



Series 2

Production Notes



A six-part drama series for BBC Two, coming October 2014

By Caryn Mandabach Productions & Tiger Aspect Productions

Created by Steven Knight

Written by Steven Knight

Directed by Colm McCarthy

Produced by Laurie Borg

Production Designer: Grant Montgomery

Director of Photography: Simon Dennis

Make Up Designer: Loz Schiavo

Costume designer: Lorna Marie Muga

Execs: Caryn Mandabach, Steven Knight, Will Gould,
Jamie Glazebrook & Frith Tiplady



Synopsis

TIME TO MAKE SOME REAL MONEY

Birmingham crime boss Thomas Shelby (Cillian Murphy, *Inception*) heads into perilous territory in the second series of Steven Knight's acclaimed gangster epic.

As the 1920s begin to roar, business is booming for the Peaky Blinders gang. Shelby starts to expand his legal and illegal operations. He has his sights set firmly on wider horizons, and the race tracks of the South are calling out for new management.

Shelby's meteoric rise brings him into contact with both the upper echelons of society and astonishing new adversaries from London's criminal enterprises. All will test him to the core, though in very different ways.

Meanwhile, Shelby's home turf of Birmingham is beset by new challenges as members of his family react to the upturn in their fortunes, and an enemy from his past returns to the city with plans for a revenge of biblical proportions.

Featuring a spectacular cast that includes Helen McCrory (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*), Noah Taylor (*Game of Thrones*) and Tom Hardy (*The Dark Knight Rises*), Peaky Blinders, series 2 is an enthralling tale of ambition, corruption, violence, desire, and above all an extraordinary family living through extraordinary times.

“Peaky Blinders” Series Two

Production Notes

The second season of epic gangster drama **Peaky Blinders** is set in 1922 – the ‘roaring twenties’, a time of glitter and glitz and the jazz age where high society happily mingled with wealthy gangsters. The notorious Shelby family has made its mark on the tumultuous landscape of post-WWI Birmingham and after turning his violent street gang, the Peaky Blinders into a legitimate business, Thomas Shelby, has designs on expanding the business out of Birmingham to run the race tracks in the south of England. Tommy’s ambitions are limitless and going up in the world brings its own dangers and challenges, and Tommy’s pursuit of success in business sees a fast, furious and gripping tale unfold in the rollercoaster journey of the Shelby family’s latest fortunes.

During the 1920s on-track betting was legal but was still a rough and dangerous business. Tommy has to gather all his cunning and manpower to outwit the southern gangs and in turn, he learns to use his looks, charm and wit to seduce the upper classes the racetracks also attract.

The stellar cast of **Cillian Murphy** leading as Tommy Shelby, **Sam Neill**, **Helen McCrory**, **Paul Anderson**, **Joe Cole** and **Ned Dennehy** from series one, are joined for series two by BAFTA award-winning actor **Tom Hardy** (*The Dark Knight Rises*, *Inception*) and **Noah Taylor** (*Game of Thrones*, *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory*), as well as **Charlotte Riley** (*Edge of Tomorrow*, *Wuthering Heights*), Screen International Star of Tomorrow **Aimee-Ffion Edwards**, newcomer **Finn Cole** (brother of actor Joe Cole) and once again a cameo from celebrated Birmingham poet, writer and musician **Benjamin Zephaniah**.

“Peaky Blinders is a passion project for me” explains creator, writer and executive producer **Steven Knight**. “It’s based on stories told to me by my parents, about their parents and uncles. They grew up in 1920s Birmingham and were bookmakers and gangsters embroiled in gang wars during that period of British history. I thought the stories must have been exaggerated, but in doing the research, I found they’d actually spared me many of the gory details. The reality was much more traumatic and I just felt I had to tell the story”.

The term “Peaky Blinders” was actually the name of a gang that Knight’s own father’s uncles belonged to “They sewed razor blades into the peaks of their caps to use as weapons and they became a part of the uniform and people were terrified by them. The story that prompted this whole idea was one about my dad as an eight-year-old



boy, being told by his father to take his uncles a message. He was terrified but did as he was told and ran barefoot through the streets of Birmingham to a room where men wearing suits were counting piles of money and drinking from jam jars because they wouldn't spend money on glasses - they'd rather spend the money on clothes.

"I visualised the story through the eyes of a young boy growing up in that environment, so there's a sense of heightened reality: the horses were bigger, the men were taller and the pubs more glamorous. What went on in those days is quite amazing and the characters are incredible and really lend themselves to drama.

"I was particularly interested in emphasising the idea of people during that period being modern in their emotions, aspirations and expressions. One of the key points for me was to mythologize a geographical area, a period in history and a class of people who are never normally focussed on in this way. Why should these people not be mythologized in the way Americans took 19th century agricultural labourers and called them cowboys and put them in Westerns? Series two of Peaky Blinders begins on the day that the British Empire was at its biggest and most influential and we open in an industrial city in England that's producing most of the weapons, metal work, vehicles and engines that are used in this huge empire."

In series one, the Shelby brothers have returned from the First World War. The war was terrifying and the big cities of England were awash with damaged men suffering the effect of post-traumatic stress or those who had lost respect for authority. These men had to make a living any way they could and the Shelby family became illegal bookmakers. "Tommy Shelby goes for the big time and he expands the gang," explains Steven Knight, "at the same time, he expands the illegal empire but his real ambition is to expand and create a legal business.

"It's based on the trajectory of some people who will remain nameless (not my family members) who have respectable businesses that continue today but they started out life like the Shelby family. An example in America would be the Kennedys who started in bootlegging and become America's first family. I've made a similar fictional trajectory for Tommy, so who knows he may be Sir Thomas Shelby by the time we're finished.

Tommy Shelby is the highly driven, charismatic, seemingly fearless head of the Shelby clan and when he created the character, Knight wanted to show a man who had become closed off to relationships by the trauma of his war experiences.. "He's driven by a desire and ambition which replaces his emotions," says Knight. "In the first series he gradually opens up and finds emotions and falls in love, but then gets betrayed. As a result, in series two he's locked down and is determined not to make that mistake again... but of course he does!"

“Much of Tommy’s fearlessness is based on the realities of men who have faced war - they cease to care about the physical consequences to themselves,” explains Knight. “They’ve seen people blown to pieces so the normal rules no longer apply. Tommy has a heightened sense of protecting the family and a reduced sense of protecting himself. That begins to change the way he looks at his own future.”

There’s a great Francis Bacon quote that could be Tommy’s motto says Knight: “‘Since it’s all so meaningless, we might as well be extraordinary.’ Tommy doesn’t believe in religion, politics or human relationships at the beginning so he’s either going to do something or nothing. He decides to do something; to build up this business and do something for his family. The key question from the series is: can someone from Tommy’s background ever escape from what they were born in to? It’s the big English question - can you change your class? In series two, that question continues to be asked.”

When Tommy encounters May (played by Charlotte Riley) there’s a sense of a parallel experience. May might be the aristocratic daughter of a horse breeder, but her husband has been killed in the First World War and there’s an awareness that the upper classes have had it just as bad as Tommy’s class. Tommy and May meet at a horse auction and although she’s an aristocrat and a lady and he’s a gangster, it’s something of a comment on the times as Steven Knight elaborates: “Between 1922 and 1928 that sort of thing was really happening. The lines were blurred. There was also this mad nightclub scene in London and around the country where you would see gangsters, aristocrats and actors all socialising together and these types of relationships would develop.”

Producer Laurie Borg notes that in series one, opium played an important role because people were attempting to deaden the pain of returning from the war but series two is about cocaine and hedonism. Steven Knight echoes: “In series two, people are trying to forget by enjoying themselves, having fun and being hedonistic. It was a cocaine era and everything was fast, jazz was in fashion and it was all about crazy chaos. That’s something I wanted to capture.”

Although a good deal of the drama still centres around the Shelbys’ main base in Birmingham, the second series sees them travel south to London to explore business opportunities in the capital, where they encounter gangland rivals in the form of Jewish gangster Alfie Solomons (played by Tom Hardy) in Camden Town and Italian gangster Sabini (played by Noah Taylor) in Clerkenwell. “Back in those days, there were all sorts of alliances forged and broken, and new peace treaties negotiated,” says Knight. “It was like a fractured Europe within one country. At that time, the Birmingham gangs were considered to be the most powerful and they were recruited by other gangs for protection. It’s rather like the Mercenaries coming into a country in medieval times and taking over.”

Knight sourced much of his detailed background information from the local newspaper, the Birmingham Evening Mail from the 1920s: "When you read about what was happening then, it's astonishing. Things were going on that you don't consider the norm in the 1920s. I also read lots of books about the explosion in cocaine use and drug use and vices generally during that era. We call it 'the roaring 20s' because people didn't really care."

After a successful collaboration with actor Tom Hardy on the feature film "Locke", which Knight wrote and directed in 2013, he created the character of Alfie Solomons in *Peaky Blinders* with Hardy in mind: "Tom was brilliant and we got along really well on *Locke* and almost as a bit of a gamble I asked him to take a look at the role of Alfie. He said yes straight away. He plays a particular kind of gangster, he's brilliant and really got into it."

The first series of *Peaky Blinders* aired on BBC2 in 2013 and the audience reaction it received was phenomenal, not just in Birmingham and the West Midlands where it's set, but across the UK. Steven Knight was thrilled that it captured the imagination of the nation, even down to influencing fashion: "People have really taken it to their hearts. There was a great piece in the *Guardian* about people in east London dressing like *Peaky Blinders*."

Producer Laurie Borg took the reins for the second series to bring Steven Knight's vision, story and characters to the screen. With locations in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands, bigger sets built at the production's main studio base in Wythenshawe, and a larger cast, Borg comments:

"Steve's storytelling is so clear you immediately get a sense of the period. The storylines this year have been wonderful and he's weaved this web of incredible diversity involving so many different characters. We have a huge cast this year and a much bigger palette but Steve's words are why we're here. The blueprint was in Steve's head. The interwoven stories of Tommy, Campbell, Polly, more female characters, love interests, the horses and the drugs make this is a big production."

Peaky Blinders' executive producer, Caryn Mandabach is an Emmy Award-winning television producer who had an established career in the US before her leap into British TV. Mandabach is responsible for such ground-breaking hits as *The Cosby Show*, *Roseanne*, *Grace Under Fire*, *Cybil* and *3rd Rock From the Sun*, *That 70s Show*, *That 80s Show*, *Grounded for Life* and, more recently, *Nurse Jackie*. Mandabach explains why she got involved in *Peaky Blinders*:

"Steve Knight is an extraordinary guy and we come from similar working class backgrounds - I'm from Chicago which is the US's second city and Steve's from



Birmingham, the UK's second city. I was a comedy producer and Steve created *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* so neither of us started in drama or the mythologizing business until later in our careers. Steve exploded on to the drama scene with *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Eastern Promises* so he was a highly prized writer already when I met him and wanted to get into the storytelling game."

"A lot of the drama in Britain doesn't have a lead character, but of course in the US we feature leads like Tony Soprano, so the phenomenon of Tommy Shelby is rather unique to our TV drama culture here in the UK."

"The trick that Steve Knight knew from some place very deep echoes what the late James Gandalfini said: 'You don't have to like Tony Soprano, you just have to understand him'. The trick is to provide a rich interior life and backstory which is in Tommy's case the fact that he had to go and fight in an absurd war, a so-called war to end all wars. Upon returning, someone poor like Tommy had two choices really – become a gangster or become a trade unionist. To depict that most honest of British stories was an important step in Steve's process. Tommy is one man but if you expand it out, he's really every man."



Cillian Murphy is “Thomas Shelby”



Cillian Murphy first garnered international attention for his performance as Jim, the reluctant survivor in Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*.

In 2005, he made an indelible impression as Dr. Jonathan Crane/The Scarecrow in Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (London Film Critics Circle Award nomination) and later reprised the role in *The Dark Knight* and *The Dark Knight Rises*. Murphy also co-starred in Warner Bros *Inception*, Nolan's critically acclaimed sci-fi hit.

In 2006, Murphy was Golden Globe-nominated for his performance as the transgender outcast Patrick "Kitten" Brady in Neil Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto* and starred opposite Rachel McAdams in Wes Craven's thriller *Red Eye*.

In Ken Loach's Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or winner *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, Murphy portrayed a guerrilla fighter who battled the Black and Tan squads that attempted to thwart Ireland's bid for independence. In 2007, he re-teamed with Danny Boyle and writer Alex Garland (*28 Days Later*) on *Sunshine*, a thriller in which a group of scientists attempt to re-ignite a dying sun. For *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* and *Sunshine*, Murphy garnered consecutive British Independent Film Award nominations

In 2012, Murphy appeared in *Broken*, which opened the International Critics' Week section at the Cannes Film Festival and won the Best British Independent Film Award. Directed by Rufus Norris from a screenplay by Mark O'Rowe, Murphy also received a British Independent Film Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor.

Murphy's diverse filmography also includes Wally Pfister's *Transcendence*, Rodrigo Cortés' *Red Lights*, with Robert De Niro and Sigourney Weaver, Andrew Niccol's *In Time*, *Perrier's Bounty* with Brendan Gleeson and Jim Broadbent, John Crowley's dark comedy *Intermission* with Colin Farrell and Kelly Macdonald, Peter Webber's period drama *Girl With a Pearl Earring* with Scarlett Johansson, Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain* and John Carney's *On the Edge*.

On film, Murphy next appears in Ron Howard's *Heart Of The Sea*, adapted from Nathaniel Philbrick book for Warner Bros and Village Roadshow Pictures, opposite Chris Hemsworth and Benjamin Walker.

Later in 2014, he stars opposite Jennifer Connelly and Mélanie Laurent in *Aloft* (Sony Pictures Classics), Claudia Llosa's drama, which premiered in competition at Berlin.

Murphy first made his mark on stage with a stunning performance in Enda Walsh's *Disco Pigs*. After receiving commendations for Best Fringe Show at the 1996 Dublin Theatre Festival and the Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival in 1997, *Disco Pigs* went on to tour extensively in Ireland, the UK, Canada and Australia. Murphy later starred in the film version directed by Kirsten Sheridan.

In 2006, Murphy made his West End debut at the New Ambassador Theatre in John Kolvenbach's *Love Song*, directed by John Crowley. His stage collaborations with Tony Award-winning director Garry Hynes include *The Country Boy*, *Juno and the Paycock*, and *Playboy of the Western World* at the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. Murphy also starred as Konstantin in the Edinburgh Festival production of *The Seagull* directed by Peter Stein, as Adam in Neil LaBute's *The Shape of Things* at the Gate Theatre in Dublin and as Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Kilkenny Castle.

Murphy most recently starred in Enda Walsh's *Misterman* at the National Theatre in London. For the run at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn, Murphy received the 2012 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance. He also garnered *The Irish Times* Theatre Award -- Best Actor for the original production in Galway.

During the summer and fall of 2014 on stages in Ireland and the UK, Murphy and Walsh will collaborate again on *Ballyturk*, a gut-wrenchingly funny, achingly sad, ambitious new work in which the lives of two men unravel quickly over the course of 90 minutes. Mikel Murfi, and Stephen Rea co-star.

Q: How did you first get involved in *Peaky Blinders*?

A: I got the scripts in the traditional way and I knew nothing about the show and I had no idea what the name *Peaky Blinders* meant or represented so I read it cold. It was just the power of the writing that attracted me. Steve Knight wrote the first two episodes of series one and it was unlike anything I'd read before. So that was it; that was my hook.

Q: What makes Steven Knight's writing so special?

A: He writes compelling characters. Obviously he's written a strong narrative as well and obviously you become invested in these characters. Like all good gangster shows, you can be appalled by some of the things that go on in them but you're still compelled by them.

Q: So you recognised right away that it was something you could get your teeth into as an actor but did you have any idea it would be so great?



A: What makes TV so attractive to actors and to writers is the long form nature of it. The idea of playing and developing the character over six hours and now we're in the second series doing it for another six hours is a real gift. Any actor would kill to spend that time and go so deep within that character. You get to explore parts you wouldn't get to do in a two and a half hour film. It's a big responsibility but it's one that I relish.

Q: Is it more similar to theatre in the sense that you get to develop the character?

A: Unlike theatre, there's very little rehearsal, you just get to go straight into it and do the research yourself. Over time, you get the ownership of this character because you've been playing it for so long and developing it for so long with the writer and directors. He becomes part of you and you become part of him.

Q: What's it like playing a character like Tommy Shelby? He's got that cold stare that gives people the chills, was that something that was easy to take on?

A: You've got to realize what the character has been through. When we first meet him, you have to contextualize him historically. In the first series, he'd just been spat out from the First World War and he'd come back numb and damaged by what he experienced there. What he's seen, that affects the character emotionally and psychologically.

It was an exciting time, socially between the wars, so you try and put that into your performance. There was a lot up for grabs during that time and a lot was changing. Like in all good drama, Tommy finds himself in a very exciting time and it's how he deals with it. The Peaky Blinders were a real live gang. They did exist and were respected and feared, so you need to try and play some of that. I'm not a tough guy, that's not my thing but you've got to try to exude the kind of authority the guys of that sort of family had.

Q: Did you know you had it within you to play the tough guy or is that something you had to work on?

A: That's the great thing about acting - it's a constant journey, without sounding like a total old darling! You're always finding out and revealing new things about yourself. The great thing about being an actor is you get to go places you obviously couldn't go in your normal day-to-day life. They say it's the shy man's range and perhaps that is the truth.

Q: What do you think motivates Tommy? What makes him get out of bed in the morning?

A: I don't think you can overestimate the effect of the war on these guys. I think there was a sort of nihilistic sense to them when they came back. They certainly had no respect for authority and they were mostly 'godless' when they came back. For a lot of them, it had just been an absolute blood bath and the stuff that they had witnessed neither you or I could comprehend.

When Tommy comes back he's a changed man. I think that having that lack of respect for authority means that when things need to be done he has to do them himself. He realizes the fragility of life and the ephemeral sort of nature of existence and he takes what we can. I also think his goals are ultimately benign - he may have nefarious roots and ways of getting there but I think ultimately he wants to protect his family. He loves his family and he wants them to be close to him but he also wants to expand his horizons and ambitions. I think one of the most profound things about Tommy is that he's not afraid to die. Death holds no fear for the man and that must change your perspective on life significantly.

Q: Can you give us the broad strokes of what Tommy Shelby has accomplished in series one and how he expands the empire in series two?

A: Tommy became this de facto leader in series one and now the next target is London and moving south where he encounters obstacles in the form of Noah Taylor and Tom Hardy's characters Sabini and Solomons. All that goes with living in a family of violent and dangerous people, so I suppose the storyline is your classic gangster storyline of going legitimate. They are constantly being pulled back down into that criminal world and that push and pull is the really exciting, dramatic element of it.

Q: Can you tell us a bit more about Alfie Solomons and Sabini?

A: It was important for Steve Knight to show that it was great to be the cock of the walk in Birmingham as these guys have a respected gang in Birmingham, but going to London takes things to a whole other level. I think it was important to show that Tommy can be out of his depth sometimes. These guys down south operate on a totally different level. You may question Tommy's morals but to Solomons and Sabini, the word moral doesn't apply.

It was important that the antagonists for Tommy, were stepped up and then you obviously needed two fine actors to play those parts and give really commanding performances. Tom and Noah were cast brilliantly. They are terrifying but also very charming and compelling which is par for the course it seems if you're a gangster leader.

Q: Sabini and Solomons are quite eccentric characters. They kind of throw these fits of rage. Do you think that's part of the gangster make-up?

A: Yes, what's more dangerous than being unpredictable? That's a frightening thing within itself and both those characters have that wonderful unpredictability so you can never know if you're safe with them or if they're your friend. What's great is that the two of them have a history and that's what Tommy takes advantage of.

Q: As if Tommy didn't have enough trouble with Solomons and Sabini, he also still has Campbell to contend with. Tell us about that?

A: There's a pretty heavy history between Major Campbell and Tommy. I think Campbell's wickedness and hatred for Tommy has just been compounded by Tommy's success and expansion so the two men couldn't hate each other more at this point. Sam Neill is such a fantastic actor. You shouldn't love Campbell but you just can't help it and that's the brilliance of Sam's performance.

Q: They are allies as often as they are enemies sometimes because they're forced to work together and it seems like the upper hand shifts between the two. What's that like for you and Sam to play?

A: It's great. There's this one-upmanship the whole time between the two. They sort of enjoy watching the other one squirm. It's great to play that pure hatred, particularly when you're having a cup of tea with Sam having a great chat then you have to snap into deep distaste!

Q: Tommy got pretty burned by Grace in series one. Do you think he's sworn off love in the second series?

A: For a man who is so perceptive and so clever, Tommy really had his head turned by Grace. She had a big effect on him in terms of his romantic ambitions but yes, in series two there is another love interest of sorts in the form of May (played by Charlotte Riley).

What's very interesting about May's character is that she's almost like a male character, even though she's very attractive and beautiful. Tommy's very attracted to that strength in her. She's very different to Grace, who was feminine and caring and that love they had was very tender. There's a sense that if Tommy and May do get together it will be a powerful coupling.

Another theme of this show is the idea of gangsters hob-knobbing with the aristocracy. It looks at that upward trajectory power and money can bring even though you're from the slums of Birmingham. Sleeping with this woman who lives in a house the size of a castle is amusing and exciting to Tommy.

Q: Paul Anderson and Joe Cole play your brothers. What's it like working with them?



A: What's brilliant is the tension between the brothers; it's so well written. Usually Tommy is usurping Arthur's role as the eldest son but Arthur is finding his place now, although he's always been the wildly unpredictable one with his drinking and doing whatever is available really. This series, I think their relationship kind of reaches an understanding. The real tension this time lies between Tommy and John's character (played by Joe). John is testing Tommy a lot and Tommy while he's impressed, he sort of pushes him away and there's a slight frostiness lying between Tommy and John. It's a classic kind of Fredo storyline from *The Godfather*.

Paul and Joe are amazing. The brothers are at their best is when they all are together. This season, they hit the town together, go to a club in London and smash it up. You see the power of them together and the love they have for each other. What makes it great, sophisticated writing is that tension.

Q: Tell us about how Polly develops this series?

A: What's unconventional about this show is you have this matriarchal figure played brilliantly by Helen McCrory but she's not their mother, she's their aunt. She's kind of a contemporary of Tommy because there's not much of an age difference between them. If Tommy died, Polly would take over for sure. She's the one who knows Tommy best and can understand and read him the most. They're like an old married couple the way they squabble and fight but they don't trust anyone more than each other.

Polly's storyline this season is just amazing and Helen is phenomenal at creating her.

Steve Knight has always written strong female characters. We see Polly struggling with the gangster matriarch role and being a mother, which would seem incompatible but they work perfectly together.

Q: Is it possible to talk about how series two is going to feel different from the first series?

A: In 1922 there was a lot of cocaine going around in the clubs of London. Tommy's moved away from the opium addiction that was dragging him down last season and now he's very focused. He doesn't partake in the cocaine himself but we've used the cocaine as a tonal atmosphere for the show.

That time in history was also very influenced by what was happening in Ireland at the time with the civil war just about to kick off. That really influences our story too.

Q: What sort of research did you do for this series?

A: I did a lot last year. The Classic Slum was a great reference book. The conditions people were brought up in, it's kind of staggering to see what we take for granted now.

Britain hasn't really been portrayed on screen during that period between the wars. It was a tough time but also a very exciting time. There's plenty of material out there.

Q: This is shot in a very cinematic way isn't it?

A: You're always hoping for that and it seems to be the case nowadays. The crossover between film and TV is massive in terms of crews and creative people who used to just work in one or the other before. What was great about last year was we premiered it at the Edinburgh Film Festival – we screened the first two episodes and it gave us the scale the story deserves. We're mythologizing British gangsters and the British working class which the Americans do so wonderfully. We haven't really done that successfully in this country before, so hopefully we're doing it on a big scale now so yeah I'm thrilled.

Sam Neill is “Campbell”



A recipient of an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for Services to Acting and a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, Sam Neill is internationally recognised for his contribution to film and television. He is well-known for his roles in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* and Jane Campion's Academy Award Winning film *The Piano* alongside Harvey Keitel, Holly Hunter and Anna Paquin.

Other film roles include *Backtrack* opposite Adrien Brody, *Deus Ex Machina*, *F2014*, *A Long Way Down*, *The Tomb*, *The Hunter* with Willem Dafoe, *Daybreakers*, *Legends of the Guardians: The Owls of G'Ahooole*, *Little Fish* opposite Cate Blanchett, *Skin*, *Dean Spanley*, *Wimbledon*, *Yes for Orlando* director Sally Potter, *Perfect*

Strangers, *Dirty Deeds* alongside Bryan Brown and Toni Collette, *The Zookeeper*, *Bicentennial Man* opposite Robin Williams, *The Horse Whisperer* alongside Kristin Scott Thomas, *Sleeping Dogs* and *My Brilliant Career*.

For his work in television Sam has earned three Golden Globe nominations: in 1998 for the title role in the NBC miniseries *Merlin* for which he also received an Emmy nomination; in 1992 he received a Golden Globe nomination for his performance opposite Judy Davis in *One Against the Wind* and a further nomination followed for his performance as British spy Sidney Reilly in *Reilly: The Ace of Spies*. For his performance in the Australian drama *Jessica* he received an AFI Award for Best Actor. Other television

appearances include the acclaimed *Rake*, Granada's epic miniseries *Doctor Zhivago*, *To the Ends of the Earth*, Showtime's *The Tudors* with Jonathan Rhys Meyers, *Crusoe* and *Alcatraz*. Most recently he featured in *Old School* for Matchbox Pictures opposite Bryan Brown.

Q: Tell us about your character in *Peaky Blinders*

A: I play Chief Inspector Chester Campbell. It's an elegant name, Chester Campbell, isn't it? Campbell is Tommy Shelby's nemesis. He's a hard man and a policeman. He's from Ulster and he has a record of cleaning up nasty places with great zeal. Winston Churchill co-opts him to clean up Birmingham which is a snake pit of vice and corruption and the police are all rotten there. Chester Campbell's mission is to clean up the police, clean up the gangs and make Birmingham habitable again. It's a job he takes on with considerable relish.

He's a very lively character, very vivid. Campbell is a man of extreme contrasts, on the one hand he's hyper religious, on the other hand he's capable of great violence and can be brutal and beastly, but he believes his mission is righteous and that he's on the side of the angels. He will do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Q: Do you enjoy playing Campbell?

A: In spite of the fact that he's on the right side, ostensibly he's a man who radiates malevolence. He's like an awful radioactive pile, so he's a lot of fun to play, as there is a side of him that's extremely vulnerable too. He's a man who has probably never experienced love. I'm sure he had a cold and violent upbringing and people can be damaged by that. I feel that he's sorely damaged somehow and he's prone to human frailty like everybody else. Those people often have the light of the crazed zealot in their eyes and are often the first people who are found in compromising positions in motels somewhere in the Deep South of America. He's been a great character for me to tangle with – I've loved every minute.

Q: Do you enjoy working on this format of television drama?

A: I've personally got a great deal out of long form television. I like watching it and I'm ashamed to say I like binge-watching TV shows that come in boxes. More than that, it's great to tell a story over a longer time and to spend a decent period with a bunch of actors you really like is fun. We've had some fantastic people on this show, people that you like and whose work you admire and you get to know them very well when you're working on something for a long time like this.

Q: Who are the *Peaky Blinders*?



A: The Peaky Blinders are based on a real gang that existed at exactly this period after the First World War and persisted for quite a long time. I personally didn't do any research in terms of the gang, that's really for those characters themselves. There's no such character as Chester Campbell, not literally, but there are many Chester Campbells alive and dead. At the same time he's no one but many people.

This is a show that's based on real things and you get a sort of sense of real things but we are talking about heightened reality. Chester Campbell, if he existed, is a man who likes to fill out forms in police stations but instead he's cutting a swathe through the dirt and slime of Birmingham.

Q: What's the mood in season two?

A: When we started off with Tommy and his nemesis Campbell it was 1919. The show now moves to 1922. It's an interesting time in British history because things were in flux after the end of the First World War. It was a very unstable time, on the edge of revolution possibly, the place was absolutely brimming first of all with grief, my own grandmother for instance was widowed in the First World War and she, like many women of a generation was forever bereft by the loss of her beloved husband. The place was full of wounded people, full of damaged people and you get a feeling that all of these Shelbys are the ones who have been at war and they're damaged goods. Something has happened to *Aunt Polly*; she's a very damaged person. Everyone is damaged in their own way and Chester Campbell is damaged by rather unfair resentment really because he's a much older man who never went to the war. Nevertheless he serves his country every day because he's a man full of political and nationalistic zeal - he gets the job done.

There's nothing pleasant about Campbell, but I feel I have feelings for him. To play a character, you don't have to love your character but you must have some empathy with him and I certainly do for Chester Campbell. There's something vulnerable and sad about him.

Q: What attracted you to this project?

A: There were many reasons why I decided I'd like to do this and I think probably the main reason was the language; there's something about Steve Knight's use of English that's very appealing. They're great words to wrap your mouth around, really beautiful, particularly Campbell's stuff. There are scenes where it's like he's tapped straight into some vein that runs through the Old Testament and it's very graphic, so I was immediately attracted to that. I was also immediately attracted to playing a character that's so vivid and three dimensional and so wrong. Then of course there was the rest of the cast - I've liked Helen McCrory for many years, she's one of the greatest

actresses of our time and she's completely lovely and gorgeous. I've followed Cillian's work since he started, he's an outstanding actor and a very nice bloke and we've had a lot of fun so I'd do it all again in a heartbeat.

Q: What's changed in the Shelby empire in season two?

A: Things have changed considerably, it's three years on and their empire has expanded. Tommy's interests and all the Shelby's interests have moved into London. The same things happen with Campbell, his concerns are much wider he's now no longer simply a policeman he's on the Irish desk at the secret intelligence service, which is MI6. He has bigger concerns than simply cleaning up crime in Birmingham. Ireland has become increasingly troublesome to the government. There's a civil war brewing between those who are for the treaty with the British Crown and those who are against the treaty and those who want a republic immediately. Campbell has a kind of mega plan for all of this, which eventually will involve the Shelby family. He still has unfinished business with Tommy so it's a bigger game, and the show has bigger concerns at this point.

Q: What's the appeal of *Peaky Blinders* to the audience?

A: When I share my DVDs of *Peaky Blinders* with family and friends they get completely hooked on it. I'm on Twitter and people tweet me all the time saying they absolutely dig the show and want it to come back. People get very addicted to it.

It's a very unique, unusual and compelling show so I just want it to have the widest audience it can possibly have.

Q: How's it been doing Campbell's Ulster accent?

A: I've certainly given it a good bash, as it's the first time I've done an Ulster accent. It's a very graphic voice to use and I got a lot of help. I had some really good dialogue coaches and I have friends from there. Liam Neeson and Jimmy Nesbitt are friends from there and they both did a little bit of work with me and I'm very grateful for that, they helped enormously and if you don't like the accent blame them. I wash my hands of it and I put myself in their care!

Helen McCrory is “Aunt Polly”



The multi-award-winning actress Helen McCrory has appeared in a variety of theatre roles and is currently at the National Theatre in the title role of *Medea*. She has worked extensively with Sam Mendes at the Donmar Warehouse playing lead roles in *How I Learned to Drive* and *Old Times* directed by Roger Michell and in Mendes' farewell double bill *Twelfth Night* and *Uncle Vanya*. Helen's other notable theatre credits include the 2005 sell-out run in the West End of *As You Like It*, which garnered her an Olivier nomination and nomination for Best Actress in the Theatregoer Choice Awards 2006; Ibsen's dramatic masterpiece *Rosmersholm* in 2008 and more recently *The Late Middle Classes* and *Last of the Hausmans* at the National Theatre with Julie Walters and Rory Kinnear. She recently received rave reviews for her role as *Medea*, which ran at the prestigious Olivier theatre this summer.

Critically acclaimed for her work on the small screen, she starred in Peter Morgan's *The Jury* and won the Critics Circle Best Actress Award for her role in the Channel 4 series *North Square*, having been previously nominated for her performance in *Fragile Heart*. Other notable TV work includes *Street Life*, *Lucky Jim*, *Dead Gorgeous*, *Split Second*, *The Entertainer*, *Charles II* and the title lead in *Anna Karenina* and she also appeared opposite Ken Stott in the psychological thriller *Messiah*. 2014 saw Helen star in a number of hit television shows including *Inside Number 9*, *Tommy Cooper: Not Like That, Like This* and in the popular Sky Atlantic drama *Penny Dreadful*, for which she is currently in production on for season two.

In 2013 Helen completed the feature film *A Little Chaos* directed by Alan Rickman, starring alongside Kate Winslet. On the big screen she has also starred in British independent features such as *The James Gang* for Mike Barker, *Dad Savage* opposite Patrick Stewart, *Enduring Love* for Roger Michell and Gillian Armstrong's *Charlotte Gray*. She has also worked on US studio productions of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Interview With a Vampire* and *Casanova*. She garnered excellent reviews for her role as Cherie Blair in Stephen Frears' film *The Queen* and in 2010 she reprised her role as Cherie Blair alongside Michael Sheen in *The Special Relationship*.

She voiced the character of Mrs. Bean in 2009's *Fantastic Mr Fox* and took the role of the evil *Narcissa Malfoy* in the Harry Potter films. 2011 saw Helen in Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* and she can also be seen in the most recent Bond instalment, *Skyfall*. In 2012, Helen starred as the lead role in Soda Pictures' *Flying Blind*. This year will see Helen star in *The Woman in Black*, *Angel of Death*, *A Little Chaos* directed by Alan Rickman and Bill from the creators of *Horrible Histories*.

Recent credits include *Penny Dreadful* for Showtime/Sky, *The Woman in Black*, *Angel of Death*, *Inside Number 9* and *Tommy Cooper: Not Like That, Like This*.

Q: Who do you play and how do you fit into the story?

A: I play Aunt Polly and I'm the matriarch of the Peaky Blinders run by Tommy Shelby, which is a Birmingham gang in the 1920s.

Q: What happened to Aunt Polly in the first series and where do we find her in series two?

A: In series one, we find Aunt Polly in Birmingham after the First World War. All the men have come back and Thomas and Arthur Shelby have both served in France. Polly was running the betting shop when they were at war, and it looks at what it was like to hand that power back to the men again. Also what those men were going through and how hard they found it to reacquaint themselves with civilization and how hard the women found it to accept them back because they had completely changed and were brutalized and damaged by the war.

We learned in the first series that Polly had two children who had been removed by the parish council, which was very common at the time for single women particularly single women who were making "gin" in the bath (that was the excuse) and were living on the breadline. She has this sadness she carries with her and she defends her family throughout the series.

Q: Did you have a sense of the depth of this character when you read the first script? When you're in television long-term there's something interesting about developing the character, isn't there?

A: Yeah, I think it's interesting, this whole novelistic drama that people are starting to watch now, which was introduced to us from America really. With fantastic series like *The Wire*, people began to really understand that actors could get their teeth into it, especially for a long period of time. I've never done it before and this is the first time I've come back to a particular character.

Q: With film acting you're constantly fighting for your moment whereas with this I guess your character can breathe a bit as you know that a lot more is going to happen and you're going to go through different phases

A: Yes and also the difference with a film script is you know exactly where you're going to end up at, so you mark it much more precisely. With this, you'll only have the two episodes when you start so it will be a surprise to you frankly as much as your character

when the man you were shouting at a moment ago is actually going to turn out to be your lover. Working like this has the same naturalism that life has and things can be dealt with in far more depth because you have six hours in which to tell a story rather than an hour and a half.

Q: How would you give people an overview of what the *Peaky Blinders* are what their business is about?

A: The Peaky Blinders are a family, a criminal gang and there are sociopathic elements in the family, that's got to be said. But, at the same time you feel that this is the last option for those people, they didn't have an education and they didn't have any chance, so if you're not given the tools in society to succeed legally then people are forced to succeed illegally.

I don't feel that Polly is an inherently violent woman, but she will have turned to violence in order to defend herself. Equally, with Tommy you know the First World War has brutalized him but you also know he's a very intelligent man. Tommy is really the person Polly is closest too and they manage the family. There are the people they've looked after too – we had a character called Danny Whizz-bang who was shell-shocked and it shows you how people in these communities looked after each other. People are still recovering from the Great War and this family in their way take care of people, rather like vigilantes and that would be their justification for doing certain things. They have an order in their world and they have a respect for each other in their world.

Q: If faith in God and religion kept people in check before the First World War, had much of that gone by the time they came back home?

A: I know Steve Knight is very interested in looking at what happens when people no longer believe in God or are servants to their country who have been brutally let down. In Polly's case, she's Catholic but the parish council took her children away, so the church, council and government are the people who have betrayed her. What happens when people don't feel that they actually are part of society - they create their own society.

In doing the research, the brutality of the Great War is very well documented and understood. But the people who were left at home had to deal with it too. Hunger is not something we have to cope with on a daily basis for most people in Britain today, but with the risk of starvation and sickness in those pre-NHS days, people had to look to each other and this is why the criminal classes built up and could keep such strongholds in society because society felt so disenfranchised at the time.

Q: There's a scene early in series one where Campbell arrives on that street where the Garrison pub is, and people are fighting and fucking in the street. You realize we have a kind of a chaste idea of what post-First World War Britain was like from books and TV. *Peaky Blinders* takes you somewhere else completely.

A: *Peaky Blinders* doesn't romanticize the past but the British airwaves do usually romanticize the past. Everyone thinks Victorian Britain for example was charming and wonderful and everyone loves Victorian names like Ethel, Edith and Matilda but anyone who has read Dickens knows that Victorian Britain was absolutely vile. Exactly the same has been done with the Great War. It's not about the dress and the suits being great, the reality of that time is brutal.

Q: Can you tell me about the research you did for this? What was a working class woman's life like in the 1920s?

A: It was horrible! You washed your clothes out in the yard every Friday. There would be a woman in charge to tell the women who was first and who was last, obviously you didn't want to be last because you had the filthy water. Children were playing in the streets and didn't necessarily go to school. You see pictures of those women and they're just exhausted.

Q: Is the street in *Peaky Blinders* based on an actual street?

A: Actual street, actual people, actual pubs, and there was an Aunt Polly. She was terrifying according to Steve Knight! When his family saw *Peaky Blinders*, they knew exactly who she was in their family.

Q: Among actors, has the conversation changed about doing TV? Do you feel differently than you felt five years ago about TV?

A: I don't think actors' feelings towards TV have changed, I think TV has changed, the budgets have changed and so have the writers. Steve Knight has written films and now he's written TV. There are loads of writers who have been doing that and I think that it's attracting the actors.



Paul Anderson is “Arthur Shelby”



Paul Anderson's major feature film credits include *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* for director Guy Ritchie, *The Sweeney* and *The Firm* for Nick Love and Brian de Palma's *Passion*. Most recently he's completed *Heart of the Sea* for Ron Howard and Brian Helgeland's *Legend*.

Television drama credits include *The Great Train Robbery*, *Top Boy*, *The Promise*, *Frankie Howerd*, *Ashes to Ashes*, *Lewis*, *Silent Witness*, *Dr Who* and *Midsomer Murders*.

Theatre productions have included Nicholas Hytner's *Major Barbara*, *Market Boy* for Rufus Norris, *King Cotton* for Jude Kelly and *On Tour* for Matt Wilde.

Q: Give us an overview of who you play and what happens to him in *Peaky Blinders*

A: I play Arthur, the eldest of the three brothers. Series one saw him upstaged by his younger brother Tommy. Arthur was content with the way things were in the family business and where the Shelbys were at, but Tommy has much more ambition and bigger scope than Arthur and takes over which sends Arthur in to this downwards spiral. This sibling rivalry forces Arthur to descend into drink and then he's confronted with the return of his father who he hasn't seen for a while and that sends him further into that dark world. Arthur spent a lot of time in pain in the last season. Despite some happier moments there's a deep sadness to him.

Q: He does terrible things and as you say, he's very sad. Is that good to play as an actor?

A: It's a great part and I love playing Arthur, I really do. There is that side of him that's angry and violent but there's also a vulnerable, sad, lonely confused child-like element to him. That's a characteristic that's quite typical of men like that – he hasn't quite grown up and he doesn't want to accept responsibility.

Q: What's happening with Shelby's empire in season two?

A: The empire has expanded and the scope is much bigger. There's much more going on and we have our fingers in many more pies in terms of moneymaking. We're branching out into other worlds and a legitimate world as well.

Q: If season one was about opium is season two about cocaine?

A: Season two is a lot faster. Cocaine makes it hectic and faster – it's just a roller coaster from the first episode. In the first season you didn't see the true strength of us brothers until the second episode, and in this season you see it straight away. What we're about becomes apparent in the first episode in London at a club.

Q: Let's talk about Cillian and what it's like working opposite him

A: What I like about Tommy is he's so composed, he's got so much going on and he takes it all in his stride but inside there's a clock ticking and there's a nervousness about Tommy but you don't see that, especially the way Cillian plays it. It's all very relaxed, very calm but there are a lot of big performances in this and there was in the first one. Cillian's very subtle, very understated. It's very interesting - he's great to watch.

Q: What do you like about Steven Knight's writing?

A: It's just so inventive. It's not predictable. There are no clichés; he just avoids them at all costs.

Q: Do you like these long shows?

A: Yeah, as with a show like *The Wire* or *Breaking Bad* in their entirety they're the best piece of film I've seen although they're television. They beat any of my favourite films. That's because you've got 12 hours of them and you have the luxury of just sitting back and letting it unfold and develop and not knowing what's next. We can do this with *Peaky Blinders* and it's a great format and it's a great way of viewing films or watching television. It's a brilliant thing.

Q: Why do you think women like this show?

A: There are strong female characters in it, which is a good thing. In this season our Aunt Polly is even more prominent and our sister and John's wife feature very highly. The women have a great voice in this show. I think it appeals to both sexes, young and old. My mum loves it as well, and not just because I'm in it! I knew she would love this because there's that period drama element to it with something different with a real modern twist on it. People can identify, it makes it more current.

Joe Cole is "John Shelby"





Since training with the National Youth Theatre, Screen International Star of Tomorrow Joe Cole has gone on to earn critical acclaim across the board for his work in television, theatre and film.

Joe will soon feature in a number of highly anticipated projects, including *Pressure*, a Ron Scalpello thriller with Danny Huston and Matthew Goode, the independent feature film, *The Falling* alongside Maisie Williams and Maxine Peake and the crime thriller *Peterman* with Alison Steadman, Phil Davis and Peter Bowles.

In 2012 he took the lead in *Offender* for director Ron Scalpello, with reviewers singling out for his performance as being '*nothing short of stunning*', and being '*certain to make his name in this film and is definitely destined for great things*'. Baz Bamigboye dubbed Joe '*the next big thing*'.

Joe also featured in Ol Parker's *Now is Good* alongside Dakota Fanning, Kaya Scodelario, Olivia Williams, Jeremy Irvine and Paddy Considine and *A Long Way Down* alongside Pierce Brosnan, Imogen Poots, Aaron Paul and Toni Collette.

He played a cross-dressing boxer in *SLAP*, which won 'Best Short Film' at the Edinburgh Film Festival. He also took a leading role in *Cargese* directed by Matt Smith, one of a series of one-off dramas for the Sky Arts series *Playhouse Presents*, co-starring alongside Craig Roberts and Avigail Tlalim

He appeared in series two of BBC2/BBC America's multi-award-winning *The Hour* with Dominic West, Ben Whishaw and Romola Garai and was seen on our television screens in the BAFTA award winning British teen drama *Skins*. Joe's other television credits include the BBC's successful series *Come Fly With Me* and five-part ITV drama *Injustice*.

His theatre credits include the Bush Theatre's highly praised productions of *The Knowledge/Little Platoons*, *Polling Booth*, *Relish*, *Brixton Rock*, *Bus*, *Talking to Byron*, *Tits and Teeth*, *Later*, *Birdboot*, *Twelfth Night*, *Our Country's Good*, *Acctington Pals*, *Our Bad Magnet* and *Helmet*.

Joe is also currently writing and developing a project for television with Matt Lucas.

Q: Who do you play?

A: I play John Shelby, who is the younger brother of Tommy and Arthur Shelby.

Q: When you came back for series two how did you feel?

A: As soon as you put these clothes on you're sort of there, it elevates the whole thing. It's quite easy to portray the character when you've got on five layers of this sort of suave suit!

Q: What's the key to doing the accent, because everybody thinks that they can do it don't they?

A: I think there is a subtlety to it and it's important not to over-pronounce - that's what Steve Knight said. The key is not doing it too 'over the top'.

Q: Can you give us a brief overview of what happens to John Shelby?

A: John's a bit of an adolescent in a sense when we first meet him. He's being carried by his older brothers and he needs to grow up and become a man. He gets married and the world is almost too big for him in the sense of what his brother Tommy is trying to achieve. John becomes a man in the second series and you definitely see a new, more mature man. While Tommy and Arthur are off building the empire across the UK, John has to step up and hold things together in Birmingham. The struggles that come for him are part of being a pawn in Tommy's bigger plan, but he's quite an important piece of the jigsaw.

Q: Do you think John likes that new role?

A: I think he sort of idolizes the *Peaky Blinders* moniker, the whole image and what they stand for. But I don't think he's cut from quite the same cloth as Tommy. Tommy's malicious and cut-throat and John is more the heart of the story and represents the heart of the family so I don't think he's quite got it in him, not for want of trying.

Q: What about Esme, John's wife? She's definitely changed things.

A: It feels like she's almost trying to become the new matriarch and she's challenging Polly a little bit. She certainly wears the trousers in her relationship with John, particularly at the beginning of the series. It's quite an interesting balance of power between the two of them.

Q: What's happening with the business in series two?

A: Business is expanding and they're trying to build their power in London. Ultimately they want to spread the *Peaky Blinders*' name across the whole of the country. There are all the family problems and suffering that come with that too. My character and Paul Anderson's character have to deal with these relationships and we're under a lot of strain because of what Tommy's doing.

Q: Does the tone feel different this time; does it feel accelerated?

A: Yeah I feel like it's bigger and better. There are some great set pieces and really exciting things that were doing and I've been lucky enough to be heavily involved in that.

Q: That's the joy in this sort of TV drama, you get to develop your character don't you?

A: I'm starting to get more of a role in this one and I'm doing more and I think as a younger character within the show, it can only grow and it's been nice to see that. It's a slow burn but it's coming.

It's like the American way and it's the best way to tell a story - to build a character over a few episodes and a few series. It's nice because you get to explore a character over a long period of time.

Q: Cillian is brilliant in this, what do you like about his character Tommy?

A: Cillian's just a brilliant actor. It just feels like it's effortless with him. Cillian is such a different person to the character he's playing, so as a young actor, to watch him play that is amazing. My character John looks up to Tommy to a certain degree. Sometimes I just look to him on set and he is the boss. He is a gangster.

Q: Do you think he has a method and that it's natural?

A: Yeah I just think he switches it on and off. He just switches into it, and he's very menacing when he's Tommy!

Q: The women on the show are important, what do you think about Aunt Polly's role?

A: She's just so strong. She's a tough woman but Helen plays Aunt Polly with a real heart. She's up against people like Sam Neill and Cillian and they're big, big characters on the page and serious players in the acting game and she's managed to develop this character that matches that and represents a real strength.

Charlotte Riley is “May Carleton”



2014 has been a busy year for Charlotte Riley with multiple projects across the big and small screen. Most recently she was seen in the Warner Bros. blockbuster *The Edge of Tomorrow* opposite Tom Cruise and Emily Blunt. Upcoming projects include the female lead opposite Chris Hemsworth in Ron Howard's *The Heart of the Sea* and the BBC's major 7-part drama *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* with Eddie Marsan and Bertie Carvel.

In 2012 Charlotte starred in Channel 4 TV mini-series *World Without End* with Cynthia Nixon, Miranda Richardson and Peter Firth. Prior to this she took the lead roles in *Grand Street* and *Entity*.

She was a regular in ITV's crime drama *DCI Banks* as Lucy Payne, appeared in *Foyle's War* and starred in the screen adaption of *The Mirror Crack'd From Side to Side*.

In 2009 Charlotte tackled the universally known role of 'Catherine Earnshaw' in ITV's adaption of the Emily Bronte novel *Wuthering Heights*, starring opposite Tom Hardy as 'Heathcliffe'. She then took a regular role crime drama *The Take*. Prior to this she took a supporting role in Stephan Elliott's *Easy Virtue* alongside Colin Firth, Ben Barnes and Jessica Biel.

Q: How and why did you want to get involved in this project?

A: I got a call from my agent saying they were doing another season of *Peaky Blinders* and I nearly fell off my seat because I'd watched the first season and I loved it so much. I started watching it at 9pm one night and I didn't finish until about 3am. I was so addicted I just had to watch it all back to back to back! I was on another job so I had to record an audition for Colm McCarthy and, as they say, the rest is history.

Q: What makes it such compulsive viewing?

A: It was unlike anything else I'd seen on TV. It really felt like I was watching six mini films that I couldn't stop watching. It was like visual chocolate that I just wanted to keep eating more of! I just thought the characters especially the female characters, were so well crafted, it was something that I wished I'd been a part of. Obviously when that call came I was like 'yes please, I want to be involved'.

Q: Did you imagine you would be playing some Birmingham gangster?

A: Yeah, I was quite surprised when the script came in and my character was aristocratic. It was nice to see these new characters, that Steve's expanded the scope and that the storyline was really branching out into other areas of the country.

Q: You've done period drama before but what's fresh about *Peaky Blinders* is that it doesn't have that quaint, twee thing going on does it?

A: No, there's nothing quaint about *Peaky Blinders* and I think that's one of the things that drew me to it. Everything is the way you'd really imagine it at that time, from the costumes, for example which they really wanted you to use in the way that they were used. Everything was roughed up, crinkled and dirty and used in the way women weren't expected to.

When it was appropriate, Colm would allow me to match Cillian and his masculinity so I made myself very comfortable within scenes in how I use the furniture and things like that. That affected me in terms of the whole project - everything about it is dark and gritty and dirty and real. It's just a breath of fresh air for this genre of TV drama.

Q: Steve Knight is obviously at the centre of this. What characterizes his writing and what do you like about it?

A: As an actor you very rarely read scripts that just come off the page so brilliantly. With Steve's scripts you just read them and everything is jumping out and you can't stop reading. You just don't want to put them down because you want to know what happens next. His characters are just so well thought through and he gives each person a huge amount of depth. Women can be left on the sidelines with some male writers but with Steve, it appears he enjoys writing women as well and he does it very well.

Q: How has he set that up for you in season two? Who do you play and how does she fit in with Tommy and the Shelby family?

A: Tommy and May meet when Tommy is purchasing a horse to allow him to get into the Epsom Derby. May introduces herself and she's particularly intrigued by him because he's different from the usual clientele at these horse auctions. She's had quite a tough life so far and she's never seen a man quite like him before.

Q: What was going on in the world at that time? For a woman like May to get involved with a guy like Tommy, it seems like a brazen thing for a woman of her class?

A: I think her interesting choices are what drew me to her as a character. She wasn't a typical woman that you would meet from that world. I think he intrigues her because Tommy's been through the war and he's come out the other side. We understand that she's been through the war in a similar way in the sense of losing her

husband and losing everything that they had set up together. May finds the people from her world incredibly boring and they don't understand what she's been through so when she meets Tommy, he's someone who equals her and she's inspired by his business and by the way he's living his life. I think he's equally quite impressed by her because she could have just sat on her backside doing very little, but she's created a business herself. She's not disturbed by the way he runs his life or by the violence and she wants him to live his life the way he wants to. She doesn't want anything from him and I think that's why their relationship works.

Q: Something that marks out these characters is that sense of abandonment because of the war so that's why they feel so fresh and exciting because they've decided to do something extraordinary

A: Yes, the fall-out from the war and the devastation for the people left behind and the ruined lives creates that spirit the Brits are famous for: picking themselves up and carrying on by any means necessary. It was a time when the class system was shifting about. Steve Knight was saying that people did what they wanted to do and why shouldn't they after such a horrendous time. It was a time for pulling your socks up and having some fun and just getting on with life.

Q: They are almost like superheroes aren't they?

A: Yeah, totally. Doing it for the working class so to speak.

Q: The story has that emotional side brought by the female characters, as well as that very masculine gangster side doesn't it?

A: Yes, there's the very masculine side of it with the gangsters, guns and killing but equally, there's the really clever manipulation of human beings within it. Helen McCrory's character Polly keeps the family together and in order. She's the matriarch and she sorts them out. Steve never writes violence without consequence - you see the fallout of people having to pick up the pieces after what's happened. There's humour in it too when you're watching the family dynamic with the younger characters learning and getting it wrong. It's nuanced and grounded so I think there's something in there for everyone, whether you're male or female, sixteen or seventy.

Supporting Cast Information...

Tom Hardy is “Alfie Solomons”

Previous credits include: Tom Hardy plays dangerous and unpredictable gang leader Alfie Solomons, whose base is Camden Town: at end of the Grand Union canal that leads from Birmingham to London.

London-born Tom Hardy shot to global attention with his captivating performance as a real-life, notoriously violent convict in Nicolas Winding Refn's *Bronson* in 2009. Hardy's subsequent film credits include John Hillcoat's *Lawless*, Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, and both *Inception* and *The Dark Knight Rises* for director Christopher Nolan. On television Hardy received a BAFTA nomination for best actor for his role in *Stuart: A Life Backwards* in 2008. Further TV performances include *Band Of Brothers*, *The Reckoning*, and *Wuthering Heights*. Hardy's stage performances include Michael in *Festen* at the Almeida, Lucca in *Blood at the Royal Court*, Dorimant in *Man Of Mode* at the National and Skank in *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings*, for which he won best newcomer at the Evening Standard Theatre Awards in 2003 and was nominated for an Olivier as Most Promising Newcomer in 2004. Hardy trained at the Drama Centre London. He recently wrapped the lead role in *Mad Max: Fury Road* in Australia and the crime drama *The Drop*, co-starring the late James Gandolfini and Noomi Rapace in New York. Hardy can soon be seen in *Child 44*, a Stalin-era thriller, also starring Rapace; *The Revenant*, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Legend in which he will play the infamous Kray twins.

Noah Taylor is “Sabini”

Noah Taylor plays violent and volatile Italian crime boss Darby Sabini, who controls betting at all the racecourses in the south – and on whose business Tommy Shelby (Cillian Murphy) has designs.

Noah Taylor is one of Australia's most accomplished film actors and has worked with some of the world's finest directors and actors. His credits include *The Year my Voice Broke*, *Flirting* (both directed by John Duigan), *Nostradamus Kid* (director Bob Ellis), *Almost Famous* (director Cameron Crowe), *Tomb Raider*, *Shine*, *Max*, *The Life Aquatic* (director Wes Anderson), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (director Tim Burton), *New World* (director Terrence Malick) and *Lecture 21* (director Alessandro Baricco). Other feature credits include *Submarine*, *Red Dog*, *Red, White and Blue*, *Lawless*, *The Double* and *Edge of Tomorrow*. Television credits include *Game of Thrones* and *The Borgias*.



Noah was most recently seen in 'Game of Thrones' playing the nasty Locke. He will soon be seen in *Mindscape* and *The Double*. Noah has been nominated for many awards, and is a four-time winner of the Film Critic's Circle of Australia Best Actor Award. Noah is very active musically, both on his own and in numerous collaborations. He also regularly paints and enjoys drawing.

Sophie Rundle is "Ada"

Sophie Rundle returns to *Peaky Blinders* for a second season to reprise her role as Ada, sister to the Shelby brothers.

Previous TV drama credits include *Happy Valley*, *Call the Midwife*, *The Bletchley Circle*, *Merlin*, *Garrow's Law* and *Titanic*.

Feature film credits include *Face of an Angel* for Michael Winterbottom and *Great Expectations* for Mike Newell.

Aimee-Ffion Edwards is "Esme"

Aimée's first television role was as regular character *Sketch* in Channel Four's *Skins*. Since then she has built up an impressive roster of screen and theatre credits, including regular character *Jennie Jones* in series two of *Luther* for the BBC, the co-lead in Sky's *Walking and Talking* helmed by Kathy Burke, the lead role of *Katy* in the final episode of Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton's acclaimed *Inside Number 9* for the BBC.

She recently took the lead in BBC4's *The Detectivists* which was written and directed by and co-stars Mackenzie Crook; and the role of *Elizabeth Barton*, opposite Mark Rylance in *Wolf Hall* for the BBC.

Aimee also took her first film lead in John Boorman's *Queen and Country*, which screened at the Cannes Film Festival 2014. On stage she has performed leads at the Donmar Warehouse and Young Vic and was one of the lead girls in Jez Butterworth's epic *Jerusalem* in the West End and on Broadway. She was recently named one of Screen International's Stars of Tomorrow for 2014.

The Creative Team...

Steven Knight

Creator, Writer & Executive Producer

Steven Knight's first screenplay, *Dirty Pretty Things*, directed by Stephen Frears, premiered at the 2002 Venice Film Festival to outstanding reviews and was selected to open the prestigious London Film Festival. The film was released in the UK and the US to universal critical acclaim. It won a host of prestigious awards including four BIFAs, Best Film and Best Actor at the Evening Standard British Film Awards, the 2004 Humanitas Award, the Edgar Award for Best Motion Picture Screenplay, Best British Screenwriter at the London Film Critics' Circle Awards and an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay at the 76th Annual Academy Awards.

His first stage play, *The President of an Empty Room*, directed by Howard Davies, opened at London's National Theatre in 2005.

He scripted two further screenplays that were released in 2007, *Amazing Grace* directed by Michael Apted, about the life of the British anti-slavery politician William Wilberforce and *Eastern Promises*, directed by David Cronenberg and starring Viggo Mortensen and Naomi Watts, which centred on London's Russian crime community.

To date, Knight has directed two feature films, both of which he also wrote. His directorial debut, *Hummingbird* starred Jason Statham and Agata Buzek and was the story of a damaged ex-special forces soldier living on the streets of London and this was followed by *Locke* starring Tom Hardy as an ordinary working man whose life changes in the course of one evening. Knight received a 2013 BIFA for Best Screenplay.

His screenplay *The Hundred Foot Journey* directed by Lasse Hallström will open in August 2014, *Seventh Son* directed by Sergei Bodrov is due for release in 2014, *Pawn Sacrifice* directed by Ed Zwick is now in post-production, an untitled project directed by John Wells will start production this summer, and Knight is currently scripting the sequel to *World War Z* for Brad Pitt.

Steve has had four novels published: *The Movie House*, *Alphabet City*, *Out of the Blue* and in 2011, his first children's novel, *The Last Words of Will Wolfkin*.



Colm McCarthy

Director

Colm McCarthy's major credits include the most recent series of *Sherlock*, the BAFTA-nominated first series of *Ripper Street*, and the BAFTA-nominated *Murphy's Law*.

Other credits include the pilot for *Endeavour*, the incredibly well received *Inspector Morse* prequel, and *Spooks V*, which received a BAFTA nomination for Best Drama Series. He also directed *The Tudors*, as well as all five parts of the Anthony Horowitz serial, *Injustice*. His first feature film, *Outcast* premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival and SXSW in the US.

Q: Why did you want to get involved in this project?

A: The first series was brilliant. Steve Knight is a genius and Cillian Murphy is completely inspiring on screen and the rest of the cast is great. Otto and Tom who directed the first series have done an amazing job creating this series and this world of the *PeakyBlinders*. I knew Steve was going to be writing all six episodes this time around and that was really exciting. It was an easy decision for me to make.

Q: What were the meetings like when you came on board? What was the mission for series two?

A: Steve and I had an initial chat about what was brilliant in the first series and what might be different in the second series. It was already apparent from the script and the kind of broad headline was that series one was opium and series two was cocaine. Series one was about oblivion and searching for some kind of escape – the relationship with Grace and all of that, and series two was about hunger, ambition and desire.

Q: Can you give us an overview of what happens in series two? The empire expands doesn't it?

A: In series two, Tommy Shelby tries to take over the world and satiate that massive desire and hunger and that aching hole that remains within him. The pressure and weight of the world are on Tommy's shoulders and he's treading his own path.

Q: What makes Tommy tick?

A: The great thing about Tommy as a screen character is that he's quite hard to sum up as a character. He has a massive appetite, ambition and desire to change things but he's also conflicted. He has this strange duality where on the one side he's driven by the desire to own and win and take over part of the ruling elite, yet on the other hand he's very faithful to his family. Family is incredibly important to him, and the

notion that it's something one should cherish and nurture. Nurturing is something he's incapable of as well, so he really is a man of contradictions.

Tommy is the ultimate cynic but he's also the ultimate romantic as we saw in series one. In series two we see that he's ultimately driven by his heart. He does reach out and try to emotionally touch people despite being the most seemingly psychopathic of individuals, but usually the consequences are disastrous.

Q: Would you agree that what's really compelling about him is that he has no fear of death?

A: Tommy Shelby definitely has no fear of death but even more so, I think he has a desire to be in situations where the stakes are extremely high. That would be unpleasant for any normal person, but that's what's familiar to him when he comes back from the war where he's been a tunneler. Maybe before the war, the criminal world that he lived in and what's familiar to him is a world of ultimate pressure. If he were not in that world he wouldn't know how to sit or be a human being.

Q: What does Cillian Murphy bring to the character of Tommy?

A: Cillian's great strength as an actor is his ability to inhabit the character completely. The very first time I was in the same room as Tommy Shelby was in rehearsals when we'd cast young Harry Kirton to play Finn Shelby and Harry has no acting experience at all apart from a little bit at school. We were trying to unlock a kind of naturalistic style of acting out of him and we read these scenes in the rehearsal room but he wasn't quite getting it, so I said to Cillian 'when you do the scene, don't let him do the lines he's memorized - force him out of his comfort zone a little bit'. I was sitting facing Harry and I could hear the chair moving behind me and I was aware that it was Tommy Shelby moving the chair not Cillian Murphy, he's so complete in his presence as an actor and sure enough when he came forward I could see that he completely unbalanced Harry and he couldn't be Harry who had memorized the lines of Finn Shelby, he had to be Finn Shelby with the psychopathic and terrifying older brother. It was an amazing moment.

Q: Are people intimidated before they meet him Cillian? He seems very friendly on the set but are people expecting to meet Tommy Shelby?

A: Cillian's very interesting. I've worked with quite a lot of actors who are what you'd term 'movie stars' and Cillian's an incredibly normal person. He knows the names of all the crew and chats with them and will muck about with them like any regular guy but when he's acting and in character he's wholly unblinking in his commitment to the part. In the scenes with Tom Hardy they were the unstoppable force. Cillian's like the immovable object, so solid with that character of Tommy Shelby; he's a force of nature.

Very early on we were discussing an idea for a scene and I said we could do this but it's a little risky and Cillian replied, "Without risk there's no art". I think that sums up his attitude towards things. He's willing to take a chance and he's quite analytical. He'll think things through and will try things that could be dangerous in terms of his own image if it's the more interesting choice.

Q: What's different about the sets, locations, style and tone this time?

A: There are about three times as many locations and twice as many cast this year. It's a much bigger world and it's not just the world of Birmingham its outside of that and moving to London. It's the ultimate empire for Tommy Shelby. In terms of the stylistic differences, it's moving out of the age of westerns and into the age of gangsters. It's a little bit sharper and spikier and a little more armoured against the world there's less 'slo-mo' and more getting punched in the face.

Q: Are you able to see it as a phase in a much bigger story as the series moves on?

A: Well it's difficult for me to speak in terms of what the show will be by series six but I certainly hope it exists because I think Steve Knight has created this incredible mythical vision of the kind of imagined world of his own origins. He's creating his own genesis myth in terms of Birmingham - the version he heard about as a kid and he's painting that in a larger than life way. With his writing, I think he's aware that the audience might anticipate something and he will try and defy that in a satisfying way, which is what great writers do.

Q: Let's talk about the force of Tom Hardy. As a director, you've got some amazing talents to play with.

A: Tom Hardy is an exceptional actor to work with. Watching as we're editing and watching him on screen, I find it hard to believe that we got him for what is essentially a BBC drama, even though it's an exceptionally well-written one. The reality is Tom's one of the biggest movie stars in the world at the moment. He's everything you hope that he might be on set and what he brings to a scene - he's unpredictable, charismatic, aggressive, loving, funny and just amazing to work with. We had a lot of very long scenes with him and Cillian that were maybe 11-12 minutes on the page but they would be so intent on not blinking. We had a whole day where each one was just under 20 minutes and these two would just go at each other. It was amazing to be around and you feel very privileged as a director to be involved, to have a say and be part of that process.

Q: Did he go off script with it and create a more larger than life character?

A: As soon as Tom started prepping we were in contact by text or phoning and what was interesting was his massive commitment to it. He's not the main character in *Peaky Blinders* but he's turned it into this huge thing, which is part of his genius. I remember very early on he sent me this text that said "gentle bear or bad bear" and when you see him in the show you know exactly what it means. His character is this constant flickering between these dual stakes of incredibly charismatic and fun, and terrifyingly psychotic.

Q: Could you explain the gangs for us in series two?

A: In series one of *Peaky Blinders* there was a taste of London in the character that Charlie Creed-Miles played when he visited Birmingham. In this series we go down to London and the factions we see are the Jews led by Alfie Solomons (Tom Hardy) and the Italians led by Sabini who is played by Noah Taylor. They're two very different energies but they both have this amazing cinematic style of acting, they both have created these larger than life leaders of their gangs who have just as much of a silhouette, a style and a swagger and a life as the *Peaky Blinders* do. The question is whether the Birmingham boys can come down and survive in that London world of higher stakes.

Q: Were they based on real gangs?

A: Alfie Solomon and Darby Sabini were both real people but the characters in *Peaky Blinders* are quite different to those original chaps. Alfie Solomons was more of an enforcer for Darby Sabini and he was a massive bloke. Tom's made the character quite big but Tom has done his own thing with it as well, and Noah has too. Tom's take on the Alfie Solomons written by Steve Knight has taken it quite far away from the original guy into this mythical landscape. I often think that Steve Knight's world is a bit like the films of Sergio Leone these characters represent something much larger even than the character.

Q: How about Noah? What sort of energy does he bring?

A: Noah is fantastic to work with. He's a very different kind of actor to Tom and Cillian, Sam and Helen. They all bring very different ways of working which is really exciting for a director. I've been a big fan of Noah's work for a long time and it's amazing to get him involved in this. His Sabini is this sort of psychotic Nazi cokehead in the 1920s. The styling is brilliant.

Q: Was it always the plan for you to direct all six episodes? What are your methods?

A: It's very unusual to get to direct six hours of drama nowadays. It's not something that happens very often. Martin Campbell did it with *Edge of Darkness* and nowadays a few others are on British TV but generally you do an episode or two episodes sometimes three episodes but not six, so it's a lot of story to have in one's head. The story is so well worked out that it's retained and I had a clear picture of all six episodes. It was quite easy to see where the pieces of the jigsaw fitted in I didn't feel like I was drowning with it because Steve's architecture is very solid.

I don't think they originally planned to have one director to do all six hours but I'm very happy that's the way it's worked out. I think it made sense for *Peaky Blinders* because most British TV dramas have a story of the week and they're mostly based around one standing set. This is a sprawling epic and it's a serial, so it's one story over all six hours.

Q: What's Campbell up to in series two?

A: Campbell has become much more psychotic and focused on revenge. Like Tommy Shelby, Campbell is defined by hunger and ambition and he craves to be part of the British establishment but he never can be. Tommy Shelby knows that he can't be part of that establishment but he can get the castle. Campbell wants to be the kind of Lieutenant to the King but that's never going to happen. He's driven insane partly by that and partly by what occurred with Grace in series one, so he's fixated on getting revenge on Tommy Shelby. It's safe to say that he certainly causes his fair share of horrific damage into the Shelby family.

Q: Aunt Polly is a consistent female presence in this show. Can you tell us about Tommy's relationship with her?

A: Tommy's relationship with Aunt Polly becomes more complicated in this series because her relationship with the world has changed and shifted somewhat. Aunt Polly had kids but the parish authorities took them away from her. That pressure at the age she is at and how it's playing out in her head, becomes almost insufferable for her and she is at a breaking point. Tommy decides to help her, which leads to the usual unpredictable results when somebody tries to help somebody else in their family with a big problem.

Tommy and Polly's relationship is complicated because on the one hand she's the strongest most trusted presence in his life and on the other hand he has a real problem trusting any women, particularly after what happened with Grace. He also has a massive problem with anyone having control or power over him. His relationship with Polly is complicated because she's the person he's able to lean on the most and the person who brings him the most problems in life. How he tries to deal with that and control the situation as a very controlling individual makes for a great drama.

Q: Arthur Shelby and John Shelby develop a lot as characters in season two don't they?

A: Paul Anderson is an amazing actor. He's fantastic to work with and what he's done with Steve's writing this series is brilliant. It's some of the most moving material in the show I think. Arthur's a really complicated character and he's the most violent of the brothers. He's the most straightforward, but he's also the most damaged and this is a time where there wasn't any understanding of mental illness or the complexities of the brain. On one hand Arthur is an awful brutish thug and on the other hand just someone who is damaged and needs care. Paul manages to convey that on screen without ever making it sentimental or making a play for the audiences' affections. He's just true in what he does with it, which is fantastic.

Arthur is sent to handle the London end of the Peaky empire in the big city and his head is somewhat turned by Tokyo, which is the street name for cocaine at the time. He's also partial to women of the night and the crazy hectic start of the 1920s, which was a swirl of bohemian criminal London.

Joe Cole who plays John is also incredibly brave as an actor, particularly in his willingness to make his character weak in interesting ways. We know John Shelby's quite weak; he's actually a nice bloke. Because of the world he's in, his weaknesses are dangerous for him and for the rest of the family. That's something that played in a very slow-grown storyline over the series in a very interesting way.

Q: How have you approached the violence in season two?

A: In the first series a lot of the violence, especially in the earlier episodes is quite slow and impressionistic. Part of what we're doing is mythical, so to make it feel more raw and visceral, more cocaine and less opium and more sweaty, hard, sharp and impactful, we brought on Julian Spencer who was the stunt coordinator on *28 Days Later* and *Eastern Promises*. He specializes in rough, messy nasty fights and I wanted the violence to feel like it had real impact this time. We have these big bar room fights this time because it's about gang warfare. The Shelbys were the only gang in the first series but this time they go to war. I've been in a pub during a fight, so I've kind of seen that happen. It felt real when we did it and it was a lot of fun. We wound up at one point with stunt guys all punching heads off each other and a few teeth were lost and tables broken. People went through walls!

Laurie Borg

Producer

An accomplished producer with a career spanning more than 25 years, Laurie Borg's credits span independent feature films, studio pictures and top television dramas. He has worked with the cream of the industry's directing talent including Mike Newell, Stephen Frears, Ang Lee, Alan Parker, Neil Jordan, Sally Potter and Nigel Cole.

Highlights have included *Made in Dagenham*, *Mrs Henderson Presents*, *Bel Ami*, *Treasure Island*, *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*, *When Did You Last See Your Father?*, *Asylum*, *If Only*, *Four Feathers*, *The Borgias*, *Thanks For the Memories*, *Fanny & Elvis*, *Little Voice*, *B Monkey*, *A Further Gesture*, *Sense & Sensibility*, *Funny Bones*, *Shopping*, *Comic Strip* and *Orlando*.

Most recent projects include *London Fields*, *Great Expectations* and *The Challenger*.

