



THE LEVEL





THE LEVEL TRANSMITS ON FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER AT 9PM ON ITV

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The Level is a tense new thriller commissioned by ITV and produced by BAFTA award-winning indie Hillbilly Television.

The six-part drama stars Karla Crome (*Prisoner's Wives*, *Misfits*, *You*, *Me and the Apocalypse*), Philip Glenister (*Prey*, *Mad Dogs*, *Ashes to Ashes*), Laura Haddock (*Da Vinci's Demons*, *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, *The Inbetweeners Movie*), Noel Clarke (*Chasing Shadows*, *Star Trek Into Darkness*, *Doctor Who*), Robert James-Collier (*Downton Abbey*, *Coronation Street*), Lindsey Coulson (*EastEnders*, *Casualty*), Gary Lewis (*Outlander*, *Silent Witness*, *Billy Elliott*), Joe Absolom (*Doc Martin*), Amanda Burton (*Waterloo Road*, *Silent Witness*) and Ruth Madeley, (BAFTA nominated for *Don't Take My Baby*).

Detective Sergeant Nancy Devlin (Karla Crome) has a secret double life. Her exemplary police career masks a covert attachment to shady businessman and drugs trafficker, Frank Le Saux (Philip Glenister). Inextricably linked to Frank from childhood as the father of her best friend, Hayley (Laura Haddock) and the father figure she herself craved.

Nancy has been playing a dangerous game to ensure that Frank always remains off the police radar.

Nancy soon finds herself at the centre of an investigation which puts her at risk of exposure and sees her stalked by a killer intent on destroying her. Nancy's complicated love life and relationships with colleagues creates further tension as she doesn't know who she can trust... literally with her life.

Further cast includes Suzanne Packer (*Casualty*), Lorne MacFadyen (*Grantchester*), Jane Hazlegrove (*Casualty*), Ashley Kumar (*EastEnders*), Kelly Harrison (*Happy Valley*) and Rupert Procter (*Peaky Blinders*).

Written by Gaby Chiappe (*Shetland*, *Vera*, *Lark Rise to Candleford*) and Alexander Perrin (*Leonardo*, *Shetland*), the series is executive produced by Hillbilly Television joint Managing Directors, Polly Leys (*Second Coming*, *Random*, *Holy Flying Circus*, *The Full Monty*) and Kate Norrish (*Second Coming*, *Random*, *Holy Flying Circus*). Andy Goddard (*Dracula*, *Downton Abbey*, *Law & Order: UK*) is lead director and Jane Dauncey (*The Trial of Jimmy Rose*, *Law & Order: UK*, *Stella*) is the producer for the series.

FOREWORD BY THE WRITERS

GABY CHIAPPE AND ALEXANDER PERRIN

The Level is a thriller, with all the conventions of the genre: the suspense, the double crosses, the life-threatening situations. But although it has elements of a police procedural, and a passing acquaintance with organised crime, we wanted our thriller to be rooted in the real world, a familiar one – a world in which characters worry about their mum’s hospital treatment, or what to give their children for tea. And in which they are defined by their emotional lives.

Nancy grew out of this world. A young woman escaping a damaged family. A detective – brave, sympathetic, good at her job, moral even – but fatally compromised. Not by greed or corruption, but by an instinctive, *emotional* loyalty – to a man she ought to be putting behind bars.

Frank’s kindness to Nancy in her troubled childhood won her undying love. But because he is a criminal, she has ever since lived a compromise between this childish instinct and the police career to which, as an adult, she is committed.

When this compromise blows up in her face, Nancy must for the first time confront the reality of who she has been, and find out who she can be now.

Her journey is defined by her relationship with ‘family’: Frank, Gil - her own father, Teresa - her mother and in many ways also the police. And, crucially, by her friendship with Hayley, Frank’s ‘real’ daughter. Best friends at school, Nancy and Hayley were once close as sisters. The Level is also the story of this life-defining friendship, lost and found, in a world fraught with secrets, betrayal and death.

Nancy’s journey can’t be allowed to be easy. After all, she’s a police officer, emerging from a heartfelt but misguided pact with a man steeped in organised crime. It’s right that the task of redeeming herself should be as difficult and life-threatening as it is. First, she has to *survive*. When a clandestine meeting ends in murder. Her world turned on its head, Nancy is suddenly both the hunter and the hunted. . . she is the missing witness her police colleagues urgently need to question... And, helplessly, a liar, who risks alienating anyone she might love.

Because we didn’t want to write about a world neatly polarized between hard-bitten cops and ruthless gangsters, almost everyone who arrives in, or on, The Level, walks in the moral shade: a grey area – bound either through their own actions or family to some kind of crippling guilt. Some, like Nancy, find themselves desperately trying to atone for it. Others throw good actions after bad, in equally desperate attempts to

conceal their guilt. These characters give us our crimes, create our conspiracy thriller. They give our story its *pulse*.

But Nancy gives us its *heart*.

INTERVIEW WITH POLLY LEYS AND KATE NORRISH - EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Q: How did *The Level* come to the screen?

Polly: “It came from the genius of writers Gaby Chiappe and Alex Perrin. Many years ago we optioned another idea of theirs that didn’t get picked up anywhere but it started a relationship between us and them and we carried on talking.”

Kate: “We first had the idea for *The Level* about seven years ago so it’s taken a long time to come to the screen. We knew we wanted to work with Gaby and Alex as writers. So we put some time aside with them to talk about different cop shows, things we’d seen, what we liked. And the genesis of *The Level* was this idea of a compromised cop but not by money or addiction. We really liked the idea of someone being compromised from an emotional place. “

“Our heroine Nancy is just that. *The Level* is about family, love, betrayal, honesty. All of those things. We hope the family story will draw people in as much as the crime story. In terms of where it’s set, Gaby grew up in Brighton and that roots it. The *Level* title relates to both the place in Brighton but also to being ‘on the level’.”

Polly: We’ve been asked about the fact that we have a female protagonist. This was a very conscious decision in the early stages of development. At that time there weren’t so many iconic female detective shows (this was pre-*Scott and Bailey* and *Happy Valley*) and we all felt it worked emotionally to have a compromised female cop.

Q: Tell us about the casting of Karla Crome as Nancy

Kate: The character of Nancy is involved in the most dangerous murder investigation of her life because, unbeknownst to anyone, she is the missing witness that both the police and the killer are looking for. She’s isolated as a character so we needed an actress that would let the viewer in. When you see Karla as Nancy you see she is brilliantly capable of conveying a huge range of emotions. You’re totally drawn in. She is everything we imagined and more. “

Polly: “At first there was a question about Karla’s availability as she was optioned to another show. But luckily for us she became available and the dates worked so we were able to sign her up. “

“With Laura Haddock (Hayley) we called her in to audition when her baby was just 8 weeks old. You’d never have guessed that she was working on minimal sleep. She delivered perfectly at the audition and continued to do so throughout the shoot.

Q: What does your first director Andy Goddard bring to The Level?

Kate: “We met with some really good directors all of whom were really positive about the script. But Andy pitched something which we all really responded to; the theme of a duty of care. He really got under the skin of the script. The emotional story was key. It’s true in a lot of thrillers that if an audience emotionally connect with the characters they go on a more satisfying journey with the story”

Polly: “Other producers had recommended Andy to us and he totally lived up to the praise. Not only did he bring a great cast and crew together but he also set a look and tone for the show which felt really fresh. He and his Director of Photography, Ben Wheeler, and designer Candida Otton, worked incredibly hard to make the show look cinematic and beautiful, even the more domestic locations have a quality and texture that is really rich. We’re absolutely delighted with the end result and hope the audience will respond to it too.”

“Andy directed the first three episodes and then handed the baton on to Mark Everest who came on to finish the series. Mark really rose to the challenge and has delivered some great performances and set pieces. It was a pleasure to see both directors work so hard and do such great work with the cast and crew to bring it all together. “

Q: What were some of the most challenging scenes and locations?

Polly: “When we were developing the show we never curtailed the writers, instead we encouraged them to write their ideal version with strong hooks for the key moments. Our thinking was that once production started we might have to make some compromises and rein some of the more ambitious material back. But our producer, Jane Dauncey, totally embraced the scripts and worked incredibly hard with the whole team to deliver all of the set pieces as they were scripted. We didn’t have to drop anything.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was the stunt involving a car being shunted off a cliff (in episode 1). That was a biggie!

Kate: “I was on set that night and it was so rewarding to watch the whole production team work together so well. Everyone did a great job. We had to do the final shot in one take so everything had to be prepped to the nth degree. It was 4:30am when we did the final stunt and it went incredibly smoothly. It was a great night.”

“Similarly with other set pieces. The team worked hard to deliver on them and so the viewer should be in for some real treats. “

Q: What are the aims of Hillbilly Film and Television?

Kate: “We set up the company because we wanted to make drama we wanted to watch and work with writers and directors whose work we admired.”

Polly: “Before *The Level* we’d made some successful and award winning high end single films. We’ve always developed series too as that was our ultimate ambition for the company. We owe a lot to ITV for giving us our first series commission and making it such a fantastic experience.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

KARLA CROME PLAYS DS NANCY DEVLIN



A Detective Sergeant at the age of 29. Smart, fiercely good at the job she loves, liked and respected by colleagues (she's just gained a medal for bravery), Nancy Devlin has never quite allowed herself to be truly close to any of them. There's a reason. . .

Nancy grew up in Brighton with her father, Gil, a police officer, and her mother, Teresa. Gil drank hard, and when he did he often went for Teresa, who suffered bouts of depression.

Intelligent, sensitive, frightened but resourceful. . . as a child, escaping the violence and trauma of her family, Nancy gravitated more and more towards the household of her best friend, Hayley. Here she was treated with kindness and generosity by Hayley's father - successful local businessman, Frank Le Saux. Frank established himself as a dependable source of comfort and strength in Nancy's world; it wasn't long before Nancy came to see him as the father she wished she'd always had.

When the time came to choose a career, it was Frank who encouraged Nancy to go into the police. It made sense. It made Nancy feel like she was winning. It was only later that she came across Frank himself through her work – with an allegation about drugs trafficking.

It wasn't difficult for Nancy to make up her mind whose side to take. She went where the love was and tipped Frank off. And so a fateful compromise was made, trapping Nancy in conflict with herself, forcing her to conceal some of herself and her own interior life.

A success in her work as a detective, Nancy was drafted to join the National Crime Division. She moved into a flat in London – and took the opportunity to invite Teresa to come and live with her - leaving Gil lonely and embittered, with his drink-fuelled

rages. Ever since, she has been juggling her career with looking after her mum, in her frequent bouts of illness. Nancy has barely spoken to her father for months. The only person in Brighton she does speak to, or text, using a dedicated phone for security, is Frank. When it's necessary. When 'they're getting close. . . '.

LAURA HADDOCK PLAYS HAYLEY SVRCEK (NEE LE SAUX)



Hayley has just returned from Spain, where she has lived the best part of a decade as a wealthy and much photographed WAG. She's in the middle of a messy divorce from La Liga footballer, Emil Svrcek, father of her two children, Romany and Thane.

It would be a difficult homecoming at the best of times. Hayley's youth and childhood in Brighton were dominated by her best friend Nancy and by Frank, whose fatherly love she challenged and tested to destruction. Hayley played out her teenage years as a wild child - clubbing, taking drugs and dating the bad boys. She fell for the worst, Shay Nash, nearly a decade older than her. When Frank, alerted by a worried Nancy, intervened in this relationship, Hayley was exiled to rehab in Suffolk, all lines of contact with Brighton were quashed by her father – before she'd even been allowed to say goodbye.

By the time Hayley left Suffolk, she'd given up on Brighton, Nancy and her family. Instead, she stayed in London, drowning her resentment in the company of Premier League footballers, modelling agents and C list celebrities. Eventually, she went with Emil Svrcek, happily, to Spain where she slowly adjusted to WAG domesticity. Motherhood was Hayley's one real discovery - that she could do it and love it. Until she recently grew bored of Svrcek and Spain and that restless, wild-child instinct reasserted itself. . .

Strong-willed, impulsive, passionate and courageous. Like Nancy, she's never flinched from taking responsibility for her actions. Unlike Nancy when they meet again, Hayley can be direct, honest with herself and others, and is almost incapable of lying. As the criminal world of her father starts to encircle her, she will very soon be out of her depth. . .

PHILIP GLENISTER PLAYS FRANK LE SAUX



It's taken Frank Le Saux over thirty years to become one of the most successful and prominent hauliers in the south of England. Thirty years ago, he bought his first truck. A few years later, he went international. Now, the distinctive Le Saux livery is a familiar sight on the arterial routes of the south coast, serving all major ports as well as Gatwick.

For many, it would be enough. Frank would seem to have it all. Thirty years ago, he married Cherie, an ex-dancer, a woman smart and secure enough in herself to realise that if you want Frank Le Saux and what he can provide, you have to learn to take the rough with the smooth. Together, they had two children - Hayley, and then, several years later, Tate, born with a genetic condition. Unlike Cherie, for whom this was a difficult challenge, Frank instantly accepted Tate and never failed to show him love.

Warm and charismatic, a caring husband, a strong father, able to absorb Hayley's teenage excesses and empathise with Nancy's distress. Frank seems to have had more than enough love to go round and it hasn't always been confined to his marriage and his family. But it has provoked incredible loyalty from those drawn into his orbit.

But a fortune, a family and the admiration of the local community isn't enough for Frank. Like his daughter, Hayley, he's not easily satisfied and quickly restless. Alongside haulage, from early on, he's flirted with, and then embraced, another line of business – he imports cocaine. It could just be impossible greed, or it could be something more complex – a natural instinct to create secrets and hoard their power. We see just how much power Frank has accrued – over people and places. And to what dark ends he'll use it. . .

LINDSEY COULSON PLAYS DCI MICHELLE NEWMAN



DCI Michelle Newman heads up the murder investigation and is razor sharp and at ease with being in authority. She loves the job, lives for it. Which is why she admires Gunner, the most focused member of her team. Although she is impatient with what she sees as her impulsive decision making, as a seasoned police officer, Newman naturally takes an interest in people, and what makes them tick – so she’s intrigued by Nancy. Her scrutiny poses a real danger for Nancy. But Nancy in turn also draws out the risk-taker in Newman. Increasingly frustrated by the blind alleys of the investigation and responding to Nancy’s essential steel. Newman will herself be tempted into backing an incredibly dangerous operation – in which Nancy’s life will yet again be at stake. . .

ROBERT JAMES-COLLIER PLAYS KEVIN O’DOWD



As the one familiar face in East Sussex Homicide, Kevin O’Dowd joins Nancy on secondment from the NCD. DS Kevin O’Dowd is friendly, personable and funny. His presence might be a bonus for Nancy - if only she weren’t having to hide so much of herself. And there’s another complication: O’Dowd has carried a torch for Nancy for a while. She’s smart, attractive - and she saved his life, winning a bravery award as result. Only, O’Dowd’s feelings are not reciprocated – despite a near-miss. It means, however devoted, he can only be a friend.. so far. But O’Dowd has noticed that Gunner is watching Nancy and soon he has his own suspicions. . .

NOEL CLARKE PLAYS GUNNER MARTIN



The enigma of what DS ‘Gunner’ Martin is thinking and what he might want is one of many hazards for Nancy as she tries to stay under the radar in East Sussex Homicide. Dry, smart, impatient with anyone who isn’t as good at the job as he is, Gunner is apparently loyal to DCI Newman, who seems to regard him as her protégé. His cool, unbending manner, his lone wolf demeanour, may simply be an expression of his exacting professional standards, as he scrutinizes his colleagues. Or they may be the mask for a more threatening curiosity - which penetrates a lot deeper than Nancy would like. He’s definitely watching her. . .

AMANDA BURTON PLAYS CHERIE LE SAUX



Former dancer, Cherie Le Saux has been Frank’s devoted wife for over thirty years. Having apparently left all decisions to Frank and chosen not to know about his business – *any* part of it. But there is steely frame to Cherie’s character. Her pride and her inner strength in fact make her a formidable force. Though her feelings of inadequacy and failure as a mother, around Tate, have been dealt with by placing Tate at the safe distance of the care home. But at the same time, she shows a sense of generosity and compassion towards others, casualties of Frank’s misdemeanours. Her relations with Hayley are not always easy – what Cherie loves or forgives in Frank, she is less ready to overlook in her own daughter.

GARY LEWIS PLAYS GIL DEVLIN



Nancy's father, Gil, is a retired former detective sergeant from East Sussex CID. Struggling to put heavy drinking behind him, partly because he is now diabetic, we first meet Gil when he's fallen off the wagon and hospitalised himself with two broken wrists. Ever since Nancy left home taking her mother with her, his relations with Nancy – in what little contact they've had - have fallen into a well-worn pattern of sourness and recrimination. But perhaps his relationship with Nancy is something he regrets. Certainly, Gil has secrets – and Nancy's return to Brighton will risk them being exposed. . .

LORNE MACFADYEN PLAYS DARRYL QUINN



Ex-Army and Frank's wingman and driver. Quinn has an affinity with Frank's son Tate, driving Tate to and from the care home. Quinn showed himself sensitive and trustworthy – a useful helper and now a friend. But Quinn's other value is his military training and strength. He's done other jobs for Frank in his 'other' line of business. Quinn's strength and calm solidity also bring him to Hayley's attention. In her unsettled new life, he may just be the rock she needs. . .

JOE ABSOLOM PLAYS SHAY NASH



Shay Nash entered the world of the Le Sauxs when he was thirty - dating Hayley. She was seventeen and at her wildest. Nash didn't help as he was an addict. He was also a dealer. When Frank found out – from Nancy – his wrath was swift and spectacular. Nash has never forgiven Nancy. And he's never forgotten Hayley. Though probably not capable of any real emotional contact, he still feels her loss - and is quick to pounce on the opportunity to become reacquainted. Nancy still sees through him. But Nash is charismatic and charming and appears to have remade himself as a legitimate businessman. He'll hover and scheme until such time as he can collect. . .

KARLA CROME IS DS NANCY DEVLIN



Q: What appealed to you about The Level?

“I’m really into the detective drama genre so I thought it was definitely something I would watch. The director Andy Goddard didn’t want any of the cast to know who the killer was. So I didn’t know until half way through filming.

“I didn’t want to know. But I guessed right. I enjoyed being a detective. I suppose I was good at solving this one because I was so closely involved with it and I was asking myself really specific questions. Obviously the member of the cast playing the culprit knew they’d done it! So I was interviewing people after the camera stopped rolling to try and work it out!”

Q: Who is Nancy?

“Nancy is a high-flying, ambitious detective sergeant who works for the National Crime Division, a fictional police unit in London. She has worked her way up pretty quickly. Then she becomes involved in a case which takes her back to her home town of Brighton and forces her to face some family demons she was dealing with when she was growing up.

“There is this work-life conflict that she has going on which means all areas of her life are colliding in a way she doesn’t want them to.”

Q: Why is Frank a very important figure in her life?

“Frank touches people’s lives positively and negatively. Nancy had a troubled upbringing and Frank was a surrogate father to her when her own parents didn’t quite cut it in the way any child would want them to. She missed out on what she

felt was a safe, nurturing upbringing. Frank offered that father figure. Someone she could trust and who looked out for her in a way her own parents didn't."

Q: How would you describe her relationship with Hayley (Laura Haddock)?

"Nancy and Hayley were inseparable as children, went to school together and were best friends. Then Hayley became involved with an older guy called Shay Nash (Joe Absolom) who Nancy didn't approve of. He introduced Hayley to drugs.

"So Hayley, being worried about her friend's safety, told Hayley's dad Frank that she was dabbling in drugs and hanging out with the bad boys. And Frank packed Hayley off to boot camp. Nancy and Hayley have had no communication since then, aside from what Nancy reads in the press because Hayley is married to a footballer and has a high profile."

Q: Nancy works with DS Kevin O'Dowd (Robert James Collier). How do they get on?

"Certainly he feels indebted to Nancy as she has saved his life in a previous incident. Kevin has enormous respect and admiration for Nancy and has liked her for a long time. Whereas Nancy is slightly harder to read. She uses him a little emotionally for someone to lean on."

Q: In Brighton she is teamed up with DS Gunner Martin (Noel Clarke). What is their relationship like?

"Nancy is suspicious of him. He takes an immediate dislike to her while she thinks some things about him don't make sense or add up."

Q: Nancy is told she does a job that makes a difference and she makes the world a better place. Does the same apply to actors and the arts?

"I do some youth and community work and unfortunately one of the companies I work with, which works with NEET, young people not in education, employment or training, has had their funding cut. And they're a brilliant organisation.

"I was mentoring a guy who had been homeless, was in prison and had just got a place at drama school. I find it astonishing that government money would not be invested in something like that - that could take people off the streets and out of harm. So that upsets me.

"But I don't think what I do is as important as a doctor. I'm not saving lives. I'm primarily here to entertain people and give them something to watch. And I enjoy it. I do it because it's fun. But I can see the benefits of the arts more widely."

Q: Nancy has a vintage mobile phone which plays a part in the drama. Where do you stand on our mobile phone fixation today?

“I love my phone. I hear a lot of people harking back to an era when they weren’t necessary. But we’ve made them a part of our lives now. It’s very easy to be negative about it. But it’s also amazing, incredible what they can do.”

Q: Nancy goes back to revisit her teenage bedroom. Why does that feel so poignant?

“There’s something about your teenage bedroom. It freezes time. And you’re walking into a time capsule. It’s such a formative time. And it captures Nancy as she was.”

Q: How was it working with Amanda Burton (Cherie Le Saux) and Lindsey Coulson (DCI Michelle Newman)?

“They’re fantastic. I feel very privileged to have worked with them. On top of the fact they’re very lovely people, you can just see they’re extremely intelligent actresses. They ask the right questions and prepare in a way that is clear and smart.

“It’s such a great cast. Everybody has a clear idea of their character and what they’re doing with them.”

LAURA HADDOCK IS HAYLEY SVRCEK (NEE LE SAUX)



Q: What appealed to you about The Level?

“I thought the concept was really exciting and fast-moving. It felt grounded in its emotional roots. I liked the fact it was a female lead and my character Hayley and Nancy (Karla Crome) go on a big emotional journey together. Finding out lots of things along the way. All coupled with a murder investigation.”

Q: Who is Hayley?

“Hayley is the daughter of Frank Le Saux (Philip Glenister). She is married to a football player and they have lived in Spain for the last nine years but are now separated. Hayley has come home to England with their daughter Romney and son Thane. Then she discovers Nancy, an old friend from school, is investigating a murder.

“I decided Hayley started off in the modelling world where the opportunity arose for her to meet football players. She ended up falling in love with one of them, marrying him and having children together.

“Before she met him Hayley was a bit of a tearaway and quite rebellious. She’s definitely impulsive. She was dating Shay Nash (Joe Absolom) who was a bad influence on her. But she was quite happy to go along with it and enjoyed the excitement of being with somebody like that.

“I remember the first time I worked with Joe. That first scene we did, I thought, ‘Oh my God, now I know who this girl is. Now I understand Hayley.’ If she was in love with this guy and ended up going into rehab because of decisions she made while with him, he’s got to have a pretty profound effect on her. And he did. Joe’s performance is really smart. He’s a lovely actor to work with and made it clear to me

who Hayley was. Who knows why we're attracted to the people we're attracted to? I guess it's chemical."

Q: How would you describe Hayley's relationship with her dad Frank (Philip Glenister)?

"Hayley is a daddy's girl who idolised him when she was younger. She wanted to impress him and for him to love her as much as he possibly could. But then she made some bad decisions. She just couldn't control herself and his disappointment was probably too much for her to take. There was that mixture of wanting to make your Dad proud but knowing you're doing things that aren't going to make them very happy.

"Her relationship with her Mum Cherie (Amanda Burton) is pretty complicated. There are certain things Hayley knows about her dad but other things she was probably quite clever at blocking out. It was better to be ignorant in certain situations than just putting him on a pedestal. He's like the puppeteer. A moment of praise from someone like Frank would fuel you for weeks and months."

Q: So Hayley and Nancy (Karla Crome) were childhood friends until they were 17?

"Hayley made some decisions which resulted in her Dad packing her off to rehab. Up until that point Hayley and Nancy were thick as thieves. But for the last year of their friendship Hayley was with Nash, and Hayley and Nancy were slowly growing apart. Nancy was looking out for her best friend and told Hayley's dad about his daughter taking drugs and getting into difficult situations. Because she was worried about her. But Hayley has always thought Nancy did that to spite her, as opposed to help her. So there have been a number of lost years between the two former friends."

Q: But Shay comes back into her life?

"It's strange for Hayley because the last time she saw Shay was before she went into rehab and her family despised him. They tried everything they could to split them up. But now he's a reformed character and they have forgiven him. He's pretty captivating and Hayley is feeling pretty vulnerable and weak. So when she sees him there's a flash of recognising her past and feeling safe because he knows her."

Q: Hayley also meets Darryl Quinn (Lorne MacFadyen), a young man who works for her father?

"He seems like a knight in shining armour to her. Hayley is curious about the jobs he has done for her dad. But really all she wants is the truth. He's soft and is kind to her and is good with her children. Darryl could be the person that allows her to have a happy life."

Q: What look did the costume department decide on for Hayley?

"She's very well put together. Hayley doesn't necessarily wear clothing appropriate for the situation. So they go to the park and she's in heels. Or they're walking on the stones on the beach...and she's in heels. When we first meet her she's still pretty well tailored with her hair and make-up done, wearing beautiful lined, tailored jackets. But she's got a lot on her plate and is emotionally and physically exhausted so they break that look down a bit."

Q: Tell us about the locations you filmed in?

"We've filmed quite a lot in Brighton. I love it there. We shot in the most beautiful house. It's just stunning with the most gorgeous views. It's quite a stark, uniformed house which is good because Hayley's Mum is pretty well put together and everything has its place. It's neat and very grand."

"Brighton is fascinating. In the sun it's lively, warm, buzzy, hopeful and just a brilliant place to be. When it's cold, windy, the middle of the night, you're down on the pier and the wind is blowing, it's quite scary. It had a spooky feeling down at the old pier in the middle of the night. And it's misty. At night it's like anything can happen. It's quite an eerie place. But in the day everything seems good, safe, happy and promising."

Q: Are you any good at spotting the killer when watching a whodunit?

"Reading the scripts for The Level, at the end of every episode I've come up with the person I think has done it. But I've not been right."

Q: You worked on The Level after the birth of your first child in December 2015?

"This is my first job since our son Pip was born. It's a huge life-changing event. It changes absolutely everything. I feel like he is the making of me. He is just wonderful. So tiny but so huge in our lives now."

"Coming back to work is scary but I'm self-employed and very aware that I want to try and keep my career going as an actress for the rest of my life and be a mummy. To be an actress and work and have him be proud of me for being a good mum, a working mummy. I would like to try and bring my children up in a house where both mummy and daddy work and are successful but they always feel safe, loved and happy."

"So far we've just been a little vagabond family. He's come with me everywhere. We're making up our own rules with it. It's about going with the flow and every day is a new day. As long as he is happy, warm and fed and safe then I'm happy. It's amazing. Things that used to matter just don't matter anymore."

PHILIP GLENISTER IS FRANK



Q: Who is Frank?

“Frank is a haulage contractor who has fingers in lots of pies. A man with skeletons in the cupboard. He’s been a father figure to Nancy (Karla Crome) as she was growing up as well as having his own daughter Hayley (Laura Haddock).

“It’s not really a world I know much about. I’m a poncey little actor. But I’ve filmed in a few haulage places before, including for *Ashes To Ashes*. They’re always interesting places to film in, including the people who work there. There were quite a lot of lorries involved in *Clocking Off*. But I didn’t drive them. I just told them where to go.

“A lot of *The Level* is filmed in Brighton. My brother Robert got married, the first time, in Brighton and I’ve also just done a radio play with him, which was recorded in Brighton.

Q: Did you have a childhood ambition to be a lorry driver?

“Absolutely not. I wanted to be a milkman. But I didn’t realise you had to start at 3am. It’s all right when you’re seven-years-old saying that. But when you get to my age, it’s far too early. That’s one of the things about filming. You’re often up very early in the morning with long hours.”

Q: Frank is suspected of transporting drugs. Does the drugs’ issue concern you?

“I think drugs have always been around. The biggest danger is the strength of drugs these days seems to be so much stronger. Now there’s all this skunk out there which is three times the strength. That’s the thing that concerns me, the strength and people not knowing what they are taking.

"I'm fortunate the school my daughter goes to has a zero tolerance policy on drugs. Basically if you're found with any sort of drug you are expelled immediately. You're out. All you can do is educate kids about them."

Q: One of the themes of *The Level* is keeping secrets. Are you good at keeping secrets?

"I am, actually. If somebody tells me something in confidence I like to think I can be trusted to keep that. Absolutely."

Q: What about whodunits? Can you spot the guilty party early on?

"Yes, often. A friend of mine who is a writer watches a new drama and as soon as he realises who's done it, which is usually in the first 10 minutes, he switches over. And then he goes back at the very end and says, 'I told you I was right.' He usually is because he writes detective novels."

Q: A vintage mobile phone features in the story. What's your view on our mobile phone addiction today and modern technology?

"I find it quite worrying. I think it's a generational, age thing. It can be very useful. But I also think it's a very dangerous tool in terms of the damage it can cause. I'm not a huge fan of social media."

"I'm always aware that we live in this age now when everybody's got to have an opinion. It's almost like people are waiting to be offended. With a remote control in one hand and the phone in the other. They're watching something on the telly or listening to the radio and they're just waiting for something to offend them. Everybody has to have a comment about something."

"Sometimes it's quite nice to remain with a dignified silence. Something that seems rather lost on many today. That's just a personal opinion. Other people would disagree."

"But I find it a weird phenomenon. I think it's made us quite lazy in many respects as well. You don't have to go out there and put the work in. You can do all the research on a tablet. You can just Google it and get what you need. That's perhaps me being a bit old fashioned but that's what I think."

Q: Cameras on phones are maybe not good news if you have a famous face?

"That whole selfie thing is something that is just part of culture now. What can you do about it? I'm not on TV enough to be bothered a great deal. It must be pretty horrendous for people on soaps who are on screen several times a week. But, touch wood, I seem to get away with it. You just think, 'Why do you need a selfie? You'll probably forget about it in a day.'"

Q: Frank tells Nancy he's not like her - she makes the world a better place. Do actors make the world a better place?

"Overall, yes I think they do. Not just actors. Culture makes the world a better place. We'd be very limited without culture and the arts. Actors are just part of that bigger picture. Music, art, photography, whatever you want to call it. It's a wonderful tapestry and I'm very proud of being part of it. It makes the world a much richer place and it would be appalling without it. Like a big black cloud.

"You can't generally put a monetary value on the benefits of the arts. It's a very contentious one in terms of what the Arts Council can give and can't give. It's also about people supporting their local communities rather than the bigger picture sometimes. Certainly the smaller regional theatres have strong local followings. They need the support people can give them.

"I'm doing my bit for the Orange Tree in Richmond at the moment, acting as an ambassador for them. They do some very good work. If you want new writing and want to find new talent, these are the places where you're going to find it.

"You've got to learn your trade. And that all starts in the local community. It's important that local communities help and support each other."

Q: Frank's wife Cherie (Amanda Burton) leaves all the jobs at home to her husband. Is that the same for you?

"My wife Beth doesn't trust me with the DIY. She doesn't trust me to change a light bulb. I usually have to do that on the quiet. If something needs doing we'll get her father round. He's quite handy. I do the bits and pieces but when it comes to anything electrical I leave that to the experts.

"But obviously I mow the lawn. I give myself that task. I think it's the golfer in me. I like a nice manicured lawn. Beth is more into letting the grass grow wild. But I'm like, 'No, it's messy, I'm going to cut it.' And, of course, I've got a shed. I don't live in it. I've got a shed I go in and retreat, read books about the olden days. It's a very nice shed built by a friend of mine."

Q: You are now filming season two of Outcast in America?

"That takes me up to Christmas pretty much. It's 10 episodes and quite a long shoot. If you've got a great TV drama like The Level or Outcast it doesn't matter which country they come from. If it's great drama, it's great drama.

LINDSEY COULSON IS DCI MICHELLE NEWMAN



Q: What drew you to The Level?

“I thought it was brilliant. Sometimes you get scripts and because of the nature of the beast, they’ve just got the green light and they’re not quite finished. So it was really nice to get something I felt had been worked on and fine tuned.

“The Level tells a story very quickly. A cracking good story told over six episodes at a pace. And I liked the fact the women were very central to the plot. It felt very positive. It’s good there are more women in the centre of these dramas now. There is a lot of good drama around at the moment and I’m proud to feel The Level is part of that as well.”

Q: Who is DCI Michelle Newman?

“I wanted her to be fair but firm. She is a middle management police officer in charge of a murder investigation and the budget. So murder is her business. It’s her responsibility to make this investigation work and she has to get a result. So she is up against it. But she has worked her way up through the ranks and the only reason she has stayed as a DCI is she still likes to be part of the hands on investigations.

“I met and spoke with some people when I played a detective constable in the drama series M.I.T: Murder Investigation Team and spent time with a murder squad. That’s when I discovered all of the various roles that are important within the team.

“The liaison officer obviously has to be supportive of the family but every single point is a potential clue. They are constantly watching and reading people. It’s taking the time in the silence to observe. Much of how we read people is body language. I think that’s where Michelle Newman is sharp. She notices things others might not and when something is not quite right.

"I suppose actors are people watchers. I do watch people. You get snippets of information which may prove useful at a later date.

"You also have to remember that police officers are human beings too. They see some pretty grotesque stuff when they investigate murders and it must get to you. But sometimes you just can't let it in. It's hard for Newman because people are looking for her to hold it together. She is the one who has to be in charge.

"That's the thing I say to myself if I have to stand up and deliver a big scene, 'Do you know what? I'm not doing brain surgery, I'm not a doctor, I'm not a nurse.' I can say, 'I'm having a wobble.' They can't do that.

"So Newman doesn't do emotion. Which is good for me. One of the things I didn't want to do for a while is all that emotion because I've done years of that. It feels good to be distant in that sense and really nice place to be."

Q: Newman and the rest of the police team do a job that makes a difference. Many would argue the arts also make a real difference. But you can't measure that in the same way?

"You can't tick box the arts. Certainly in schools at the moment they're wanting to do this EBacc where the arts might start to be taken out and not seen as serious. I think it's probably the most important subject. It doesn't mean you have to take it to GCSE or A-level or beyond. This is about confidence boosting.

"I'm involved with The Rudolph Walker Foundation and I mentor in schools. To see the difference in children empowered to do things they couldn't do before is quite incredible. That's what the arts do in so many different forms.

"The arts are so important for so many people. For us to function as a healthy society."

Q: Mobile phones play a part in the drama. Do you worry that people today are addicted to their screens?

"Every night I would go to bed reading a newspaper app on my phone, reading people's opinions and so on. So then you've got maybe 12 people in your head that you go to sleep with. Then in the morning I was getting up and doing the same with rolling news.

"But I've stopped doing that. And it's been lovely because I've not had any of those people in my head. I've started to read my books again and I feel really calm. I think we're heading for some sort of breakdown with the amount of stuff we try and be across. Our brains haven't developed that much. I definitely feel calmer."

Q: What's next?

"After having worked very constantly for six years, what's been lovely is just stepping back. And the older I'm getting the nicer it is. I'm not as desperate to do loads of stuff. I've been very lucky and I feel like I will be again. But there's so many of us in this profession. I don't have that anxiety about roles. Although speak to me in a year. At the moment I'm in a really nice place and that feels good.

"Jumping off a long-running show like EastEnders you go, 'Can I do this or this? Something new?' And then you say, 'Yes I can.' Life always presents other wonderful opportunities and challenges. Change is good."

ROBERT JAMES COLLIER IS KEVIN O'DOWD



Q: This is your first role after the final series of Downton Abbey. Why did you want to play Kevin?

"I wanted the next thing to be something new and good. Sometimes you have to wait for that. The Level is really fresh, fast-paced, high octane, exciting and has a young cast. It's just non-stop with so much going on and is so interwoven and interconnected. To be part of that is a privilege. It was worth the wait."

Q: Who is Kevin O'Dowd?

"Kevin is a police detective at the National Crime Division in London. He's very gregarious. One of those guys who can fit straight into an office. Confident in his own skin. Good at his job, knows what he's doing. There's a warmth to him and he's quite funny."

"O'Dowd has been working alongside Det Sgt Nancy Devlin (Karla Crome). He feels affectionate towards her which he wants to pursue further. Then she is re-located to work on a murder in Brighton and eventually he ends up following her because there could be links to organised crime. And he's hoping to pick up where they left off."

"When we first meet him he has a cast on his foot. Nancy has saved his life by dragging him out of the line of fire. There's a scene where essentially O'Dowd and Nancy are trying to get into bed but they are struggling as he's in a cast and on crutches. It was my first day on set. We were laughing our heads off so much anyway because of how ridiculous it all was. It was quite a funny scene at the end. The passion being interrupted by the clumsiness."

"It was also quite weird acting after the cast came off because I kept forgetting to limp. So then I put a stone in my shoe to remind me."

Q: Have you ever broken anything?

“My own bones no. But I broke a Victorian fireplace belonging to me yesterday. In a house I’m refurbishing with my cousin. He took his time getting it off the wall, because it’s going on another wall. It’s been there since 1850.

“I had all the separate pieces of the fireplace lined up. Then I’ve turned to say something, slightly hungover, and clipped one of the front legs which then fell between my legs and split in half. And I was just like, ‘Oh my God.’ It’ll glue back together. Just one of those moments.”

Q: What was it like working with Karla?

“Karla is fantastic and fearless. It’s a great part and a huge responsibility. One she has taken to with aplomb. She’s got a great attitude.

“O’Dowd is probably more aware of Nancy because of his feelings towards her. So he watches her more than he would other people. He has that protective instinct for her and sees things others might miss.

“Nancy’s police partner in Sussex is Det Sgt Gunner Martin (Noel Clarke). O’Dowd regards him as a bit of a threat. A bit of alpha male-ism going on. Gunner is also a very abrupt and intense character, whilst O’Dowd is the complete antithesis of that. They’re chalk and cheese. They don’t get on at all and there’s tension between them throughout the series.”

Q: O’Dowd is seen driving a speeding police car in a chase. How much of that were you allowed to film yourself?

“More than I wanted to, because I’m a bad driver. I’ve got an automatic and haven’t driven a manual for years. They asked, ‘Can you drive a manual?’ And I went, ‘Yeah, but I prefer an automatic.’ Then they gave me a manual. Of course, they strap a hugely expensive camera to the side of it. So the width is huge and I’ve got to get through these tiny gates at speed. It was quite nerve-wracking. There were a few close calls. Too close.

“I’m a terrible driver. I shouldn’t be let loose on the roads. I learned too late and I’m not good at judging distances. It’s a miracle I’ve never had a crash. I stalled the car a couple of times and I reversed out of a scene when I should have been going forwards. It’s quite hard. You have to deliver your lines and make sure they sound natural while at the same time driving with this camera sticking out the side of your car.”

Q: O'Dowd is involved in a stake out of a haulage yard. How was that to film?

"The yard we used was full of 'Downton delivers' lorries. You'd almost think they did that especially for me. When we first started Downton Abbey we'd see those lorries everywhere. Of course they were around on the roads before the series but that name then lodges in your brain.

"The novelty has long since worn off for me. Our assistant director Chris Thomas said to me, 'Everyone who has come on to the set has mentioned the Downton lorries apart from you.'

"Other locations included filming by the beach in Newhaven, which was stunning. The sun was setting over the white chalk cliffs and I was like, 'It's not a bad job, is it?'"

Q: Did you get a sense of just how difficult it is to be a police officer?

"It's all very well saying you have a cut off between work and home life. No human can do that if you're compassionate and you care. You have to take that emotional baggage home with you. You can't unsee things. It must be horrendous.

"It's one of the worst things in the world to knock on someone's door and tell them their loved one has been murdered. Yet it's all part and parcel of their work which, sometimes, is taken for granted. They are human beings at the end of the day."

Q: Nancy and O'Dowd do a job that makes a difference. Do actors make a difference?

"We're not saving lives. We're not claiming that. But for a culture to evolve and advance you need the arts. It's inspiration, a world of escapism for other people. And it's not just TV, film and stage. It's art, books and music. I don't know where I'd be without music in my life. It permeates right through. And it's a great way for children to get involved in the arts. It helps children develop teamwork and inter-personal skills. It gives them confidence and a release you can't achieve through some of the other subjects in schools which are maybe more academic.

"I do think there's different types of intelligence. There's academic intelligence and if you're not catering for the arts in your syllabus then you're skewed towards people who are more logically minded. They're fine. But what about the ones who aren't? They're thrown on the scrapheap. Whereas there's a creative intelligence not everyone possesses. That lies within the arts. And it's of equal value and worth, at least in my eyes, to that of academic intelligence.

"Without getting too political, sometimes the arts are targetted for budget cuts because there's no perceived, tangible gain from it. A socially awkward child may turn into a confident child through involvement in the arts but you can't measure that. So usually the arts are the first in line for cuts."

Q: A member of the police team in *The Level* go undercover. Would you be good at that?

"A lot of our work can be improvisation, which is something actors are usually good at. Freewheeling and continuous thought, flowing with stuff and situations when they change. Often in an audition you can be given a situation without a script and they want to see how you react and whether you're believable.

"So I think actors would do quite well undercover. It's whether you can hold your nerve. It's quite a challenge going undercover and being able to fit in with a world you probably resent."

Q: A vintage mobile phone features in the drama. Do you think we're now too obsessed with our mobiles?

"It's an addiction. The battery human. There's a great song about people looking at screens all the time. You look around on the train and everyone is staring at a screen. I'm guilty of it as well but I think we can be too connected to being connected. And we do look at screens too much. It affects the senses. I definitely think as a species we need to cut back on that. It's interrupting life too much. It's bad for the eyes as well."

Q: How do you look back on this new role after leaving *Downton Abbey* behind?

"I was so nervous on my first day filming on *The Level*. I hadn't worked for about eight months so I was like, 'Oh, how do I act again? I've forgotten.' I was just focusing on the scene at hand. It was a bit like, 'Don't let anyone find you out.'"

"*Downton* was a fantastic journey. And I always use the word privilege. Because if you're ever working in this game, it's a privilege. It's so hard to get work and there are so many better actors than me out of work. *Downton* was a once in a lifetime experience in terms of its success across the world. I can't see that happening again for a while on such a scale. To be part of that was fantastic.

"And to get six years out of it when I was originally only signed for the first series because Thomas was going to get sacked or die. Sometimes you look back and go, 'Wow, have we just gone on that journey together?' But it has to end. You don't want it to fade out, become jaded and worn. There's always that danger. So we were very lucky to get six series. To close that door, to have the memories.

"There was an increase in the number of bad guy roles I was offered. Although not necessarily butlering! So it was nice to get a role in *The Level*. Something fresh, new and worlds apart from *Downton*. A modern cop show about homicide. So it's another stepping stone. One of the reasons I became an actor is to play different characters and meet different people in different locations. You couldn't get any more different than *The Level*."

NOEL CLARKE IS DS SEAN 'GUNNER' MARTIN



Q: Why did you want to be involved with The Level?

"The Level stood out for me because of Nancy, the young woman cop at the centre of the story. A young female lead. It makes the show very current. The birth of a star in Karla Crome. But actors don't act to become stars. We're actors. You can go a year with a bit of stage work and then suddenly you get a big Hollywood film or whatever. I think Karla is fantastic and this will really introduce her to the mainstream public after the other work she's done before. She's great. That's why I think the show stands out. It just feels real and it works. This series is pushing the bar."

Q: What's your take on DS 'Gunner' Martin?

"Sean 'Gunner' Martin is one of those officers who has progressed through the ranks quickly and has always taken the job, and himself, very seriously. Rightly in terms of the job but maybe not in terms of himself. He doesn't have a family of his own so work is what he lives for. He's one of those detectives who views everybody as a suspect, until he eliminates them from his inquiries. I've played him very stone-faced."

Q: Nancy (Karla Crome) arrives in Sussex on secondment. What does he make of her?

"Initially Sean is annoyed that an officer from another force needs to come down to his department, as if we can't do our own job. He knows he is very good at what he does. So he doesn't think they need Nancy's help on this murder."

Q: Your character drives a police car in a high speed chase. How much of that were you allowed to film yourself?

"The stunt drivers did a fair amount, the bits that skid round towards the edge of a brick wall going into the sea. But we did a fair share of that driving as well. The pulling up sections where you have to stop and then get out and the camera pushes in dramatically. That was fun. It's very technical. You have to stop in exactly the right place at the right time.

"And I filmed a moment where the cars almost crash because the camera would see then exactly who was driving and you can't substitute a stunt driver. It's one of those jobs where you can never complain because it is a great day at work. But people have to understand it is still work!"

Q: What do the Brighton locations bring to the drama?

"I guess many people may take Brighton for granted. But the rest of the world when it watches The Level will perhaps not know much about Brighton and think, 'That place looks cool.' It makes it immensely cinematic with its beachfront, great cliffs and the sea. I was filming there one day on a really hot day thinking, 'This is almost like Santa Monica.' They've got the pier and big wheel."

Q: Gunner is a watchful detective. As an actor, writer and director, are you more observant than most?

"For me to do what I do, maybe I think in a slightly different way. I once saw a girl on the tube who happened to be deaf. And I thought of a whole feature film just looking at her. The treatment is still on my laptop.

"What it does do is make me more understanding of the process. Not that any actors on this job give the director a hard time but I'm an easy actor to work with. Because I know when a director is stressing. I can also make suggestions to make it easier.

"It takes a confident and brave director to hire me as an actor. Knowing I'm a director and have directed four movies you have to be confident in yourself to hire me. That says a lot about this show. Everyone is nice, confident and knows what they're doing."

Q: Are you good at spotting the guilty party in a whodunit?

"I'm pretty good at guessing. I can see how things are being set up. My wife asks me who I think did it. Then when I tell her she says, 'Why do you have to ruin it?' But she asked me in the first place. If you don't want to know, don't ask me! It is quite funny. As a writer and director I know the beats of a show and the small things that are important."

Q: Gunner does a job that makes a difference. Does the same apply to actors and the arts?

“Entertainment is always needed. In times of stress or whatever, some people like to relax and look at entertainment. My mum was a nurse for over 30 years and saved lives doing a job that makes a real difference. She would come home from work after a hard day and switch on Inspector Morse or Auf Wiedersehen, Pet, which I ended up in years later. And that provided her with an escape.

“In terms of what we do as actors, you think to yourself, ‘Bloody hell, I’m doing that and getting this amount for it’ compared to a junior doctor who isn’t receiving their recompense. But at the same time I can’t walk down the street some days. There are sacrifices for the job you do as well. It is a balance.

“How much actors are paid isn’t up to an actor. As an actor you just do your job, whether you do theatre, TV or film. What people choose to give you for that is what they choose to give you.

“But I think entertainment is massively important. It is stress relief, escapism and the thing people need to get by sometimes.”

AMANDA BURTON IS CHERIE LE SAUX



Q: What appealed to you about The Level?

“I thought it was very well written and different. There are a lot of shows out there which can become a bit generic. The casting was really interesting with two young women characters from different backgrounds who share this extraordinary link.

“Also the fact we don’t know an awful lot about Cherie’s husband Frank (Philip Glenister) and his dealings. So there were a lot of positive factors there for a good story and mystery thriller with lots of action. This was different enough to make me want to do it and it involved a very interesting bunch of people. It’s also an intriguing title.”

Q: Who is Cherie?

“I really liked my character Cherie. She is a very strong matriarch who develops as the series goes on and I loved that. The Level keeps you guessing and isn’t one of those dramas where we all know what is going to happen eventually.

“My take on Cherie is she has always wanted to have a rich life. She is very bound by money and loves her position of having this lovely house with Frank, who she doesn’t ask too many questions of. He’s a real old fashioned geezer and they have an old fashioned marriage.

“So she keeps herself presentable, looks after their amazing home and keeps everything ticking over. Cherie probably made quite big decisions but Frank earned the money in the relationship. They were both working class made good with strong values.

"The big house and big cars is everything Cherie aspired to, having come up from nothing. So it's very much a trophy house they live in - a big glass house. Which for a family with a lot of secrets is quite ironic. That's very clever because there's nowhere you can hide in a glass house.

"I love her scenes in the house because she is always there. Not like a prisoner in her own home but it's just interesting, all the little things the writers have put in. Very lovely to play because there was nothing ambiguous about it.

"Her biggest disappointment in life is her relationship with her son Tate (Cian Binchy), who has a development disorder and learning difficulties. She just doesn't have a relationship with him and can't cope with him at all. Her daughter Hayley (Laura Haddock) is pretty much left to deal with Tate."

Q: How did Cherie and Frank meet?

"They met when she was a dancer. Somebody mentioned something about Cherie's pins, which made me laugh quite a lot. I'm probably the shortest dancer in the world. She's obviously been a very ambitious, pushy kind of woman. I know that type. Wanting to haul themselves out and money is the answer. And she's not going to let go of her lifestyle and what they have built up."

Q: How would you describe her relationship with her daughter Hayley?

"She didn't expect Hayley to come back home, having split up with her footballer husband. Cherie tries to mend that by saying marriages have these times and you just have to work at it. He loves you and provides a good home for you and your children. What more do you want? That actually says more about Cherie than it does about what she really is thinking for Hayley. That's very much a generational thing. You got married and you stuck with it."

Q: Cherie is perceptive about other people. Are actors in general more perceptive and observant than the average person?

"Yes. Although I wonder if it's chicken or the egg. Does that make you want to become an actor because you're much more sensitive to other people? I can't talk for everyone but certainly I think I'm very observant about people and very sensitive to other people and situations. Probably sometimes more so than I would like. I feel things a lot more strongly, much more so than I would like emotionally. But I suppose then you just turn that into your work."

Q: What was it like working with Karla Crome (Nancy) and Laura Haddock (Hayley)?

"Karla and I had a humdinger of a scene and it was wonderful to work with her. I had seen her on stage in a play called Linda at the Royal Court in London last year and I thought she was excellent. Also she hasn't been over-exposed on television.

“And it was an interesting dynamic working with Laura. She was very much the new mother in real life. It was very lovely to meet her baby and talk about that. But also her character is a mother with two young children, making me the grandmother. So you have three generations there and I found that really good. It was a lovely layer to play.

‘Cherie has quite a weird relationship, in a way, with her daughter Hayley. She loves her but is not afraid to go against her and hide things from her. That’s quite a big thing to play because I’m very open as a person. And to play someone who is actually quite devious was great.”

Q: And working with Lindsey Coulson (Michelle Newman)?

“I loved working with Lindsey. She’s amazing. We just got on really well. There was a lot of mutual respect there. It was great to have a complete cross-section of all different ages of actors working on this, which brings a lot to the table. I’m proud to be my age.”

Q: Mobile phones play a part in *The Level*. Do you have a view about how we all seemed glued to a screen today?

“Where I live now by the sea, I hardly ever see anyone walking along the road looking at their mobile. Whereas in the city it’s become like a dummy. Like a pacifier. That everyone has to feel connected to their little world on a phone when they’re in the city. You don’t see it in the countryside. And I’m not quite sure why that is.

“Maybe people have a lot of anxiety about living in a city so they have to keep their sanity or their anxiety at bay while connecting with someone or something, a blog, a tweet or whatever, constantly. Or is it an affirmation of their existence in a big society?

“The internet is an amazing thing. Mobile phones are fantastic. But really there’s nothing for me like the power of conversation and a good meeting with somebody or a good lunch or dinner. Where you really do connect and you have great conversations. And in town I like looking up and seeing things. I like people watching. So I feel very at odds with that kind of thing.

“It’s like a third party. People have to film things. They’re not actually witnessing something with their own eyes. Their witnessing it through a screen. So everyone has become a photojournalist. I don’t think it’s for the better at all. You can’t wait to show other people that you are having the best time by putting it up on Facebook, which I don’t do. It’s all this affirmation that you’re alive and you’re enjoying yourself. I think people are just very anxious.”

Q: You recently worked with your two daughters?

“We made a family film called *The Dog With The Woman* which was such fun. My younger daughter Brid Arnstein wrote it and she was in it with me. Phoebe and her future husband directed and produced it. And we had Martin Freeman voicing it. It’s about a woman who lives with a dog. It could have gone horribly wrong, working with your family and a dog but it was such a pleasure to do and will be going on to ‘short’ film festivals this year.

“Brid and Phoebe are so connected with the arts. Phoebe is still working behind the camera and definitely wants to do more directing. And Brid is working at Pulse Films now in development.

“When we all get together you just can’t get a word in edgeways. It’s very hard for anyone who can’t keep up with us. I love it, of course. It’s just the most fun. Full on talk and excitement. I’m very lucky.”

SYNOPSIS

EPISODE ONE



Detective Sergeant Nancy Devlin is a good cop with a dark secret - a loyalty to haulier and drugs trafficker Frank Le Saux, to whom she has been close since childhood.

When a clandestine meeting ends in murder and Nancy is caught in the cross fire, her link to Frank suddenly risks being exposed. Nursing a bullet wound and desperate to cover her tracks, Nancy finds herself having to tread a very dangerous line when she's seconded to the murder investigation in Brighton, her home town.

Here, Nancy can't escape her past, in the shape of ex-cop father Gil Devlin and childhood best friend, Hayley, Frank's daughter. Like Nancy, Hayley is newly returned to Brighton and already asking her mother, Cherie Le Saux difficult questions about the family business. Potential allies in adversity, Nancy and Hayley try to rekindle their friendship but Nancy's guilty secret casts a long shadow.

Nancy must track down the killer while all the time concealing her own role from her new colleagues – among them the enigmatic DS Gunner Martin and eagle-eyed boss DCI Michelle Newman – as well as an old friend from London, DS Kevin O'Dowd. O'Dowd has always carried a torch for Nancy, but she can't afford to let him get too close.

Nancy's mission is suddenly made more dangerous when crime scene forensics reveal an unidentified missing witness. Now both the police and the killer are on the hunt. Can she hide in plain sight?

The investigation leads Nancy to pursue a corrupt customs officer, Delia Bradley. But when Delia is attacked and a vital piece of evidence goes missing, Nancy realises with horror that the killer is very close - and getting help from inside the police. . .

The Level Cast

Nancy Devlin	Karla Crome
Hayley	Laura Haddock
DCI Michelle Newman	Lindsey Coulson
Kevin O'Dowd	Robert James-Collier
Gunner Martin	Noel Clarke
Frank Le Saux	Philip Glenister
Cherie Le Saux	Amanda Burton
Gil Devlin	Gary Lewis
Darryl Quinn	Lorne MacFadyen
Shay Nash	Joe Absolom
Julie	Ruth Madeley
Delia Bradley	Kelly Harrison
Theo Kettler	Rupert Procter

Production Credits

Executive Producer	Polly Leys
Executive Producer	Kate Norrish
Producer	Jane Dauncey
Director (Block 1)	Andy Goddard
Director (Block 2)	Mark Everest
Writers	Gaby Chiappe and Alexander Perrin
Production Designer	Candida Otton
Costume Designer	John Krausa
Hair and Make-up Designer	Jojo Williams