Kapadia's rejection of an omniscient voiceover to 'guide' the documentary allows the audience to establish their own response to the subject.

Sue Barnard teaches Film Studies at Durham Sixth Form Centre.

from the MM vaults

Documenting Amy – Mark Ramey, *MM60*
Mirror, Mirror on the Wall – Mark Ramey, *MM59*
Agent of Change: The Documentaries of Michael Moore – Pete Turner, *MM34*
Searching for the Truth – Caroline Birks, *MM68*

Olli Homann / Flickr

Street artist JXC paid tribute to Amy on the 10th anniversary of her death with this mural in Camden

Swift at this year's Grammy Awards where she picked up the award for Best Music Video

Associated Press / Alamy Stock Photo

Written and Directed by Taylor Swift

Since the release of Taylor Swift's 10th studio album, *Midnights*, she has dropped three music videos: 'Anti-Hero', 'Bejewelled' and 'Lavender Haze'. Charlie Winward considers how these videos show Swift leaning in to the creative control she has now established over her music and what this might mean for her next creative move.

Taylor Swift's *Midnights* was released on October 21st 2022. In the months since then three music videos have been released, all of which include the credit 'Written and Directed by Taylor Swift' within their opening titles. Since the release of her 7th studio album, *Lover*, in 2019, she has had full ownership of her work, subsequently rereleasing earlier albums as 'Taylor's versions', the rights over which she has full control. It now seems as though Taylor Swift is enjoying full creative control over her work, both musically and visually. After co-directing music videos of the *Lover* era with Dave Myers and Drew Kirsch, Taylor's first solo directorial debut came with video for 'The Man' music video, the final single from *Lover*, released in 2020. She maintained her solo directorial status with the music videos of her career that followed: 'Cardigan' and 'Willow' from the 2020 albums *Folklore* and *Evermore*, and the recent Grammy Award winning music video *All Too Well: The Short Film* from *Red* (Taylor's Version), released in 2021.

Midnights marks Taylor's first album to include multiple self-directed music videos. She explores a playful creativity in her writing of the music videos. Both 'Anti-Hero' and 'Bejewelled' include large sections of dialogue, separate from the song. The 'Anti-Hero' dialogue interrupts the bridge of the song. We see a depiction of Swift's funeral where her children find out that they have been left nothing in the will. Taylor playfully constructs the spoiled rich kid archetype in all three of her bratty blonde children -it's both witty and self-deprecating to choose to portray her future children in this way. The 'Bejewelled' opening dialogue sets a medieval scene offering an intertextual reference to the classic Cinderella fairy-tale, with a wicked step-mother played by acclaimed Hollywood actress Laura Dern, and mean step-sisters picking on 'House Wench Taylor'. Within both videos' dialogue, Taylor's

writing shines in its ability to not take itself too seriously and build genuine moments of humour.

Taylor's directorial aspirations extend beyond music videos. In December of 2022, she made a (controversial) appearance in *Variety*'s Directors on Directors series, engaging in discussion with playwright and director, Martin McDonagh (whose film, *The Banshees of Inisherin,* won Best Screenplay and Outstanding British Film at the BAFTAs this year). In the discussion she states that after directing 10 music videos and a short film she is 'sort of inching [her] way along towards taking more responsibility'. At the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival, where she screened *All Too Well: The Short Film*, she stated, regarding her directing: 'I'd love to keep taking baby steps forward, and I think that I'm at a place now where the next baby step in not a baby step.'

Around the same time the *Variety* video was released, it was reported that she was set to direct her first feature-length movie. She has written an original script, and the film will be produced by Searchlight Pictures.

Casting

Taylor's creative control extends to the casting of the actors in the music videos. As well as casting famous actresses and music artists, another notable casting choice is Laith Ashley, a trans man, and model, as the love interest of the 'Lavender Haze' music video. In Swift's 2020 Netflix documentary *Miss Americana*, she vowed to no longer remain silent on political issues that were important to her, including her allyship to the LGBTQ+ community. Her 2019 'You Need To Calm Down' music video, featured countless LGBTQ+ celebrities cameoing through a song telling homophobes everywhere that they 'need to calm down'. This music video was met with mixed reviews among the LGBTQ+ community; while some were thrilled with the representation of so many queer people in one video, others accused Taylor of placing herself, a straight woman, at the centre of a LGBTQ+ narrative.

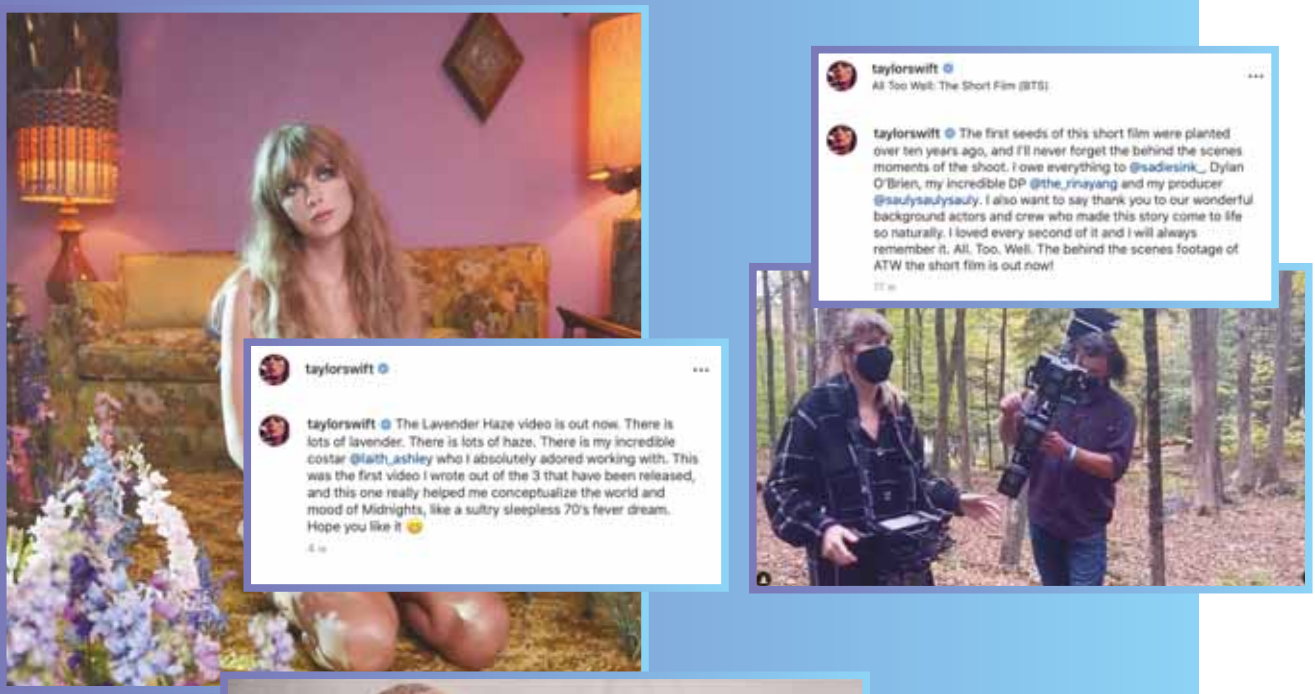
The 'Lavender Haze' video shows a sophisticated growth in Taylor's

Taylor's writing shines in its ability to not take itself too seriously and build genuine moments of humour.

Model, actor and activist Laith Ashley

Ovidiu Hrubaru / Alamy Stock Photo

The many eras of Taylor Swift



On Swift's Instagram, she is positioning herself as much as an up and coming director as she is a music artist

TaylorSwift / Instagram

directing while maintaining the importance of representation. Casting a trans man as the sexy love interest of the video, a role that would typically be cast as a cis man, is significant for the usually under or misrepresented transgender community. The representation was far more subtle, with many fans not noticing the actor was trans which helps normalise the representation of transgender people in the eyes of the public. This casting is an extension of Taylor's allyship, this time without the drama of making it about her own advocacy.

The 'Bejewelled' video casts many notable celebrities. Iconic burlesque performer, Dita Von Tease, and famous makeup artist Pat McGrath make perfect additions to the glitz and glamour of 'Bejewelled'. While Laura Dern's casting as evil 'stepmommy' shows Taylor establishing an affiliation with the great actors of the film world. Aligning herself with The Haim sisters, who recently appeared in *Liquorice Pizza* (2021) further supports Swift's intentions to extend into the world of film and cinema.

Easter Eggs

Taylor is no stranger to being self-referential and is famous for planting hidden Easter eggs, hinting to fans what is coming next. Through her career this has led to many wild fan theories of potential releases and speculated release dates – often met with disappointment. She pokes fun at the perception that everything she does has secret cryptic messages in the 'Anti-Hero' music video with one of her children speculating 'there's probably a secret encoded message that means something else' and her will ending with the post script 'P.S. there's no secret encoded message meaning something else'.

That said, there are certainly plenty of secret encoded messages in the *Midnights* music videos. The big question on any Swiftie's mind at all times is – what album is Taylor re-recording next?! In her campaign to reclaim ownership of her work from her former record label, she set out to re-record her first six albums. With two already released in 2021, *Fearless* (Taylor's Version) and *Red* (Taylor's Version), fans are anxious to find out which one is coming next. The 'Midnights' music videos offer many clues that *Speak Now* (Taylor's Version), will be her next release.

A clear Easter egg appears in 'Bejewelled' where the buttons of the floor numbers in the elevator are colour coded to match her albums. She then presses the third-floor button which matches the purple of the dress on the cover of her third album *Speak Now*. She then ends the video on the 13th

floor which is also shown as purple in the elevator, hinting that *Speak Now* (Taylor's Version) will be her next/13th album. The purple motif is also seen in 'Anti-Hero', as when she is shot by an arrow she bleeds in a glittery purple, and similarly after drinking shots she vomits a glittery purple. And unsurprisingly there is lots of lavender in the 'Lavender Haze' music video.

The 'Lavender Haze' music video also offers nods to several of the tracks on *Midnights*. As she sits on the floor surrounded by vinyl records, the cover sleeve of one reads 'Mastermind' – which is the name of track 13 on *Midnights*. Similarly, the weatherman on the TV is seen reporting rainfall at midnight, a reference to 'Midnight Rain', track 6 on the album. However, these references seem slightly unnecessary months after the album came out. This led some fans to theorise that she had initially planned for 'Lavender Haze' to be the lead single ahead of the album's release. This makes a lot of sense as the track list hints would be clever Easter eggs. The album ultimately had no true lead single, with the 'Anti-Hero' music video being released on the same day as the album. Such a marketing strategy could only be successful with an artist of Taylor's status. It is also speculated that the 'Bejewelled' music video was released earlier than originally intended (just days after the 'Anti-Hero') to boost its streaming numbers to help her secure the entire top 10 of the billboard hot 100 – which she ultimately succeeded in doing.

This perhaps shows how Taylor's creative control has grown to cover the marketing and roll out of the album as she has been able to be responsive in her approach. I doubt there are many artists who would have the liberty to change their minds about releasing a single – especially after a music video had been filmed. But Taylor Swift is not simply one of 'many artists' she is *the* artist. She is known for a phenomenal work ethic: with four more re-recorded albums, a world tour, and feature-length film lined up (and that's just things we know about!), Taylor Swift remains an exciting creative force seemingly capable of anything she puts her mind to.

Charlie Winward is studying Linguistics at Kings College London

Casting a trans man as the sexy love interest of the video, a role that would typically be cast as a cis man, is significant for the usually under or misrepresented transgender community.

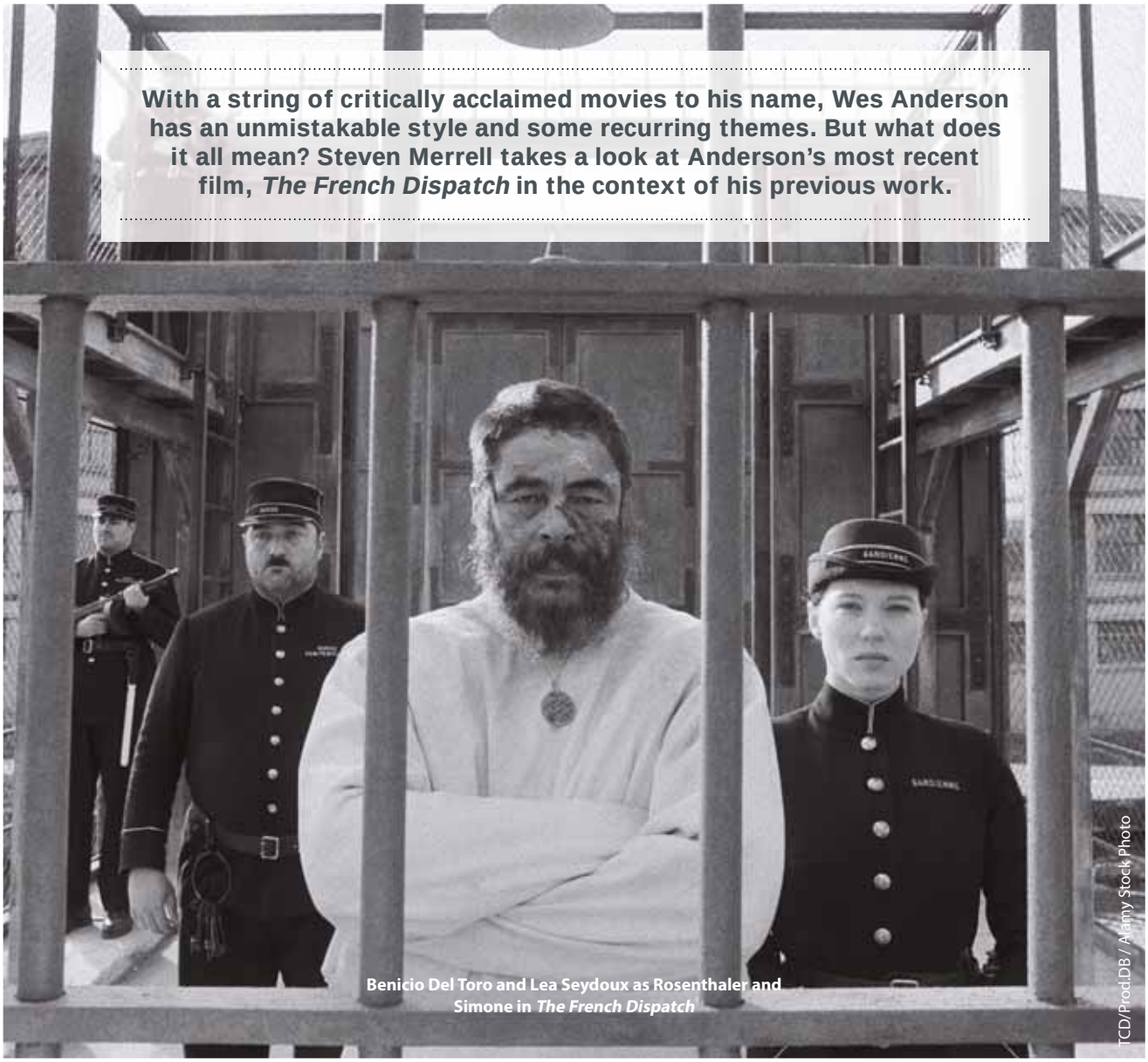
from the MM vaults

All Too Well: an Artist Lost and Found – Matt Taylor, *MM79*

Wes Anderson the Auteur

Style over Substance?

With a string of critically acclaimed movies to his name, Wes Anderson has an unmistakable style and some recurring themes. But what does it all mean? Steven Merrell takes a look at Anderson's most recent film, *The French Dispatch* in the context of his previous work.



Benicio Del Toro and Lea Seydoux as Rosenthaler and Simone in *The French Dispatch*

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

If we want to think of a modern auteur filmmaker, then there is probably no easier choice than Wes Anderson. His films have a distinctive aesthetic in the use of colour, the movement of the camera, the mirror-effect framing, the flat planes and the deep depth of field. The films always involve characters oddly off-centre, quirky and mannered, usually intellectual. The situations are familiar and yet handled in unconventional ways, such as a student demonstration against the authorities to be decided by a chess match in *The French Dispatch* (2021). And yet, does it add up to anything? Are we blinded by the razzle dazzle of sweeping zooms, text overlays, addresses to camera (breaking the fourth wall) and other visual trickery that really it is all just dressing up? Like the Great Oz in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) perhaps a loud, imposing, demanding voice actually hides a timid person with confused values and a need to be admired.

Early Days

It is evident, even in his first self-funded short film, *Bottle Rocket* (1994) that Anderson had a clear idea of what he wanted to achieve through the medium of film. There is a sense that Anderson, much like the young Picasso, could effortlessly achieve the highest quality of conventional art and therefore wanted to go off the usual road, to challenge himself and his audience. In *The French Dispatch* the art collector, Cadazio, persuades the rich backers that the artist, Rosenthaler is worth supporting by producing a conventional picture of a sparrow he drew in 45 seconds, the argument being, think what he could do given a month or a year. In Anderson's case it would be the two hours film running time.

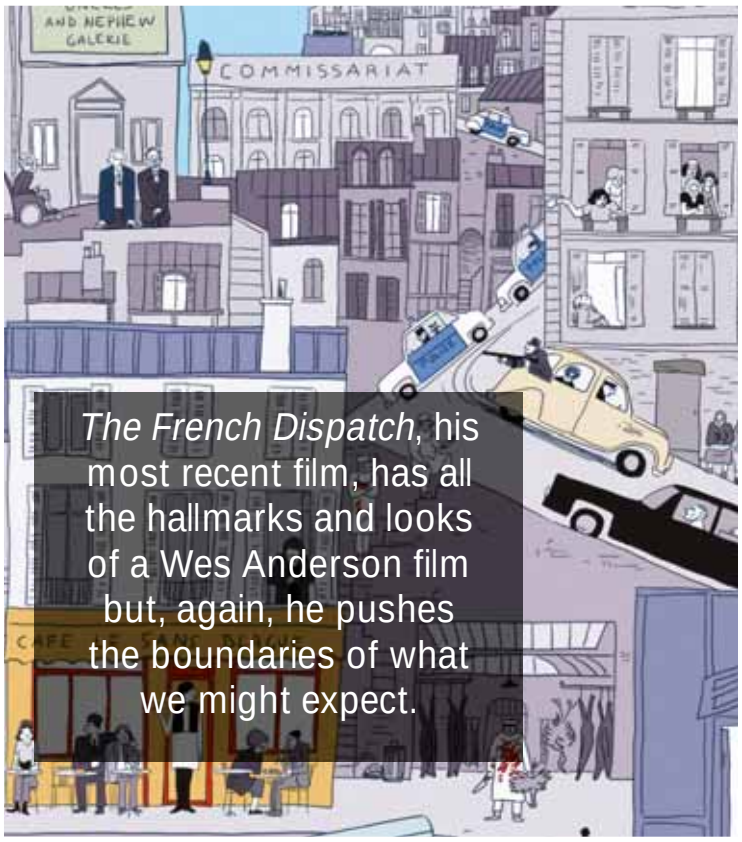
Anderson does not compromise and we are asked to buy into his world. For some, this a Marmite issue. I could imagine the great studio bosses of the 1940s, Jack L. Warner and Louis B. Mayer gasping in frustration at any one of his films and asking, 'What the heck is going on?' or 'Why are you telling us all this?'. If you have had similar frustrations it is certainly worth enduring a bit more pain to get to some of the deeper truths. This is not to claim that Anderson's films are beyond criticism. In my view, most are indulgent, some overlong and bordering somewhere between dramatic and ridiculous, sincere and saccharine. I have no problem with this and admire the complexity of his work; these are crafted films, made from a love of cinema and an attention to detail not seen in more mainstream offerings.

Keeping it in the Family

Claire Pollard in an article on Anderson (*MM*75) discusses the importance of family and how this is often 'at the heart of his work.' *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) features four highly intellectual children distanced from each other, quite literally within some of the framing, and torn between success and self-doubt.

In *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) the family is also the dominant theme of the film. The father, Royal, fakes a terminal illness to inveigle himself back into the lives of his children and grandchildren. But this is only one strand of a complex number of storylines, and this is where Anderson (and his co-writer, Owen Wilson) share qualities Warner and Mayer would have recognised, that narrative and action are also at the heart of his films.

The French Dispatch, his most recent film, has all the hallmarks and looks of a Wes Anderson film but, again, he pushes the boundaries of what we might expect. As in previous screenplays, the film is episodic, '*The French Dispatch*' being a classy art magazine, very much styled on the look of *The New Yorker*. The film presents three stories, not connected, other than forming the content of the final issue. From the first frames we are led into the opening pages and Anderson, as he does, borrows a technique we would have



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THE FRENCH DISPATCH
OF THE LIBERTY, KANSAS EVENING SUN
A FILM BY
WES ANDERSON
BILL MURRAY
FRANCES McDORMAND
JEFFREY WRIGHT
TILDA SWINTON
ADRIEN BRODY
BENICIO DEL TORO
OWEN WILSON
STEPHEN PARK
LÉA SEYDOUX
TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET
LYNA KHOUDRI
MATHIEU AMALRIC
LIEV SCHREIBER
ELISABETH MOSS
EDWARD NORTON
WILLEM DAFOE
LOIS SMITH
SAOIRSE RONAN
CHRISTOPH WALTZ
CÉCILE DE FRANCE
GUILLAUME GALLIENNE
JASON SCHWARTZMAN
TONY REVOLORI
RUPERT FRIEND
HENRY WINKLER
BOB BALABAN
MELVIL POUPAUD
NIPPOLYTE GIRARDOT
ANJELICA HUSTON
SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES and INDIAN PAINTBRUSH present an AMERICAN EMPIRICAL PICTURE by WES ANDERSON
"THE FRENCH DISPATCH OF THE LIBERTY, KANSAS EVENING SUN" U.S. Casting by DOUGLAS AIBEL, CSA
French Casting by ANTOINETTE BOULAT U.K. Casting by JINA JAY Music Supervisor RANDALL POSTER Music by ALEXANDRE DESPLAT
Costume Designer MILENA CANONERO Editor ANDREW WEISBLUM, ACE Production Designer ADAM STOCKHAUSEN

Moviestore Collection Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

seen in classic Disney films – we are about to be told a story.

In the first story there is, in my view, a daring use of self-conscious filmmaking. The prisoner, Rosenthaler is locked-up as a young man and held until he has aged, fattened-out and assumed a lined and weary face. This is not shown through a montage or cross-fade. Instead, the younger actor stands up, allows the older actor to take the same place and pose, then transfers his necklace to the older man and gives him a reassuring pat on the shoulder before leaving. It is gimmicky and different, but it could also speak of the anger and frustration of the younger Rosenthaler maturing and aging, as we see ourselves in later life, not who we once were. I also need to add that it is funny: as if the younger actor has finished his shift on the film. Anderson may hint at bigger issues but he does not take himself too seriously; life can be absurd, random and unpredictable.

Complex Characters

At times in his films it can border on whimsy but, as in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2016), Monsieur Gustave, played by Ralph Fiennes, is a figure we can laugh with as he arches his eyebrows, gives a thoughtful swerve of his eyes, or, as he is about to be arrested, runs away in a comic style that owes much to Buster Keaton. He is a figure to be amused by, sometimes appalling but ultimately admired for his bravery and sacrifice. As with most of us, we are complex individuals, maybe seeking redemption in a difficult world.

Royal Tenenbaum, the conniving liar, is also a divisive figure, exploitative, self-pitying and yet Anderson bestows him with enough charm and credibility that we enjoy his manipulation towards his family. There are a few moments within the film where the more typical Anderson visual tropes are put aside, other than the long take and steady tracking shot, reliably provided by his long-term cinematographer, Robert Yeoman. Royal joins his ex-wife, Etheline, for a walk by the lake. It is a masterful interchange of two great actors as Royal flatters his ex-wife, 'You're true blue, Ethel'. She doesn't reply but shows her appreciation and amusement, knowing it is Royal's old-school charm. Even if it isn't totally sincere, she enjoys the effort he is making to win her over.

With moments such as these we can overlook the fine quality of his direction and why Anderson may be a victim of his own aesthetic style. It can be easy to pigeonhole, even parody Anderson with the cutaways, the symmetry, and the literal presentation of the past. Anderson can do 'serious'. In a review of *The French Dispatch*, Richard Brody in *The New Yorker* writes:

> **Anderson approaches serious matters not by displaying the authentic pain that they entail but, rather, by letting it ricochet off other, related subjects—he arouses emotion more than he displays it, and, in the process, associates ideas to the feelings.**

I find this preferable to filmmakers who have characters giving heartfelt speeches in close-up, usually finishing with the dire cliché: 'I guess you just wouldn't understand.'

True Blue? Etheline isn't immune to Royal's charms

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

Ralph Fiennes as Monsieuer Gustave in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*

Meaning Making

Does art – not just films but novels, paintings and plays – need to make grand statements and have 'meanings'? My view is that generally when they do it often falls into simplistic preaching and clunky trite messages more suitable for fridge magnets. Wes Anderson respects the intelligence of his audience to take what they wish from his films. For some it can be the playfulness of the images and narration. *The French Dispatch* might be a reflection on the decline of long-form journalism, the vanities of the art world, and the idealism of youth. For cineastes it is the enjoyment of a filmmaker respecting his heritage and sharing it through visual and verbal references. There are themes on loneliness, idealism, art, love and homosexuality.

To paraphrase an interview where he discussed his work, Anderson said, 'I think, often, what ends up being important in a movie thematically, or what it ends up being really about, is usually not what you're focusing on… I'd rather have the meanings come out of the life of it, rather than wanting to demonstrate a certain theme, or communicate a certain theory.'

With *Asteroid City* due for release later this year we can be sure that Anderson will again celebrate cinema through its infinite possibilities with his idiosyncratic approach and passion – that may be all the meaning we need.

Steve Merrell was Head of Film and Media at King's Ely in Cambridgeshire.

from the MM vaults

Moonrise Kingdom: the families of Wes Anderson – Claire Pollard, *MM75*
Why I Love *The Grand Budapest Hotel* – Neil Paddison, *MM59*
We Auteur Know Better – Mark Ramey, *MM83*

The Theory Drop
The Theory Drop
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The Theory Drop

Bourdieu

Why do we like what we like? What determines the kinds of films, books and newspapers we consume? Pierre Bourdieu had a few ideas on the subject, Mark Dixon explains.

Media Studies – without a doubt – is the best subject in the world. Where else can you explore the social or ideological significance of gaming, news or advertising? Where other than in Media Studies can we scrutinise the 'always on' power of digital media platforms? But the subject has its fair share of critics. Academic David Buckingham complains that Media Studies, 'is often seen as a running joke for desperate stand-up comedians and newspaper columnists'.

Indeed, the notion that Media Studies isn't a serious subject nearly resulted in its obliteration during the government's overhaul of A Levels in 2015. Buckingham tells us that criticisms often rest in the notion, 'that the content of Media Studies is somehow not real knowledge – that because it looks at things that are deemed to be trivial, it is by definition trivial as well.'

Of course, media students and media teachers know better. We intuitively understand that the media exercises enormous influence, and, as a result, that it deserves serious academic scrutiny. David Buckingham's defence of the subject, perhaps, has something of a Bourdieu-tinged ring to it when he suggests that Media Studies was very nearly axed because it reflected the 'wrong' sort of cultural knowledge.

Pierre Bourdieu, French social philosopher and originator of the term 'cultural capital', outlined his key ideas in the 1980s and 90s, arguing that culture and our consumption of cultural objects reflects more than just our individual tastes. Cultural consumption, Bourdieu argues, is shaped by social status or social class – that, for example, we are influenced to watch a certain type of film or buy a specific brand of newspaper because they are acceptable for the social groups that we are a part of. Stereotypically,

> Audiences buy or disregard media products because they do or don't correlate with their class-based dispositions.

Charlie Knight / Alamy Stock Photo

What do your media consumption habits say about you?

> Media students unashamedly investigate popular culture interests, and, in so doing, suggest that those forms of culture are equal in weight to more traditional or middle-class savvy forms of cultural capital.

middle class audiences, perhaps, are more likely to consume broadsheet news titles laden with middle class savvy content (politics, business news or literary reviews). Those same groups tune in to BBC Radio 4 or watch subtitled art house films. Working class audiences, conversely, are stereotypically more likely to see sports-dominated tabloid titles as appropriate to their needs or to watch mainstream genre-driven film output.

In this sense, cultural capital, Bourdieu tells us, is distinctly different from economic capital. The latter concept is defined by the kind of job we have or the economic assets we are able to muster. In short, the higher our class, the bigger our cars and houses are likely to be. Economic capital, as such, is a visible marker of social status – it can be defined in terms of bank balances and financial assets.

Cultural capital is a much shadier and subtler social force, Bourdieu argues. Understanding which art forms or which media products are socially acceptable for a particular group isn't as easily quantifiable or measurable. What constitutes cultural capital is shaped over time by a range of institutions and social forces, Bourdieu tells us, and it operates as an invisible set of rules that outlines what is culturally acceptable or unacceptable for the particular class to which an individual might want to belong.

Understanding those rules requires time, and operates as an attitudinal force whereby we develop specific class-based dispositions, or as Bourdieu calls them, a habitus, which leads us to

value or reject specific cultural forms. To middle class audiences, for example, the excessive fascination with celebrity culture in the tabloid press might be perceived as vulgar or tasteless, while to working class audiences, coverage of high art forms in broadsheets (opera, literary fiction or global cinema) are rejected as elitist or snobbish.

Bourdieu, as such, tells us that we apply the 'logic of association and difference' when consuming cultural material, that audiences buy or disregard media products because they do or don't correlate with their class-based dispositions. Bourdieu labels those purchases as objectified cultural capital and argues that they are visible markers that signal our class status to those around us: that the book, album, DVD or CD collections on our shelves, for example, are used to publicly broadcast a specific class status: a casually discarded copy of *Huck* or *Adbusters* on a coffee table might be used to infer a middle class hipster outlook, while the presence of a folded *Sun* newspaper tucked into dashboard signals the working class credentials of the van's owners.

Of course, Bourdieu argues, we also consume products ironically – selecting media because it is kitsch or chintzy – because it represents a vulgar perversion of what we would normally watch or read. Ironic consumption, as such, is a cultural day trip in a media world that is entirely different to that of our everyday disposition – a sampling of an alien habitus whilst knowing that we can return to the comfort of our usual media consumption habits afterwards.

Those class-based dispositions and habits, Bourdieu tells us, are nurtured initially by family as well as our educational experiences. It could be argued, for example, that privately schooled children are more likely to be brought in contact with elitist art forms via music tuition or visits to galleries where they are taught to appreciate the hidden qualities of specific artistic modes as superior. Bourdieu, importantly, is careful to acknowledge that neither high or low cultural forms are intrinsically better or worse than one another. Instead, he draws attention to the way that cultural consumption and the class habitus of social groups reflect wider social inequalities, arguing that those cultural forms associated with higher class groups are positioned as having more worth. This, Bourdieu argues, is a form of symbolic violence, wherein having the wrong sorts of habitus can be seen as less worthwhile. More contentiously, Bourdieu argues that a lack of cultural capital prevents individuals from knowing the rules of the game, and, as a result, can prevent them from becoming fully paid up members of a group or class. Not sharing similar cultural dispositions with an interviewer, for example, might mean that you are less likely to get the middle-class job of your dreams.

Maybe, just maybe, that's why Media Studies is so disrespected by its critics: Media students unashamedly investigate popular culture interests, and, in so doing, suggest that those forms of culture are equal in weight to more traditional or middle-class savvy forms of cultural capital. Media Studies, as such, breaks the rules of a well-established game: rules that, Bourdieu tells us, are routinely used to reinforce class-based social inequalities.

Mark Dixon is head of Media and Film at Durham Sixth Form Centre and author of *Media Theory for A Level: the Essential Revision Guide*.

Speak Bourdieu

- Habitus: a disposition or attitude that allows audiences to belong to a specific social or class-based group. Knowing, for example, how to analyse a modern painting might allow you to appreciate painting as an art form and give access to a middle-class disposition
- Class habitus: the shared disposition or attitude held by a particular group. Middle-class audiences, for example, are more likely to appreciate and value modern opera, politics or even specific sports like cricket.
- Economic capital: describes financial power – the money or wealth that an individual can access.
- Cultural capital: the use of art or culture as a marker of class or group-based belonging
- Objectified cultural capital: physical manifestations of cultural capital, objects that are bought, for example, or the culture venues we might visit (galleries or art house cinemas, for example).

Cultural Capital: class discussion questions

- Does social class still shape audience consumption in the digital age?
- Have you ever engaged in the ironic consumption of a media product? What was it? Why was it an ironic experience?
- Do audiences use media as objectified cultural capital? What examples can you think of in your own experience where media ownership has been used to signal class belonging?
- Is it possible to move out of the social class you were brought up in? What role does the media play in shaping those restrictions of freedoms?

a thoroughly modern magazine

the many pleasures of the gentlewoman

How does a publication that largely comprises luxury adverts feel so very different to other women's magazines? Georgia Platman is ready to join the club.

I didn't know I was a gentlewoman before I started researching this article, but have found my esteem for this unconventional magazine growing to the point where now I am all in. I can see, though, that *the gentlewoman* is not for everyone; even for me, it was not love at first sight. So, let me try to break down where its pleasures lie.

Pleasure One: Modern

'Modern' is a word that *The gentlewoman* loves. They refer to the articles in the first section of the magazine as 'Modernisms'. And they are so in love with this idea that they made a book out of some of these articles, 'Modern Manners' (Phaidon, 2021). But what actually makes it modern? Perhaps the easiest way is to show, rather than tell. Show what the magazine is not.

I was brought up on traditional women's magazines with their names that oozed glossy glamour: *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*. I can spot one from across a dentist's waiting room solely based on the layout, the colours, the photograph and the typefaces. It is a genre I know inside out. If you're struggling to conjure up an idea in your mind, simply go down to your nearest newsagent and scan the shelves. Check out the front covers of the four I have mentioned. Sure, they might be aimed at different ages and at women with different spending power, but they are all selling a similar idea of aspirational and stereotypical womanhood in similar ways. Of course, there are differences too: *Elle* veers slightly more into careers and travel, *Vogue* is fashion-focussed, while *Cosmo* has more sex. But, from afar, they all follow similar conventions, like using uppercase letters to GRAB YOUR ATTENTION. And they do this on purpose, to compete with each other.

Yet, *the gentlewoman* sticks a middle finger up at these conventions. Its minimalist covers are so completely different that it's actually shocking. The only text is the title, subtitle and name of the person in the photograph, which is taken as a portrait and framed like a painting. It's a bold statement that says this is more than just a magazine, this is art. In case it wasn't different enough, the masthead is in lower case! Compared with *Vogue*, *Elle* or *Cosmopolitan*, *the gentlewoman* has no need to shout. Its fresh take on what a magazine should look like stands out enough – made you look, it seems to whisper. From its very specific choices around typography to its choices around colour and blank space, *the gentlewoman* oozes class in a different and much more, yes, modern way.

The only text is the title, subtitle and name of the person in the photograph, which is taken as a portrait and framed like a painting. It's a bold statement that says this is more than just a magazine, this is art.

All photos by Claire Pollard and Georgia Platman

Pleasure Two: Welcome

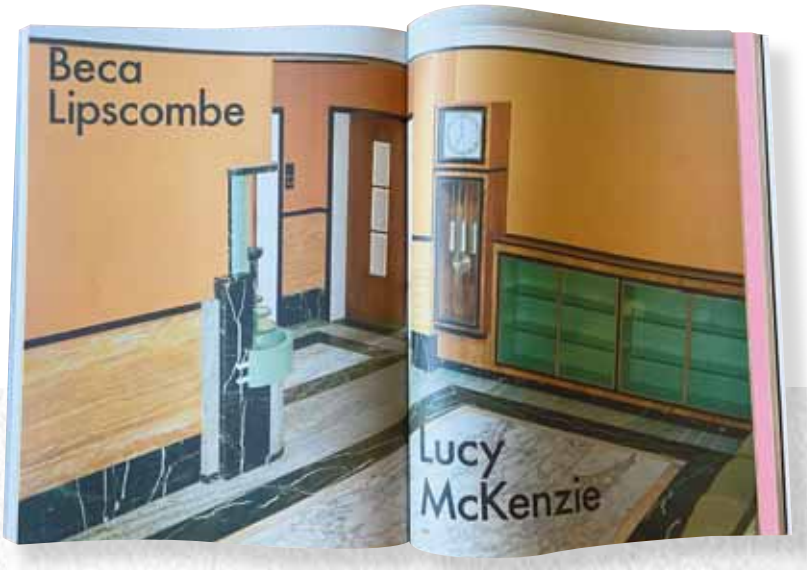
'Welcome to the fabulous women's magazine', *the gentlewoman*'s new subtitle coos. 'Come on in!', one page

on the website invites. This is for everyone, these phrases suggest. And indeed, representation in *the gentlewoman* is pleasingly wide ranging. *the gentlewoman* does a pretty good job of presenting a spectrum of womanhood (it may not surprise anyone to hear that the vast majority of its subjects are emphatically not men). This includes playing with ideas of gender performativity and stereotypes, such as the fashion feature on the smart summer suit (issue 25, pp.272-287) – a masterclass in androgyny. Most of the non-advertising-related subjects are creatives of some kind – artists, musicians, fashionistas, writers, actors, dancers – but there are occasional oddities, subjects that you simply would not get in other women's mags – an undertaker, a botanist, a Zambian rapper, a courtroom artist, a Moroccan mountaineer – that both elevate *the gentlewoman* to being more serious and give it a more down-to-earth feel than the ethereal airbrushed beauties we are usually bombarded with in women's magazines.

The women featured seem to be purposefully chosen across the age and race span. In the latest issue (no. 26), 19-year-old Isadora Barney graces the cover, but there are four features about women aged between 50 and 70. Furthermore, there are women from Africa and Asia, as well as Black and white women from the UK and North America, promoting a structural vision of a multicultural society and nodding to an intersectional, post-colonial future. Coupled with the fact that fashion advertising has become significantly more diverse in recent years, *The Gentlewoman* feels a world away from the pages of willowy white women that filled fashion magazines a decade ago.

Pleasure Three: Club

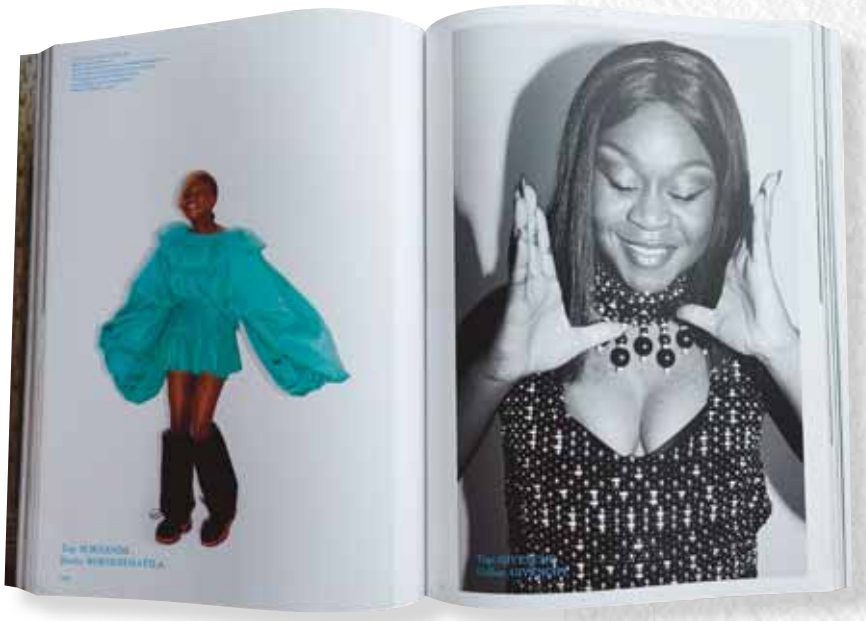
After spending a few days reading and thinking about *the gentlewoman*, I have a sense of not only knowing its creators and the creatives who feature on its pages, but that they know me too. They do, in a sense, for I fit the demographics of their average reader almost exactly. I am a woman, like 85 percent of *the gentlewoman*'s audience. I am 38, which falls right in the middle of its largest readership bracket: 61 percent of its readers are aged 28-46. As a teacher, I fall into one of the 'right' social classes to be an average reader: 47 per cent of *The Gentlewoman* 's readers are in the A or B categories of the NRS social grading system that the UK press uses to gather demographics.



And while I may not have the income of *the gentlewoman*'s average reader (a whopping £87k!) to back up my love of fine things, I had the upbringing and education that allowed me to access culture and appreciate aesthetics in an aspirational way (statistics from *the gentlewoman* Media Kit 2023).

In a bid to set itself apart, *the gentlewoman* is trying to create a bilateral relationship with its readers. Enter *The Gentlewoman* club – an 'international society' of 'sophisticated women and men who demand quality and originality from their agenda of cultural happenings' (text taken from the website and Media Kit). The club is both a real, offline way to get to know others who share similar interests, a way of deepening brand loyalty among readers, and a cynical way to covertly market products to a highly affluent and motivated targeted audience who are made to feel special. A mutually beneficial blur of constructed media and real life, that could be probed using end-of-audience theories by the likes of Clay Shirkey, fandom theories by Henry Jenkins, and David Gauntlett's ideas about how we, as media consumers, use media products to help create our identity. It could definitely be argued that by creating a club, *the gentlewoman* is able to tailor and construct a superglamorous and ultra-modern 'reality' for its readers – a simulation that would make Baudrillard perk up.

Yet I'm here for it, happy to play along. It's a physical magazine that only comes out twice a year (perfect for my information overwhelm). It'll look great



By creating a club, *the gentlewoman* is able to tailor and construct a superglamourous and ultra-modern 'reality' for its readers – a simulation that would make Baudrillard perk up.

on my bookshelves. It provides me with a glimpse into the world of high fashion and celebrity and picks a few choice social trends to help me feel in the know. It meets some of my needs for cultural and media interaction and all it asks in return is the price of a cinema ticket and that I put up with some targeted marketing. Yeah, duh, it's 2023. As an avid media consumer I can deal with and filter that.

Pleasure Four: Independent

The team behind *the gentlewoman* is small but clearly influential. Creators Gert Jonkers and Jop van Bennekom have come up with a number of subversive and unconventional publications. They are clearly savvy and use their websites as great adverts for their products, giving away just enough content to allow potential readers to enjoy full articles and get to know the brand, while being seductively minimalist enough to encourage you to buy the physical product. There are clues as to their business model. Running a small publication with a small team means that running costs can be kept low. Meanwhile the sheer number of luxury adverts tells you that the cost to the reader is not what's really propping up the production. *the gentlewoman*'s liberal use of cross-platform social media helps deepen readers' relationship with the brand, while being a largely free resource to the company.

An important part of the magazine from an industry point of view is what *the gentlewoman* calls its 'creative collaborations'. Also known as 'native advertising', brands use *the gentlewoman*'s own writers and photographers to market their products to *the gentlewoman*'s audiences. I usually find this type of marketing jarring and cynical, but somehow – probably by carefully selecting which brands it works with – *the gentlewoman* has made it seem like an utterly natural feature of the magazine. And the collaborations spill over into real life with special events for club members. All these strategies help to make *the gentlewoman* feel modern and relevant to those the magazine is targeting.

Of course, what pleases me may not please you; *the gentlewoman* is not for everyone. But this in turn gives it a sort of cult appeal – exclusivity, being in the know, enjoying the old medium of magazines in a modern way. Sign me up.

Georgia Platman is a writer, copy editor, filmmaker and Media teacher based in Suffolk.

M3GAN

When the trailer went viral at the end of last year, Blumhouse Productions knew they had a cult hit on their hands with the sci-fi horror film M3gan. Ian McMechan examines several factors that contributed to the films' success.

Not many Hollywood film premieres feature the middle-aged, male producer of the movie on the red carpet wearing an A-line dress, a large red and blue pussy bow, white tights and a blond wig. But then despite its undoubtedly generic aspect, *M3gan* is unusual in many ways. The original trailer was released in October 2022 and a section of it, featuring a clip of the lead character performing a set of unhinged dance moves, quickly became a viral hit on social media. Jason Blum, owner of Blumhouse Productions, the company which co-produced the film, chose to appear at its December unveiling as an outsize version of the lead character – an AI 'living doll' – in order to capitalise on this synergistic tidal wave. Maybe some onlookers found the outfit a little creepy but quite probably Blum just thought it would be fun to dress up and fun is a word that seems to feature heavily when the principal figures discuss the process of making *M3gan*.

The film's narrative centres on Gemma and her newly-orphaned niece, Cady. Gemma is a roboticist at a multi-national toy company. She creates a surrogate friend / sibling / caregiver / parent using the latest AI tools and, desperate to make a connection with Cady, lets her have the prototype – M3gan. The robot's prime directive is to ensure that no harm comes to her human companion but that principle soon becomes corrupted.

Blumhouse is noted for its 'minimalist' approach to production – it made *Paranormal Activity* supposedly for $15,000. That went on to become the most profitable movie in Hollywood history, netting over $200 million worldwide. *M3gan*'s production budget was $12 million – not a small amount of money but by industry standards for mainstream films, not a fortune. In an interview with *Variety* Blum explained his approach:

I've always been a big believer that movies are better when they cost less. When you push budgets down, you make better creative choices. It's hard to do.

Living Doll: M3gan

Making a Monster

One of the immediate impacts of this method for *M3gan* centred on the making of 'the monster'. Blum comments:

The way you stick the landing is you don't start prepping your movie until you know exactly what every detail of M3gan is going to look like, how you're going to shoot her…Special effects go wrong when they are rushed.

Speaking to *Indiewire*, Director Gerard Johnstone explained that

We didn't have the budget for a Boston Dynamics Robot, but we didn't want to rely on strings or puppeteers in blue suits.

Part of the solution turned out to be 10-year-old New Zealander Amie Donald, a trained dancer who eventually performed many of the film's stunts. For sequences featuring the killer doll in more static moments, the crew used an animatronic puppet; the more mobile shots featured Donald in a mask. The facial movements, many of which are highly nuanced, were created by 'tiny robotic gears… programmed by human puppeteers'. Designer Adrien Morot revealed that M3gan had 'dozens and dozens of servo motors inside her head' which moved the latex eyes, brows, cheeks, lips and neck. The eventual outcome is a mixture of the unnerving, the comedic and the immersive – for most viewers, including the teenage demographic which has taken *M3gan* forward at pace, she is a highly engaging creation. Maybe this owes something to the sources of Johnstone's inspiration – the design concept for the lead character drew on cinema icons of the 1950s such as Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly and Kim Novak.

Parenting the crisis: orphaned Cady trials the prototype AI M3gan.

A Genre Film

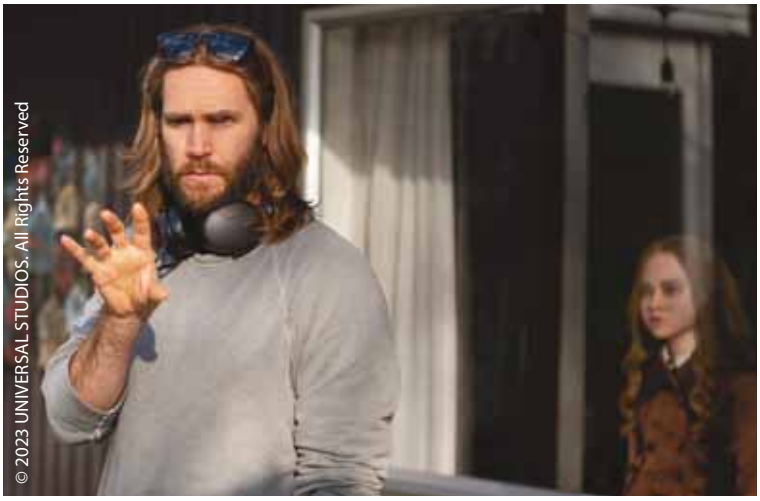
Despite the movie's slick style, it's hard to ignore the horror tropes, particularly in the slash and burn ending. The film could easily be seen as 'so far so Chucky'. Or maybe so Frankenstein. Possibly Pinocchio even, for the original 19th-century story of the toy-maker's wooden puppet coming to life is much darker than the famous Disney film of 1940. As a side note, James Wan, co-producer of *M3gan* has also worked extensively on the *Annabelle* series of horror movies. Asked who would win in a fight between the two psychotic dolls, Wan said 'Yeah, no contest. It's M3gan.'

However, beyond the slasher clichés, there are other cinematic influences threaded through *M3gan*'s narrative – they're noticeable, but they don't obscure the main attraction. M3gan's death twirl as she tumbles after David, her corporate prey, in the one of the film's most climactic moments looks knowingly back to Daryl Hannah's crazily acrobatic turn as the replicant Pris in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. The closing battle between Cady, Gemma, Bruce (Gemma's earlier robot creation) and the demented doll draws on Sigourney Weaver's do-or-die scrap with the Alien Queen in James Cameron's *Aliens*. The mangled robotic corpse dragging its entrails after it comes straight from the original *Terminator* film. The half-haunting, gently menacing voice of an artificial intelligence attempting to take control of its own destiny, echoes Hal in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. These are all genre-defining sequences and *M3gan* tweaks them effectively, adding other layers for its audiences to unpick.

Music

Another of *M3gan*'s post-modern selling points is its use of songs. In a key moment of character realisation M3gan sings a lullabied version of David Guetta and Sia's 'Titanium' to a traumatised Cady – the effect on audiences has been striking, the *Los Angeles Times* reporting that 'Inside a theatre in Glendale, the scene cued incredulous laughter.' By mid-January, the M3gan version of 'Titanium' had racked up 4 million views on TikTok. Later in the film, an original song called 'Tell Me Your Dreams', written by music supervisor Andrea von Foerster and composer Anthony Willis soundtracks another tense moment. Willis describes it as 'a Disney-ish parody, (giving) it… more of an impact' than the mash-up version the original script had called for. To add to the glamour, Taylor Swift allowed 'It's Nice to Have

You're next Gerard Johnstone!



a Friend' to be used in the trailer. These kinds of embellishments contribute significantly to the film's just-the-right-side-of-kitsch tone.

There are lots of other interesting things to know about *M3gan*. For example, Akela Cooper's sharp, sleek script was originally 'way gorier'. Cooper states

> **It was toned down because once the trailer went viral teenagers got involved and you want them to be able to see it.**

The un-rated version was scheduled to be an add-on to the DVD & Blu-ray release in March 2023. Additionally, the movie has filtered into already lively debates about our relationship with technology, the role of parenting and the ethics of creating sentient robots. Finally, Megan Thee Stallion was super-excited about the film's release, vowing on Twitter to be 'THEE FIRST in line to see *M3GAN*!!!'. It would have been a long queue – just two weeks after its January 5th. release, *M3gan* had netted over $100 million worldwide.

Jason Blum states that he never plans a follow-up until way after a film has hit the market but that in this case

> **We broke our cardinal rule…I felt so bullish that we started entertaining a sequel earlier than we usually do**

Sure enough, *M3gan 2.0* is slated for a January 2025 release and will likely be one of the most widely anticipated movies of the next two years.

Ian McMechan is and experienced teacher and senior examiner.

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INTERVIEW WITH KEANE SHAW

‘Little Bit of Love’ was the breakthrough hit for Tom Grennan, reaching the top 10 in early 2021 and paving the way for a number one album and Brit nominations. The video also racked up an impressive number of views and told a story that mirrored Grennan’s own background. Dan Clayton talked to Keane Shaw, the video’s director about what made it so special.

Grennan and Shaw on location for the ‘A Little Bit of Love’ video

Images courtesy of Keane Shaw

The song and video have been immensely popular (well over 40 million views on YouTube alone) so that must give you a sense of satisfaction. How does it feel for your work to have been seen by so many people?

To be totally honest, I have to keep reminding myself how many people 40 million is… ha. Obviously as a director, from writing up the idea at home, to shooting it on a cold December's day, to 40 million people watching it, that's kind of what it's all about right? But for me it really hits home whenever I go to watch Tom perform the song and see the crowd's reaction, or hearing it all over the radio or over the tannoy at events. Seeing people's reactions, being able to be a part of the process with Tom and his team, is what makes it all the more real.

I get the impression that the commissioning process for this didn't follow the usual pattern, as you and Tom already knew each other. Was it a question of him liking your work and making that link or was it more complicated than that?

Whenever I work with Tom it always starts with a WhatsApp voice note. It usually starts with him telling me I'm too busy flying around the world to see him, and then I pretty much tell him the same thing. He will then send me a second voice note explaining the idea for a song he's just written. That's where I love my job: I get to take a tiny little seed of an idea and spin it all different ways. That's what I love about working with him; because of our relationship we really can just say it how it is, good or bad. I can sit and listen to where the song comes from, what he's trying to say in the lyrics and then mould that into something visually complimentary.

Can you talk us through your creative process with this video? Did you have particular images in mind from the lyrics that you wanted to work with (the 'swimming in the deep end' theme, for example) and what did you want to do with them?

You know what, I never connected 'swimming in the deep end' with the actual video concept – probably makes more sense now I think about it! The concept was always based on Tom's real relationship with his little brother. I could always feel the bond they had for each other, the way that Tom almost felt it was his responsibility to raise him and steer him in the right direction. During the pre-production process, we often talked about mental health with each other – in particular, mental health for men of our age – which also pushed the creative thinking one step further into the realms of toxic masculinity and the pressures of it in today's generation. I never wanted to create another 'boy meets girl' pop music video, so for me channelling these ideas into something more brutal and raw, complemented with such a beautiful, heart-warming song struck the perfect balance.

It feels like there are also feelings of frustration and hope in the lyrics – frustration at how things are and hope that they can be changed – so did this mood transfer into your technical decisions for the video? For example, with the speed of the edits, the kinds of shots you wanted, the performance from Tom?

I think with any music video it's important to use the momentum in lyrics and arrangement to create that rollercoaster of emotion. It's then my job to make sure we get those climaxes and crescendos in the right moments to help elevate both the song and the narrative. The overall creative style leant into British cinema, shooting on 16mm film, having that brutal, very raw feeling to it, which for me helped create that overall aesthetic, adding texture and grit where needed, whilst making it feel very sentimental and intimate.

Images courtesy of Keane Shaw

Bonded: Tom and Keane come from similar backgrounds

> I think there's a time and a place where artists need to let their guards down to allow their audience to get a bit closer to them, understand them, connect with them.

Images courtesy of Keane Shaw

You've talked before (in the NME) about the video being 'a story of two brothers' so was that something that fed into the need for a narrative in the video? What did you want to show in that narrative and what were the important moments in that story?

Yes, that was always our base narrative. I wanted to show a more earnest side to Tom, away from the huge star he is. Personally, I think there's a time and a place where artists need to let their guards down to allow their audience to get a bit closer to them, understand them, connect with them. This was the moment for Tom to say something more with his video.

In that same interview you describe the video as being 'a representation of toxic masculinity and unconditional love'. How did you want to convey these representations of masculinity in the video?

Both growing up on council estates, Tom and I often discussed the challenges this brought. When you're young, you are always questioned about why you dress a certain way, listen to the music you listen to, why you aren't a builder or a fighter like your dad. For me there was always that pressure to go and be like the rest of the family, do certain things that everybody else on the estate was doing and at some point, there was a danger of that. That's what I wanted to portray in this video. Whether it's the surroundings you grow up in, financial pressures or even just trying to look after your family, there's always a reason to drift off course and delve into darker pastures. Of course, the other thing with a music video is you need to condense a narrative down into 3 minutes, plus the music performance itself, so you don't really get much time to play it out, so it's key to keep the narrative short, sweet and to the point.

It's a very male video – no women feature in it at all – and you've talked already about your conversations with Tom around 'toxic masculinity', so was this an important part of what you wanted to explore?

I suppose it's a combination of things. The sub-narrative is that they've been left alone to fend for themselves for one reason or another, no motherly figure around, which everybody needs. I chose to leave a female figure for that reason; it added to the loneliness, the battle for Tom how he would fulfil not only that alpha male role, but also that tender, caring role of a mother. Those delicate moments in the piece are exactly that, Tom showing his audience the endearing side to his personality, both in the video and in real life.

Can you tell us a bit about your choice of location? Was there a conscious decision to signal a working class setting?

The locations were incredible: an untouched 1970s house in South London, no art department was really needed – it was so perfect. Visually for me these textures, patterns and colours just add another layer of beauty when it comes to the video. In my mind it always was this house that felt like they'd inherited from their grandmother or something, passed on and not really changed as they didn't have the funds to. The colour palette of the location also helped me bring it all to life in the colour grade, giving it that nostalgic feeling whilst still giving it a contemporary look.

As well as the grittier dress codes, there's some impressive knitwear on show! How far is that about Tom's identity as a performer and how much about the world of the story in the video?

Talking about grandmas, I think we borrowed a few cardigans from some on that day for the wardrobe! The brief for styling that day was to find something that reflected these locations,

Representing masculinities: frames from Shaw's video

Images courtesy of Keane Shaw

> The overall creative style leant into British cinema, shooting on 16mm film, having that brutal, very raw feeling to it, which for me helped create that overall aesthetic.

> The, concept was always based on Tom's real relationship with his little brother. I could always feel the bond they had for each other, the way that Tom almost felt it was his responsibility to raise him and steer him in the right direction.

to be totally honest. In the street scenes it was always that sports luxe Brad Pitt *Snatch* vibe – tracksuits, vests, gold jewellery. Then with the interior locations I wanted to reinforce that cosy feel, again, adding texture and patterns wherever possible. I'd never put Tom out of his comfort zone and to be honest, his wardrobe is pretty interesting to say the least so I very much think this was more Tom's normal identity than anything show-related!

Just one of Grennan's impressive knits

Images courtesy of Keane Shaw

You've directed quite a few commercials as well as music videos. What does a music video allow you to do that a commercial doesn't?

They're both challenging, difficult beasts in their own way. I think a music video allows more room for experiment, whether it's testing out a new technique, camera move or piece of equipment. Most music video directors definitely have a screw loose – the weirder the better most of the time! Whenever briefs come in, I really don't think there's a 'wrong' idea when it comes to music videos: it's all open to interpretation of the track and what it makes you feel and that's why the pitch and shoot process is so complex. There are a lot of people you have to make sure are happy, not only the artist themselves!

And finally, what are your favourite music videos at the moment and which are the ones that really made an impression on you when you were growing up?

Jamie XX, 'Gosh' has to be one of the best videos ever made. The complexity in the location, the choreography and styling with simple yet epic camera moves really does grip you. Childish Gambino, 'This Is America' is obviously a masterpiece, but then you have simple ideas like The Strokes, 'You Only Live Once' where the room fills up with oil. It's beautiful, simple and just can never be repeated. That's what makes a good video in my opinion, an original idea, where not much happens, but when it does, it's genius.

Keane Shaw spoke to *MediaMagazine*'s Associate Editor, Dan Clayton.

Ken and Jackie one of the 'youth' storylines of early *Coronation Street*

Trinity Mirror / Mirrorpix / Alamy Stock Photo

RETURNING TO THE ROVERS

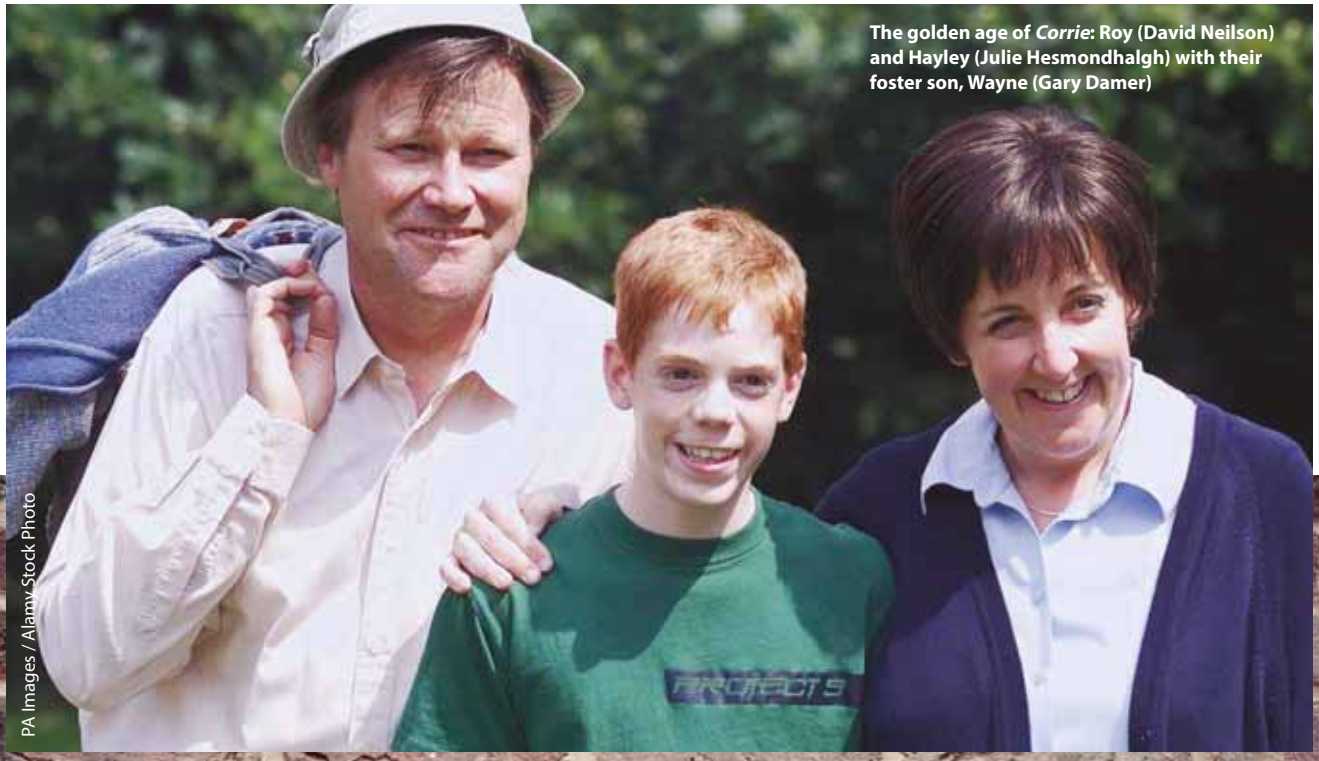
Soaps have always been a core part of traditional TV schedules, often broadcast for 30 minutes in the early evening. Michael Massey examines ITV's decision to schedule *Coronation Street* later and for longer and explains why life on the best-known street in Britain is still important for an understanding of how TV drama works.

It's December 9th 1960. On our small black and white TV we see an image of a grey, overcast skyline revealing the rooftops of drab, two-up, two-down, terraced houses, crowded together, hardly a hair's breadth between them. On the soundtrack we hear the brass band strains of a tune that manages to be both jaunty and melancholy. A rather shaky superimposed white title appears in bold capitals: CORONATION STREET.

This very first visit to the street would determine the future not just of this particular programme but how audiences will react to the new concept of a television soap opera. Sixty-three years on, and no doubt beyond, the format is still a staple of British TV schedules.

Sixty-three years is almost a lifetime by anybody's standards; in televisual terms, sixty-three years of uninterrupted serial drama is undoubtedly a record! When *Coronation Street* first aired in December 1960, its creator, Tony Warren's cast of back-to-back, working-class characters, living in their back-to-back, working class, terraced houses in a Manchester back street, would have been immediately recognisable to its northern audience and working-class audiences across the country but it was initially scheduled for a modest thirteen-episode run. At the time, an enthusiastic cast member dared to suggest that Florizel Street (its original working title) would be likely to run for longer than the BBC's radio drama, *The Archers*, then in its tenth year! Both dramas are still going strong even today.

Those early episodes were broadcast at 7pm and lasted for thirty minutes, including adverts. After more than six decades, '*Corrie*' as it has come to be known, has now achieved the



The golden age of *Corrie*: Roy (David Neilson) and Hayley (Julie Hesmondhalgh) with their foster son, Wayne (Gary Damer)

PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

unprecedented status of three prime time hour-long slots scheduled at 8pm, turning it from a regular thirty-minute soap (although its producers have always insisted on calling it a serial drama), into an hour-long major drama. Such a change may not seem world-shattering, but such a shift in the way the show is broadcast could be perceived as a serious recognition of the *Coronation Street*'s continued importance in the ever-contentious business of the primetime scheduling of drama.

Why was the decision taken to make such a move? Media interest suggests that the move by ITV is a deliberate attempt to compete head-to-head with the BBC's *Eastenders* soap opera, now in its 38th year. It's likely that the change also takes into account the different ways that people watch TV nowadays and how the producers are responding to the fact that streaming services offer an array of hour-long binge-worthy dramas that viewers can watch at any time of day. In this climate, a 30 minute early-evening drama or soap no may no longer feel sufficiently involving or relevant.

ITV, however, claims that the hour-long episodes will give the drama a much broader canvas on which to present its storylines. A sample 30-minute episode from 2020 contained 17 scenes, covering five different storylines. Some scenes lasted for not more than a few seconds, others were considerably longer. Compare this with the first episode in 1960, which had nine scenes and five different storylines, and the second, which had 11 scenes and six different storylines. Similarly, compare these statistics with one of the new one-hour format episodes from June 2022, which had 35 scenes, but still only six storylines. At this early point in the new formatting, we can see that the number of storylines seems to remain constant at six, but the number of scenes is virtually doubled, suggesting that, for the moment, the one-hour format is still really two 30-minutes episodes edited together. All of which suggests that Warren's original plan to run about half-a-dozen storylines simultaneously has actually remained constant throughout the show's long history, despite the increase in the number of characters, dwellings and social spaces.

It is interesting to note, though, that scenes from the very early episodes (available on YouTube) tended to be longer than they are now. This was largely because each episode was recorded live (videotape recording and editing was in its infancy) and camera movements had to be plotted precisely, especially since the cameras were large and bulky and the sets rather less substantial than they are now – watch that bannister rail seriously wobble when Dennis Tanner descends in episode one! Consequently, there were no smart, digitally-driven, post-production editing moves as there are now.

It could be argued, then, that hour-long episodes might give the characters and their storylines more time and space to breathe as the narratives unfold, more like a featured one-hour TV drama

From the very first episode, Warren was committed to the notion that *Coronation Street* should be character-driven, but it was clear from the first few minutes of that first episode that the characters provoked issues, and it was equally arguable that issues were as central to the drama as the

An iconic moment from the 80s: the villainous Alan Bradley is killed by a tram in Blackpool

Trinity Mirror / Mirrorpix / Alamy Stock Photo

Dustin Hoffman guest stars in 1983

characters who generated them. Even that very first episode laid the foundations for issues that are just as valid in the current storylines: family conflict, marital breakdown, troublesome young people, confrontational behaviour, serious misunderstandings, class conflict and perceived snobbery, criminal backgrounds and behaviour, all knitted together with lashings of dramatic irony and genuine northern accents

This is not to say that characters were not prominent, and the 'intimacy' of the 'small screen', as it was then, meant that the audience was literally brought face to face with those early inhabitants of the famous cobbles. Big close-ups meant that every facial feature was brought into sharp focus, revealing the personality and nature of the characters we were watching, and often the emotions they were feeling in reaction to what was happening.

So why do people still return to the Rovers? It's a common misconception that the soaps are aimed at the older demographic: the very first episode featured a 20-year old Ken Barlow as a university student in conflict with his bigoted father, his girlfriend, Susan, a young Dennis Tanner in conflict with his unsympathetic mother, Elsie, and her daughter, Linda, a young married woman, who has left her young husband.

Recent storylines have featured many young people and the issues that concern them, including Sam Blakeman, 11, coming to terms with the murder of his mother; Hope Stape, 12, facing the publication of a book about her father, murderer John Stape; Max Turner, 16, who became involved with a criminal gang of racist activists; Summer Spellman, 18, deciding to become a surrogate mother for a childless couple; Asha Alahan, 18, who had issues with online trolling and was also the girlfriend of a teenage thug and convicted killer; Amy Barlow and her boyfriend, Jacob, who was exploited by his father and made to become involved with drug dealing – the list goes on.

It could be argued that many of these storylines have a dual purpose: to engage younger people in the issues that they raise, and to raise awareness among parents and grandparents, encouraging them to ask themselves the difficult questions, such as 'What would I do, if my child behaved like this or was affected by the behaviour of others?' ,'How might I talk to my child about these issues?', 'What mistakes made by the characters should I try to avoid?'.

It is often said that programmes like *Coronation Street* are deliberately exaggerated for dramatic effect and entertainment value, but we shouldn't ignore the fact that much serious research on the part of both writers and actors lies behind the storylines, and many episodes carry offers of advice for those affected in some way by the events portrayed in them.

There have been concerns over the years that under the regimes of some producers, *Coronation Street* has become too graphic, too violent, too realistic, and that it has lost some of the leavening of humour and the warmth of humanity which was once its trademark. I would argue that the show, quite rightly, has evolved to reflect the social and economic contexts in which it is produced.

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The global cast of *1899*

© Rasmus Voss

LOST AT SEA

1899, Complex Television, Active Audiences & Netflix

An example of complex, compelling 'puzzle box' storytelling, *1899* entered 2023 hugely popular but was then unceremoniously cancelled. Kirsty Worrow asks what makes it such great TV and what its cancellation tells us about Netflix's direction of travel.

This is not the article I wanted to write for you, dear reader. I wanted to write about my television obsession of 2022: Netflix's complex mystery thriller *1899*, notable for its multi-lingualism, creative use of virtual production technology, diverse representations, and its ambitious narrative. *1899* is about a European steam liner, the Kerberos, bound for New York, but its passage is derailed by the discovery of a ghost-ship in the mid-Atlantic. The passengers and crew are tested by unexplained deaths, visions of past traumas and impossible events. Despite landing in mid-November 2022 and performing well globally, in early January 2023, Netflix decided not to renew *1899* for a second season. So, with a heavy heart, I am writing this as an exploration of Netflix's default assumptions about viewing behaviours, its measures of success and the impact of these on more complicated, slow-burn, niche long-form television dramas.

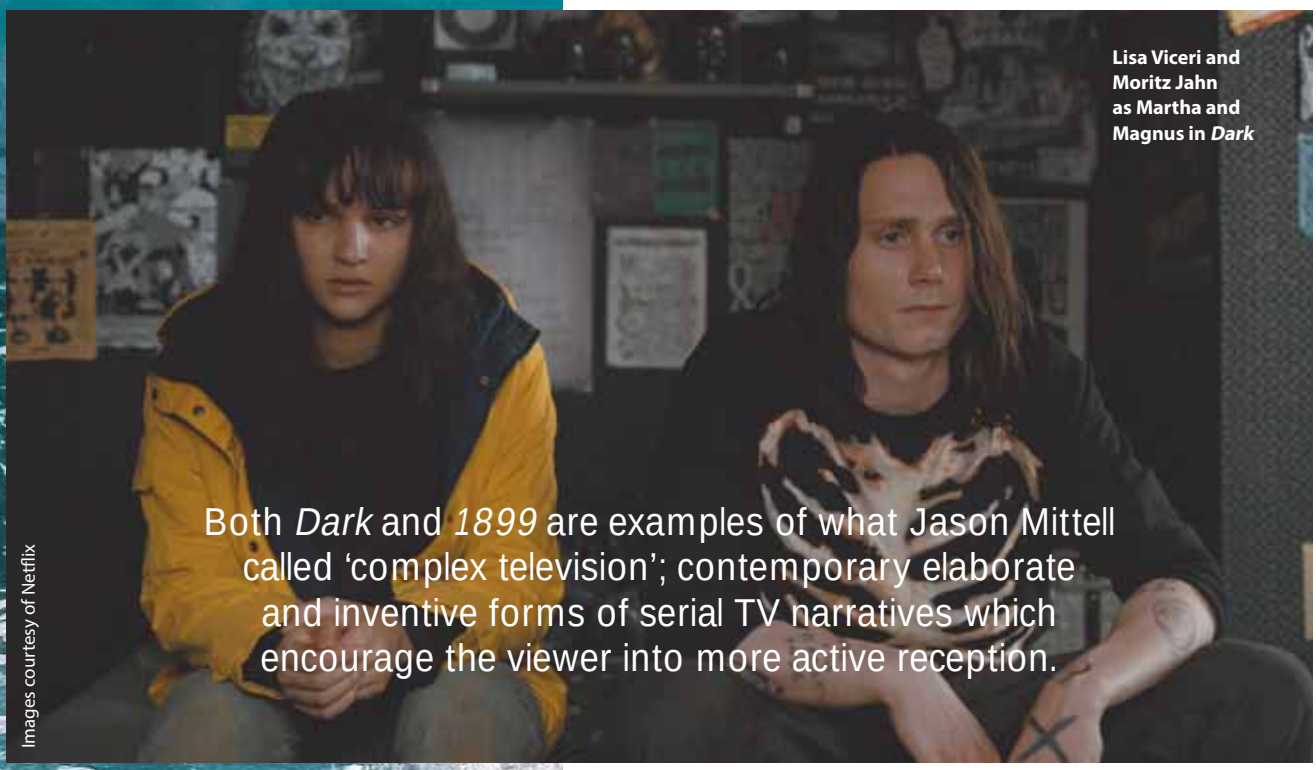
1899 was conceived by Baran bo Odar and Jantje Friese, the couple responsible for the Scandi-Noir-inspired time-travel saga *Dark* (Netflix, 2017-2020). Initially sold to international audiences as Germany's answer to *Stranger Things*, *Dark* became a critical and cult hit, proving itself to be far more than a European cash-in, combining 80s nostalgia and science-fiction tropes. Odar and Friese were praised for crafting an intricate and mind-bending fairy-tale. Consequently, their follow-up was much anticipated. Like *Dark*, they conceived *1899* as a narrative to be told across three seasons, with the first season establishing theme, characters and emphasising the big questions for the viewer. Both *Dark* and *1899* are examples of what Jason Mittell called 'complex television'; contemporary elaborate and inventive forms of serial TV narratives which encourage the viewer into more active reception. Both are also 'puzzle box narratives'; stories which foreground enigma codes, often employing non-linear structures to heighten the mystery. Frequent dramatic reveals that satisfy the viewer whilst simultaneously giving rise to further, more unexpected questions are conventional of this genre.

Images courtesy of Netflix

After *Dark*

After the success of *Dark* and the phenomenal response to South Korean thriller *Squid Game* (2021-), Netflix wanted Odar and Friese to create a series which could reach a global audience, contributing €48m of *1899*'s €60m budget, making it Germany's most expensive television production to date. It was ambitious beyond the expected narrative complexity: the ensemble cast was an international one, as Friese (motivated to provide a more positive representation of European community in the face of Brexit and the migrant crisis) crafted a show where many nationalities were represented and where everyone speaks their mother tongue. Consequently, *1899* has eight principal languages, which created unique challenges in relation to casting, writing, performance, and direction.

Furthermore, the narrative demanded global locations, as the backstories of the principal characters are revealed. Pre-pandemic, this would have needed some location shooting, but Covid-19 restrictions called for a more imaginative response. The majority of *1899*'s production was done at Babelsberg Studios in Berlin using LED 'Volume' studio technology. This high quality, floor-to-ceiling180 degree digital backdrop meant that, unusually, a lot of the VFX work had to be completed prior to shooting and was augmented by a team of digital artists on set. The use of the 'Volume' meant that there were no green screens and that VFX elements



Lisa Viceri and Moritz Jahn as Martha and Magnus in *Dark*

Images courtesy of Netflix

Both *Dark* and *1899* are examples of what Jason Mittell called 'complex television'; contemporary elaborate and inventive forms of serial TV narratives which encourage the viewer into more active reception.

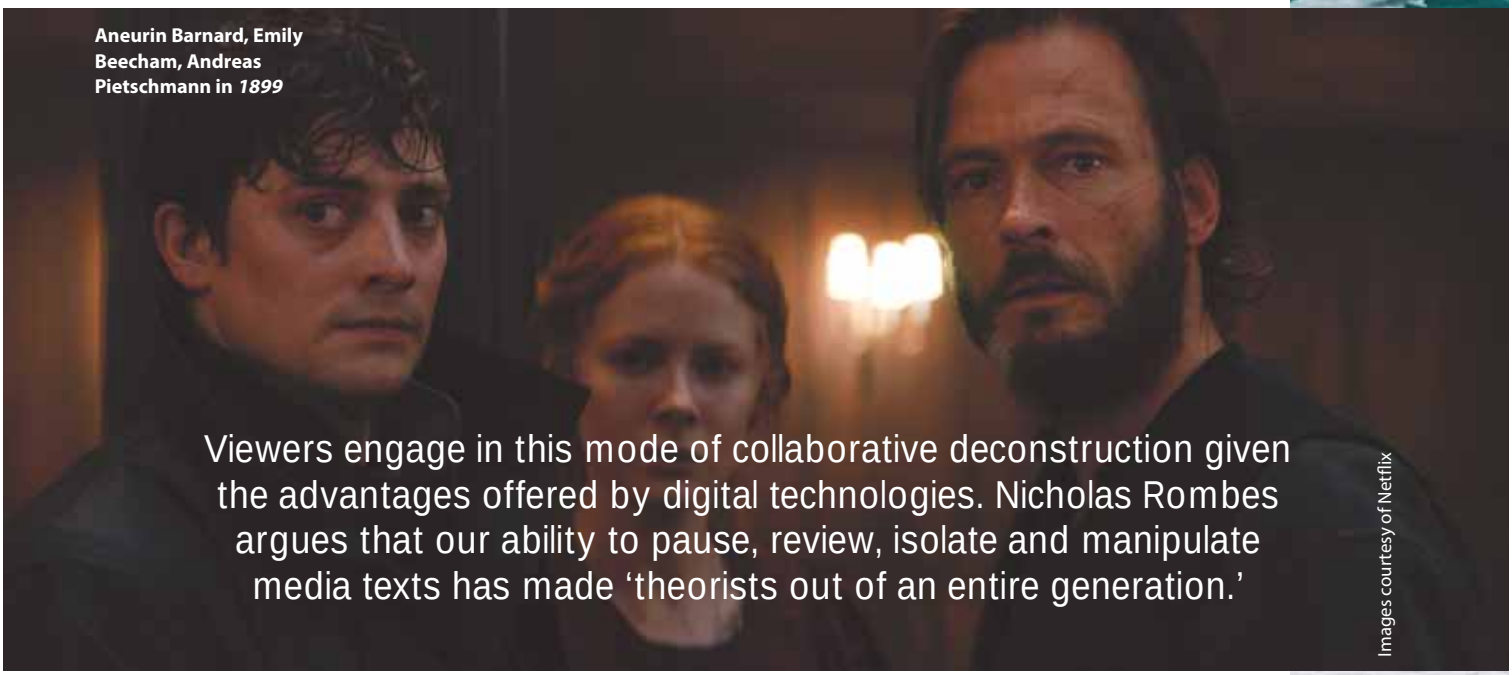
(commonly added after) were used to help create verisimilitude during shooting. Actor Isabella Wei recalls how she experienced motion sickness from standing on the stationary deck in the studio; the projected footage of the moving sea on the LED screens tricked her body into thinking she was at sea. Renowned VFX house Industrial Light and Magic pioneered this technology for parts of *The Mandalorian* (2019 -), but *1899* marks the first production to use it as the primary method for integrating VFX with live action footage.

1899 at Number One

Netflix released *1899* in mid-November, just before the World Cup and before Netflix released the much-anticipated Tim Burton's *Wednesday* series (2022 -). Nevertheless, according to German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, initially *1899* was the most watched show on Netflix in 58 countries. It remained in the top ten in many territories throughout December. An online fandom community developed and got busy forensically deconstructing episodes and speculating about events that might occur in the future. This is now typical fan engagement for contemporary complex television, what Mittel calls 'drillable media' – content which is designed for repeated viewings and shared analytical discussion. Fans of *Dark* were primed for this, as their experience unpacking Odar and Friese's previous work demonstrated their ability to create a rich text, constructed for active deconstruction. Friese talked about the challenges of writing for this type of audience, and said that she has to ensure that her works are rich with clues that they can interpret. Fans discussed the symbolism in the mise-en-scène (like the recurring alchemical symbol for Earth which is in each character's costume), speculated about the relevance of the inclusion of classical references, and pondered the significance of characters' names. Viewers engage in this mode of collaborative deconstruction given the advantages offered by digital technologies. Nicholas Rombes argues that our ability to pause, review, isolate and manipulate media texts has made 'theorists out of an entire generation.'

Netflix pioneered the online streaming platform, and consequently upended the traditional models of television distribution and consumption. Whilst commercial terrestrial broadcasters were tied to specific episode lengths and structures to accommodate advertising, Netflix subscriptions meant viewers no longer had to tolerate such disruptions and show runners were free to experiment with the length and form of television narratives. Similarly, Netflix could try out different strategies for the release of their shows, with some series having new episodes released weekly and others being released as whole seasons at once for binge-watching. For Netflix, the binge-watching model has become the default expectation for consumption, as evidenced by the auto-play feature giving viewers just a few short seconds to stop their show before the next episode starts.

This mode of viewing has given rise to the 'completion rate' as a key performance indicator for Netflix. This is the percentage of a show's viewership that completes the season within



Aneurin Barnard, Emily Beecham, Andreas Pietschmann in *1899*

Viewers engage in this mode of collaborative deconstruction given the advantages offered by digital technologies. Nicholas Rombes argues that our ability to pause, review, isolate and manipulate media texts has made 'theorists out of an entire generation.'

Images courtesy of Netflix

Images courtesy of Netflix

Mutiny aboard the Kerberos!

a given time. At the time of *1899*'s cancellation announcement (a mere six weeks after release), the completion rate stood reportedly at 34% with 50% being the threshold which makes renewal more likely. The fans of the show, already united in a short space of time because of its 'drillable' nature, mobilised online to protest against the decision, using hashtags, co-ordinated appeals, petitions, memes, marathons, etc. Commentators noted how unjust this cancellation appeared to be, not just because of the timing of the release given the plethora of festive viewing options, but the swiftness of it: a complex television show, particularly a puzzle box narrative often works better with time to digest between episodes, so a binge-watch mode of consumption doesn't allow the dramatic reveals to be pondered on and theorised about. This is a type of television that clearly benefits from the weekly release model still in vogue with producers like HBO; *House of the Dragon* (2022) and *The Last of Us* (2023) both benefited from being 'appointment viewing' which sustained public interest and kept them in the popular consciousness beyond their broadcast windows.

Netflix: Cancel Culture?

Data from media analysts Parrot Analytics suggests that in January 2023, *1899* was the third most in-demand show across all platforms according to their metrics at the time of writing, suggesting that Netflix's decision was perhaps premature. Though the context of Netflix's many recent cancellation decisions is important to note: after launching in 2007 and having spent the last 15 years spearheading dramatic shifts to global media culture (and reaping the financial benefits in the process), 2022 marked a downturn for Netflix. A drop in subscriptions affected the corporation's spending on new productions. Consequently, it launched a new ad-supported subscription tier in late 2022, making it susceptible to the same market pressures which it once prided itself on avoiding. Later it lost around $11 billion from the value of its shares as the launch of the new tier was hampered by technical issues.

Regardless of the realities of Netflix's situation in this new era, its decisions to not renew series leaves many viewers with a sour taste and with an increasing archive of unfinished stories. Many fans have taken to social media to share their dismay over cancellations, offering evidence of their own subscription cancellation. Furthermore, many savvy viewers claim they are reluctant to start a new show until it's complete, or at least well-established, to guard themselves against the disappointment of getting invested in a story if there is a risk of not being able to finish it. More than that, there has been widespread concern about what *1899*'s cancellation means for more interesting, complex television. Wired described it as 'the end of Netflix's weird era', suggesting that the platform is at the mercy of the same market forces that it once so proudly offered an alternative to.

Kirsty Worrow is Programme Leader for Media Studies, Film Studies and Music at Shrewsbury Sixth form College.

from the MM vaults

Clear the Schedules? Scheduling and event television in the digital age – Chris Welch, *MM67*
The Fall of Netflix and What it Means for the Animation Industry – Laurence Russell, *MM81*
Netflix and the Cultural Industries – Nick Lacey, *MM63*

Úrsula Corberós is Tokyo, the narrator of *Money Heist*

MONEY HEIST

A modern twist on the heist genre?

A criminal mastermind, a band of skilled thieves and the one big job that means they'll never need to work again. Such are the key components of heist narratives. Does the Spanish drama *Money Heist* offer anything new? Dawid Soltysik kicks down the doors of the bank vault to find out.

Jeosm/Netflix

Images courtesy of Netflix

La Casa De Papel is a highly-acclaimed non-English language long-form television drama which first gained commercial success in Spain, on Atenea 3, part of Atresmedia, a Spanish media conglomerate. Its global success came about when Netflix acquired distribution rights for the show and added it to its library in December 2017. Renamed *Money Heist*, it became one of the most-watched Netflix series, with an estimated global viewership of over 65 million households. The show also received critical acclaim, with praise for its well-written characters, intricate plot, and strong social and political themes. Netflix has renewed the show for multiple seasons, ensuring its continued popularity. Along with these qualities, as a text for analysis, Money Heist offers a great range of interesting points around representation of gender, diversity and some intriguing character development.

Understanding the Genre

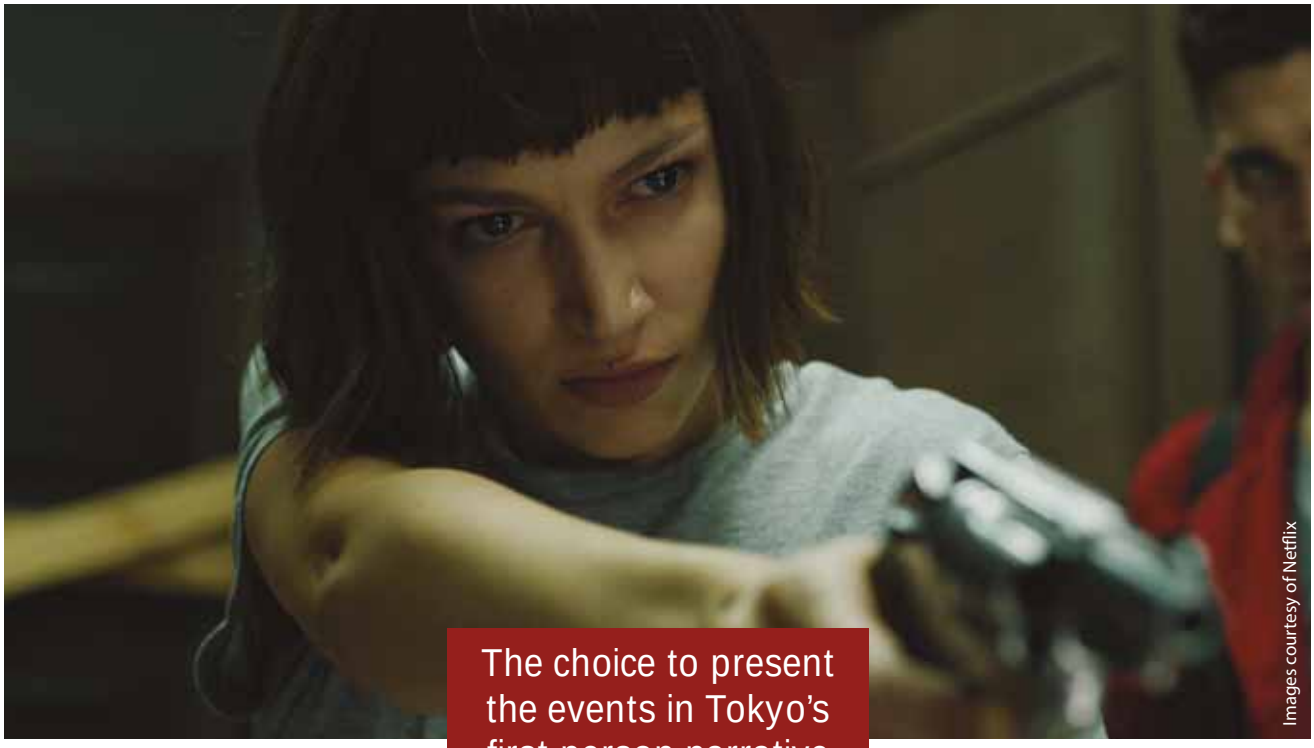
It is crucial to understand the genre context of a text to comprehend how representations are constructed. Its characters and plot – which involves carefully assembling a team, planning an opportunity-of-a-lifetime 'job', and executing it with precision, places it firmly in the heist genre. The Professor embodies the stereotype of the heist mastermind and the show's technical elements –slow-motion editing, flashbacks to develop characters, and dramatic music – all align with the conventions of the heist genre. *Money Heist* also uses intertextuality to reinforce its genre identity.

> The heist genre has been a staple in film and television for many years and it remains popular, however, in recent times, audiences have become more discerning and have come to expect more diversity in their media choices.

For example, the overt intertextuality to *Inside Man* (2006) such as the elaborate heist planning and the aliases named after cities is a clear homage to the heist genre. Interestingly, the first episode features an iconic shot of Denver with his father, Moscow breaking into the Royal Bank of Spain's money vault and is super reminiscent of a similar shot in *Inside Man* where Dalton gains entrance to the money vault in the Manhattan bank.

References to *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) with the use of aliases for each character and other recognisable elements from popular heist films like *Ocean's Eleven* (2001) are all employed to attract an audience familiar with the genre and its expectations.

We can examine the representations of gender in the show by focusing on two of its main protagonists. The heist genre has traditionally been male-dominated, with men occupying the central roles as the masterminds and executors of heist plans. In *Money Heist* the central most powerful character, 'The Professor', is male but his portrayal is more interesting than an average crime boss or gang leader. In *Money Heist* women also occupy prominent roles as both leaders and equal members of the heist team at the frontline of the heist and our narrator, the character through whom we experience the action is Tokyo – a female professional thief. The show features complex, multi-dimensional female characters who are resourceful and respected by their male peers.



Images courtesy of Netflix

Tokyo

In Season 1 Episode 1, Tokyo is depicted as a bold and resolute female character who is ready to risk everything to attain her objectives and as such makes a fascinating character to analyse. As a key member of the heist team, she takes on a central position as the lead thief. In the opening shots, Tokyo is portrayed in a provocative and sexualised manner, with the use of red lighting emphasising her sexuality, while the close-up shots of her wearing little clothing and holding a gun, highlight her power and danger. This kind of representation, that mixes female strength and sexiness, is rooted in the third wave-feminist movement and is an image that is likely to be familiar to audiences of the heist and crime genres. Offering audiences something so familiar and recognisable, reminiscent of some of Tarantino's female characters from the 90s and early 00s, could be a way of ensuring the success of the show, and possibly an example of the creators minimising risk to maximising profit.

Although Tokyo is a skilled criminal operating on equal terms in a traditionally male environment, the male gaze is still at work here; the camera, at times objectifies and reduces Tokyo to a sexual object. As an example, a flashback scene depicting Rio's unsuccessful proposal to Tokyo is rooted in an intense and highly sexual encounter between the two characters, depicted as almost a way of them 'making up' and moving on. The show has been criticised for finding ways for most of the female characters to appear in their underwear at some point in the series but by positioning women as dangerous criminals who have power in a world, and a genre, that has previously been male-dominated, the show also challenges traditional gender roles and expectations.

The choice to present the events in Tokyo's first-person narrative is significant because it allows the audience to see the events of the heist from her perspective, providing a unique and intimate look at her motivations.

The choice to present the events in Tokyo's first-person narrative is significant because it allows the audience to see the events of the heist from her perspective, providing a unique and intimate look at her motivations. Additionally, the use of Tokyo as the narrator serves to elevate her character and position her as a central and important figure in the story.

However, while Tokyo's epresentation is largely progressive, there are still instances of hegemonic gender representations. Her sexual relationship with Rio whilst at the training camp for the heist, shown in episode 1 through flashbacks, has faced criticism for its explicit and gratuitous depiction. The relevance of these scenes to her character development is questionable, as they serve only as a subplot to show their disobedience of the Professor's instructions to avoid relationships and present her as having a romantic weakness.

The Professor

Representation of masculinity varies among the male characters. There are interesting binary oppositions: The Professor and Moscow are portrayed

as calm and controlled, using their intelligence and strategic thinking to carry out the heist whereas characters such as Berlin and Denver are shown as more impulsive and aggressive, relying on physical strength and violence to get what they want. The Professor is portrayed as a composed and confident leader, with a strong sense of organisation and level-headedness, his intelligence implied by his costume: suit and glasses. He embodies the typical genre trope of the heist mastermind. The close-up shots of The Professor carefully reviewing details of the heist surrounded by maps and diagrams emphasise his attention to detail and focus. He speaks in a calm, methodical manner, explaining the plan to the team and anticipating potential obstacles. The slow, continuous background music punctuated by moments of silence emphasises The Professor's plan until the reveal of the heist location, the Royal Mint of Spain, causing a moment of tension and rise in the music – and…roll on the titles!

The representation of The Professor in *Money Heist* as the mastermind and leader of the heist can be seen as hegemonic. He isn't portrayed as a criminal, but rather much more like a teacher, and despite limited screen time, he is the driving force behind the heist and has the respect of and authority over the criminal gang. The Professor is the most recognisable element of the genre, but much of the deviation from the genre is seen in the fact that other characters like Tokyo are at the forefront executing the heist and there is a great emphasis put on their strong female representation, This balancing of genre expectations and diversity of representation in the ensemble cast might have been a choice made by the producers to attract audiences and offer a variation in representation.

Roberto Garver/ Netflix

Modern Twist on the Genre

The heist genre has been a staple in film and television for many years and it remains popular, however, in recent times, audiences have become more discerning and have come to expect more diversity in their media choices. Given this context, it is not surprising that producers of *Money Heist* sought to add a modern twist to the genre playing with the generic conventions. This deviation has the potential to reinvigorate the genre, making it more appealing and relevant to younger contemporary audiences while still offering a fresh take for those familiar with this genre.

As a fan of the show, and having watched beyond the first season, I personally find it fascinating to see each character develop. With such a broad cast of characters, from the Professor's charisma to Berlin's rough exterior, the show leaves a lasting impression on the audience and to my mind is what makes *Money Heist* such a captivating and well-written show.

Dawid Soltysik is Head of Media Studies at Presdales School.

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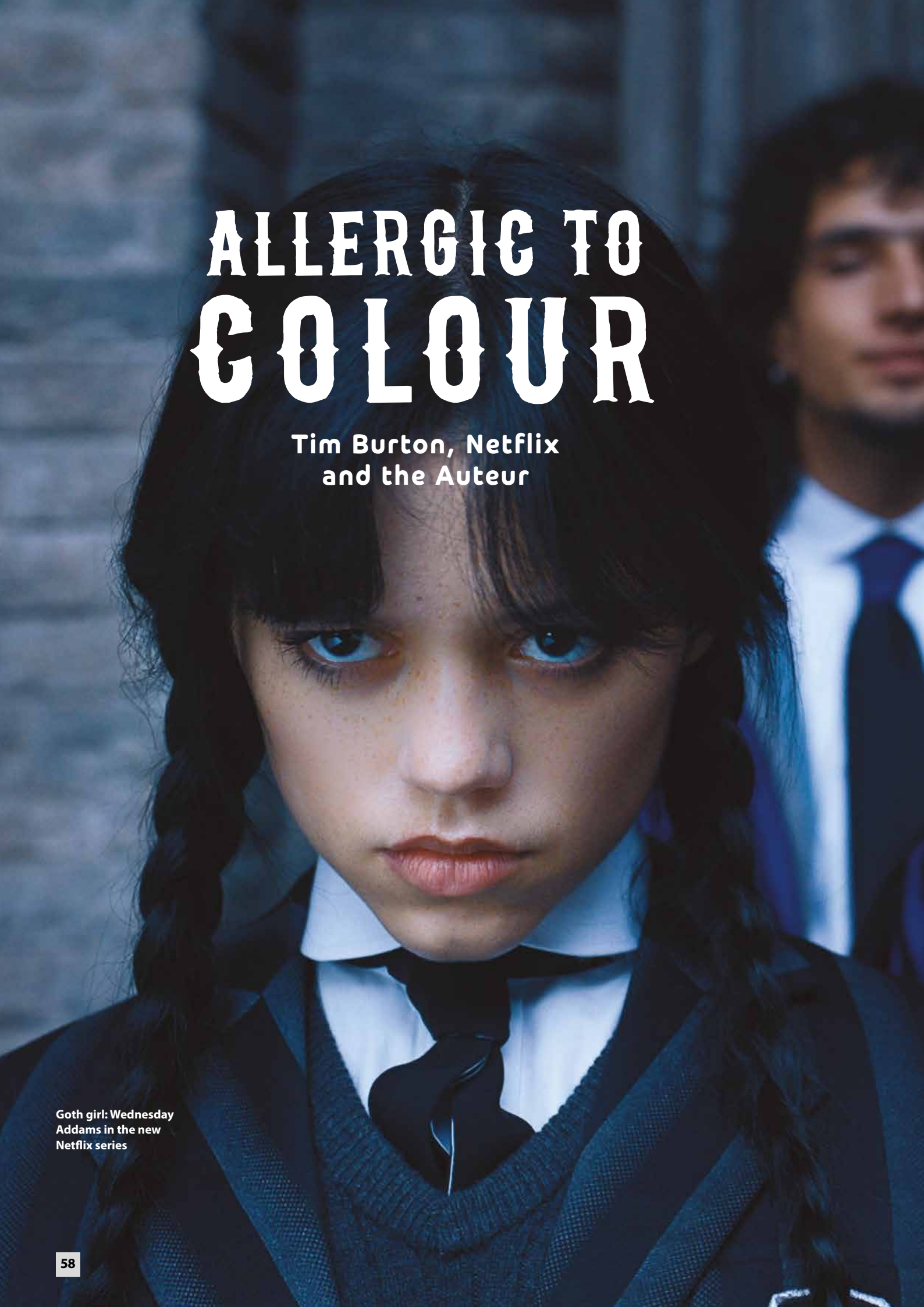
Mark Kermode's Secrets of Cinema: The Heist is available online at: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6zkf6c

https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/the-money-heist-phenomenon-decoding-how-netflixs-spanish-heist-drama-became-a-global-favourite-8244381.html

ALLERGIC TO COLOUR

Tim Burton, Netflix and the Auteur



Goth girl: Wednesday Addams in the new Netflix series

Based on the comic strip characters created by Charles Addams in the late 1930s, Tim Burton's highly anticipated Netflix series *Wednesday* has been met with both critical and commercial success. But in a media world saturated with a vast range of serialised television, James Rose asks if the artistic vision of a respected A-List Hollywood director can survive and thrive as streamed episodic content.

Rave on! Jenna Ortega's iconic dance

Images courtesy of Netflix

The arrival of Tim Burton's *Wednesday* on Netflix raises two observations in relation to the study of film and television.

The first is despite their critical success through traditional cinema distribution, numerous A-List film directors – such as Guillermo del Toro, Martin Scorsese, and Alfonso Cuarón – have approached Netflix to seek funding and distribution for their recent productions. This not only demonstrates the power this streaming service holds for known directors but also reflects Netflix's willingness to financially invest in and support creative talent with their personal productions.

As a result, going 'straight to streaming' now no longer signifies low quality projects (as 'straight to video' used to suggest) but quite its opposite: high quality productions through significant financial investment in creative talent and production values. The second observation raises the question of whether auteur directors such as Burton and del Toro can maintain their distinctive voice and creative vision within the context of Netflix and its mode of streamed distribution. It is this second observation that this article will explore.

Defining the Auteur

Auteur is French for author, suggesting that a person who is defined by this term is such a visionary and creative force that they are the sole creator of any given media production. Writer Andrew Sarris defines three essential criteria of an auteur: technical competence, distinguishable personality, and interior meaning. For Sarris, an auteur is a film director who exerts considerable technical and artistic control as well as personal creativity over their productions. So consistent is this vision that, when a number of films authored by an auteur are viewed as a collective, certain themes, visual elements and production techniques are used continuously across them and unifying them into a consistent body of cinematic work. It is worth noting that some auteurs undertake multiple production roles, acting as screenwriter and producer alongside their directorial responsibilities, compounding the exertion of their artistic control over their productions.

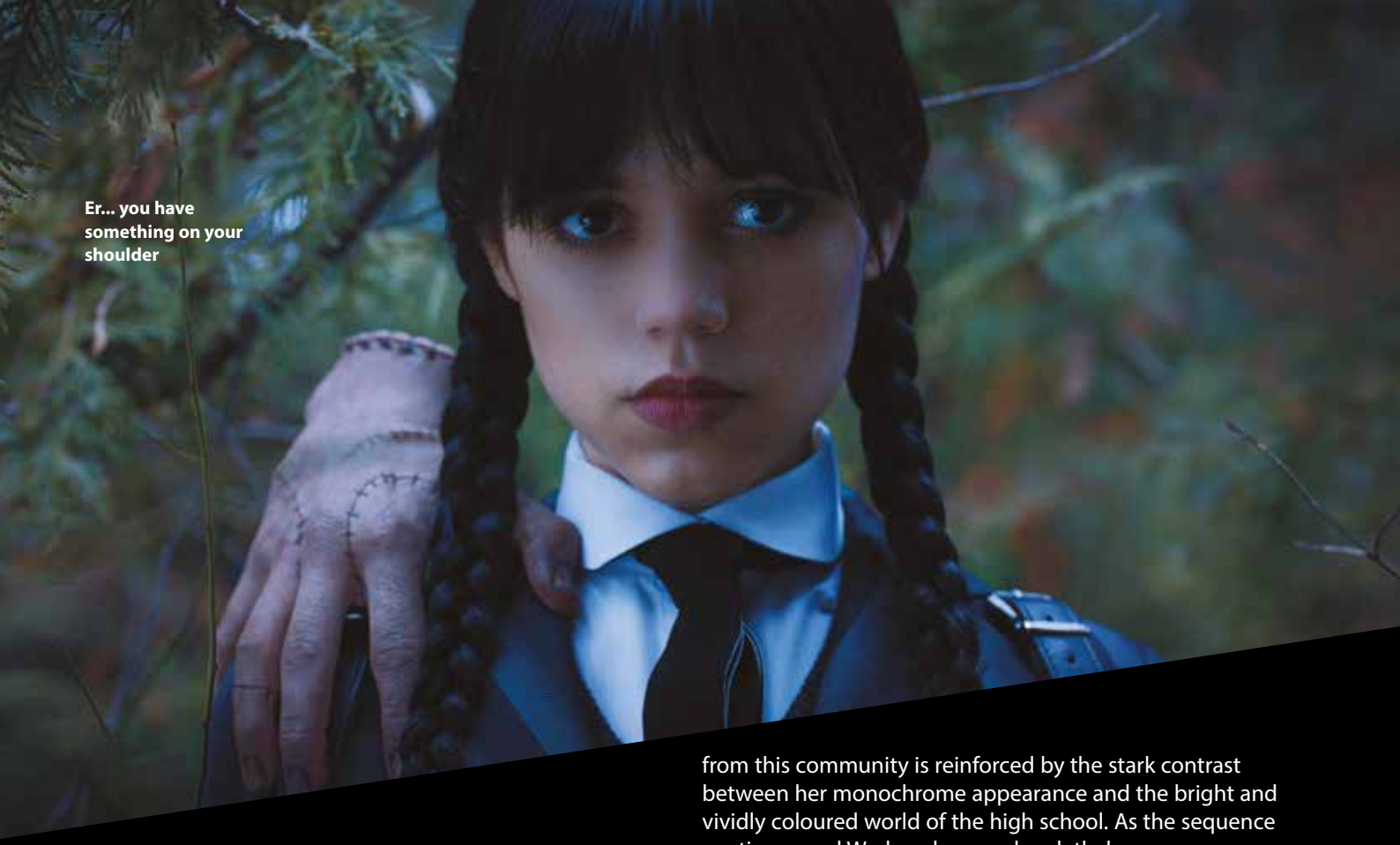
Tim Burton: An Auteur's Biography

A cursory consideration of Burton's childhood is enough to establish the sources of his unique artistic vision: by his own admission, Burton was not overly successful at school, his introspective nature leading him to enjoy and excel in painting and drawing. As an introvert, he would rather spend time in his own imagination or in the fictional delights of monster films (such as *King Kong*, *Frankenstein*, and *Godzilla*) and Roger Corman's adaptations of the gothic work of Edgar Allan Poe, culminating in him making stop-motion animations in the family backyard. By the age of 12 he left his parents to live with his grandmother and then moved again when he was 16 into the small flat above a garage his grandmother owned. Burton would go on to study character animation at the California Institute of the Arts and graduate with an animator's apprenticeship at Disney. While he got to work on a range of films, the strength of his artistic vision permeated through his work, noticeably clashing with the Disney style of the time. Despite this, the originality and creativity of this vision was recognised and Disney offered Burton the funding for his first animated short, *Vincent* (1982).

Vincent and Burton's Auteur Vision

Vincent recounts, in poetic form, the summer of young Vincent Malloy, a child who spends the warm, sunny days inside his room, fantasising he is Edgar Allan Poe and being besieged by numerous gothic creatures and tragedy. Without doubt, this short explicitly defines the parameters of Burton's artistic vision:

- A child/teenager (or child-like) protagonist who is isolated from the community around them.
- A protagonist whose costume, usually black with elements of white, shares some resemblance to Burton himself.
- Protagonists frequently have a creature or animal as a close and loyal companion.



Er... you have something on your shoulder

- The mise-en-scène of Burton's fictional worlds is always gothic: stark contrasts between light and dark; pockets of shadow and expanses of light as well as a grey shroud of mist. Monochrome stripes, spots, spirals and swirls often feature.
- Families in Burton's films are usually represented as loving and supportive.
- A visual contrast between the black and white toned world of the protagonist and the vivid, colourful world of the family or of what they desire.
- The title sequences are generally similar, often featuring the camera moving around mechanical devices or montages of objects pertinent to the film. These often appear against a black background and seemingly rotate, float or tumble through this darkness.
- After *Batman Returns* (1992) Burton's films have consistently been adaptations of existing works, be that remakes, novels or television series. Despite being based on a story by another creative, these narratives are filtered through Burton's distinguishable personality and become uniquely his.

Burton and *Wednesday*

Wednesday is, without doubt, a Tim Burton product: within the opening shots of the first episode, his unmistakable style is in evidence as Wednesday Addams (Jenna Ortega) walks through the corridors of her high school. Dressed in a white collared blouse and black dress patterned with a skull and cross bones motif, she is immediately a typical Burton protagonist through her costume and her age. This is compounded by Wednesday's isolation from the community around her – the other students either move out of her way as she walks through the corridors or stand in small groups to one side and judgementally stare at her. Her isolation from this community is reinforced by the stark contrast between her monochrome appearance and the bright and vividly coloured world of the high school. As the sequence continues and Wednesday wreaks a lethal revenge upon the school jocks for bullying her brother, the title sequence begins and it is, again, typically Burton: the camera moves around objects pertinent to the narrative (must notably a cello and a spider web window), all of which float through the darkness towards and then past the camera, coupled with a staircase spun into one of Burton's favoured geometric forms, a spiral, all accompanied by a score written by Burton's regular composer Danny Elfman.

As a result of her retaliation against the jocks, Wednesday is expelled from her high school and, with some manipulation from her parents, Morticia (Catherine Zeta-Jones) and Gomez (Luis Guzmán), she is enrolled into the Nevermore Academy (a nod to Poe, 'Nevermore!' is a frequent refrain in his 1845 narrative poem, The Raven). Throughout the journey to Nevermore – and despite the tension between them – it is clear through their dialogue exchange that Wednesday's parents love her dearly and care greatly about her emotional wellbeing as much as they do her education. This bond is sustained throughout the scenes in which Wednesday is interviewed by Nevermore's Principal (Gwendoline Christie) and when she is shown to her dorm, making it clear that Morticia and Gomez function as Burton's 'ideal family'. This is reinforced by Gomez leaving Thing to help Wednesday; despite being a severed reanimated hand, Thing quickly becomes Wednesday's loyal companion and so adds a further auteur quality to the production.

Nevermore itself is the archetypal Burton location – a huge gothic building of immense stone walls, ornate turrets and gargoyles perched upon its pitched roofs. Once enrolled, Wednesday meets her roommate, Enid Sinclair (Emma Myers) in the room they will share. To Wednesday's horror the dark gloom of the room and Gothic spider web patterned window have all been dispelled by Enid whose bed and belongings are all soft pastel tones, a bright splash of colour in the darkness while the window has been painted in the same vivid colours. To make the room more to her liking, Wednesday divides it into two, casting her half in Burton's requisite shadow and darkness as well as removing all the colour from her half of the spider web window.

When these elements are combined and coupled with *Wednesday* being an adaptation of an existing work, the auteur vision that Burton has developed and crafted over decades of film production has easily and capably translated itself into episodic television. This would suggest that moving from cinema distribution to streamed content does not hinder creative expression. In fact, it is probable that it cultivates it for that is what audiences want to see – the auteur's vision within the context of another story. Looking at the works produced by other auteurs for Netflix, a similar quality occurs: del Toro's film for Netflix, *Pinocchio* (2022), is replete with his auteur vision (most notably his preoccupation with disobedient children, fascism and WWII) while Scorsese's Netflix film *The Irishman* (2019) is also further evidence of this director's auteur status (a film about American gangsters, played by Robert De Niro and Joe Pesci – characters who are beginning to lose their veneer of masculinity, questioning who they are – coupled with scenes of strong and explicit violence). Such content validates the proposition that not only are Burton, del Toro and Scorsese unique and gifted filmmakers but also embodiments of the auteur: directors with a clear and distinctive vision that makes itself evident in all of their work, regardless of platform or distribution method.

James Rose is a freelance Film and Media Studies Academic who specialises in horror and science fiction cinema and television.

Colour contrast: Emma Myers as Enid

Careers download

Having made films as a teenager, Ynes Myers wanted to get into the industry. She tells MM how she took her first steps

Ynez Myers

What is your job/job title?

Production Assistant for Agile Films Production Company, mainly working in Music Videos.

What does that mean?

I am an assistant to the Executive Producer and Head of Music in Agile's music video department. I also assist freelance producers that we hire to produce our music videos. I will be involved from before the conception of a director's idea to after the delivery of the video to the music label.

My job consists of admin, assistance and support. A music label will come to Agile with an artist and a song that they would like to have a video made for. We have a roster of directors that might pitch an idea to the label and artist or sometimes a label will pick one of our directors specifically to pitch. Once an idea is green lit, a freelance producer will come in and work on the project. They will organise, liaise and set up the entire production. It is my job to assist them in this process. To begin, the producer will draw up a budget for the video. I may help them find the costs of certain things to inform how the budget will be written: for example, looking at costs of a studio, location, camera equipment, catering and crew. We will then book and confirm these elements until everything is organised ready for the shoot day(s). The amount of responsibility I have on each production varies depending on how much assistance the producer needs. At other times, my work consists of supporting directors and admin, such as submitting our videos to various awards and online platforms which will showcase the work we make. We often submit to sites such as Promonews, David Reviews and Directors' Library which are also brilliant for finding cool new work.

What was your route into the media industry?

I fell in love with filmmaking as a teenager. I would watch films all the time and loved storytelling. I studied Media GCSE and Film Studies at A-level along with different social sciences. I often think that Media-based subjects are linked to the social sciences such as Psychology, Sociology and Philosophy because they all involve the study of people and their stories. When I was sixteen, I took part in the BFI regional filmmaking course in Nottingham where I grew up. I would go to sessions at my local independent cinema and learn about filmmaking. By the end of the course, I wrote and directed my first short film. It was well received and had a sold-out showing at the cinema. From this pivotal moment onwards, I knew I wanted to be in this industry. At 19, I moved to London and went to Film School at UAL. Whilst there, I'd run on student films and learn about how a set works. I loved the people-centred, sociable, busy, collaborative, problem-solving nature of it and fell in love. I would DM, email, call and nag at people that I'd found online that I knew were in the industry. I did this by researching the 1st AD's and Producers of smaller indie films that I'd liked and find their details online. Eventually, through word of mouth and recommendation, I managed to run on music videos. I found the world of music videos to be fast paced and varied. The productions are much smaller and much shorter than those of films, and you meet new people all the time. I eventually started to build my CV, and by the time I graduated, having also written and directed my graduation film for film school, I had a healthy CV and a confidence to start applying to production companies. With a lot of enthusiasm, divine timing and self-confidence, I landed a PA position at Agile Films – one of my favourite companies in London.

I would go to sessions at my local independent cinema and learn about filmmaking. By the end of the course, I wrote and directed my first short film.

What's the best thing about the job you do?

I have the opportunity to learn something new on each production that I'm on. You get asked the strangest things and it will become your job to research and understand that thing which would help inform how you put a video together. For example, I spent hours on the phone with different bird-handlers a few weeks ago, to find out if I could film from the perspective of a seagull. I now know loads of random bits of information about seagulls.

What's the worst thing about your job?

It can be quite intense. When you are working within strict budgets and are at the helm of a production, everyone is looking to you for answers. You have to love the work and be motivated by working with others and as a team. You also have to be self-assured and know how to work under pressure. Like any job, it can take a toll on your mental health so it is important to always put your wellbeing before anything and watch for signs that your body is telling you to slow down.

What advice would you give young people wanting to work in the media industry? Try out everything and find out which part you really love. Once you find that thing – believe that you can achieve it. Also, make friends with those at your level! It's important to have a support network when navigating the industry.

What's next for you?

I hope to progress within the company and produce creative and interesting music videos myself for Agile Films. I want to see the music video department grow and take on more creatively challenging work. I will also continue to write and direct my own short films to express my own creativity, taking inspiration from the directors I work with daily at Agile.

Ynez Myers works at Agile films: https://agilefilms.com/

MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSITY

In this issue, Caroline Reid tackles representation of mental illness in Marvel's new series, *Moon Knight* (2022)

It's no secret that when the MCU first burst onto the big screen, it was not diverse in its forms of representation. However, in recent years, the MCU has made a shift in the representation of marginalised communities, from introducing openly bisexual character, Valkyrie, in *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022), to continuing to build on more varied and diverse cultures, such as in *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2023) which celebrates Marvel's first Indigenous Latino superhero, Namor, played by Mexican actor, Tenoch Huerta Mejia.

One of Marvel's latest Disney + releases, six-part series, *Moon Knight* (2022), has continued to step into uncharted territory by establishing its first superhero living with dissociative identity disorder (DID), a condition usually characterised by the presence of other identities, previously referred to as multiple personality disorder. Characters with split personalities make for dramatic narratives and plot twists so the condition (also often confused with schizophrenia) has been employed in numerous stories from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to *Fight Club* to M. Knight Shyamalan's *Split* (2017). In *Split*, Kevin, who suffers from DID and is battling to contain his 24th identity, kidnaps three unsuspecting teenagers. The audience is positioned to be afraid of Kevin's various identities – he is seen as dangerous and unhinged. In these narratives, the condition itself is rarely explored or even given much consideration, rather it is employed as a plot device: the binaries of good and evil co-exist in one character with the focus on whether the good or bad personality will triumph. This has resulted in an established stereotype: that people with DID are problematic or villainous, often presented as having both a 'good' side in conflict with a maniacal alter ego who acts to fulfil the deepest, darkest desires of the character. Stuart Hall's suggestion that stereotyping reduces real people to a few simple and recognisable characteristics or traits (such as the belief that a character having multiple personalities should be something to be feared) can have a damaging and lasting impact on those who live with the disorder and can lead to them being 'othered' in society.

Moon Knight attempts to take a more sympathetic portrayal of mental illness, and instead of being something to be feared and vilified, it helps to drive the superhero narrative forward and adds intrigue rather than fear to Oscar Isaac's titular character. As well as superhero Moon Knight, Isaac plays both Marc Spector, a former US marine and mercenary and Steven Grant, a London gift shop employee suffering from confusion and blackouts, a common trait of DID. These two personalities are also being controlled by the Egyptian God, Khonshu, who uses Marc as his avatar to do his bidding in Egypt, with Steven unwittingly along for the adventure.

Moon Knight represents each different identity of the protagonist by physically separating them from each other. This is achieved by showing Marc and Steven communicating with each other using reflective surfaces. The identity not currently 'in control' is seen as the reflection or the 'weaker' personality. For example, when Steven, the alter-ego the audience is introduced to first, becomes aware of his other persona Marc, it's in a bathroom full of mirrors, where he sees his other self, reflected at him a dozen times over. He knows it is not him, and Steven detaches himself from Marc by referring to him as 'the man in the mirror.' Over the course of the series, we see Marc and Steven struggling to gain control of their body, not just with each other, but with the God, Khonshu, who also inhabits their thoughts and adds to the confusion they battle within their mind.

Another way that the series represents the separate identities of Marc and Steven, is with the superhero suit, which turns them into Moon Knight. When needed, Marc or Steven can invoke the powers of Moon Knight, and the appearance of the suit alters, depending on which identity summons it, as the suit is inspired by who you are. So, when bookish Steven, the personality who is completely ignorant to the superhero world, summons the suit, it becomes a simple white Armani-esque ensemble, representing his purity in relation to Marc, whose costume is much more suited for battling in the Egyptian deserts. It isn't pure white; instead, it is different shades of grey, as Marc is aware of his servitude to Khonshu and thus, can be perceived as less innocent.

The series takes great strides in attempting to represent DID in a more accurate and positive way; however in the penultimate episode, 'Asylum', it can be argued that mental health disorders are once again stereotyped using recognisable traits, as Marc and Steven

Oscar Isaacs in *Moon Knight*

find them themselves physically and emotionally dishevelled in a psychiatric ward, where they are left to question whether they have imagined the superhero persona that they embody, and if they are simply 'crazy,' something which Marc calls himself in one scene, and is a problematic term which is offensive to those suffering from the clinical condition.

'Asylum' is designed to confuse the audience and question whether the events of episodes 1-4 took place, but it soon becomes clear that Marc and Steven are actually stuck between life and death as they come face to face with hippo-headed deity, Taweret, who is there to guide them to the Egyptian underworld, the Field of Reeds. The psychiatric ward is purely a construct that Marc and Steven have built in their minds as a place of judgement, as they face their past together and begin to understand their disorder and each other.

Moon Knight's representation of mental health isn't unilaterally positive, and to an extent, relies on tired stereotypes and outdated terminology. However, it is still a step in the right direction for raising positive awareness of mental health, as *Moon Knight* has removed the need for the character to be 'cured' of his condition. Instead, the audience are encouraged to accept that Moon Knight isn't a broken character that needs to be fixed, but it is his condition that makes him who he is.

Caroline Reid is a Media, Film and Journalism lecturer at Exeter College.







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