

A promotional poster for the TV show 'Houdini & Doyle'. The background is a deep red velvet curtain. On the left, a man with a full brown beard and a yellow bow tie is hanging upside down, his arms and torso encased in a white sack. He is secured with heavy metal chains and padlocks. On the right, a man with a mustache, wearing a dark green herringbone suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie, stands looking forward. He holds a dark blue fedora hat in front of him with both hands. The 'itv' logo is in the top left, and the title 'HOUDINI & DOYLE' is at the bottom.

itv
ENCORE

HOUDINI & DOYLE



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Houdini & Doyle

Press Release

ITV has commissioned 10 part supernatural crime drama, Houdini & Doyle, from Big Talk Productions and Shaftesbury. Stephen Mangan and Michael Weston headline the cast.

This bold and thrilling new crime drama series is Executive Produced by House creator David Shore, and written and created by his long-time collaborator David Hoselton, and leading Canadian screenwriter David Titcher.

A UK/Canada treaty co-production, the drama is produced by leading independent producers Big Talk Productions (UK) and Shaftesbury (Canada) in association with David Shore's production company, Shore Z. Sony Pictures Television will handle International distribution of the series which will air on Global in Canada and will be broadcast exclusively in the US on FOX.

Stephen Mangan (Episodes) plays Sir Arthur Conan Doyle alongside Michael Weston (Six Feet Under, House) as Harry Houdini, two of the most fascinating and iconic characters of the early 20th century: real-life friends, real-life adversaries, real-life crime solvers.

Harry Houdini: master magician, escape artist, born penniless and now the highest paid performer in the world and he wants everyone to know it. He refuses to believe in the paranormal. As a professional magician and master of illusion he knows there's nothing supernatural about magic. To him, everything unexplained is a trick, a gimmick, or a fraud.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is the creator of the greatest detective of all time - Sherlock Holmes - but is also a passionate believer in the paranormal. Because, having lost someone very close to him, he desperately wants to find a way of communicating with them.

This fundamental difference between the two men leads to conflict... and humour... and competition. High-minded competition in the pursuit of the truth and ridiculous petty competition because they're... guys. But despite all this, they need each other. Doyle needs Houdini because he is gullible. Houdini needs Doyle because he is wrong.

Houdini & Doyle draws heavily on the rich history of the period. At the turn of the 20th century the Metropolitan Police, mired in the ways of the 19th century, were overwhelmed with bizarre and often inexplicable cases so they turned to outsiders including, believe it or not, Houdini and Doyle, who collaborated with New Scotland Yard on some unsolved and inexplicable crimes.

What can we believe? What should we believe? Is cynicism to be admired or is it what makes us human? Is reason the antithesis of hope?

Joining the international cast of new and established talent are exciting new Canadian actress Rebecca Liddiard as Constable Adelaide Stratton, whose character in the series is the first female PC ever to work for the London Metropolitan Police Force, Tim McInnerny as Inspector Horace Merring, fast rising star Adam Nagaitis as Sergeant George Gudgett.

Multi award winning Stephen Hopkins (24, Californication) is the lead director and Adrian Sturges (The Enfield Haunting) produces the series. Executive Producers are David Shore, David Hoselton, David Titcher for Shore Z, Kenton Allen, Luke Alkin and Matthew Justice for Big Talk Productions and Christina Jennings, Scott Garvie and Maggie Murphy for Shaftesbury.

Houdini & Doyle was ordered by Controller of ITV Encore, Angela Jain and commissioned by ITV's Director of Drama Steve November and Controller of Drama Victoria Fea.

Houdini & Doyle: The Premise



The Premise

London, turn of the last century. For the first time in human history everything is changing and there's a growing belief that science can explain it all, including the mysteries of death itself. Enter two of the great characters of the last 100-odd years – Harry Houdini; master magician, escape artist and paranormal debunker – and Arthur Conan Doyle; creator of the greatest detective of all time, a man who brought to life the ultimate rationalist and a man who believes in faeries. They grudgingly join forces to investigate crime; specifically crimes that appear to have, and may indeed have, a supernatural slant.

At its core, it's a character study masquerading as a procedural - involving vampires or ghosts or time travel or telepathy - and each week there will be a mystery solved. Or almost solved, for there'll always be a nagging doubt about what really happened. Which gives us a chance to explore real fundamental human issues. What do we believe – and more importantly -- why? Is cynicism to be admired or is it the death of what makes us human? Is reason the antithesis of hope? But don't worry, it's also fun, funny and scary.

Houdini & Doyle: The Characters



The Characters

Doyle believes in the paranormal, or rather he doesn't believe the paranormal is paranormal at all – it is simply undiscovered science - and having lost loved ones, he's desperate to find a way of communicating with the departed. Houdini, on the other hand, refuses to believe. He thinks everything unexplained is either a trick, a gimmick or a fraud. And he is extraordinarily skilled at exposing charlatans. And when those skills meet their limits, he's not above cheating. In his mind, it's not dishonest to use dishonesty to expose dishonesty. And these differences lead to conflict and humor and competition: both high-minded competition because they're brilliant, and ridiculous petty competition because they're... guys. But at the same time, they need each other. Doyle needs Houdini because he knows he has a certain amount of gullibility. And Houdini needs Doyle because he knows he is stubborn, and after all, it is never the close-minded who conceive of the new.

The series starts with both Houdini and Doyle going through personal crises. Doyle's killed off Sherlock to pursue more meaningful pursuits - like figuring out what happens when we die - and Houdini's grown frustrated that his 'parlour tricks' have actually instilled in the public a greater belief in the supernatural - so he sets his sights on exposing paranormal fraud...and on humiliating Doyle.

Constable Adelaide Stratton, as the first female cop in Scotland Yard, is up against the mother of all glass ceilings. And although she knows more about the new science of forensics than the rest of Scotland Yard put together, she's relegated to a desk in the basement. When she's assigned as the official police liaison to Houdini and Doyle, she knows it's really to be their babysitter. But she sees this could be her chance; if she can properly wrangle the two men, the three of them could make a kick-ass crime-solving team.

Foreword from David Hoselton Co-Creator and Executive Producer



It was a set-up that seemed almost too good to be true: the real-life friendship between Sherlock's creator and the great magician, bonded by a mutual interest in the paranormal. And most intriguing of all was the fact that they were on unexpected sides of the debate, for one would assume Doyle to be the sceptic and Houdini the believer; but it was quite the opposite.

However, we realised we would have to take some liberties with history – artistic license, we like to call it. After all, in reality, the two greats were in middle to late age when they met, and we couldn't have that. So we backdated it a tad - twenty-ish years to be imprecise - and set our story in the perfect time, 1901. A new century, a new king, a new era chock-a-block with new ideas, and the ideal time to meet our characters. In a highly unpopular move, Doyle had killed off Holmes to devote more time to 'weightier work,' and Houdini was at the apex of his career as the highest paid performer in the world.

Of course we needed someone to ground this rich and famous pair, and who better to do that than the first female cop, Constable Adelaide Stratton (based on a real character). Remember, this was 17 years before women got the vote, and females in the workplace, other than stenographers, were pretty much unheard of, so Adelaide gives us a window into that evolving world. And the fact that she just might add some romantic tension to our tale seemed like not a bad idea.

Armed with equal parts scepticism, hope and humour, this trio felt like the perfect group to explore the world of the supernatural - and if they happen to raise a few profound questions in the process, all the better.

Episodic Log Lines

Episode 1: The Maggie's Redress

Houdini, Doyle and Adelaide investigate the murder of a nun in one of the notorious Magdalene Laundries. A witness claims the killer is a young woman who was tormented by the nun. The only problem is, that young woman has been dead for six months.

Episode 2: A Dish of Adharma

A 12-year-old boy shoots a prominent suffragette, claiming he's avenging a murder - his own murder in a past life. And if the trio wants to find the truth, they must solve the decades-old killing.

Episode 3: In Manus Dei

When a heckler is mysteriously struck down at a faith healer's show, the team investigates whether the healer is truly channeling the power of God. And if so, can he work a miracle on Doyle's dying wife?

Episode 4: Spring-Heel'd Jack

In the first of several attacks, a businessman is murdered by a mysterious phantom with demonic eyes and gravity-defying leaps. As panic spreads across London, the trio tries to determine if this is a case of mass hysteria, or is there a beast out there that thrives on fear?

Episode 5: The Curse of Korzha

An attractive traveling medium uses her psychic gifts to solve crimes, frustrating Houdini when he can't figure out her tricks. Doyle feels she may be the real thing, so he is mortified by her next prediction: the end of Adelaide Stratton.

Episode 6: The Monsters of Nethermoor

After a nightmarish encounter with otherworldly beings, a man wakes up in a field claiming his wife has been abducted by aliens. The team investigates but it's only when Doyle has his own encounter that they learn the horrifying truth of what's really out there.

Episode 7: Bedlam

When several people are found literally scared to death, the clues lead the team to Bedlam, the notorious insane asylum, with which Doyle has a disturbing history. And when he starts to lose his grip on reality, he doesn't know if he's losing his mind or is becoming the next victim.

Episode 8: Strigoi

Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula* and good friend of Doyle's, shows up at Doyle's house in a panic. Vampire hunters are trying to kill him, believing Stoker to be a vampire. As they investigate a disturbing murder, they begin to wonder if Stoker really is a vampire, and if not, what is the dark secret he's desperately trying to hide from the world?

Episode 9: Necromanteion

The trio travels to Canada to investigate a homicidal poltergeist, where they are joined by other paranormal experts, including Thomas Edison, who unveils his latest invention - the Necrophone - a device that can purportedly communicate with the dead.

Episode 10: The Pall of LaPier

Small-town Ontario. A minister wakes to find everyone in his village dead, without the slightest sign of violence. Was this retribution for past acts of evil, as the local natives believe? And if not, how else to explain why the man of God was the only one spared?

Houdini & Doyle

Cast and Crew Biographies



STEPHEN MANGAN - Arthur Conan Doyle:

Stephen Mangan is an English actor, best known for his starring television roles in *Episodes*, *Green Wing* and *I'm Alan Partridge*. He is an acclaimed stage actor, having been nominated for a Tony Award for his portrayal of Norman in Broadway's *The Norman Conquests*. He also starred as Bertie Wooster in *Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense*, which won the 2014 Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. Mangan made his feature film debut in the hit movie *Billy Elliot*, and appeared on the big screen in director Ron Howard's *Rush*. He lives in London.

MICHAEL WESTON - Harry Houdini:

American television and film actor Michael Weston is best known for his roles on *House* and *Six Feet Under*. He has also appeared on *Elementary*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *The Office* and *Burn Notice*, among others. His feature film credits include *Garden State*, *Wish I Was Here*, *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Coyote Ugly*. He resides in Los Angeles.

REBECCA LIDDIARD - Constable Adelaide Stratton:

Rebecca Liddiard is a Toronto-based Canadian actress of both stage and screen whose star is on the rise. A graduate of Ryerson University's theatre performance program, she has appeared in principal roles on such programs as *Karma's a B*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Man Seeking Woman* and the feature film *Highly Functional*.

Liddiard is also a proud member, supporter and contributor to Toronto's theatre scene. She studied classical performance while simultaneously rehearsing lead roles in premier productions by Judith Thompson and Valina Hasu-Houston, which toured the Greek festival circuit. In Toronto, she played a sociopathic teen superfan in the Canadian premiere of Joel Kim Booster's hit play, *Kate & Sam Are Not Breaking Up*. Liddiard teaches Creative Performance Studies at Ryerson University, to first-year theatre and dance students. She also works with Theatre Gargantua in its high school workshop series, and is a participant in the inaugural Devised Theatre Lab programme with Theatre Columbus. She lives in Toronto.

Houdini & Doyle

Cast and Crew Biographies continued...

DAVID SHORE, Executive Producer:

Writer and producer David Shore was the creator of the acclaimed medical drama *House*, which received numerous awards and nominations, including an Emmy Award for Shore for writing the episode *Three Stories* (2005), four nominations for Outstanding Drama Series and three Golden Globe Award nominations for Best Drama. The series also won a Peabody Award, two Writers Guild of America Awards and four People's Choice Awards for Favorite TV Drama, and was a 2005 American Film Institute TV Program of the Year. In addition, Shore won the Humanitas Prize and was nominated for two Producers Guild Awards.

Shore has written for the television dramas *Due South*, *EZ Streets* and *NYPD Blue*. He served as head writer and supervising producer on *Traders*, which he developed for Canadian television, and was part of the writing team for the Emmy Award-winning first season of *The Practice*. He was nominated for two Emmy Awards as a producer on *Law & Order*, and executive-produced both *Family Law* and *Hack*, before creating *House M.D.* Shore resides in Los Angeles.

DAVID HOSELTON, Co-creator and Executive Producer:

Born and raised in Canada, Hoselton moved to Los Angeles to pursue a writing career. Moving from live action features (*First Knight*, *The Extreme Adventures of Super Dave*) to animation (*Brother Bear*, *Over the Hedge*) and finally to television, Hoselton joined David Shore on his hit series, *House*. During his six seasons on the medical drama, Hoselton was nominated for a Humanitas Prize for writing and an Emmy Award as a producer. After stints on *CSI: NY* and *Chicago PD*, Hoselton returned once again to work with Shore on *Houdini & Doyle* as co-creator and showrunner. Hoselton currently lives in Westlake Village, California.

DAVID TITCHER, Co-creator and Executive Producer:

David Titcher was nominated for a WGA Award for his blockbuster TNT hit *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear*, the highest rated movie on all cable television that year, starring Noah Wyle, Bob Newhart, Jane Curtin and Olympia Dukakis. The movie led to two highly rated sequels and Titcher is the consulting producer of its TV series spinoff, *The Librarians*, recently renewed for its third season. Titcher also wrote the feature films *Around the World in Eighty Days*, starring Jackie Chan, Steve Coogan, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Kathy Bates and Owen Wilson, and the teenage cult film *Morgan Stewart's Coming Home*, starring Jon Cryer and Lynn Redgrave, as well as an assortment of TV miniseries, movies, and episodes. Titcher resides in Los Angeles.

Cast interviews



ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE STEPHEN MANGAN Q&A

Q: What appealed to you about the series?

A: Your first question is always, 'Who's involved? Who's creatively in charge?' because my experience has taught me that if that person is good, then something interesting and worthwhile will happen. You can never guarantee anything will be a success. But if the one person at the top of the tree knows what they're doing then it certainly helps. So when I found out that person was David Shore, who created *House*, it was a very simple decision. I read a couple of scripts and agreed to do it.

Q: What is the relationship between Houdini and Doyle?

A: It's based on a real life friendship, or acquaintanceship, the two men had. They were very famous figures of their day. Houdini the master showman, escapologist, who was very keen to debunk what he saw as the charlatans who preyed on vulnerable people: psychics, mediums, mystics. Arthur Conan Doyle was very much a believer in an afterlife, in spirits, in the ability to contact the dead for people who are sensitive enough to do that. Yes, there were a lot of charlatans, but he was keen to prove, through science, that an afterlife existed.

So they did actually meet in real life and in our story, they come together and look at crimes that have a supernatural element. For example, a nun is murdered. The other nuns think it was by a ghost. In come our heroes.

They're both huge admirers of each other's works - and I think they were in real life - but they won't admit it. On an intellectual challenge, if Doyle can convince Houdini there is an afterlife, he can convince anybody. So we see the other person's thought as the ultimate goal for our belief. If you can convince them - very smart, famous, learned men - you'll triumph.

Cast interviews

STEPHEN MANGAN Q&A continued...

Also, of course, Houdini (Michael Weston) is American and Doyle is a Brit, so we have that conflict. Houdini is the brash showman who's come over from New York. He's very gobby, like a little Tigger bouncing around full of energy.

Arthur Conan Doyle is a well respected author and a renaissance man. He played football for Portsmouth, cricket for the MCC, he was a doctor, created one of the most famous characters in the history of fiction in Sherlock Holmes. He was such a polymath. An amazing sportsman as well as a brilliant writer and a great medic. It makes you tired just thinking about it.

Q: Do they team up with anyone else?

A: Rebecca Liddiard plays Adelaide Stratton, the first female police constable at Scotland Yard. She joins Houdini and Doyle in their investigations and gives us so many more possibilities.

We have two men who are really well established in their lives and careers. Big stars. And it's great to counterpoint that with not only someone at the beginning of their career but a ground-breaking pioneer, to be the first woman police officer.

We fiddled around with the timeline. No-one is going to sue us, I hope. As Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini are dead, we're probably safe. So we have someone starting out and having to deal with these two egos. In the middle. And someone fighting her own battles to get recognition in very much a male world.

Q: What did people believe back then?

A: Obviously lots of people believe in spirits or the afterlife today. But it's not considered now as scientific to use it as a means to crack a murder case. But in those days, what else did you have? There were no forensics, no fingerprints - unless you caught someone stabbing somebody through the heart you really didn't have much to go on.

Doyle's views on the spirit life were quite a respectable position to take at that time. There were those famous fake photos of the girl and the fairies - the Cottingley fairies. A lot of very smart people believed those to be genuine.

Q: Are the supernatural elements always explained?

A: It's a bit like the Edwardian X-Files. As no-one on this planet has yet proven scientifically that ghosts or spirits exist, we can't do that either. But at the same time it's not always a case of Houdini being proved right and Conan Doyle being proved wrong. Occasionally things happen that are left unexplained and seem mysterious.

Not every single crime is explained. It would be dull if that was the case. As much as I love Scooby Doo, as a crime drama it starts to get a little bit predictable after a while. And you don't want that. What I love about this show is that every episode is written by a different person and they all have very different feelings.

Every episode has a different feel and a different flavour and tone. I think that's really good. It's a very fertile period. An old England that's now long gone, but it had that very rigid structure where everyone knew their place. The class system was fully functioning.

Q: Have you ever had an experience you could not explain?

A: No, I haven't. Unlike Arthur Conan Doyle I am not a believer in the afterlife, a spirit life. I believe whenever anything spooky or weird happens there's normally some sort of explanation. Whether we'll ever know what it is, that's another matter.

Cast interviews

STEPHEN MANGAN Q&A continued...

Q: There is a real sadness in Doyle's life. Can you explain this please?

A: Yes, there is sadness in his life. He is struggling with the fact his wife is not very well and he has to cope with their two young children. As an actor it's a joy to play a character who has a volcano of sadness inside him. But it comes up against what is expected of a man in those times. Men weren't going around hugging each other or breaking down or going to therapy. You were very much expected to be brave, not to cry, stiff upper lip and all that. And that's just a joy as an actor. To have that dam of emotion playing up against such a solid wall.

Q: Does being a husband and father in real life help play that side of Doyle?

A: It does. Very much so. Louise Delamere, who is my actual wife, is playing my wife Touie in this. So that was great, and strange as well. Our children are going to have to be in their thirties before they can watch their mother in a coma and their father standing over her crying.

Q: Did either of you have any qualms about co-starring together as husband and wife?

A: Yes, we did. We were nervous that it might be difficult. And in some ways it is. Because when you're actors you may know someone a bit but normally you're starting from scratch so you can build your relationship with them at the same time as you build the characters' relationship. You can do the whole thing together. But obviously if you've been married for 10 years then you have a whole history of other stuff that's harder to strip away. But I'm glad we did it. We had to kiss in one flashback scene. It felt very weird kissing in front of lots of men in the camera crew.

Q: How would you describe Doyle's look?

A: We've got some amazing suits which have all been made for us. Silk waistcoats and proper two-piece collars, with collar studs - all men should rejoice at the fact we don't have to wear those anymore because they are fairly uncomfortable.

Q: And a moustache?

A: The moustache is real. I'm actually delighted and really enjoy having it. I wish I'd been born in 1880 so I could wear one all the time. Half the job is done for me. I don't need to act with a moustache like this. But I can't keep it. We've got to do Episodes again in the spring of 2016 so it'll have to come off. But it was easy to grow. I had a beard when I did a play on Broadway three or four years ago. So my facial hair-growing capabilities are strong.

Q: How did you film the opening scene of the series?

A: You find Houdini and Doyle drowning at the very beginning of the first episode. We are in a cellar. A mischievous - some might say, downright naughty - nun has let us fall into this terrible predicament. It will come as no surprise to anyone that we manage to get out of it somehow. Otherwise it would be a very short series.

We shot most of it in a day. They got a shipping container and then filled it up with water. So we were inside this watery container in a car park in Manchester. We tried it once and the walls of the shipping container started to bow, because water is obviously incredibly heavy. So they had to re-enforce it.

In the scene the water level is rising and we're running out of air. And even though it was a grill above us - so we weren't under a solid ceiling - we were still down to the last two or three inches of space. And you feel your heart really starting to pound. Because even though you intellectually know you'll be all right, your body is going, 'This is not good. You shouldn't be doing this.'

That's one of the few stunts I do. On the whole Michael does most of them. He was suspended upside down in a strait-jacket and lowered into a tube of water. He's always leaping around whilst I'm typing at a typewriter.

Cast interviews

STEPHEN MANGAN Q&A continued...

Q: Does Doyle have any other action scenes?

A: He punches Sergeant George Gudgett, played by Adam Nagaitis, and knocks him out. I haven't been in many shows where I get to punch people. I don't tend to play those kind of characters. And even though Doyle is not really that sort of man, when it's necessary he'll step up to the plate. So I enjoyed that. Storming down the corridor in Manchester Town Hall and laying him out with a right hook.

We've filmed a scene where a knife is held to my throat and the actor misjudged the knife. He's supposed to throw my head forward, throw it back and then hold up a knife. He threw my head forward, pulled up the knife and took a big chunk out of the bottom of my face. It was a stunt knife but he hit me with quite a lot of force. But I was fine. It's all part of the war wounds and the mystique of the hard man actor.

Q: In the series do Houdini and Doyle get physical?

A: In the story Houdini slaps me awake but does it one or two times too many. Then later on I get the chance to return the favour and slap him a few times too many. But they actually filmed the scenes where Doyle slaps Houdini first rather than second. So I knew I had to be careful, otherwise I was going to get repaid in spades later.

Q: What were some of the other memorable scenes?

A: I spent a thrilling afternoon lying in the Derbyshire countryside in a pair of Victorian long johns. There's something for everyone in this show. We've had some really fantastically odd days. That episode is all about aliens and visitors from outer space. It's a real mix and a joy to do.

We also filmed in the Peak Cavern - also known as the Devil's Arse - in Derbyshire, which is an enormous system of caves. That was rather fantastic. Although two or three days filming in a cave starts to mess with your head after a while.

We filmed in a couple of graveyards, including Highbury in London. They always provide really dramatic lighting. Huge great towers with a shaft of light coming through and they fill the whole place with smoke. It's really atmospheric.

Q: Where did you film scenes of Doyle's London home?

A: His home is filmed in Liverpool. We filmed most of the series in Liverpool and Manchester and the architecture there is fantastic and largely unspoilt. There are huge areas of Liverpool that are perfectly preserved, Regency and Victorian streets. So we filmed that on, appropriately enough, the street where all the doctors are. It's the Harley Street of Liverpool and a beautiful old five-storey house. We didn't have to do too much to it at all. It had been kept in a great state.

We've used some beautiful locations. Some days on set was like going through a time machine. You walk out and there are horses and carriages, the very first early cars. It was a joy.

Q: Did filming attract a great deal of attention?

A: Yes it has attracted attention. I think people are fascinated to see - as I was - a whole street transformed back 110 years. All the road signs are taken away, all the road markings go. You have maybe 30 or 40 extras in full, proper Edwardian gear with all of the facial hair and proper hair cuts. It's magical to see that happen and a real privilege.

Cast interviews

STEPHEN MANGAN Q&A continued...

Q: What car does Doyle drive?

A: Doyle drives a red Wolseley Roadster. It's very peculiar. Because the thing about filming is often you're required to come shooting down a driveway and then pull up and stop on a mark. And they want you to hit it to within two or three inches. Well this car, there's no brake pedal. You put up the revs via a lever on the steering column and the brake is just a lever on the side of the car which you pull up, it then starts to slow the car down in its own sweet time. And you're moving quite quickly.

So you basically have to guess some distance away when to start pulling the lever to try and hit this mark. It was not easy. Car design has come on a little bit in the last 110 years. I kept stalling it trying to put it into reverse and drive it back. But when I first got in it, it took off like the clappers and I suddenly thought, 'Oh my, this could all end in tears.' You don't mind crashing a Mini Metro, which I have done on set before. You do mind writing off a 1904 red Wolseley. The owner was there having a panic attack behind a pillar.

Q: What was it like working with Michael Weston?

A: He's great. I think you know really quickly whether someone is in it for the right reasons. You're always looking for someone who will work hard but not take themselves too seriously. That's the thing you really hope for. And he is fantastic. Very creative. Lots of ideas and a good bloke.

Q: Where are you filming the last two episodes?

A: In Canada which is exciting. We have the same showrunners overseeing it so they've kept the continuity. There comes a point on a show like this where actually the actors are the people who have been around the longest and know the show and the characters better than anyone else almost. So in conjunction with the writers, I'm pretty confident it won't suddenly turn into a completely different drama.

Q: Houdini says, 'Fear is a good thing.' Doyle believes it erodes your strength. Where do you stand?

A: A little fear is useful in every life, as long as it's not overwhelming. It's good for us to put ourselves in situations that we don't know how they're going to turn out. Otherwise life becomes very predictable and dull.

Every time I do a play in the theatre I stand in the wings before the first show and I can't imagine why I ever thought it would be a good idea. But you've got to test yourself and keep testing yourself. I'll be worried when the fear goes completely.

Q: How would you sum up the appeal of Houdini and Doyle?

A: It's a lot of some familiar things done very well. It's a crime drama. There's a reason why there are so many around, and it's because they hook you in. You just want to know whodunit. But at the same time there is a variety in each show. Each episode is like a self-contained film all on its own plus a double act. Again, a classic formula. Two very different blokes. I think they have fallen upon two fascinating characters in Houdini and Doyle. It's exciting, compelling and funny. And a real bonanza for anyone turned on by moustaches.

Cast interviews



HARRY HOUDINI MICHAEL WESTON Q&A

Q: Why did you want to play Harry Houdini?

A: I was in House which was created by David Shore and David Hoselton. I remember going to my first script read through of House and not only were the actors so great and so professional but the scripts were deep, layered and well manicured.

There are so many moving parts in TV so you never know what you're going to get in those first scripts. And they were gems. Smart, clever, funny and well thought out. That's when I was like, 'Whoa, I'm dealing with someone really talented.' It was a privilege to work on that show. So David Shore could tell me to leap off a bridge and I'd do it. I'm a huge admirer of his. And David Hoselton too. He brought this idea together. It's such a unique idea, set in this period time of these two epic figures. And he does it with such wit, humour and humanity. Yet it's this great adventure and procedural at the same time. He somehow manages to weave all of that together in the course of an hour. That, to me, is a magic trick unto itself.

Q: Did you know much about Harry before this?

A: Not a great deal. I had read the novel Ragtime so I knew Harry Houdini from that perspective. I had a peripheral idea of who he was, just as a magician. But I didn't really understand the place he occupied in history and in people's hearts.

My wife said to me when I got this role, 'I love Harry Houdini.' I had no idea. He holds a place in people's imaginations and in their sense of wonder and their own fantasies of what magic is. To push the possibilities and boundaries of your own imagination and your own capability.

Cast interviews

MICHAEL WESTON Q&A continued...

When I started reading about him as preliminary research for the part, he was this person who represented freedom and liberation and hope and carved out the American Dream for himself. And held this energy in his acts and somehow managed to translate that from these escape acts to huge throngs of people crowded on blocks.

To each one of them it meant something else. I think it was very personal in some way. He pushed boundaries and had the sense of hope that you could escape them and be anything you want. And that's magic. We need magic.

He pulled himself up from the dregs of poverty, having nothing, and became an international celebrity at a time when there was no YouTube, Twitter or television. You didn't get around that easily. And so to become an international anything took some real work ethic. I think he had a real work ethic about everything he did.

Q: How would you describe Houdini and Doyle's (Stephen Mangan) relationship?

A: What's great about this series is these guys were real life friends and also philosophically combative. They ridiculed each other but at the same time had deep admiration for each other. Houdini probably read every one of Doyle's books. He read and studied a lot and wanted to bring himself to a different class.

I feel like he looked up to Doyle a lot but at the same time was really frustrated with him. He couldn't believe this incredibly intelligent man could be such a fool and believe in all this supernatural rubbish. And he spent a lot of his time trying to de-bunk all that spiritualism that Doyle needed to believe in for his own emotional arc.

In this series these guys have such a clever, David Shore and David Hoselton patented, repartee. It's really fun to act. Stephen Mangan is a pal on and off stage and we really enjoy pushing each other's buttons. So it's been great fun.

Q: Did Houdini go out of his way to expose frauds and charlatans?

A: He made it a personal crusade to de-bunk spiritualism and expose charlatans. And did it in such a public way. At a certain point he had been that himself. He had learned the mechanics of what it takes to be a medium.

Mediums came up out of the Civil War and in people's need to communicate with the people they had lost. When Harry Houdini was on the scene it was around the time of World War One and there was that same need to communicate with the people you have lost. He realised he was taking advantage of these people, they would hang on these hopes and it would derail them from their own trajectory. They would buy into it and get lost in it. Not only was he taking their money, he was lying to them. He hated that, hated the lie. He loved the trickery of a good trick but he didn't want to take advantage of the very people he grew up with and was a real leader for. So he stopped.

He wanted everyone to know there was a science involved in it and that it was real. That's another point where Doyle and Houdini really met eye to eye. They believed in science. Doyle tried to prove the supernatural from a scientific standpoint. Houdini made his tricks work and you couldn't figure it out. And so there is a science involved in that too.

Cast interviews

MICHAEL WESTON Q&A continued...

Q: How would you describe Harry's relationship with Constable Adelaide Stratton, played by Rebecca Liddiard?

A: She really throws him. Adelaide is a total cutie, yet is a strong woman and he can't use his celebrity to buckle her knees. It frustrates him. She challenges him because she can stand on her own two feet and is to the fore of the feminist and suffragette movement. She's a new woman. I think she really enlightens him and makes him a deeper, better man as he sees the potential in her.

Q: In terms of the supernatural, have you ever had an experience you could not explain?

A: I think of myself as a very rational human being. A pragmatist, a realist. And yet I have a moment I remember in my grandmother's old house where myself and an old buddy of mine from New York thought there was a ghost.

It was a big old house in Paris. My grandfather Arthur Rubinstein was a pianist who lived there. Then the Gestapo took the house over and my grandparents fled to Los Angeles, where my father was born. The Gestapo used it as a headquarters and took everything away.

After the war my grandfather returned to the house. My grandmother was in her nineties when I got to know her at the end of her life. I spent a year there working in Paris bars and hanging out.

One night I'd got up and went to the bathroom. I was going back to my bedroom along an old hallway when I saw this amorphous thing and my body just had a reaction. I'd never thought of ghosts in my entire life. I went in and my girlfriend was sat up in bed and totally awake when she had been asleep. She said, 'Did you just see a ghost?' And I was like, 'Oh my God. You saw it? I saw it.'

Then two months later I'd gone back to the house with my giant six foot four inch buddy from New York, who doesn't think of anything except burgers. And he had a moment in the same hallway where he freaked out and thought something had touched his head. It's impossible to scare this guy. But he freaked out and was sweating, asking, 'What just happened?'

So those two things happened. I don't know what the hell that was. Just inexplicable things. I feel science has so many answers but not all the answers. I believe in a connected spiritual world and yet I'm not a religious man. I feel there's a deep connective tissue in us but it's not tangible. There's a lot of stuff I can't explain, some stuff is inexplicable to me. I don't go around thinking about it in my daily life. But there are so many unanswered questions.

Q: The opening scene in the series sees Houdini and Doyle trapped up to their necks in a cellar as water rises all around them. How was that to film?

A: It was really intense, but fun. We have incredible wardrobe and set departments that build these extravagant things. They built this set for us and we were in water for hours and hours.

They were raising the level gradually and let us go right to the point of real danger. We always want to make it look real and feel real. So we will do it as close as we can. We really were gasping for air and happy when it was all over. But it was awesome fun. You get a little adrenaline rush.

Q: You filmed the infamous Chinese Water Torture stage routine, tell us about that.

A: They presented it to me as, 'Hey, do you want to try this? Is that something you would do?' And I was like, 'Yeah, I definitely want to do that.' Then I did it and it was one of the most terrifying things I've ever done in my life.

Cast interviews

MICHAEL WESTON Q&A continued...

You're literally being hung upside down in shackles so you can't move your arms and you have the sense of being completely out of control. Then you're dipped into this tiny claustrophobic tank full of water. If they drop you, if something malfunctions, you're screwed. You know that but you know there are guys on set looking out for you. Yet as they dip you down you have to take this breath and your adrenaline is going and you've got butterflies. I didn't have the control so I'd take a breath and I'd immediately run out of air. Then they'd say, 'Action,' and I'd be trying to get my breath as I went in and then hold it and remain calm upside down with water shooting up your nose. It was so intense.

It made me have deep respect for Houdini who could actually pull that off and go fully into it. I think I went in to just above my waist and stayed in for about 15 or 20 seconds. I came out gasping so I can't even imagine being in there for three minutes or whatever he did, eight times a week. You have to have steel veins.

Q: Where did you film those stage scenes?

A: We did it at the Palace Theatre in Manchester where Houdini had performed. You look out from the stage and it's a beautiful, ornate old theatre. Breathtaking. So being on stage there where he had performed - literally 100 years ago to the day we filmed that - was so special and pretty crazy.

For a second you just allow yourself to believe in it. It's that rare moment as an actor where you walk through your own dream for a second. It was both surreal and beautiful. I savour that.

Q: What were some of the other memorable scenes?

A: There's a scene where Houdini dives into the Port of London docks. They wouldn't let me dive into the dock so we filled up a tank with water and then we spent a day in there, jumping in - with people making waves in the water. It felt so real.

I loved doing it and got such a rush out of it. It's a first for me doing all those stunts. It's fun but also scary.

Q: What were some of the other challenges?

A: Houdini's back is covered in boils at one point. My least favourite thing to do as an actor is prosthetics. And then they told me it was boils....you know that's going to be four hours in the make-up chair. But we had genius make-up artists and so they got it done as quick as they could and it looked incredible.

Q: Presumably you had to learn the secrets of the magic tricks?

A: We had a magician, a guy who is an escapologist in the vein of Harry Houdini. He came and helped me out and taught me a lot of tricks. It's stuff I wish I was better at. You really need to spend a lot of time with a deck of cards in your hand. But I did do some tricks. I was really, actually doing them. It made me more nervous than anything - more nervous than any stunt.

One card trick involves Houdini pulling out a hankie from someone's breast pocket and it then dissolving into flames. That flame was real. I burned all the hair off my hand.

Cast interviews



CONSTABLE ADELAIDE STRATTON REBECCA LIDDIARD Q&A

Q: What was your initial reaction to Houdini and Doyle?

A: When I was given the scenes for my first audition I was so excited. Firstly because it's a period drama. Secondly because it films in the UK and in Canada. And lastly and most importantly, it was the best female character I've ever read for in my career. Which hasn't been long, mind you, but I was so excited about this character above all. She's fantastic.

I'm from Canada and my parents had been away on vacation for about a month. On the day they got back I phoned them to say, 'I'm moving to the UK for five months and I'm leaving on Saturday.' They were shocked, but incredibly excited for me.

Q: Who is Adelaide Stratton?

A: Adelaide is Scotland Yard's first female police constable. When you first meet her she is based way down in the basement of the building, away from all human interaction, just pushing paper around and making tea. She's been banished there because nobody knows what to do with her. People have this misogynistic attitude towards her.

Chief Inspector Merring calls her up from the basement to act as a nursemaid to Houdini and Doyle on their investigation and make sure they don't get into any trouble. Basically he wants her out of the way.

But Adelaide can do everything men can do and she also has a unique perspective as a woman, plus talents that complement.

Cast interviews

REBECCA LIDDIARD Q&A continued...

Q: So is she a pioneer for women?

A: This job is very serious for Adelaide. She wants to succeed and prove herself. But there are obstacles in her way. Even the clothes they wore, the fashion of the time was so constricting. Every inch of society was designed to keep women in a very specific place where they couldn't do much more than sit around and look nice. So it means a lot to her to be able to have this job. She is very proud of where she is and doesn't want anybody to push her around.

When she makes a mistake her male colleagues at Scotland Yard think that demonstrates a woman is not cut out for this job. But she says, 'No. OK, fine, I made a mistake. But that doesn't mean I don't deserve to be here or that I shouldn't be fighting for this life that all women should have and can do.'

We have an episode about the suffragettes. Adelaide admires the suffragettes and the work they do. She's in a tough position because she's a police officer. But under her breath she's like, 'Go, go, go!'

Adelaide is not afraid of breaking the rules. If it means getting the job done, of course she'll break the rules. That doesn't scare her. She's a real renegade.

Q: Does Adelaide have a secret?

A: Adelaide has her own agenda. She's working towards a goal that is somewhat obscure but that gets clearer as the series goes on. That personal goal is what has led her to be where she is. It's not necessarily that she wanted to go into law enforcement. But what she's working towards, what she's trying to do, has necessitated her taking on this role and it has completely changed her life.

Q: Did you do any of your own research?

A: I knew who Harry Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle were, but I had no idea about this relationship they had. This battle of brains that took place. It was pretty interesting reading up about that.

Q: How does Adelaide fit in with Houdini and Doyle's investigations?

A: Her presence throws something else into the debate. It provides another angle into the storytelling and also gives a third point of view which is somewhere in the middle. It's fine to have these existential points of view, but at the end of the day there's a dead body in front of us and we have to deal with that.

Adelaide picks out their prejudices and is very quick to demonstrate to them how what they are doing and how they are treating her is flawed. But she is also very quick to pick up the personal emotional things they are hiding and are affecting their reactions to the crimes. Everyone sees these things through their own eyes and experiences.

Houdini is intrigued by Adelaide while she has an enormous amount of respect for Doyle, who is a gentleman. However chivalry is its own kind of sexism in a way. Consequently she has to work on him to point out that chivalry doesn't necessarily help her. It's very nice that he feels she should be protected - but she really can do these things.

Q: What was it like working with Stephen Mangan and Michael Weston?

A: Amazing. When I arrived at that very first rehearsal in London I just remember thinking, 'Oh my God, I have won the lottery.' Stephen is a fantastic actor. He is so calm and just so with it, and then there's Michael who is also completely brilliant. They come at their craft so differently and I've learned so much just by being in their presence. I feel very lucky to be working with this cast. Just a dream come true. Very special.

Cast interviews

REBECCA LIDDIARD Q&A continued...

Q: What are your views on the supernatural?

A: I'm pretty open minded. I think there is room for the unexplained. Certainly in my life. I love a good ghost story. I love magic. I've had a few experiences. When I was in high school I did a show in a very old theatre in the town where I grew up, which is London, Ontario. I arrived there early. I could hear through the door that the dressing room was full of people and the lights were on. I had some homework to do so I stayed in the hallway outside. About 15 or 20 minutes later the stage manager came through and started unlocking all of the dressing room doors. Then she goes up to my dressing room and opens the door where I had just heard voices and seen the light coming out from under the door. But when she opened the door the room was dark, completely empty...and it had been locked up.

Q: How would you describe Adelaide's look?

A: Adelaide's costume is a bit of an artistic interpretation. Because she's the first woman police constable at Scotland Yard there is no set uniform. She wears a tailored suit and has a whistle and some gadgets. It is pretty functional and raised off the ground so she can get around pretty quickly. But it's still a struggle.

Q: How did you find filming in the UK?

A: This is the first time I've worked in England. This is such a beautiful country and the people here are so nice. We were filming mainly in Liverpool and Manchester and the people there were just so kind and welcoming. They're very outspoken but a lot of fun. We had some great times and I've had a blast.

We filmed one episode in Derbyshire and I'm so happy we got out into the countryside to see a little bit more, including the beautiful Peak District. We also filmed in caves there but Adelaide wasn't involved. That may have been a blessing in disguise because I heard they were very cold and damp - and I don't do well in that kind of environment.

Q: Did you also enjoy filming two episodes Canada?

A: Adelaide is working on her own personal mystery and it leads her to Buffalo in America. There's someone in Buffalo she wants to speak to, to help solve this mystery. And so Houdini says, 'OK, let's go.' So they are heading to Buffalo but have to make a few stops in Canada because - wouldn't you know it - a few inexplicable crimes need to be investigated. It's lovely to go back and film in Canada. I was so pleased.

Q: Do you think viewers in Canada will enjoy the show as much as in the UK?

A: We have Houdini who brings his North American flavour of humour. Then Doyle, with Stephen Mangan's very witty, intelligent banter and British sense of humour. As a person who loves period drama and a lot of British drama, I love that kind of humour and I know a lot of people who do in Canada as well.

Cast interviews



CHIEF INSPECTOR HORACE MERRING TIM MCINNERNY Q&A

Q: What appealed to you about Houdini and Doyle?

A: It was a really interesting idea about two historical characters who did genuinely know each other. They didn't necessarily agree about everything but they had respect for each other.

I also knew of them because I'd done a film called 'FairyTale: A True Story', which was about the little girls in Edwardian England who claimed to have taken photographs of fairies. Conan Doyle supported and believed them while Houdini was completely cynical about children making up stories. So I knew that scenario of them knowing each other and clashing, while also agreeing about certain things. Conan Doyle was already a very famous person in Victorian England because of Sherlock Holmes.

Q: Who is Horace Merring?

A: Chief Inspector Horace Merring of the Metropolitan Police in London is the man in charge of these investigations. But somebody has gone over his head to his boss. So Houdini and Doyle have been given permission to, as far as Merring is concerned, interfere with cases. And he is disgruntled about that.

Merring is a Victorian man dragged kicking and screaming into the Edwardian age. He doesn't like what's happening in the modern world. Least of all having the first woman police constable on his force in the form of Adelaide Stratton. He doesn't think it's a woman's place to be in the police. But Merring is not a stupid man. People don't get to his position without being good at their job. He may be old fashioned, stubborn, irascible and quite scary sometimes. But he is still a very good detective and judge of people.

Cast interviews

TIM MCINNERNY Q&A continued...

So what is nice is that through the course of the series he does change his opinions and later on is seeking Adelaide's advice more than the others. After having threatened her right at the start with getting rid of her as quickly as possible and discrediting any idea of a woman police constable ever appearing in the police force again.

Q: Is there more to Merring than first meets the eye?

A: During the series you do start to wonder why he is quite so stiff and bad tempered and difficult, unapproachable. It's partly a man in authority in that period. You didn't show your emotions in the way we expect now. But we eventually find out he has had tragedy in his life. And his relationship with Houdini, Doyle and Adelaide becomes different.

Q: What state was the London police force in back then?

A: The public had lost faith in the police after Jack the Ripper. There are detectives around but no idea of forensics or fingerprints., so it was difficult for the police. You're also dealing with a period when there are huge technological advances running ahead of society, which makes this series interesting.

At the same time people were increasingly interested in spirituality and life beyond the grave. The scientific and technological advances make people less and less trustful of organised religion, so they're trying to find other ways to have something to cling on to. That means the police have to be very careful about the toes they tread on and how they deal with people when society is in such a spiritual flux.

Q: What are your views on the paranormal?

A: I think it's foolish to dismiss it. But I suspect anything out of the ordinary that we can't explain is simply a case of science not having found out what it is yet.

My mother claims to have seen ghosts, several times. It's more often women than men. I don't know why. And my grandmother was absolutely certain. She was 93 when she died in 1970. So she was already a young woman in the period we're talking about. You still do have that social history link. I can remember, as a little boy, my grandmother telling me stories about the first car in the village. Which is extraordinary to think of now and of how much has happened within two or three generations.

Q: How would you describe Merring's look?

A: Merring's sideburns are quite extraordinary. Basically everybody had facial hair back then. It was a sign of authority. The older, more experienced and wealthy you were, the more facial hair you had. Especially the mutton chop whiskers, which are quite incredible.

They did want me to have a beard but I didn't have time to grow it - and fake beards and moustaches are really not much fun. They also cover up a lot of the expressions you can make, so you could become too enigmatic as a character. But I was quite keen on the whiskers. It changes the shape of your head. I like looking as different as possible from part to part.

Q: Does Houdini perform a trick involving Merring?

A: What viewers will see is Michael Weston, as Houdini, taking the handkerchief from Merring's breast pocket, flourishing his hand and it then dissolves in flame. It just disappears. There's not even fine ash. It was quite extraordinary and very clever.

Michael was taught the trick, did it live and it was amazing. There was no trick photography and no TV trickery. He just did the trick on camera. And he did it on every repeated take. It was like magic.

Cast interviews

TIM MCINNERNY Q&A continued...

Funnily enough, I know Derren Brown enough to talk to him. A fantastic actor called Andy Nyman is a great friend of mine and he directs Derren's shows and also does close magic, card tricks and the like, two feet away from your eyes. He's one of the best in the country, as well as being an actor.

It appeals to some ancient part of our brain. You do want to believe. And, of course, Derren Brown spends his whole time doing exactly what Houdini did, debunking people who say it's magic. It's just a trick. He keeps telling you all the way through the show, 'What I'm doing is a trick.' But then you watch him and think, 'Well, I'm sorry, that's magic!'.

Q: Does Merring get to leave his office at Scotland Yard?

A: Merring does leave his office for scenes we filmed on the docks in Liverpool. That was exciting. It was a night shoot and I actually got out of the office for once. I got to put my coat on, which usually hangs in the corner of the room. Hopefully Merring will get involved in the field more in future.

I hadn't been to Liverpool for about 25 years and the way it has changed is extraordinary. The same with Manchester. Money has been spent in the right way in reviving those areas.

Q: What was it like working with Stephen Mangan and Michael Weston?

A: I've known Stephen for a long time. I did a short film with Stephen about 20 years ago. So we always meet at various functions and we've always got on well. It wasn't one of the reasons for taking the job but it was very nice to hear that Stephen was doing it. Not only is he extremely talented but he's also a very nice guy.

Michael I didn't know at all but he is brilliant. You work long hours and it's a lot to do in a limited space of time. It's the way of television these days. So if everybody didn't get on, it would be horrible. It really would be no fun at all. But it's such a nice bunch.

Q: How would you sum up the appeal of Houdini and Doyle?

A: Technically I think the show is brilliantly done. It looks amazing. It's witty, clever and entertaining. But at the same time it touches on basic human questions about the nature of faith and belief, where we come from and where we're going. Which, of course, was very prevalent at the time with Darwinism and so on. And I think that's very relevant now, so it entertains you and it makes you think.

Cast interviews



SGT GEORGE GUDGETT ADAM NAGAITIS Q&A

Q: Who is George Gudgett?

A: Sergeant George Gudgett is Chief Inspector Merring's right hand man and a police officer on his way up. He's the lieutenant and likes to cross the line of the law on occasions in order to make sure things get done. He's good at his job. A good investigator and a smart guy, but Gudgett is a Victorian man heading into an Edwardian age. He still believes women are not capable nor strong enough for the police force. He's learned a lot of that from Merring who he will take over from one day.

Constable Adelaide Stratton is the one who keeps Houdini and Doyle in check. She tends to be the one who comes up with the right answer on the many occasions they get stuck.

Gudgett hates Doyle for all kinds of reasons, including the fact he wrote the Sherlock Holmes stories. All Holmes does is make fun of the 'knuckle-draggers' at Scotland Yard. While Houdini is a celebrity to him. He's a very famous guy.

Policing is a serious job to him and then these celebrities come in and start thinking they can just pick it up and do it. Gudgett sees that as an insult.

Q: What was your initial reaction to Houdini and Doyle?

A: It was fascinating to learn Houdini and Doyle not only knew each other but got along. I didn't know a lot about Arthur Conan Doyle, aside from the Sherlock Holmes stories. But I knew quite a lot about Houdini and that he was a mystic in his early days who did séances and made a lot of money out of it.

Cast interviews

ADAM NAGAITIS Q&A continued...

So I was surprised when I learned about their relationship. I thought it would be the other way around. That Doyle was the scientist, rational and pragmatic and not Houdini. I thought Doyle would be defending the science with Houdini going after the supernatural. It was actually the other way around, which was really interesting, because Sherlock Holmes is all about science and the simplest explanations.

When I started reading the scripts it became clear that, of course, these guys would be very funny and interesting to have in a room together, having these conversations. They're so witty and funny. Two enormous minds. And the idea they would hook up with Scotland Yard and solve crimes. It's just too good to be true.

And there was so much more to Conan Doyle than Sherlock Holmes. It's also hard to believe Houdini was capable of some of the things he did with the prowess to contort his body the way he did and hold his breath. People today don't tend to know a lot about him or his mysterious death. It all adds to the mystique.

Q: Did Scotland Yard need their help?

A: The police force was going through a lot of changes at this time. We look at it now and say they weren't that great. But the police force had only been around for 50 years. It wasn't an entrenched thing like it is now. There was no fingerprinting and the methods were very basic. The police force was more of a deterrent to criminals and a way to keep the rich feeling safe. It was a very small police force as well.

Q: Is there a possible supernatural element to the crimes?

A: It's not always explained. That's the beauty of this show. They tend to find the best human explanation we can come up. A lot of the times it's not as simple as we would like it to be, and that creates the tension between Houdini and Doyle. Neither of them are either really right or wrong. Nothing is completely explained and not every crime is solved.

I've never had an unexplained experience myself. I've had things I don't understand but that doesn't mean they're unexplained. That just means I'm not smart enough to understand them yet. I'm not a big believer in the supernatural.

Q: Gudgett is knocked out by Doyle, played by Stephen Mangan. How was that to film?

A: Doyle punches Gudgett out cold. That was fun to film. Gudgett has been giving Doyle a lot of stick about how much he hates Sherlock Holmes. Then he starts to get in the way and it brings out the beast in Doyle who gives Gudgett what's coming to him. Stephen was very good in the punch scene, and no-one got hurt.

Q: Can you tell us about Gudgett going underground?

A: One of the investigations takes Gudgett into a sewer. The set designers basically built the sewer and then flooded it. It was a fantastic illusion. So we went down there in the running water and filmed in our sewer for a day in wet suit and boots. It was fantastic.

Q: What other locations did you film in?

A: In one episode they created an amazing Victorian street with a horse and carriage. There were two horses there and a dog. It's always fun to watch people trying to control animals on a set. Liverpool was a great place to film. The city has a number of streets that still fit this period perfectly.

Q: How would you describe Gudgett's look?

A: Historical accuracy would tell us that Gudgett wore a blue uniform but we decided to go against that. Gudgett is a police officer below Merring but above your average bobby. It's that idea of him becoming one of the early detectives. So they made a few bespoke, amazing suits of that time. The costume design and hair and make-up are amazing on this job. They really give the feel of this show.

Cast interviews

ADAM NAGAITIS Q&A continued

It's very clever and does more than half the work for you. The costume, for example, if you pull the waistcoat tight enough, it straightens you up. It's all in the little details. Everywhere you look on set it's completely authentic. It's all there. You can really let your imagination go. You find a lot of the character through it.

Q: What was it like working with the rest of the cast?

A: They're great to watch and always a good laugh to work with. We very rarely kept a straight face. Tim McInnerny is one of my favourite actors. He's fantastic. Fascinating to watch. I had never met Michael Weston or Stephen Mangan before but they were like a breath of fresh air. And Rebecca Liddiard just does an amazing job, a lot of the time being the sole woman on set. She's so magnetic as an actor. I'm a big fan.

I've learned a lot on this job. You learn regardless of who you're working with. But it's special when you get to work with people like this. They're always energised and at the top of their game.

