

# ITV commissions three part drama, Des - with David Tennant as Dennis Nilsen

Published Fri 22 Nov 2019



## [Drama](#)

**Confirmed: New three-part drama Des starts Monday 14 September at 9pm on ITV. Des is a true-crime drama focusing on one of the most infamous criminal cases in UK history, Dennis Nilsen. Des played by David Tennant.**

## **ITV commissions three part drama, Des - with David Tennant as Dennis Nilsen**

ITV has announced the commission of Des, a three part drama which follows the arrest and trial of serial killer Dennis Nilsen, known as Des.

Written by Luke Neal and developed by Luke Neal and Lewis Arnold, the drama is based on material from the book Killing for Company by Brian Masters, which focuses on one of the most infamous cases in UK criminal history, that of serial

killer Dennis Nilsen.

Told through the prism of three men – Dennis Nilsen played by David Tennant (Good Omens, Broadchurch), Detective Chief Inspector Peter Jay played by Daniel Mays (Line of Duty, Temple) and biographer Brian Masters played by Jason Watkins (The Crown, The Lost Honour of Christopher Jefferies) – the series will explore the personal and professional consequences of coming into contact with a man like Nilsen.

Nilsen murdered boys and young men in his flat from 1978 to 1983. He was undetected for five years, and it was only when DCI Peter Jay was called to 23 Cranley Gardens on 9 February, 1983, to investigate human fragments of flesh and bone clogging the drains, that the police realised they had a serial killer on their hands.

Dennis Nilsen was arrested and convicted at the Old Bailey of six counts of murder and two of attempted murder. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, which was replaced by a whole life tariff in 1994. He died in May 2018.

Told from both the police and Masters' point of view, Des will explore how a man like Nilsen was able to prey on the young and vulnerable in 1980s Britain. The series will not only highlight the police investigation and trial but also the effect of the media coverage on public perceptions of the victims at the time, raising questions of just how far have we really come since then?

Additional cast include Ron Cook, Faye McKeever, Chanel Cresswell, Barry Ward, Tony Way, Bronagh Waugh, Laurie Kynaston, Ross Anderson, Ben Bailey Smith, Jay Simpson, Silas Carson, Stuart McQuarrie, Jamie Parker, Lex Shrapnel, Gerard Horan, Joel Morris, Jonathan Coy, Amy Booth-Steel, Ken Bones, Andrew Woodall and Amaka Okafor.

Commented ITV's Head of Drama Polly Hill:

*"This drama starts with Nilsen's arrest and is looking at him through the eyes of the police officer trying to identify those he killed and deliver justice for them and the biographer he chose to tell his story. David Tennant is going to be brilliant as Dennis Nilsen and with Daniel Mays as Jay and Jason Watkins as Brian, this has an incredible cast to bring this story to screen and we are delighted to be making this with New Pictures for ITV."*

Kim Varvell, Executive Producer for New Pictures added:

*“Dennis Nilsen’s crimes shocked the nation in the early 1980s. Our programme focuses on the emotional impact of those terrible crimes, both on those who came into contact with Nilsen himself, and also on the victims’ families. We’re thrilled to be working with Luke and Lewis on this project, as well as the incredible cast.”*

The series is produced by New Pictures (Catherine The Great, The Missing) in association with all3media international for ITV and executive produced by Willow Grylls, Kim Varvell, Charlie Pattinson, Elaine Pyke, Luke Neal, Lewis Arnold and David Tennant.

Des is written by Luke Neal (episode 1 and 2) and Kelly Jones (episode 3), based on material from the book Killing For Company by Brian Masters. Directed by Lewis Arnold and produced by David Meanti, Des has been commissioned for ITV by Head of Drama, Polly Hill.

all3media international will distribute the series internationally.

Press Contacts

[Rich@ijpr.co.uk](mailto:Rich@ijpr.co.uk)

Picture Contacts

[patrick.smith@itv.com](mailto:patrick.smith@itv.com)

Viewer enquiries

<https://www.itv.com/contact/how-to-get-in-touch>