

SUGAR CITY

A night-time street scene with a large fire in the background, silhouetted figures of people, and a police van. The scene is dark, with the fire providing the primary light source. The silhouettes of people are in the foreground, and a police van is in the middle ground. The fire is a large, intense orange and yellow mass in the background.

MARTIN CUFF

OVERVIEW

Format:	Limited TV Series (6 x 55 minutes)
Story:	Martin Cuff
Genres:	Current Events & Social Commentary, Murder-Mystery, Amateur Detective, Psychological Thriller, Medical Thriller
Tone & World:	A propulsive thriller set in Bristol in 2025, that braids two investigations: a city gripped by multiple child abductions, and McCormack's private search for a missing woman. Media panic, racially charged opportunism, and institutional rot collide. <i>Sugar City</i> is a thriller where personal betrayal, medical malpractice, and weaponised racism converge to expose the fragility of a divided society.

LOGLINE

Filmmaker Mallory McCormack is asked to find a missing childhood friend. But her efforts are overshadowed by a series of child kidnappings and murders that spark civil unrest and anti-immigrant violence in the city of Bristol. The rage is spurred by right-wing talk show host Barry Brennan.

But as Mallory pursues her own investigation, she uncovers perplexing and unsettling connections between the missing woman and the heinous crimes in the city, raising a terrifying question: are immigrants responsible for these killings as the media suggests, or are they a cover for something far more sinister?

As the city – and country – plunge into chaos, Mallory races against time to bring the real culprits to justice.

SYNOPSIS

In Bristol, England in the summer of 2025, a child is kidnapped, and an immigrant is blamed - kicking off a spiral of racial tension and violence that is hard to contain.

Against this backdrop, filmmaker Mallory McCormack is asked to investigate the disappearance of childhood friend Jane Berenson. Although police believe that Jane has chosen to drop “off grid”, the question “why?” – and “where?” remains unknown. As Mallory interviews friends and colleagues, the investigation reveals that Jane faced a number of pressures – work problems, boyfriend problems, a stalker and even jury duty. Jane’s work at a fertility clinic seems particularly problematic; financial malpractice is suspected

Meanwhile, more children are abducted, and far-right shockjock Barry Brennan fans the flames, sparking panic and hatred against migrants.

The city becomes a crucible of fear, where hysteria, politics, and prejudice collide.

Mallory hones in on the malpractice allegations at Jane's place of work. At the centre is Dr. Ted Theunissen and his coolly malevolent lawyer JB Willis, who have been manipulating events to conceal a devastating secret: Ted has been using his own sperm to father children through the clinic. Jane had discovered this and fled.

What Jane doesn't know is that Ted has more recently discovered he has late-onset Duchenne-like Muscular Dystrophy, and he's passed on the fatal condition to his sons. When the truth of his actions begins to surface, JB Willis organises the boys' abductions and murders, disguising them beneath a wave of populist racist hatred.

RIGHTS

- All creative materials are based on the original novel SUGAR CITY by Martin Cuff.
- The series treatment, concept, characters, and dialogue, are original works created by Martin Cuff.
- The rights are solely held and reserved by the creator
- No third-party contributors hold claim to the concept or execution of the series.

WHY THIS STORY NOW?

Sugar City confronts how fear, prejudice, and misinformation can be weaponised for power. In an age of disinformation, where populists exploit tragedy to sow division, the series shows how fragile the truth becomes when institutions are corrupted, and communities are primed for scapegoats.

By fusing the intimate world of parenthood with the explosive politics of race and migration, the story reflects real anxieties: the ethics of science, the commodification of life, and the manipulation of public rage for private ends.

Set in Bristol, a city with a deep history of slavery, immigration, and social struggle, *Sugar City* reframes those legacies for today. It's not just a crime thriller; it's a mirror of how societies fracture under pressured – and how the most vulnerable pay the highest price.

CHARACTERS

MALLORY McCORMACK

- Mallory McCormack is a Bristol-based filmmaker whose work sits at the intersection of history, politics, identity, and truth.
- Fiercely intelligent and often caustic, she's broad-minded, caring and unafraid, Mallory is a woman defined by curiosity and conscience - someone who can't stop pulling at the threads, even when they lead to danger.
- Sharp-tongued, battle-worn, and driven by a need for truth over comfort, she is both the narrator and the catalyst in *Sugar City*: the woman who exposes what everyone else would rather leave buried.





TED THEUNISSEN

- Dr. Ted Theunissen presents as the golden boy of modern fertility, handsome, charismatic, and lauded as a visionary for his “patient-centred” approach to reproductive medicine.
- Behind the polished charm and immaculate tailoring, though, is a fragile ego and an almost narcissistic need for order and control. Brilliant, vain, and fatally deluded, Theunissen embodies the danger of intellect without empathy - a man who mistakes himself for God.

WENDY “Dave” BURGER

- Wendy “Dave” Burger is a mixed-race private investigator from Tiger Bay with a mouth as sharp as her instincts. Once Mallory’s right hand in production, she knows where to find information and how to use it.
- Funny, fearless, and gloriously unfiltered, Dave is Mallory’s counterweight: all instinct where Mallory is intellect, all motion where Mallory is thought.
- She can charm or threaten her way through any locked door, and when the city starts to burn, she’s the one still standing, saying, “*Told you so.*”





BARRY BRENNAN

- Barry Brennan is the latest monstrosity belched off the conveyor belt of English far-right grievance.. Through his public platform, he turns fear into ratings and prejudice into conflict.
- His venom is broadcast daily, his reach expanding as the country fractures. He's not a believer so much as a salesman. Calculated rage is his currency, and Britain's decline is his brand.
- His racist assumptions turn the tragedy into a crisis, and place a target on every African, Asian, Muslim and Immigrant in the country

SETH CARVER

- Seth is an Australian art photographer and former supermodel who swapped catwalks for creative expression. Openly gay, disarmingly honest, and fiercely protective of Mallory, Seth is her emotional anchor - the person who coaxes her back from the edge when the investigation consumes her.
- In a world defined by deceit, Seth is one thing in Mallory's life that feels anchored and real.



OLUWATOYIN “Toy” ADEBAYO

- Toy is Mallory’s assistant - a 26-year-old British-Nigerian with a degree in data journalism, a bottomless curiosity, and Wi-Fi faster than most police databases. Equal parts sharp and irreverent, she’s the one who can unearth a person’s life story from three emojis and a deleted LinkedIn post.
- Toy’s dialogue is a mash-up of London slang, Naija bluntness, and newsroom wit. Loyal, funny, and quietly fearless, Toy brings heart and modernity to the investigation - the digital bloodhound who proves that truth still matters, even when everyone else has stopped looking.



JB WILLIS

- JB Willis is the money behind The Whitman Clinic — a former security contractor turned venture capitalist whose charm masks a predator's pragmatism. Polished, calculating, and perpetually unruffled, Willis understands leverage better than ethics.
- When Ted Theunissen's genius starts slipping into madness, JB contains the damage while hysteria in the city is redirected toward convenient scapegoats.
- JB is brawn and brains – with a side of ruthlessness amorality. If Ted plays God, JB is the devil in the details.



JANE BERENSON

- Jane Berenson is quiet, orderly, the type who colour-codes her filing system and still reads physics textbooks for fun. She's steady and unremarkable, until she joins the Whitman Clinic in Cotham.
- To colleagues, Jane is neat to the point of severity. But beneath that calm exterior runs a fierce moral clarity - the kind that doesn't let go once it senses wrong.
- When she noticed that the clinic's stored sperm samples aren't being used correctly, she sets in motion the actions that bring the city to its knees.



MARGARET BERENSON

- Margaret Berenson is polish and poison, a widow who has learned to weaponise propriety and believes presentation is protection. Her voice is clipped, her smile a practiced blade; she treats kindness like a currency she can withhold.
- When Jane disappears Margaret files reports, hires investigators, and makes a show of worry - but it is strategic theatre. She knows more than she's letting on. She cultivates fear to control outcomes and is unapologetic about the lies that serve her ends.
- Margaret is not merely unsympathetic; she's small, cunning, and corrosive - the kind of mother for whom reputation always outweighs truth.



EPIISODES

Episode 1: Bring Him Home

- **A-Story (Jane case begins):** Producer Mallory McCormack is pressed by formidable family friend Margaret Berenson to find Margaret's missing daughter, Jane. Mallory meets DI Manadue at New Bridewell - Jane is an adult, "low-risk," low priority. Manadue is blunt: Jane may have chosen to go off-grid. Mallory continues production on The Queen's Warrant.
- **B-Story (City crisis):** A toddler is abducted from his home in Bristol and an immigrant is sought for questioning by police. This inciting incident electrifies the city and the airwaves. Barry Brennan's talk-radio show turns fear into fuel, platforming callers who frame the kidnapping through borders and "community breakdown."

Episode 2: Withdrawal

- **A-Story:** Mallory starts mapping the life Jane walked out of, work, friends, boyfriend. All leads suggest a deliberate withdrawal. The questions of “why” and “where” remain unanswered. Mallory also continues the filming of her production: The Queen’s Warrant.
- **B-Story:** Another boy is kidnapped, this time in a carjacking. The city’s nerves fray in real time on radio. Brennan keeps “just asking questions” while pushing an “inflection point” narrative the audience can finish for him.

Episode 3: Trifecta

- **A-Story:** A third boy is kidnapped, violently snatched in broad daylight. The city begins to crack. Brennan's public utterances become more racist and divisive.
- **B-Story:** Jane's disappearance raises a number of leads – a toxic workplace, a broken relationship, even a worrying Jury Duty. Mallory tries to make sense of it all. The workplace – a fertility clinic – closes ranks and lawyer's up. But why is the senior investigator of the child kidnappings crossing over into Jane's "missing persons" case? What's the link?

Episode 4: Rabbit Hole

- **A-Story:** While still trying to keep The Queen's Warrant filming safely, Mallory's investigation begins to hone in on the clinic. Dinner with Ted Theunissen and a chance meeting with Ted's ex wife shed light on Ted's mental state, and deep dives into the clinic's financials show Ted's lawyer JB Willis is laundering money through the clinic.
- **B-Story:** The body of one boy is found, and grief and rage explode into violence. And when a second boy is discovered killed in a brutal African ritual killing, the city breaks down into roiling civil disorder. Immigrants, blacks, Asians, muslims – no minority is safe.

Episode 5: Upheaval

- **A-Story:** Mallory discovers that Jane had reported medical malpractice to the Care Quality Commission – and the investigator had been killed in an “accident.” Mallory also learns that Jane’s ex boyfriend Rylan knows where she is. Mallory and Dave follow Rylan to Wales, unaware that they have led the criminals to Jane’s door.
- **A-Story:** A second boy is murdered in African ritual. Riots spread nationwide. Brennan uses his new national platform to share yet more divisive and incendiary rhetoric.

Episode 6: Angel's Flight

A-Story and B-Story come together: Mallory pulls the story together; Ted has been using his own sperm to father children through the clinic. Jane had discovered this and fled. More recently Ted has discovered he has late-onset Duchenne-like Muscular Dystrophy, and he's passed on the fatal condition to his sons. When the truth began to surface, JB Willis organises the boys' abductions and murders. He uses a tame copper DI Dennis Carew to sow disinformation and disguise the killings as immigrant crime. Barry Brennan learns his child is also a target of this "white-on-white" crime. A final showdown between Mallory, Ted and JB takes place against the backdrop of the Bristol Balloon Fiesta, where Ted is killed and JB brought to justice.

SEASON TWO

Mallory McCormack is in Edinburgh, in the middle of production of her latest film on the failed Scottish 1698 colony of Darien, when Scotland is rocked by a series of heinous but apparently unconnected murders.

But as she digs deeper into the colonial-era research, she uncovers perplexing and unsettling connections between the historic colony and the contemporary killings - exposing her and her team to powerful vested interests who will stop at nothing to keep their secrets safe.

MARTIN CUFF



**DARIEN
GAP**

SEASON THREE

Mallory is filming on location in South Africa when Cape Town is rocked by the disappearance of several women; there are no clues to their whereabouts or who might have taken them. Mal is also helping an old friend whose farm has been targeted by land invasions - is this a genuine desire for land by the poor, or is it a powerful businessman trying drive him out of his home?

As Mallory investigates, she uncovers disturbing connections between the land invasions and the missing women, raising a terrifying question: are these land grabs acts hijack or restitution, or are they cover for something far more sinister?



homeland

MARTIN CUFF

REFERENCE IMAGES



Cliftonwood



University





College Green

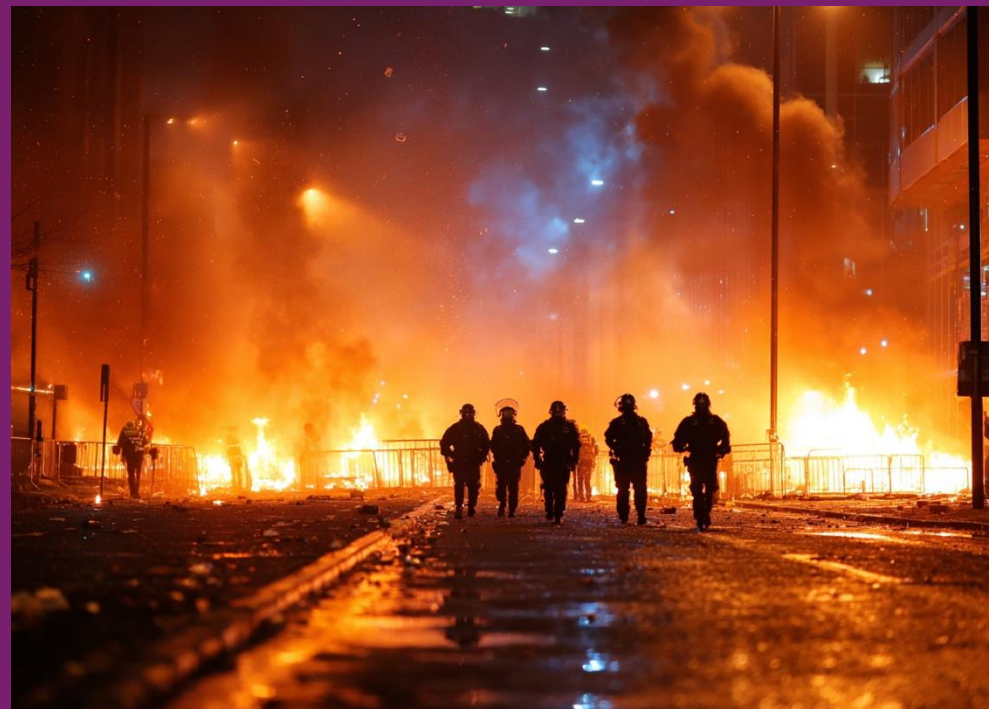
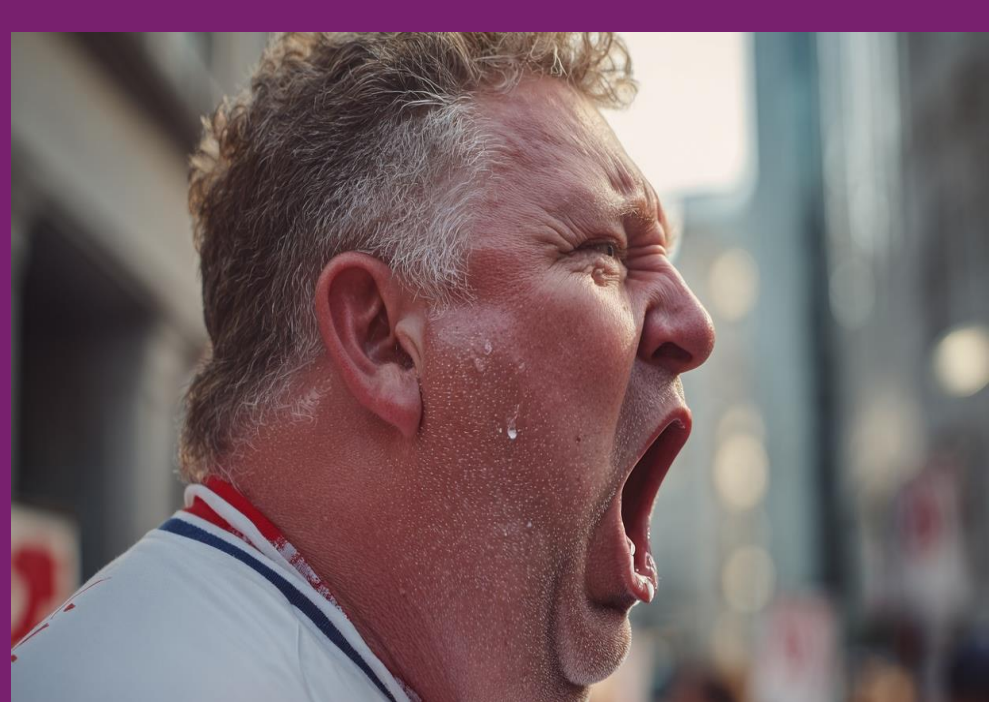




Severn Valley Radio



Easton







Stoke's Croft





Avon Gorge



Floating Harbour



Suspension Bridge



Clevedon



Mendip Hills



Sneyd Park





**BEST FEATURE
FILM**

MOROIA FILM FESTIVAL

**MOST INSPIRATIONAL
FILM**

BORCELLE FILM FESTIVAL

THE QUEEN'S WARRANT

**JAY
WINSTON**

**RANDALL
DE LA WAR**

**JASMINE
SASAY**

**AMANDA
SHORT**

**RHYS
AP-OWEN**

A MALLORY MCCORMACK FILM

THE QUEEN'S WARRANT

- *The Queen's Warrant* is Mallory's latest movie, in production at time of Sugar City. It's a telling of the true story of Queen Elizabeth I's 1597 warrant to deport all the black people in England. It looks at the impact of the warrant on Black Tudors at court and in society, and how they cope with the assault on their freedom.
- The movie stars some of England's greatest treasures – vintage character actors, Shakespearean actresses, top music stars and Children's TV presenters stretching their creative chops for the first time.
- The film shoots in studio in Bristol and at historic sites around the West Country.

Annie Cobbie

Black Belle



Sir Thomas Sherley



William Singer



Lord Burghley

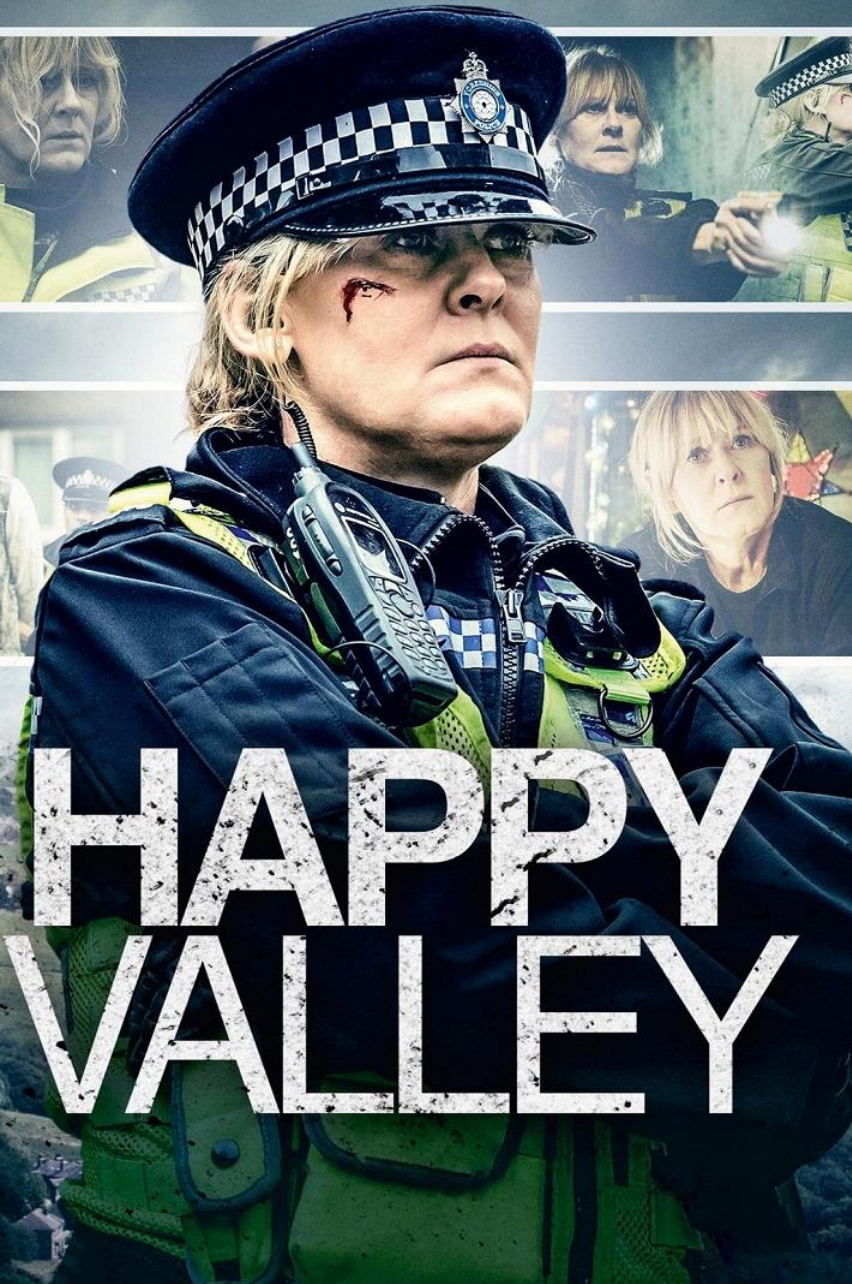




COMPARISONS

GRITTY, HEART-WRENCHING AND BRILLIANT AS EVER

THE INDEPENDENT



HAPPY VALLEY

FROM ACADEMY AWARD® WINNER
JANE CAMPION

TOP OF THE LAKE

"AN EDGY, DISTURBING AND
ALTOGETHER FIRST-RATE CRIME DRAMA"
HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"A MASTERPIECE" "RIVETING TO WATCH"
BUZZFEED INDIEWIRE



and on CineMaterial.com

BBC

THE FIGHT FOR POWER
WHO WILL YOU TRUST?

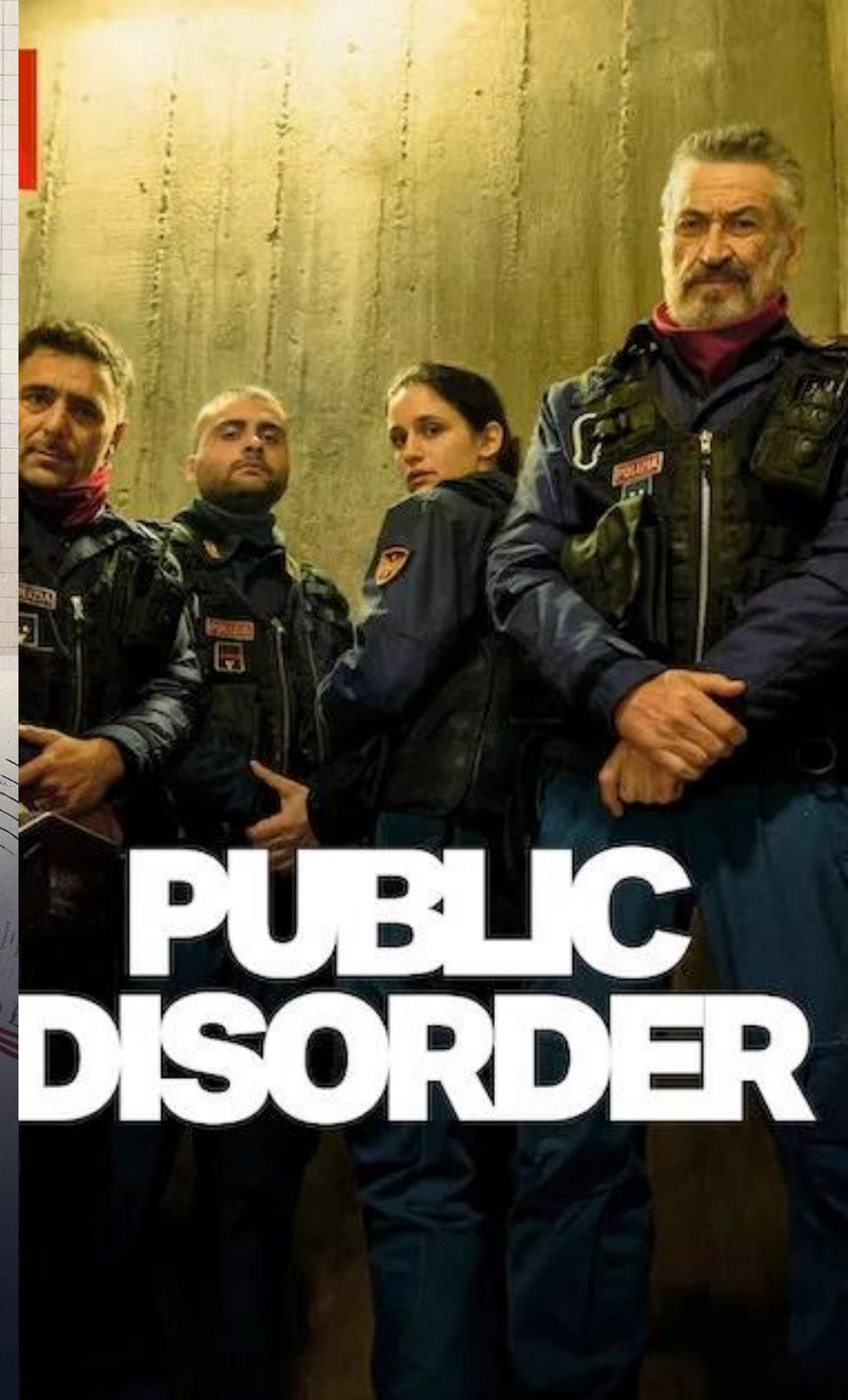
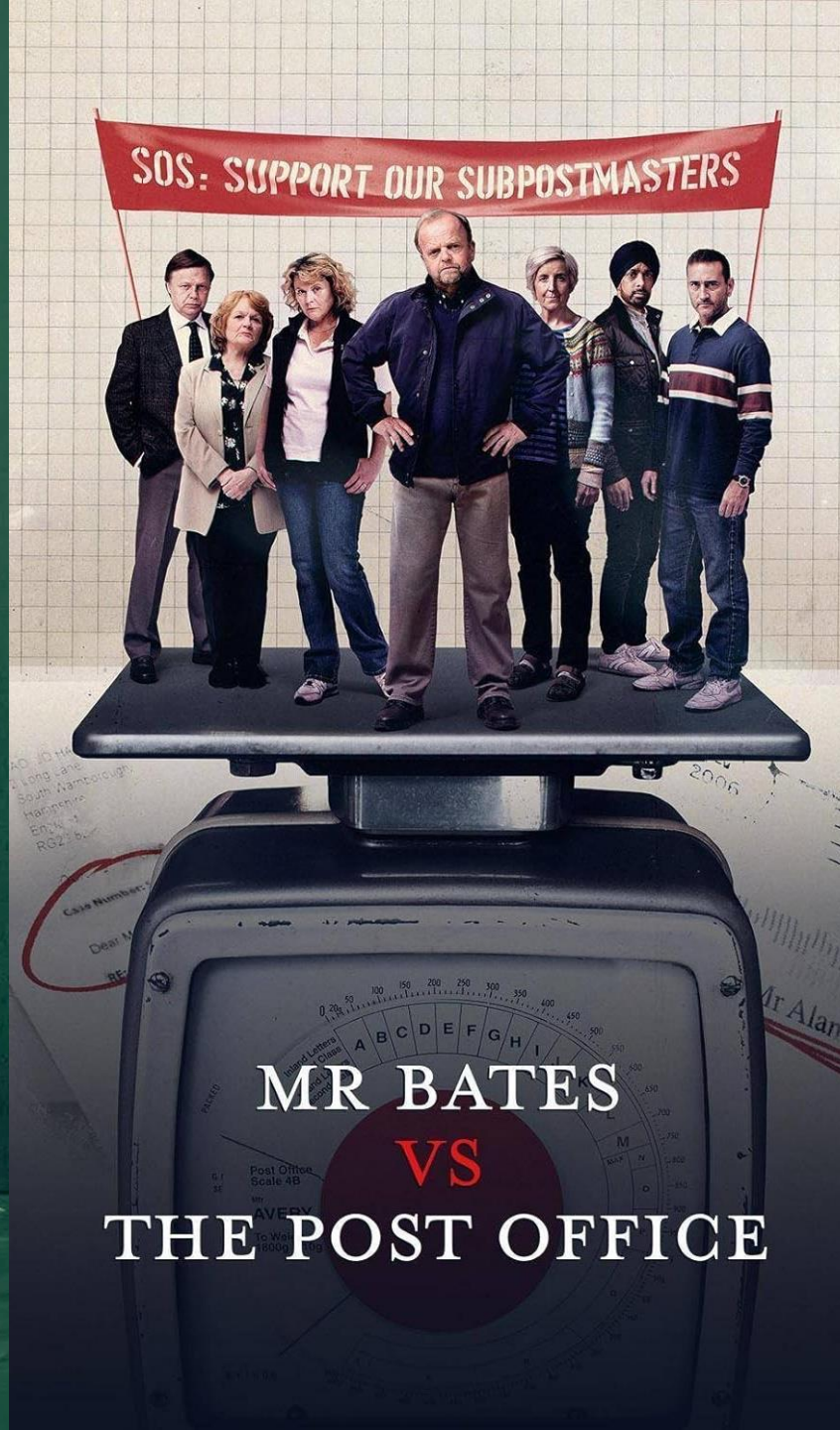


A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES

BODYGUARD

OCT 24 | NETFLIX

Marcella



STATEMENT

- At a time when far-right rhetoric is gaining ground across Europe and the UK, *Sugar City* exposes the cynical machinery behind public outrage - how political / media figures manufacture fear of outsiders while quietly enacting the very policies that fuel economic insecurity and social division. It's a story about scapegoating, distraction, and the moral decay that comes from weaponising prejudice for political gain.
- The Tudor counterpoint isn't just historical flavour either - it's the film's moral backbone. Over 430 years ago, England was already saying "*we're full.*" The same language, the same anxiety about foreigners taking work, homes, and dignity. *Sugar City* lays bare how that narrative has been repeated, rebranded, and re-sold generation after generation - a convenient myth that diverts anger from power toward the powerless.
- Through that lens, the series becomes more than a crime thriller: it's a reckoning with national memory and selective history. It challenges audiences to ask not just "*how did we get here?*" but "*why do we keep coming back?*"

MARTIN CUFF

- Martin Cuff's credentials include roles as Executive Director of the Association of Film Commissioners International (Los Angeles), Executive Director of the Colorado Film Commission (Denver), Executive Director of the Cape Film Commission and Cape Town Film Permit Office (South Africa) and Chief Operating Officer of Sithengi, the Southern African International Film and Television Market.
- Martin is the creator of ELSIE'S ARMY, currently in development through Pirate Productions, Edinburgh





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THANKYOU

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