

Lauren Lyle to star as Karen Pirie in ITV cold case murder drama 'Karen Pirie'

Published Tue 11 May 2021



[Drama](#)

Lauren Lyle to star as Karen Pirie in ITV cold case murder drama, based on acclaimed author Val McDermid's *The Distant Echo*, adapted by Emer Kenny.

Outlander star Lauren Lyle will take the lead role of Karen Pirie in a new ITV drama series from the producers of *Line of Duty* and *Bodyguard*, World Productions.

True to Val McDermid's iconic character, DS Karen Pirie is a young and fearless Scottish investigator with a quick mouth and tenacious desire for the truth.

Adapted by Emer Kenny (*Harlots*, *Save Me Too*) who will also take the role of Karen's friend River Wilde, Karen Pirie also stars Chris Jenks (*Sex Education*) as Jason 'Mint' Murray and Zach Wyatt (*Blithe Spirit*) as DS Phil Parhatka.

The series is based on Val McDermid's first Karen Pirie novel *The Distant Echo*, and in the first episode Karen is tasked with reopening an historic murder investigation that has been the subject of a provocative true crime podcast.

When teenager Rosie Duff (Anna Russell-Martin, *Casualty*) was found brutally murdered in the Scottish university town of St Andrews in 1996, suspicion fell on the three drunken students who were discovered at the scene of the crime, claiming to have found her body; Sigmund 'Ziggy' Malkiewicz (Jhon Lumsden, *Pancake*) Tom 'Weird' Mackie (Jack Hesketh, *Besa*) and Alex Gilbey (Buom Tihngang, *Death In Paradise*). But with a lack of forensic evidence, no charges were brought and the police investigation floundered.

Twenty-five years on, someone appears to be willing to risk everything to keep the secrets surrounding the case hidden. Do the three men know more than they previously revealed? How flawed was the original investigation? And can Karen uncover the truth of what happened to Rosie that fateful night?

Further cast includes Michael Schaeffer (*The Salisbury Poisonings*) as Tom 'Weird' Mackie senior, Ariyon Bakare (*His Dark Materials*) as Alex Gilbey senior and Alec Newman (*Unforgotten*) as Sigmund 'Ziggy' Malkiewicz senior.

Karen Pirie (3 x 120 minutes) has been commissioned for ITV by Head of Drama, Polly Hill. Drama Commissioner Huw Kennair-Jones will oversee production from the channel's perspective.

Karen Pirie will be executive produced by Simon Heath, World Production's CEO, Emer Kenny and Val McDermid. Gareth Bryn (*Line of Duty*, *Hidden*) will direct and Clare Kerr (*The Nest*) will produce.

Commented Lauren Lyle:

"I am completely overjoyed to be bringing the formidable force that is DS Karen Pirie to life through Emer Kenny's slick adaptation. The world Emer has created using the backbone of Val McDermid's much loved books is electrifying and hooked me immediately. I couldn't ask for a more creative, supportive and energetic team to be joining. I'm so thankful to Val, Emer, World Productions and ITV for welcoming me wholeheartedly on board."

Commented Simon Heath:

"I'm thrilled with the uber-talented young cast Emer's brilliant scripts have attracted to Karen Pirie. Lauren is a born star who will breathe passion and wit into Val's iconic detective."

Commented Emer Kenny:

"I am so grateful to Val McDermid for lending me her brilliant characters, and beyond excited to work with the actors and Gareth Bryn to bring them to the screen. As I got to know Karen - and in casting the wonderful Lauren - I realised I wanted to be her best friend. So, I am delighted to announce that I will be playing River... Karen's best friend."

Commented Val McDermid:

"It's always exciting to see a project like Karen Pirie leave the page and head for the screen. We've been fortunate to secure a very talented and enthusiastic cast to bring The Distant Echo to life, and shooting in Scotland is definitely added eye-candy! Audiences are in for a treat."

The novels of celebrated crime writer Val McDermid have sold over 17 million copies worldwide. The Tony Hill/Carol Jordan series of novels was adapted into Wire in the Blood starring Robson Green for ITV.

World Productions have produced the highest rated dramas of 2021 on ITV and BBC1 in The Pembrokeshire Murders and Line of Duty. World was awarded Best Independent Production Company at both the Broadcast Awards and the Edinburgh TV Festival in 2019.

The series is filming across Scotland.

Karen Pirie is in association with, and distributed by, ITV Studios.

Press Contacts

sarah.gaffney@itv.com

Picture Contacts

patrick.smith@itv.com

Viewer enquiries

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