



# IN PLAIN SIGHT





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# IN PLAIN SIGHT



In Plain Sight is a new three-part mini-series based on the true story of Lanarkshire detective William Muncie's quest to bring to justice notorious Scottish killer Peter Manuel.

Douglas Henshall (*Collision*, *Shetland*) takes the role of William Muncie whilst Peter Manuel is played by Martin Compston (*Line of Duty*).

Produced by critically acclaimed, award winning producers World Productions (*Line of Duty*, *Code of a Killer*) and Finlaggan Films. After extensively researching the story, this is Nick Stevens' TV writing debut. The mini-series is directed by John Strickland, who helmed the recent *Line of Duty* finale.

Muncie first arrested Manuel in 1946 for housebreaking, but also successfully convicted him for a string of sexual assaults. Manuel vowed revenge.

Released from prison in 1955, Manuel embarked on a two-year killing spree, claiming eight lives in the close-knit communities of South Lanarkshire.

Manuel evaded capture for so long because he was unlike anything the local police had ever encountered: A murderer without any discernible motive whose victims were chosen at random. Muncie was the one man who had Manuel's measure and doggedly refused to give up until Manuel was brought to justice.

*In Plain Sight* is produced by Gillian McNeill (*Casanova*, *Vanity Fair*) and executive produced by World Productions' Creative Director Simon Heath (*Line of Duty*, *The Great Train Robbery*) and Head of Development Kirstie Macdonald (*The Fear*, *Dark Angel*) and Finlaggan Films' Richard McNeill. Criminal barrister and true crime author Allan Nicol acts as a consultant for the drama.

The cast also includes Gilly Gilchrist (*Versailles*) who takes the role of Samuel Manuel, Denis Lawson (*New Tricks*) as Lawrence Dowdall, Shauna Macdonald (*Ripper Street*) as Agnes Muncie, Joanna Roth (*The Widower*) as Bridget Manuel and Gary Lewis (*Outlander*) as William Watt.

The show is supported by Creative Scotland's Production Growth Fund. International Distribution will be handled by BBC Worldwide.



## **INTRODUCTION BY WRITER**

### **NICK STEVENS**

It was 2011 and Gill and I had been trying to find something we could work on together for some time. It turned out that the right project had been under Gill's nose all along.

Gill showed me a couple of pages written by her husband, Richard McNeill. They began with a memory from Richard's boyhood. On young Richard's birthday a stranger had come calling. A man bearing a gift. A birthday cake. The man was grateful, Richard's father was a fellow businessman, the cake a thank-you for his support in difficult times. But such was the frisson occasioned in the McNeill household by the man's visit, that it left an indelible impression on the birthday boy. The man with the cake was named William Watt. A man who – for every person living in Scotland at that time – would be forever linked with the terrible deeds of one Peter Manuel.

A few days after my meeting with Gill, I sat in the British Library reading, Manuel – Scotland's First Serial Killer by A.M. Nicol. By the time I'd finished it, I was hooked.

Between 1956 and 1958, Peter Manuel traumatised South Lanarkshire. In two years, he killed 8 people (almost a third of all the people murdered in Scotland during this gentler time) and all within an area that was a mere 26-mile round trip by car.

Manuel eluded capture for so long because he was unlike anything local police had ever encountered before: a murderer without any discernible motive whose victims were chosen at random – men, women and children. With the crucial exception of one determined, forward-looking officer, Lanarkshire CID failed to see the monster in their midst because they did not know such monsters existed. The term 'serial killer' had yet to be coined.

Long before anyone else, Detective William Muncie saw Peter Manuel for what he was: a psychopath. Almost a decade before Manuel committed his first murder, Muncie had arrested him for a slew of housebreakings, seeing to it that Manuel did time in prison. Manuel never forgave him for this. Released six years later, Manuel emerged from prison ready for murder, and, in a twisted form of revenge, he made Detective Muncie his Number One target audience, leaving a trail of tantalising clues and taunting Muncie with birthday and Christmas cards.

Manuel was addicted to the limelight. A high-visibility killer – literally In Plain Sight - who thrived on the panic and press generated by his crimes. On three occasions he opted to conduct his own defence in court. The culmination of all this pathological attention-seeking was his prolonged, sadistic victimisation of William Watt.

The project was daunting. This was a world I knew nothing about. And then there was all that arcane police procedure and terminology. But such was the pull of the material – and Gill’s bloody-minded resolution to see the project made – it just had to be done.

Some two years on, a spec script of the pilot episode was dispatched to Simon Heath, Creative Director at World Productions and Victoria Fea, Senior Drama Commissioner at ITV sealed the deal.

During the process, I was helped by many generous-with-their-time, well-informed people. In particular, Allan Nicol (the prosecutor-author of the above-mentioned book); retired police officers, George Barnsley and Henry Harper of The Lanarkshire Historical Society; and countless soft-spoken, methodical Scottish librarians.

## DOUGLAS HENSHALL IS WILLIAM MUNCIE



### **Q: Did you know about this story before the drama came along?**

“I mainly knew about it through my mum because she was about 17, 18, when Peter Manuel was notorious. My mum died a good while ago but I remember her talking about how nervous and frightened people were.

“We’re from Barrhead which is not that far from Birkenhead and Uddingston but it’s far enough to be able to realise that my mum and her friends probably weren’t in any danger at all. But it proves the way fear reaches out. Especially when you haven’t caught somebody and you are reading these terrible things in the newspapers.

“God only knows what it must have been like for the people who were actually living there at the time. So listening to my mum it just shows how that fear spread. It’s an astonishing story and surprising it hasn’t been told in a TV drama before.”

### **Q: Did you do any of your own research?**

“I read William Muncie’s book *The Crime Pond* and I’ve dipped into that every now and again. I liked Muncie’s description of Peter Manuel as a lone heron and his analogy of his patch as a pond. He thinks about nature in relation to human nature. In his home on screen we see books on bird watching and copies of the *National Geographic*. I don’t think he was an enthusiast for its own sake. Consciously or unconsciously, it was something he used for his work.”

**Q: Is there any extra responsibility when you play a real person?**

“Yes. Mainly to the victims. Muncie’s daughter is also still alive. I feel a certain amount of responsibility to try and recreate a man who was someone she might not recognise physically or even with the things he says or the way he says them, but the spirit of the man is at least there. I can try to get a little bit of that. But it’s mainly for Manuel’s victims.

“Our producer Gillian McNeill and writer Nick Stevens spoke to Muncie’s daughter. What she remembered about her dad was that he was funny. He was always cracking jokes. Despite all of the terrible things he must have seen during the day, he didn’t bring his work home with him. I’ve tried to bring a sense of that to the family scenes. There isn’t that much of an overspill from his work. I wanted to try and make him an identifiable human being. A decent, good man.”

**Q: Was Muncie ahead of his time or just a good detective?**

“I think both. He was quite progressive in so far as he looked towards America for new ways of working. He was always looking for new ways to be able to do things and catch people. I think the notion of a serial killer first came from America and Peter Manuel was the first person to have that label attached to him in Scotland. The job seems to have been a vocation for Muncie.”

**Q: We first see Muncie with Manuel in 1946 when he was a 31-year-old sergeant and Manuel was 18 and about to go to prison for the first time?**

“Muncie knew him from when Manuel was a teenage burglar. When you first see him with Manuel there’s a powerful moment where Muncie slaps him and says, ‘You’re not a boy anymore. It’s not going to be borstal. It’s going to be prison this time.’

“Before it became clear he was dealing with a psychopath, Muncie thinks, ‘Straighten yourself out, son. This is real what you’re doing and what you’re being punished for now.’ And at the end he says, ‘When you get out, I’ll still be here.’ In other words, ‘I’m not going to forget who you are and just ignore you.’

“So that seems to be somebody who was quite advanced for their years because he was only in his early thirties then. When I think about myself in my early thirties and then I think about that, it’s quite grown up.”

**Q: How shocking is it to learn the details of Manuel’s murders?**

“It’s really shocking what he did. And also very sad how accidental some of his most heinous crimes were. He murdered one family but he wasn’t actually targeting them. He was going for the house next door but miscounted the street numbers, because the street started at two instead of one.”

**Q: Muncie and his family lived in a police house across the road from his police station. Did that put them at risk from Manuel?**

“Today’s online generation will understand the idea of online abuse and trolling. But back then it wasn’t some invisible person. You have actually got that person coming to your house. So you can imagine how much more frightening that is. Because then it’s not some anonymous person writing terrible things to you. It’s somebody who lives in the same area and comes personally to your house to deliver the message. A very real threat to Muncie’s wife and two children. Muncie tried to shield his family from that but it must have been a real worry for him.”

**Q: What was it like filming the scenes with Martin Compston involving Muncie and Manuel?**

“There are only three actual interview scenes where we are together but there are a few other scenes as well as that. In terms of filming for Martin and I, it’s either a Manuel day or a Muncie day. So we tend to cross as he arrives and I leave or whatever. But we’ve been out a few times together socially.

“There’s an edge underneath the interview scenes with Muncie and Manuel and I hope that comes across. A lot of it is me facilitating Martin talking. So I put my ten pence in and watch the show roll. Then it’s about Muncie trying to wrong foot Manuel in some way.”

**Q: Do you think Manuel wanted to be caught?**

“The psychology of that is interesting but the wrong conclusions you can draw from it are also myriad. I do wonder if there wasn’t a side of him that actually wanted to get caught. Or that he always knew he was going to be caught but he wanted to see how much he could get away with.

“He never seemed to show any remorse. I don’t know whether he felt any inside for himself. It’s difficult to know. If you want to get away with these crimes, why would you keep doing them? Unless it was a compulsion. And if it’s a compulsion to do that then I don’t understand that kind of thinking. I don’t understand his mind.”

**Q: Policing was also different back then with only basic forensic methods and communications?**

“Manuel was very clever in that he never left fingerprints. DNA and other modern techniques just didn’t exist then to link him to the murders. Nothing like that was available. So if you didn’t have fingerprints or an eyewitness it was difficult for the police.”



**Q: Muncie went on to become assistant chief constable. But he did make mistakes in his career?**

“He had a remarkable record of 54 murder cases and 54 convictions.

“I think it’s probably just as well he was infallible because that makes me think he was more honest. If he made mistakes they were honest mistakes. And in the case of Peter Manuel he also saved one other man from being wrongly convicted and hanging. He was just days away from the gallows but was completely exonerated.”

**Q: What locations did you film in?**

“The Manuel family house is still there. His sister Theresa lived there until her death in 2008. But we didn’t film there. I don’t think it’s necessary to use the original locations.

“Some of the streets where we’ve filmed on look like it would have done in the 1950s. So we don’t have to hide very much from the modern day. It’s mainly about what you have to hide and what you can get away with.

“I know many of these places where we’ve been filming from my own life. Some are just up the road from where I was brought up.

**Q: You play Muncie with a moustache. Is it your own?**

“The moustache is mine. I couldn’t bear the idea of having one stuck on every day. And it’s not just the fact you have it stuck on in the morning, it’s the maintenance of it through the day. And there’s enough touching and poking and fixing and stuff to get done during the day anyway that the idea of that would just drive me nuts. So if I ever have to have any facial hair I prefer to grow my own. I don’t particularly like it because it’s not my thing. But it’s preferable to the other.

“We do the very first interview scene in 1946 on the very last day of filming because that means I can shave off my moustache to make Muncie look a bit younger.”

## MARTIN COMPSTON IS PETER MANUEL



**Q: Coming from Greenock, did you know about this story before taking on the role?**

“A lot of people in Scotland know about Peter Manuel. But I don’t think many people of my age would be aware of the depth of his crimes. It was really shocking when I started looking into it. My parents knew about the big murders but even they didn’t know about a lot of his crimes. So it was a bit of an eye-opener. It was such a vile series of crimes.

“There are no redeeming features about Peter Manuel. We are in no way glorifying him. He is an evil man. When you look at the details of the story and the fact he defended himself in court, it’s insanity. The sheer brazenness and confidence of the man was astonishing. He was the ultimate narcissist. An evil, evil man.

“Before we started filming I read the books written about him and these crimes and also watched the documentaries. But we’re making a drama. It’s not a documentary. The scripts are really strong.

“I went to Manuel’s real house one night after shooting. Just to sit outside. All the murders were in a 10-minute area. It’s a horrific kill zone in this tiny area. The community must have been terrified.

“From what my aunts have told me, people in Greenock were locking their doors. People driving an hour and a half away were terrified. It put a fear right across the west coast of Scotland.”

**Q: We first meet Peter Manuel at the age of 18. Were there any warning signs then that he was a killer?**

“There was a story I read about when he was 14 and he escaped from borstal. He had broken into a woman’s house, she woke up and he was hitting her over the head with an axe. I remember them saying, ‘That was a warning sign.’ That’s not a warning sign. That’s attempted murder. So from early on he really had that killer instinct within him. From being a teenager.

“That first scene features Manuel and police officer William Muncie (Douglas Henshall). Manuel has not found his confidence yet as a criminal. In those early years he’s committing crimes and just hoping he doesn’t get caught. That changes in the later years.

“He spends time in Peterhead Prison, which is a hard jail. That gave him a criminal education. By the time he’s served a prison sentence and comes out, he believes he is a criminal mastermind. There was also a physical difference. He went into prison as a boy and came out a man.”

**Q: Who did Manuel admire?**

“He was actually born in New York and the American gangsters were the people he looked up to. That was his dream from when he was young, to be a gangster and a killer. But I don’t think any of the gangsters of Glasgow took him seriously. He also went down to London and offered his services to gangsters there but they just said, ‘This guy is a lunatic.’ And turned him down.”

**Q: William Muncie seemed to know Manuel was dangerous from their first encounters?**

“From the off, Muncie saw there is something different about Peter Manuel. That work against Muncie in terms of his police work for a few years because everyone thought he was obsessed by Manuel. But he was the only one who knew Manuel was to blame. Manuel had a calling card. He would break into a lot of houses and he was really vindictive. He would pour soup on the floor and things like that. And that’s what Muncie detected.”

**Q: Muncie called Manuel a psychopath. Is that your view?**

“Yes. He was a psychopath. I gave myself a fright in one scene because I went a bit too far, because he was so evil. There was nothing redeeming about him. The guy was just pure evil. I felt really good all the way through filming but I just had that one

moment where I took it too far. If you didn't put, 'This is a true story' at the start of this, you wouldn't believe it."

**Q: What has it been like working with Douglas Henshall as Muncie?**

"We lived next door in our flats during filming. So we were out quite a bit. Dougie is an old pro at this so it was nice to be working with him. Our only scenes together were filmed in the first and last weeks. But we passed each other every day. He's also in one of my favourite films of all times, Orphans, with Gary Lewis, who is also in Muncie playing William Watt. So it's been nice seeing the two of them. Dougie looks the part. He's definitely got a presence."

**Q: Manuel loved attention. It's almost as if he wanted to get caught?**

"He more or less did get himself caught in the end, because he couldn't handle the fact other people were getting the blame. Or the way he saw it, they were getting the credit for his crimes. At one stage he volunteered the information to try and get one suspect out of prison.

"But, again, that was just for the attention so the lawyers and everybody else had to come to him. He liked nothing better than the idea of him being in the newspapers. He probably loved the fact he was Scotland's most notorious killer with headlines in all of the newspapers. He loved that attention.

"Police back then had no forensics or computers. But Manuel would probably have got away with it for even longer if he wasn't so inclined to give himself away. And they said without his confessions it would have been a much harder case. But he only confessed because he couldn't stop talking about, 'It was me that did it.'"

**Q: Manuel never wanted to be a responsible family man?**

"In Peter Manuel's case he was only interested in drinking, burglary and murder. He wasn't a settling down type of guy. He thought people who wanted wives and children were the weird ones."

**Q: What about his parents?**

"His dad gave him lots of alibis. You have to say his father wasn't a good man. He was trying to protect his son but you have to think of the scale of the crimes. It must have torn the family apart."

**Q: What was it like filming at the old district court in your home town of Greenock?**

"That was interesting. I recognised some of the names in the graffiti on the wall. I knew a few of those 'woz heres'. My dad came down to watch filming. It was lovely to see him and to film in Greenock and see some familiar faces."

**Q: You had worked with the director John Strickland before on Line of Duty. Does that help?**

“It’s nice to have somebody directing that you’ve already built a trusting working relationship with. Especially with this dark character and knowing how far to go with him and when to pull back. We worked together on the last Line of Duty, which went down quite well. So we’ve already got quite a successful partnership, as it were. John has been great at guiding me through this.

“It was funny when people reported this role of Peter Manuel as me crossing over to the other side of the law. I’ve actually probably played the bad guy a lot more than the good guy over the course of my career.”

**Q: Were you able to leave the role behind at the end of the day?**

“The older I’ve got I’ve become a lot more comfortable with doing that. Maybe a couple of years ago I would have been locked in a room at night. But now I feel much more confident and can lock into the character 10 or 15 minutes before we do a scene.

**Q: You married actress Tianna Chanel Flynn just before filming Muncie. Presumably the honeymoon was on hold?**

“Muncie started filming on 20 June and I got married on the 19 June. But I didn’t start filming myself until the Wednesday of that week. They gave me a day or two to get my head together. With my wife being American, her family and friends were still here until the Thursday. So you’re still in entertainment mode. The honeymoon has obviously been delayed - indefinitely - because I went straight into Line of Duty after this.”

**Q: How would you sum up Peter Manuel?**

“Pure evil. He really was. That’s the only way you can sum him up. There was nothing good about him. They call him the devil incarnate in Scotland. They did believe he had the devil in him.

“You always have to remember his victims were real people. This really happened. He really did these things. Manuel was an evil, evil man.”



## SYNOPSIS

### EPISODE ONE



Detective William Muncie is celebrating his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday at home with his friends and family when a birthday card is hand delivered. The card is signed Peter Thomas Manuel and takes Muncie back to 1946 when he saw Manuel arrested and imprisoned for the sexual assault of three women.

Nine years later Manuel is out of prison and back on Muncie's patch with revenge on his mind. He attacks a young woman, Mary McLauchlan, and keeps her with him in an open field for most of the night before returning to his home.

Mary reports the attack and says she thinks she knows who did it. Manuel is brought to the station where she identifies him in a line up. Under questioning by Muncie, Manuel does not deny being in the field, but says he was not with Mary, he was poaching. Muncie warns his team that Manuel is a real threat to the woman of the community and they must do all they can to make sure they obtain a conviction. He is concerned about the length of time Mary was held in the field unsure what Manuel was up to. Then he hears that he is going to mount his own defence.

Manuel manages to secure a not proven verdict on the attack, saying he had been romantically involved with Mary and had been trying to tactfully end their affair that night which was why they had been together so long. Muncie promises a distraught Mary that he will not rest until Manuel is behind bars.

It is Christmas time and Muncie arrives home to another personal delivery, a Christmas card from Manuel. He confides to Agnes, his wife, that he is afraid that Manuel won't leave a witness next time.

On January 4<sup>th</sup> the brutally beaten body of a young woman, Anne Kneilands, is found on a local golf course.

## **In Plain Sight Cast**

William Muncie .....	Douglas Henshall
Peter Manuel.....	Martin Compston
Iris Laird .....	Joanne Thompson
McLeod.....	Jack Greenlees
Samuel Manuel .....	Gilly Gilchrist
William Watt .....	Gary Lewis
Lawrence Dowdall .....	Denis Lawson
Theresa Manuel .....	Bobby Rainsbury
Agnes Muncie.....	Sauna MacDonald
Joe Brannan .....	James Harkness

## **Production Credits**

Executive Producer .....	Simon Heath
Executive Producer .....	Kirstie Macdonald
Producer.....	Gillian McNeill
Financial Executive Producer .....	Roderick Seligman
Financial Executive Producer (Finlaggan Films).....	Richard McNeill
Director .....	John Strickland
Writer.....	Nick Stevens
Costume Designer .....	Alison McCosh
Hair and Make-up Designer .....	Ann McEwan