



CULPRITS PRESS PACK

Full series streaming from Thursday 19th December on ITVX



Contents:

Series Synopsis

Episode Synopsis

Character descriptions

Interview with Nathan Stewart-Jarrett

Interview with Gemma Arterton

Interview with Niamh Algar

Interview with Kirby

Interview with Eddie Izzard

Series Synopsis

Crime thriller **Culprits** centres on Family man Joe Petrus is living the American dream with his fiancé and step-kids. However, unbeknownst to them, Joe was involved in a mysterious crime three years ago and now his dangerous past is about to catch up with him. When a killer starts targeting the crew behind the crime, Joe realises it's only a matter of time before his family is targeted. He returns to London to track down his old gang and find out who is coming after them. The stellar British cast includes Nathan Stewart-Jarret, Niamh Algar, Gemma Arteton, Eddie Izzard and Kirby.

Episode Synopsis

Episode 1 - Family man Joe Petrus is living the American dream with his fiancé and step kids. However, unbeknownst to his family, Joe was involved in a mysterious crime three years ago masterminded by Dianne Harewood, a notorious British criminal. And now Joe's dangerous past is about to catch up with him.

Episode 2 - Joe takes matters into his own hands when he realises he's being followed. What do they want, and why? Jules questions Joe's behaviour and their relationship comes under pressure when Joe's lies start to spiral. Three years ago in London, the Culprits steal the plans for a secret bank vault, and the addition of a brutal new member sends shockwaves through the team.

Episode 3 - Specialist is living her new life in a remote wilderness but is surprised by an unexpected visitor. Joe's paranoia and fear grow. His conflict with Kyle takes a violent turn and Jules is horrified by Joe's confession. Joe breaks protocol, contacts one of the other Culprits, and embarks on a mission to neutralise the looming threat.

Episode 4 - Three years ago, the team is completed with the addition of a safe cracker. Now, back in London, Joe, Specialist, and Officer are reunited and they try to figure out who is killing the crew and why. Joe and Officer agree to team up, but Specialist vanishes. Does she know more about the Killer than she's letting on? Another murder rocks Joe and, together with Officer, he travels to France hoping to find fellow Culprits, Youssef and Azar, before the killer does.

Episode 5 - Three years ago, the job goes off the rails, and the Culprits make their getaway under a barrage of bullets. In the present Joe and Officer track down Youssef and Azar to a secluded French village, but they're not the only ones on their trail. The Killer lays siege to their hiding place and his motives become clearer. But who is he working for and why? Meanwhile, in America, Jules and the children are in more danger than they realise.

Episode 6 - Jules and the kids are in danger as gunmen break into their house. A game of cat and mouse ensues as the family desperately try to escape. Back in London, Specialist's condition worsens, a frustrated Officer is kept on a tight leash and a new revelation about the heist sends shockwaves through the Culprits. Seeking revenge, Azar's actions place the team in danger when a trap set for the Killer takes a dark turn.

Episode 7 - A new clue takes Joe, Officer, and Azar to a mysterious address. Joe takes control of the situation. But their visit takes an unexpected and dangerous turn. As Joe's fears for his family grow more urgent, he tries to understand what really went down during the robbery. And Joe finds himself being presented with an opportunity. One that will determine whether Joe, Jules, and the kids live or die.

Episode 8 - Joe tries to lure Dianne into a trap. Letting down her guard, Dianne's true reasons for targeting Hawkes are revealed and Dianne and Joe put together a plan involving the remaining Culprits. But an unexpected showdown puts everything at risk.

Character Descriptions

Joe/Muscle (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett)

Joe is a family man living in a sleepy town in Washington State. He is pursuing the American dream: engaged to a woman he loves, a step-father to kids he adores, and starting his own local business. The future seems bright. But Joe has a secret criminal past that threatens everything he holds dear. And now that past is catching up with him. At first we believe Joe to be American. But in reality he is British, formerly known as 'Muscle', and he worked for various London criminals before being recruited onto an elite heist crew that stole millions of pounds. And now he is living in this new life as a fraud – with a fake identity, a fake name, a fake accent. Who is the real Joe? As Muscle he was capable of committing terrible crimes, but as Joe he is thoughtful and kind and adores his new family. He wants to be in control of his own destiny. He wants to be a good man. He wants a quiet, normal life. But to protect his hard-won peace, he is going to have to become Muscle again, to track down the killer who's coming after him and put an end to the threat once and for all.

Dianne Harewood / 'Brain' (Gemma Arterton)

Dianne is the mastermind of the crew. She picks the target, selects the team, and creates the plan. She's brilliant, impressive, and meticulous. And very choosy about who she hires for a job. Her codename for the heist is "Brain". She has been working robberies and scams for years. A much-feared, infamous underworld figure, Dianne has a reputation for being a high-stakes, ruthless criminal. She's confident, elegant, and striking. And her plan for the heist is intricate and detailed. Dianne has an impressive track record. And her close associates, Fixer and Right Hand, are intimidating and loyal. She is careful and calculating, always thinking five or six moves ahead. In the heist, Dianne is not on the sidelines. She is in the thick of it. Even when things begin to go wrong and the carefully planned heist descends into chaos and bullets, she doesn't shy away from the action. She thrives on it. But when the past comes back to haunt the crew, Dianne is nowhere to be found. So where did she go? What did she do with the money? Does she know who is chasing them? And why?

'Specialist' (Niamh Algar)

Nick-named "Psycho" by Officer, Specialist's name is INGA BEATRICE. She is the expert killer of the heist crew. She enjoys killing and does it without remorse. Not only is she good with weapons, she is a weapon. And she has a scary reputation for being merciless and ruthless. She is resourceful, patient, quiet and resilient. An assassin with a reputation of being exceptionally calm, until her own hair-trigger is pulled. Then she goes insane. She is unpredictable, dangerous but highly effective. She is like a star-player on the crew. A celebrity criminal for the others to gawk at – and fear. She finds other people an irritation. She strives to be perfectly in control. In her work. In her life. And other people are a liability. She doesn't trust them. She would rather work alone. So when the past comes back to haunt her, she is annoyed at having to re-team with the crew.

'Officer' (Kirby)

Dubbed "Officer" by Dianne because she impersonates a cop on the day of the heist. We never know Officer's real name. She is a con artist. So every time they need to fast-talk or pick-pocket or scam someone, Officer is the one to do it. Officer revels in the art of the con. The thrill of it. The power it gives her. She is expert at fake identities. Fake back stories. Elaborate narratives. She's fast-thinking

and fast-talking. She is funny and charming. She is the queen of bullshit, able to create elaborate webs of lies on the fly and totally convince you it's real. She's also Muscle's closest ally during the heist. But can someone who lies so much ever really be trusted?

'Devil' (Ned Dennehy)

The man who is chasing the Culprits. He is the big bad wolf: the personification of fear and paranoia and guilt. Relentless. Emotionless. Often hidden behind a blank mask, he is an unknowable presence. He kills and tortures and gets it done. And every criminal in the world has heard about him. Like kids have heard of the bogeyman. Some people don't believe in him. Or think the stories about him are apocryphal. But you should be scared of him. Because most of the stories are absolutely true. And the Culprits have NO idea who hired him.

Vincent Hawkes (Eddie Izzard)

A rich man. A mysterious man. A dangerous man. Someone we will learn more about as the story unfolds.

Azar Mizouni (Tara Abboud)

Azar is 18 and Youssef's granddaughter. She is brash, fiercely bright, agile and brave. She enjoys the coolness and swagger of being on a heist crew. And she proves her worth with her impressive skill. She relaxes by covering abandoned buildings in her gloriously vibrant graffiti. She loves her grandfather. And will do anything to protect him. Even if it takes her to dark places.

Youssef Mizouni (Kamel El Basha)

Youssef is mid-70s and Azar's grandfather. We meet them both in their home city of Barcelona. Youssef is an old-school safe-cracker. He used to work for hire for some of the biggest criminals in Europe, including the mafia. He worked as a team with his son Malek (Azar's father) until they got caught. They served eight years in prison. Once they were released, they retired. Or at least Malek did. Youssef has been hungry ever since for another big job. Meanwhile, he has trained up his teenage granddaughter Azar in lock-breaking and she has proven to be a prodigy. Youssef is fearless, loyal and fun. He loves the criminal life. He loves the challenge of safe-cracking. But he is getting older and once they are on the run, he needs to rely on Azar more and more.

Jules (Kevin Vidal)

Jules is Joe's American fiancé. A widower with two children – Frankie and Bud. He was left to raise his kids alone when his wife Laura died a few years ago. A realtor living in the suburbs of town in Washington State, Jules is happy and very much in love with Joe. And together they are planning a future together. Jules is a warm, generous, and patient man. But when Joe's secrets start to come to the surface, Jules' love for Joe will be tested.

Interview with Nathan Stewart-Jarrett



Who is Joe?

He's basically a bad guy who wants to be a good guy. He's a person with morals but one who essentially does many, many bad things. He was a key part of the crime three years ago as 'Muscle,' your guy who gets it done, but since then he's tried to – because he had to – rebuild his life with a new partner and his kids, living a suburban dream in America. And then the past comes back to haunt him. The thing with Joe is he's always trying to do the right thing, tending towards ultimate goodness — but the make-up of that is often many bad things on the way.

What is Joe's backstory?

There were a few bits of backstory in the actual text but not loads and loads, which meant there was a lot of filling in to do. Backstory is always a weird one because it's often very personal — it's stuff you dream up yourself. But I needed to anchor what had happened to Joe in his youth, which led him to the criminal underworld, essentially. And then what had happened to him so that he wanted to be out of it. I went back and thought about all of those things. I did a timeline and so on of what events occurred to lead him to the beginning of our story. It's one of those things that most actors do you have these journals almost of a life that isn't yours. You always go back to his parents and huge incidents that would happen in his childhood that would lead him from one path to another. I find that I can ground my character within that. And maybe you don't think of it every day, but sometimes something wafts up in your memory that you can use.

Why did Joe want to do this one last job?

It's almost like a gambling thing — like the psychology of an addict. One last hit, one last ride, one last drink or whatever that would be. I used to smoke and for months I was saying, 'This is my last one.' It went on for quite a while. It was about romanticizing that moment, putting weight on that moment; being unable to stop doing it. In this case, Joe is desperate to get out. There is a price on his

head, and he must disappear. This is an escape route. So, it is one last job, but it means so much more because if he doesn't pull it off — if he can't get out — he probably will die. Kind of like cigarettes.

What has he found in his new life that he loves?

I think there's a simplicity to Joe's life now that actually, to me, makes it really, really sad. To have gone through everything, all of that, to have done this massive crime and then to kind of settle in the suburbs with a small family, which is something that's so accessible to so many people. It's tragic that he had to go to that degree to get that. Reading and going through filming, seeing what other characters had in place before the crime often was families in suburbs. It makes it all rather sad that he was unable to build that prior to the crime. It's really a great setup.

What was your initial take on the script?

It came in and there was a lot going on. My agent said, "You should read this thing," and I dithered and then she said, "You really have to read this!" I think I opened it up and it said 'Muscle' on the first page. I was like, "Oh. No, no, no." But then it only took five or six pages in for me to be going, 'This is really amazing.' And then wonderfully and unusually they had sent three episodes at once. J writes beautifully, rhythmically, and there was so much to grab on to with the character. The language and the text just flowed. And that's sometimes unusual. And the part? I didn't think I could do it. Which is always a huge attraction.

What happened next?

I got the part and they literally marched me to the gym! It's weird, because there are certain things you can do and that are in your wheelhouse. I thought I can do text but this - there's so much text. We're talking about 10-page scenes, nine regularly. And then on top of that you've got so much action. And then on top of that you've got plot stuff. I was like, there's so much there. I've had leads before, but not like this and there are easier leads to play. It's also not a very showy role. So it's how to navigate that — even though Joe talks a lot he's quite a quiet character. How do you show that someone's quiet when they've talked for 11 pages? There are so many contradictions and twists and turns. The sheer enormity of the task - incredible.

How did you approach the fact that Joe himself is playing several different roles in Culprits?

I think we play many parts in our lives and context changes everything. We code switch and that's something that Joe does. I wouldn't say that he plays roles, I would say that he just code switches constantly. There was a decision that he had to build a new life and a new persona. The best way to lie is to basically tell the truth: I think he truly believes and wants to be Joe, not David, the man he was. If he could build himself another life, this is who he would build.

How demanding was the role physically?

It was ridiculous! I lived in that gym. I ate whole cows daily. And coops of chickens and eggs. It was really hard. But weirdly it played into the internal transformation as well. Actually going through that process, getting up at 4.45am, getting to the gym, then going to set — my body changing was part of the process. And it really helped. I got stronger, became more tired, achy, whatever it was, but I felt in my body in a different way. And then you've got the fight scenes, the carrying — I've physically carried so many people in the show. I wouldn't have been able to do that before. To be able to pick

someone up in that way grown men was kind of incredible. I've never carried anyone in my theatre work! I've never had to transform my body in this way before. And I've loved it.

There's a high stakes robbery involved in Culprits but J Blakeson has described it as not a heist show. How do you think it plays with this genre?

You could say it humanises it... inverts it. Our story follows the aftermath, the fallout of this robbery. It's told in reverse order and it's kind of amazing. I do think it personalises the genre — J's idea was to focus on a character that is usually overlooked. The 'muscle' in this genre is often somebody who stays in the background and if they're lucky they get a line. To focus on that person and what they want, I think is incredibly interesting. Also, what Joe wants is love. His family, the love of Jules [played by Kevin Vidal] and at the heart of that, these two men of colour, engaged, with these two children. To have that at the centre of this story, in this genre, is very unusual.

How closely did you work with Kevin, who plays Jules?

What was great was there was time to talk to Kevin, find out about each other, which is really important in building a textured relationship. We also, at the beginning of the shoot, filmed in Jules and Joe's house for two and a half weeks straight, so that embedded that relationship further. We took over this house in the Toronto suburbs and it was our house: I showered in there, had naps in the bedroom, brushed my teeth — we literally moved into that house. Not to get too Blue Valentine but that was really useful to anchor me and us with each other in that story.

How have you found working with J Blakeson as both writer and director?

In theatre and independent film, you have the writer there. In television you have it too sometimes but it's often in a very distant way. With J, if something isn't working you can change it in real time or discuss what a moment means and where it's come from. And that's been really incredible. Because there was a lot to say, a lot to do. And he's so detail oriented. So, it's about colour, the symmetry, the fabric, texture, he's got a hugely cinematic vision. He's incredible.

Interview with Gemma Arterton



How would you describe Culprits?

It's a fun thriller that takes place after a major crime. It picks up where most crime thrillers end, which is after the incident when the crew have dispersed and they're all living separate lives and with new identities. It's a real character piece. Although it follows one character predominantly there are many different characters and they're all fully drawn. And it's got a lot of mystery in it, too — there's a lot of edge-of-your-seat-stuff while you're trying to work out what's actually going on and timeline jumping. It means that as an audience member you're trying to work it out as you go along, which is always quite satisfying.

Why did you want to be part of it?

J [Blakeson] and I worked together years ago on *The Disappearance of Alice Creed*. For years we've been trying to find something to do together — there've been various things that have almost happened or not quite happened. This came out of the blue — I think J had written the pilot even before he shot his most recent film, *I Care A Lot*. Obviously, I have a shorthand with J: I know what he likes, and it's very easy. Also, the scripts were so fun, I mean, just really cool. My character Dianne is probably the coldest character I've ever played, the most calculating. Any exuberance that I usually bring to roles I've had to kind of sit on — she just isn't an exuberant person. And then all the creative team are great. Phillip Blaubach, who's shot all of J's stuff, he's the DP that shot *Alice Creed* and this is my third project I've worked with him on now. And though I hadn't worked with [Block 2 Director] Claire Oakley before I loved her film *Make Up*. It was a really fun job — a no brainer.

Introduce us to your character, Dianne...

When we first meet Dianne she's in a gallery where she's crewing up for the high-stakes crime. This is way back in the timeline. When she's enlisting, she has to be quite charming and calm and in control. She's very, very glamorous — she loves being rich. I remember when J was telling me about the role he said, 'She's like Madonna — she just loves that life.' She loves glamour and power and yet as the series goes on you learn more about her motivations. She's deep into the crime world, very revered and respected in high level crime and is quite feared and mysterious. But as the story goes on you realise that her motivations for the crime itself are very personal. Although there's this steel to her deep down there's this real soft core too. It was quite fun actually to play this very calculating and dangerous person — I don't think I've ever done anything like that before.

She labels herself 'Brain.' What are her particular skills?

Well, unlike me she's incredibly good at planning things and thinking of every eventuality and being all over it. I mean I remember thinking, 'Why on earth have I been cast in this role?' Because she couldn't be further away from me. She's just one of those people that before anyone else knows that something's happened, she's all over it. She's already planned for that — she's got a brain that's like a computer.

Does she do her own dirty work or is that what 'Muscle' is for?

I liken her to a mafia boss in that she has all of these incredibly capable and dangerous people around her that can carry out her dirty business, but if she needs to do it, she will. But she doesn't really like to get dirty to be honest — she's got all of those expensive clothes on!

What is Dianne's look?

We have an amazing costume designer, Ian Fulcher, and we really worked hard on Dianne's look. I know J wanted her to look really iconic, like Katharine Hepburn. She's masculine, but she likes to wear powerful clothes. One of my favourite outfits was a pink suit with a pink jacket and big coat over the top. All the visuals in this show are very bold and striking.

There's a high stakes robbery involved in Culprits but J Blakeson has described it as not a heist show. How do you think it plays with this genre?

I watched a lot of heist stuff in preparation for this and a lot of the ones that we know are kind of cheeky, and people love watching the heist itself and all of that. But actually this one is quite dark and it's gritty at times. There is this black humour that goes all the way through it, and that's very J in style. Because it is a character piece and because we have so much time — it's eight hours — you have time to really get to know the characters and see their different sides. So hopefully this is a new kind of heist story: obviously there is that satisfying moment of watching the heist take place and it's really well done — it takes place over the whole series, with new bits being slotted in and new details going back over time. But mostly it is about the aftermath. And that's very different to usual heist movies.

J Blakeson obviously loves working with you. Why do you like working with him?

He has real vision. He knows what he wants and I think that comes from being a writer, having it all in your mind from the outset and dreaming up these characters. At the same time he always allows you to play and find it yourself. But he knows what he wants and I like that in a director. Also, his style shines through. He loves old movies and noir and that really reflects in the style and the rhythm of what he does, as well as in the rhythm of his writing. And also he's fun: he always wants there to be an element of fun or a twinkle or something behind the eyes. It's not kitchen sink drama; there's a heightened element to it. In the UK we don't have many directors that have that style so he's quite unique in that sense. It means this feels almost like an American show: it's heightened, it's bright, it's visually exciting, it's very crisp. And that's all very J.

Interview with Niamh Algar



Who do you play in Culprits?

I play Specialist aka Inga Beatrice, who is also known as Psycho. She's a specialist in the field of being able to kill people in a very quick and un-messy way, so basically, she's a badass assassin. She's tactical; she's a hunter, extremely intelligent, fearless, tough as nails, and quite wild! Though she's brought into the group to help carry out the heist, she's definitely a loner and she finds it quite difficult to work in group environments. This is the first time she's worked as part of a team and I think she would in many ways rather work alone.

Why did you want the role?

The story and the character excited me. It's the sort of role I dreamed of playing. When I was a kid I watched James Bond and I wanted to play the villain because they get to have the most fun! They are also the most intriguing characters to study due to their actions and so naturally you lean into them, try to understand them and make sense of why they do the things they do. It makes you question how a person gets to a place like that in their lives. Reading the script and seeing what Specialist does in the story I knew it would be a really fun and action-packed journey to go on and try to make this character human and challenge the Psycho" stereotype. But most importantly I wanted to work with J. I loved his work and was really keen to work with him on something. I was so excited to see what J would do with this story. He has such a fascinating style of filmmaking, and I was keen to see his own twist on a story like this. Having watched [o

How did you try and understand a character who gives so little away?

I used the analogy that hurt people, hurt people, and she's someone who's definitely been hurt. Specialist's body is covered in scars so visually that tells a lot about this woman, she's been through a lot and survived, and she wears her scars with pride. Although she appears disconnected from others, she has a remarkable ability to read people. I had a lot of fun with J hashing out her backstory and figuring out what she got up to in the years between the heist and the present. I found her such a fun character because she doesn't give much away, it's a joy and a challenge to play around with that. Specialist is fascinating because she makes unusual choices. Who knows what madness she got up to after the heist with all that money, but where we find her in the present is living in complete exile; she chose to disappear into the wilderness, completely off the grid. It takes a certain type of person to be able to do that — that's their version of the best life that they can have now that they have this endless amount of money. Money is a huge factor in what drives people, and it was interesting to see once you have money, what actually drives her as a person. Specialist is a mystery, who knows what she did with all her millions! I also looked at her as someone who was either hurt or broken by someone and has built these barriers around her. It's easier for her to disassociate from people than to get involved. She looks at the world in a non-materialistic way and she's grounded in nature. But when she's been given a task, to solve a problem, her problem solving is by process of elimination. If the problem is that a person is doing something they shouldn't, her solution is to take them out of the equation. She looks at it very clinically because that's what makes sense to her — hence why she's quiet and (what appears to be) calculating — she doesn't waste time. Small talk is pointless to her, there's nothing to be gained.

She's nicknamed 'Psycho' by the Officer. Is she a psychopath?

Well, it's not for me to judge. I don't think she's a psychopath, or maybe she is, but I don't know if psychopath's themselves realise they are psychopaths. She's psychotic maybe in her job - she looks at

it like a game. There's a sense in why she doesn't allow herself to get involved emotionally with people, which is rooted in some form of deep trauma, so from the outside she acts in a way that's abnormal, detached and at times wild and unpredictable. She's been hurt so many times that she finds it impossible to trust people, so she has to be guarded and therefore not emotionally involved with anyone. She's quite practical and clinical in her relationships so when it comes to having to hurt people, it's easier — she doesn't have to switch into that empathetic part of herself because she hasn't invested in the person, she's efficient and moves on. So maybe, actually, she is a bit of a psychopath but that doesn't mean people can't empathise with her!

How does she change over the course of the series?

She started as a loner and as the story progresses begins to realise that there is something to be gained from working as a pack, as a family. She definitely grows fond of Muscle, I think they see parts of themselves in each other. All of these people are outsiders and yet when they come together, they understand each other because they don't fit into normal society. I kind of looked at it like a film set — you have all these people that come from different walks of life and who don't conform to the usual nine-to-five jobs. And yet we're all on a project, all with the same shared goal. Everyone is very different, has very different personalities and have vastly different skill sets but they have to work together to get to where they're going. It's the same idea with this: they each have a very specific job and they can't do that job without the other person. Specialist, by the end, I feel finds her purpose, her people. She's someone who lost everything from a young age, was orphaned and feels like she's got nothing to lose, but then finds a place in this dysfunctional family. Her fearlessness catches up on her - the others are wary of this, it's good to be wary of the person that has nothing to lose. That's why she's able to face death with such ease. For her, dying's fine: she's not leaving anyone behind that counts on her anymore.

Specialist is a very physical character. Was that something that appealed to you and how did you prepare?

Yes. For me, when I was a kid I saw GI Jane with Demi Moore and she's doing those pull ups, fighting with the guys... I always thought that that was the most badass thing I've ever seen. Just that physical strength... and she totally incorporated it into the role, I love it when actors go for it. But she did it in a way where it had to apply to the physical requirements of the character and not just aesthetically. On Culprits, I knew the character would have to endure a lot of large fight sequences and stunts, so I worked with a trainer called Marc Mene. Marc went through the script and said, 'There's a part where you're physically dragging a dead deer through the snow. If you're trying to ground this character, you have to be able to do that'. Marc is about 20kg more than I am and I had to drag him up and down in the gym. By the time we got to filming those sequences, I was pretty strong. We trained 6 days a week, incorporating boxing, strength and conditioning exercises. Most days I trained before and after set. I worked with an incredible stunt and armoury team on this job and spent a month before filming going through a rigorous safety armoury training course in order to feel comfortable with the various fighting styles and equipment. The key physical characteristics of Specialist is her ability to disarm and take down anyone in her path with complete ease and so to be able to do that you have to be well prepared!

What's her look?

Ian Fulcher is our costume designer. He said that when the culprits all come together they have to look like a band. They complement each other, but none of them is the front-man. Specialist's colour is white and that's the thing that we want to play the whole way through. She wears no other colour, she has a clinical and pristine fashion. She always has this one, kind of military look, and when she's fighting the evidence of her destruction is evident on her wardrobe. It's my favourite costume I've had the chance to wear due to the insane level of detail and practicality. We don't want her to be an army girl or something in a SWAT team, we have to find a middle ground, something fresh. I talked to Ian about the fact that she knows all these mixed combinations of martial arts, and her fascination with that has to be incorporated into what she wears, because she has no other hobbies in her life. So, this is her all-consuming frame of mind — we need to incorporate that into the clothing. We looked at the early 1900s war jackets and brought it back down from there. We ended up looking at Swedish military jackets and then stripped it all back. That was her character silhouette. She is also covered in scars, but there's only two moments in the show when we see that and it's at quite a pivotal moment in the story. Practicality played a lot into the costume design, Ian was amazing by working in the fact that she had protective bullet proof layers and places for concealing weapons. She looks intimidating and ready for battle. But at moments when she's injured, and she has to take everything off, and she's just there in the tank top, you realise this is someone who can die. As the show progresses, she begins to show that she's actually human and so the idea of this bruising coming through or seeping out is important – it shows that this character that we think is invincible is very much human.

How would you describe Culprits overall?

It's along the lines of Fargo meets Wanted meets Money Heist meets Hanna. But that's the thing: it's something new that you can't really compare to anything else. The Culprits themselves are unique and bold. Tonally, it's kind of dark but there's humour in it as well and there's a lot of heart. The heartbeat of the story is Nathan's character Joe. He's the way in for the audience to see and allows us to be introduced to all these characters. I suppose it's an unconventional crime series with a drama narrative running through it.

Interview with Kirby



Who do you play in Culprits?

I play Officer, and we don't know that much about her. We do know that she is a woman of many disguises but in the beginning, we know very, very little else and that's all part of her mystery: she is very good at keeping people at bay and making sure they know very little.

Officer is always keeping people at bay, yet she and Joe [Nathan Stewart-Jarrett] have to form a genuine bond throughout the series...

I think in situations like that you kind of have to find your own motivation and find like, who that person is? Who is Joe to Officer as in who in my life can I relate that to? So he's a person that she has to trust to a certain extent, but she still gives them very little of herself. And yet needs them to trust her a lot.

What does Officer bring to the group?

As the story goes along, her place is to keep Joe tethered to the idea of family and connection. This whole motley crew are all really a bunch of lost souls, but I think that when Joe and Officer come together, they are reminded of what family is like and why it's important.

How do you play someone who is always putting on a face and can never really be trusted?

I think you have to figure out who this character is completely outside of this group and away from this situation; and why a person would need to transform themselves quickly. What sort of person is that? What sort of life have they lived and what's been their upbringing? It's like when people change schools a lot: you reinvent yourself constantly. What reason has she had to develop this skill where she can constantly reinvent herself and also endear herself to people... and then leave them very quickly.

And what were the highlights from filming?

My favourite days were when the cast were all together. I did enjoy my scenes with Niamh [Algar] in a shack in Norway. There needs to be a whole short film about the Norway shack.

How did you find the high-stake crime scenes?

There's very little acting that you have to do there — if you are running through the street being chased by men with guns, even if you stop and think about it you know, logically, that it's not real, but in the moment your physiology does not recognise that it's not real. Particularly when we were in Manchester and we had blanks. So you're running through the street and the sound is so loud and you're in all the gear... there's so little acting to be done to play this woman running and she's panicking and she's scared. My body was doing 90% of the work and my brain just had to do the extra bit.

What did you like about the scripts?

I just read them incredibly quickly. I think that's always a good sign. When something reads that well, then you know it's going to be even more appealing when you're watching it. And it doesn't really let up, which is really exciting as well as really unusual.

What is J Blakeson like to work with?

I think it's amazing, because as he wrote it as well as directed it you get it straight from the horse's mouth where you go, what exactly was the intention of this scene? On a weekend I had a call with J to ask him about something that we were picking up. Because we already discussed exactly what that scene meant — you've discussed what it means to the writer — it means you're going to have a better idea of what you're going to do on the set.

How does this show fit –or not fit – within the heist genre?

Every show is different. This differs in that I think it's got a really unique cast, it's really high octane and jumping through different time periods keeps people on their toes.

Interview with Eddie Izzard



What attracted you to Culprits?

J Blakeson has got a great track record writing and directing in the auteur position. Add Gemma Arterton being in it and Nathan Stewart-Jarrett... what's not to like, you know? To come in and play a sort of flashy git seemed like something that I felt I could do.

Who is Vincent Hawkes?

He is a billionaire businessman. I play him as someone who normally gets things to happen. And if they don't happen by fully legal means it moves into the grey area of legality; he's even happy to go into a completely black area of Black Ops. He will go to whatever extremes he has to, but still feel that he's being a reasonable person or a reasonable businessman. Dianne Harewood [Gemma Arterton] it becomes apparent is the person who is the bane of his life. He is a big player in the story.

What is Vincent's motivation?

He's doing it for money and power. Having more money rather than less money — as someone who's got to a place in life where I used to have no money or a lot less money; and then I've got some money... it's definitely better than having no money. But for some people, it's the idea of keeping

amassing more and more and more. And it becomes like, I suppose, a playground of toys and power that drives them on. You might have heard the line: 'He who dies with the most toys wins.'

How do you distinguish Vincent from a cackling Bond villain?

Ah, well, if you think about the more modern Bond villains they have got better and better, much more nuanced. That's the thing: you've got to give them third dimensions. You've got to land them in a space of humanity so that people can say, 'Okay, well, that's an odd person but I can see them existing.' Hitchcock said, 'You've got to play the charming side of it,' which is why Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart started figuring in his work. Hopefully I can be charming, so I've played that side of me. So, if you have got to a position in life where you have a certain amount of power or sway or whatever, you could probably imagine what it's like if you start going off on one. I personally try not to go off on one or get angry... but you can feel where that edge is. It's an intriguing place to play. Hopefully, if you can give them a third dimension and make them couched in a certain reality then it should play well for an audience. That's what I think they want: the dark characters are now getting more and more nuanced in this golden age of drama.

Do you think Culprits sets up Vincent as an example of robber capitalism gone wrong?

That's a J question, really. I would think so in a certain way. Some people have said to me that any billionaire must have done bad things to get to that place. There are very few people who actually have a heart and have billions. Although Warren Buffett is doing that thing which I suppose you would want all billionaires to do which is giving away 99% of his money. I don't think J's banging a gavel on that. But yes, a soft point is in there.

What was it like working with J Blakeson on Culprits?

I liked his track-record and he was happy to let me go play. I'm happy with directors that really want to advise on every scene and every take — I'm okay with that. Equally, I've worked with directors like Stephen Frears who just cast well and then let them go. But I liked the fact that J was writing and directing as well. I like that. I find that intriguing.

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