

LITVINENKO



itvX



# LITVINENKO

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# LITVINENKO

David Tennant portrays Alexander Litvinenko, the former Russian Federal Security Services and KGB officer, whose death from Polonium-210 poisoning in November 2006 triggered one of the most complex and dangerous investigations in the history of the Metropolitan Police.

Produced by ITV Studios, Tiger Aspect Productions and Nordic Entertainment Group (NENT Group) in association with Livedrop Media, *Litvinenko* is the story of the determined New Scotland Yard officers who worked to prove who was responsible for the death of Alexander Litvinenko.

Written by acclaimed screenwriter George Kay (Creator and Showrunner of the smash hit crime thriller *Lupin*) the drama will relate how in November 2006 two police officers were called to University College Hospital in London to interview a patient in declining health. The patient was Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian dissident who claimed to have been poisoned on the direct orders of Vladimir Putin.

During the police interviews, Alexander provided meticulous details from his hospital bedside about the events leading up to his illness, which he knew would prove fatal. His information would ultimately help detectives track down two Russians who had poisoned Litvinenko with Polonium-210, a highly toxic radioactive substance.

The drama also focuses upon the story of Marina, portrayed by Margarita Levieva (*The Deuce*, *The Blacklist*), Alexander's fearless, dignified widow who fought tirelessly to persuade the British Government to publicly name her husband's killers and acknowledge the role of the Russian State in his murder.

*Litvinenko* has been produced with the support of many of the key individuals involved in the investigation and subsequent public inquiry including former New Scotland Yard officers, Clive Timmons and Brent Hyatt, along with Ben Emmerson QC and Alexander's family.

# LITVINENKO

Mark Bonnar (*Catastrophe, Quiz*) portrays Clive Timmons, whilst Neil Maskell (*Small Axe, Utopia*) portrays Brent Hyatt.

*Litvinenko* has been directed by Jim Field Smith (*Criminal, Endeavour*) and was filmed on location in and around London.

The series is executive produced by Patrick Spence for ITV Studios (*A Spy Among Friends, Ralph & Katie*), Josephine Zapata Genetay for NENT Group, Lucy Bedford for Tiger Aspect Productions (*Three Little Birds, Viewpoint, The Good Karma Hospital*), George Kay (*Lupin, The Long Shadow*) Jim Field Smith and David Tennant.

The co-Producer is Richard Kerbaj for Livedrop Media (*Hunting the KGB Killers, Unmasking Jihadi John: Anatomy of a Terrorist*) and the drama has been produced by Chris May.

*Litvinenko* has been commissioned for ITVX by Head of Drama, Polly Hill.

The series is distributed internationally by ITV Studios, who recently announced it had pre-sold the show to over 80 territories. In the Nordic region, Baltic region, Poland and the Netherlands, the series will premiere exclusively on NENT Group's Viaplay streaming service.



## FOREWORD BY GEORGE KAY - WRITER & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Sixteen years ago, a patient in a London hospital made an extraordinary claim.

Alexander 'Sasha' Litvinenko, a former KGB operative who had lived in the UK for six years before becoming a British citizen, was a healthy, athletic man. And yet he now looked gravely ill. He told his doctors that he had been poisoned in a public place in Central London on the direct orders of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

Sasha's allegations were initially met with disbelief and bemusement. In 2006, Putin was widely viewed in the West as an unremarkable bureaucrat and a valuable ally in the War on Terror. Now he was being accused of commissioning a chemical attack on a British citizen, on British soil. It sounded preposterous.

Investigating Sasha's claims was a job nobody wanted. Sasha's story presented an unprecedented problem for the Metropolitan Police: either the mysterious Russian-born Litvinenko had invented a crackpot story or his allegations would present a challenge unlike any they had ever faced.

It fell to an honest and principled group of detectives to get to the truth. DI Brent Hyatt could tell instinctively from Sasha and his devoted wife, Marina, that he believed what he was claiming. With Sasha's health fast deteriorating, Brent chose to take his statement - the account of a man who was a witness to his own murder - before it was too late.

Sasha's fight to provide the police with enough clues to arrest his killers before his death is at the heart of *Litvinenko's* first episode. Beyond this, the series becomes a dramatisation of the subsequent police investigation, one that neither Russia nor the United Kingdom - we discovered in research - were keen for the Metropolitan Police to maintain.

But SIO Clive Timmons, Brent Hyatt and their colleagues refused to give in.

## FOREWORD BY GEORGE KAY CONTINUED

It also tells the story of Marina Litvinenko, who fought to bring justice for her husband in the decade after his death. She stands as the moral compass for our drama. Her bravery sets a high bar for the detectives. If they can find it within themselves to show half her courage, we discover, then they have every chance of success.

*Litvinenko* shows us London as the site of a chemical attack, takes us to Moscow as the hunt for the killers intensifies, and returns to the UK to demonstrate that our biggest fights are often to be found closest to home. For despite the allegations made about Putin and his agents, Marina's toughest fight turned out to be against the British Government.

This limited series has been written and produced at a time when the world's relationship with Putin has never been more fraught. Sasha's murder marked the beginning of a series ruthless attacks on anyone perceived to be enemy of the Russian state, something that has never been more relevant.

In the end, though, this is simply a story about standing up to bullies. A story about good people standing up to bad. Timely, yes, but timeless too.

November 2022





## INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK SPENCE - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

### How did this project originate?

“The full credit for the inspiration for this TV dramatisation must go to Richard Kerbaj and his documentary *Hunting The KGB Killers* which appeared on Channel 4. It told the story about Alexander Litvinenko none of us had heard before. We were very familiar with the photo of him in hospital. We knew he had died. We knew that there was an inference that Vladimir Putin was involved. But, to my mind anyway, the story ended there. That documentary opened up the possibility that, actually, there was a brilliant tale of stubborn resistance and determined investigation that led to a sense of justice. Richard is a co-producer on our drama.”

### **Litvinenko is a joint commission with Nordic Entertainment Group (NENT). Why partner with them?**

“This is an international story that should send a shudder down everyone’s spine. But as you can imagine, in Scandinavia the full force of Russia feels even heavier than it does to us. So geographically what goes on in Moscow is keenly observed and felt in Scandinavia. They were the only people we approached. We just said, ‘Look, if you’re interested we’d love to make this with you.’ So we went to them and they have been fantastic partners.”

### What does depicting these real life events in a drama give us that a documentary does not?

“Firstly, a drama allows you behind the scenes into the emotions involved. And in the case of Alexander’s wife Marina I hope we have achieved that. To allow a window into her courage, her frustration and her despair. You can’t do that in a documentary. A drama also gives you a bigger audience. We think this is a vital story to be told about despotism and that we need to be contributing to the conversation about what happens when power runs riot. A drama allows millions of people to watch it. It’s not always true but on the whole people will watch dramas for longer than documentaries. So it allows us to, step by step, tell that story in a way that people feel drawn into.”

## INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK SPENCE - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

### **What story did you want to tell?**

“If you’re talking pure genre, this is a police investigation story. It’s a murder investigation. But what the murder detectives are dealing with is a man who, at the outset, is still alive. Who walks into a hospital knowing he has been murdered. And then you get the incredible courage of Litvinenko when he dedicates the last hours of his life to giving the police everything he can, in the belief they will pursue it.

“And then they are dealing with the most dangerous substance known to man - Polonium. They are having to track it themselves through London at, as they were told quite correctly, huge personal risk. Along with the potential risk to tens of thousands of people. Then they had to tackle the Russian state who had killed him, in the form of two individuals but also the corruption in Moscow when they tried to investigate.

“Finally they had to deal with their own UK government. With MI6 and Theresa May trying to block the inquiry. So it’s a police story but the obstacles were enormous and they required a very particular kind of stubborn courage from the detectives and Marina herself.

“We already knew who was responsible but the European Court of Human Rights also ruled in September 2021 - while we were filming - that Russia was responsible for the 2006 murder by radiation poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in London. It’s an incredibly powerful postscript for our drama. The European Court’s ruling is definitive.”

### **You have described this as “a once in a career opportunity to tell a story about a family and a police team who had shown such courage and resilience that it has inspired us all”. Is this a project close to your heart?**

“Having met Marina, absolutely. We are doing this for her. As far as we’re concerned, our audience is both worldwide, if we can make something that people want to watch, but it’s also for her and her son Anatoly. It is about honouring this woman’s fierce determination and courage, which we’ve been completely overwhelmed by. It’s very humbling and moving to be in her presence. I only met Marina 18 months ago but we’ve been working on this project for five years. She is fully supportive of this project.”

## INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK SPENCE - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

### **What were the main challenges you faced?**

“We were due to start filming in September 2020 but had to delay it by a year because of the pandemic. When you’re filming everything on location, rather than in studio, it means the moment anyone comes down with Covid you lose a day or two’s filming. If you’re in a studio it’s fine. You keep filming in the studio and you go back to the set you were going to use. But if you’ve only booked a location for a day or two and you then lose those two days’ filming it’s very difficult.

“In terms of everything else, our biggest challenge was our determination to be authentic. That meant we were very careful about the locations we picked. If you know your facts well you will see that even if we couldn’t film in the actual location where it happened - which we have done several times - we filmed in something that was as close as we could get. Everyone has been obsessed by authentic detail. Because when you’re telling a story that you really want to hit home, you don’t want to be unpicked by people saying it doesn’t look real.

“In terms of filming in the real locations, that included the actual Itsu restaurant in London’s Piccadilly which was among the places Alexander Litvinenko went to. We filmed in about four or five of the actual locations, including Highgate Cemetery where he is buried.”

### **What does David Tennant bring to the role of Alexander Litvinenko?**

“David Tennant is phenomenal as Alexander Litvinenko. He helped us get this production green lit. When we took him the scripts his first question was, ‘What can I do to help?’ And the answer was, ‘Be in it.’ On that basis he brought his star power very deliberately to this project to help get it made.

“The second thing he did was he brought a staggeringly good performance as Litvinenko. From his accent and recreation of the man himself to the incredibly humbling and moving way he delivers those scenes. It’s really special stuff. He absolutely magics you into the world of Litvinenko. He is brilliant.”

## INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK SPENCE - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

### **And what about Margarita Levieva as Marina?**

“Margarita was not an actress we knew well. A few of us had seen her in the HBO David Simon’s show The Deuce. So we knew she was good but none of us had worked with her. She has personal connections with the story and she very much wanted to play Marina.

“We were completely, genuinely, blown away by her audition. I would say her audition is one of the best I have ever seen. She has immersed herself, just like David has done, in the role. She got to know Marina very well. I would say they’ve become friends. And just like myself and the writer George Kay, I think she feels it’s an honour to tell a story like this.”

### **This project was produced with the support of key individuals involved in the investigation, including former Scotland Yard officers Clive Timmons and Brent Hyatt. As a dying man, Litvinenko put his trust in the British police?**

“This was a British citizen, murdered on British soil. Litvinenko had huge faith in the British police and our justice system. To the extent he gave away the last two days of his life, knowing that’s all he had left.

“He passionately believed in the idea that they were the opposite of the Russian state. That if they knew an injustice had been perpetrated they would not stop until they put it right.

“Clive Timmons and Brent Hyatt are polar opposites. One is an alpha leader and one is a quieter, subdued character. But they both share the same steely, stubborn determination. The trust that Hyatt built in Marina is clear for everyone to see. And his determination to see her get justice never went away. When you come across people like Hyatt you realise that most police officers out there are doing their job in the hope they can make a significant difference by being good, hard-working, honest people. Hyatt typifies that.”

### **The murder of Alexander Litvinenko has been described as ‘an act of nuclear terrorism’. Despite all of the findings, Russia still denies any guilt?**

“By going back to the first time this happened, as far as we know, the first time that an international head of state this openly killed somebody, we’re able to be reminded that that’s when it started and that it’s still going on.

## INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK SPENCE - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

“It’s important that we develop an awareness of the pattern and that because we didn’t stand up to Putin more strongly in this country, and indeed internationally, after the assassination of Litvinenko they all felt that they could keep going. So now North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Russia, they’re doing it at will. All we’re trying to do is contribute to the conversation to say, ‘This is where it started. We didn’t get it right then. We need to act differently now.’”

### **How do you reflect back on making Litvinenko?**

“I have tried really hard in most of the dramas that I’ve made to tell stories that are about something. The thing about true stories is they usually speak a bigger truth than even a drama can make. And if you can bring the emotion of a true story to the fore and make people feel like they’re literally living it, then for me it’s a huge source of pride.

“The three pieces I’m thinking about in my career were Five Minutes Of Heaven, which was a piece about truth and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, Marvellous, which was a true story about a man with a learning disability whose life transcended that label, and now Litvinenko. They’re all true stories where I think audiences are able to feel what it was like. And they’re all extraordinary stories. I love pure fiction very much. But true stories occupy a special place in my heart because they do ask us to ask bigger questions.”

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT



## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

### Why did you want to play this role?

“One of the reasons was the importance of the story and the need for it to be told and re-told because of what it means to all of us, personally and geopolitically. And then George Kay’s script that brought it so vividly and clearly to life. It was both of those things.

“Like everyone, I remember seeing that image of Alexander ‘Sasha’ Litvinenko in the hospital bed and coming up to speed on the whole story very quickly. It all felt so implausible at first, like something from a James Bond film. It didn’t feel like something that happened in the real world. And that alarming, striking image of him was so powerful.

“So I suppose I knew the bare bones of it but really when I went into it there is so much about the story that is extraordinary. The fact he survived as long as he did, which is the only way we managed to find out what it was that eventually killed him. It’s quite implausible that it worked out like it did.

“He should have, as was intended, just slipped away as an unexplained death and we would not be any the wiser. But that in itself then creates bigger questions. You think, ‘How many times has this happened and it’s remained undiscovered?’ It was only his physical tenacity in hanging on as long as he did - and a few quirks of fate that allowed the right people to see the right test results - that allowed us to uncover the full horrors of what this meant.

“Then we have items of evidence clinging on to a radioactive trace so long after the event. There is so much about this story that is fantastical, implausible and remarkable. And, of course, it’s all anchored to what becomes a very personal story about Sasha, his wife Marina and son Anatoly. Which is what makes it so tragic.”

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

**This was a murder investigation like no other. It began when the victim was still alive?**

“For a start, nobody would believe Sasha. Although he was certain he had been poisoned, it seemed so unlikely that he had to convince people he knew what he was talking about. Then they had to start this investigation and all the time there is this ticking clock of a body that is closing down. He is the only witness to his own murder. And then they have to work backwards from that. There are also pieces of what appears to be contradictory evidence which are later explained.

“There are so many parts to this and that’s what makes it an incredible story to re-tell. But what is so compelling about it is the personal tragedy of this family. The fact it has such a global significance is maybe why we’re able to tell this story. But I think what makes it really count is the repercussions of it and how it changed Marina’s life in particular.

“He was murdered in the most grotesque way. Alexander Litvinenko and his family had moved to Britain and were British citizens. He thought he had reached safety and escaped the talons of this regime. That he had done the right thing for his family. So there is the tragedy of all of that.

“And yet, at the same time, because he recognised the importance of the fact of this he sacrificed his dying days to get this story out there. That must have been so difficult, for Marina particularly. I met Marina and, I think for all of us involved in this, she became the motivation for telling this story. The reason why we had to get this right and the person we all feel responsible to.

“Marina is a remarkable human. The person this had made her. She is the hero of this in many ways. Marina has so fearlessly devoted her life to making sure his death does not go for nothing. And what Marina continues to do in talking, banging on these doors and telling the world what happened. This was not the life she ever imagined for herself or signed up for. And yet there is a bravery to her. Presumably having seen what happened to her husband she must be, on some level, nervous for herself. But when you meet her all you get is this extraordinary woman who just wants to shout about this as loudly as she can for the rest of her life

“Marina is a woman whose life has been so extraordinarily shaped by this tragedy that was thrust upon her. And yet she has such an energy to her and such a love for Sasha that continues to propel her through.



## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

“It was something that myself and Margarita Levieva, who plays Marina, were very aware of when we were filming those scenes in the hospital. We just kept coming back to our experience of Marina and thinking, ‘This is the most appalling, extraordinary, extreme moment of human existence to have lived through.’ Marina remains remarkable for the way she has dealt with it.”

### **Why was Alexander Litvinenko poisoned?**

“He was clearly a man who had to speak his truth about corruption in Russia and in doing that he was aware he was putting himself in the firing line. And yet he didn’t hesitate and he did it again and again. He refused to stop speaking truth to power. He was appalled and terrified about what was happening to this country he loved. He couldn’t look away and that was why he was ultimately assassinated.

“But it speaks to his extraordinary moral compass. You wonder how you would behave in circumstances like that? Would you have that courage? Would you be that brave? I don’t know that I would. He showed a remarkable clarity of purpose in terms of what he believed was right and what he believed was wrong. Ultimately, it’s why he was killed. But he died with his integrity intact.

“He was incredibly fit. A very robust individual. Part of the reason he survived for so long. He ran every day and trained. He was a physical specimen to be admired. So we see that side of him very briefly as he arrives home on the bus. We see him with his family. But this is on the day when he has already been poisoned. We are with him for a couple of hours before the poison kicks in and he becomes very ill.

“So we get a brief glimpse of what that life was before. That’s very important. You have to tell a lot of story in those scenes. You have to establish this family and how they interact. That very close unit they have. And, of course, that’s the tragedy. That was shattered for political ends. To settle a political grudge.

“Polonium has been described as the most poisonous substance on Earth. It’s terrifyingly cavalier the way they transported this stuff across the world. It could have killed many more people. But as far as we know it was only Sasha who was a victim of it.

“Polonium is so toxic that it could, and should, have killed him much more quickly and invisibly. It was only his own knowledge of these substances that alerted people to what had happened. Who knows what other havoc was wreaked? There might be unexplained deaths from 2006 which we will never be able to link back to this.”

# INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

## Who was responsible?

“This is a substance that can only have come from one specific place, which is why we are so certain he was poisoned by Russia. The trail has been investigated very thoroughly by the officers who worked on the case. It’s terrifying. And, of course, they have done it again. Salisbury was a different substance but it’s the same principle. And those are only the ones we know about.

“Litvinenko had no doubt about it. A crime like this would not be committed without Vladimir Putin’s say-so and knowledge. There’s a famous line where Putin dismisses the whole business and says he’s gone, he’s not Lazarus. But if we can achieve anything with telling this story it’s to allow him to be Lazarus. To keep him rising from the dead and pointing the finger and not letting this be forgotten. That’s Marina’s mission and one we’re all very proud to be part of.”

## Can you tell us about the process of transforming into the dying Litvinenko in hospital?

“One of the first things we did was recreate the image of him in the hospital bed which went all around the world. We had prop newspapers that had to have this photo on the front of them for other scenes.

“So that was the first thing we had to achieve. That was quite a technical process in a way. Because it was about lots of people. The art department, the make up department, the costume department, the lighting department all trying to get their side of this image correct and me trying to, quite technically, recreate that in the first instance.

“That involved a lot of very skilled people helping to recreate that image. The make up and the prosthetics and the costume team staring at photographs to figure out, ‘What is that hospital gown and where is it arranged?’ If you can get that image right you allow the audience into the detail of the story, I hope.

“It was a relatively lengthy process. It took several hours. But that was the least I could do. Sit in a chair and have very skillful people transform me. So it would emerge over several hours with a number of stages in the process.

“When we got that image and I saw it on a laptop screen, for a second you couldn’t quite tell if you were looking at the original or what we had just done. That was the moment you thought, ‘This feels like an effort worth making. If we can get this right and remind people of that image from 2006, then that will, hopefully, give us a great starting point to make this story as impactful as it needs to be.’

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

“The veracity of that is very important. That image of him. When people hear his name, that’s the image that comes into most of our minds. Of that wasting body in a hospital bed. We had to get that right. Whether other characters look like their real life versions doesn’t really influence the telling of the story. But that image of Alexander Litvinenko that bounced around the world, that attracted the world’s attention, is so vivid and is iconic, if that is an appropriate term to use for something that is about a real human tragedy. We had to get that image right.”

### **How did it feel lying in the hospital bed?**

“It felt incredibly bleak lying there. The act of getting into the bed and getting all of the wires attached, the heart monitor, the hospital gown arranged in the correct way...it was quite a palaver. So at the beginning of a scene I’d get into the bed and I’d just stay there. That was partly the practicalities of it but it also became a choice.

“It’s hard when you’re playing a real person. You feel a responsibility to the gravity of the moment you are recreating. Because there’s an element of acting that’s always a little bit silly. It’s make believe, it’s pretend.

“It’s quite a hard to explain and you can sound terribly pretentious but I felt a responsibility not to be larking around. While you are representing that memory, I felt I had to just go to a quiet place. So I would get in the bed and I would just stay there. I would try and find the stillness. It also helped me to concentrate and to find the right headspace. Again, having met Marina, she was very generous and shared a lot of photographs of the family together. You just felt the import of all of those things in that moment and you wanted to be respectful of it as much as anything.”

### **In terms of his Russian / English accent, did you listen to recordings of Litvinenko talking?**

“We couldn’t find any recordings of him speaking English. Aside from a tiny little piece, a couple of sentences, where he is addressing a panel in a club and he introduces himself in English then very quickly speaks through the translator. There’s lots of him speaking in Russian because that became part of his mission in later life, to make sure he talked whenever he could about the truth of what was going on in Russia, his experiences, the corruption and what he knew about what was wrong. So there is lots of him talking in Russian, which I don’t speak.

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

“I worked with an extraordinary man called Fabien Enjalric, a French and Russian speaker who is also a voice coach. He helped me with the actual Russian phrases and with finding a Russian accent that, hopefully, feels truthful and that sat in my vocal range.

“With all of these things it’s the balance between recreating what somebody was without it becoming me doing an impersonation of Sasha. That’s not really relevant to the story. But if I can create something that could believably sound like him, then that’s really what I was going for.

“And, yes, there are sections of Russian. He does slip in and out of Russian as he gets more tired and it gets more difficult for him to keep talking. As I don’t speak Russian that took a lot of work. That was probably the hardest bit. Trying to master some of those phrases. So there is some footage to go on and then you have to join the dots yourself after a certain point.”

**Sasha had huge faith in the British police. The officers in this case were determined to do their duty and keep their promise to him and Marina to seek justice?**

“From all of the reading I did, from all of the people I met and spoke to, this seems to be a genuine representation of the officers who worked on this case.

“I found that terribly moving. His belief in the honesty, truthfulness and abilities of the British police.

“But, of course, coming from a world where officials are corrupt and nobody could be trusted, for all the limitations we might have in some of our public services they are still a million miles from what Sasha had come from.

His belief in the British system and trust they would follow his case and would see it through was very moving. And, in the end, justified. Because he was served brilliantly by those officers who overcame quite a lot of obstacles, particularly from Russia itself, and did some extraordinary police work. Although there are still some questions hanging over this case, we know a lot more today than it looked like we ever would.”

**Where did you film?**

“We used a disused hospital in Ealing to double for University College Hospital, London. The hospital room scenes were all done in a week. Probably the most intense week I’ve had on a film set. From the early morning prosthetics’ calls and then going through those scenes. I’m very proud to tell this story and be a part of it. But getting to the end of that week felt like an achievement, I have to say. It’s such a difficult story to tell and such an agonising family tragedy.

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TENNANT

“We were right in the middle of filming when the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Russia was responsible for the 2006 murder by radiation poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in London. There’s no surprise there. It just confirmed what we all knew. But the more official channels that can acknowledge it, it’s all part of the mission to have this recognised.”

### **What was it like working with screenwriter George Kay and director Jim Field Smith?**

“I’d worked with them both before on Criminal, the Netflix show. And, indeed, way back on that we’d talked about this. There was a version of this script even then. So this has been in development for a while. They are a great team. George is a great writer and Jim, for me, was the perfect director for this. You felt absolutely supported by him and I knew exactly what the parameters of what was required were. He knew when to step back, he knew when to encourage or nudge. He knew exactly what he needed so he would be very specific about things he didn’t get and very much give you the space to find the rest of it. It was about as intense a week as I’ve known on a film set. But I felt very supported by Jim on set and by George’s scripts from the off.

“There was an enthusiasm from everyone involved in the production at every level that they were telling an important story and that we were doing good work. That we were doing something that meant something. That was throughout the production. At every level, in every department, it really felt like people were proud to be there. There was a determination from all of us to get it right. A constant sharing of personal experiences. Everyone had a journey to getting on set that wasn’t just about learning your lines and turning up. Everyone had met people, talked to people, read stuff. There’s a lot of material about this and you need to find your way through that to find the truth. Because everyone felt responsible to tell this story properly.”

### **How do you reflect back on this role?**

“One can’t second guess how this will be received or what kind of impact it will have. But on a purely personal level it’s something I’m very proud to have done. I feel like we gave it our best shot and we are, hopefully, honouring the memory of Sasha and the life’s work of Marina. That’s what we set out to do.”

INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA



## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

### **How did this role come about?**

“When the audition to play Marina in Litvinenko came through I was shooting a show in Spain on a pretty tough schedule because I was the lead, in every scene and there was a lot of stunt stuff. We had been filming for a few months and I was very tired by that time. So I got the audition for Litvinenko and thought, ‘I really want to do this but I don’t know how to find the time.’

“The audition tape was due Monday morning and that weekend I was feeling so low and down because I was tired. I was video calling with my friend telling her I was really resisting working on this audition. She said, ‘Just put your phone next to the computer and turn the camera on.’ I was like, ‘I don’t know the character, I haven’t worked on it, I haven’t memorised it. There’s so much work to do.’ And she said, ‘I can feel she is already in you. So just read it.’ And I did.

“It certainly was one of those experiences where I think both of us were shocked at what came out. Something was coming through that I wasn’t in control of. So I was a little surprised by my audition.

“I knew the story, had followed it and I really wanted to play Marina. She is such an extraordinary woman. To see her courage, resilience and integrity through it all was always very inspiring and something I was very curious about. I had doubts as far as me playing her. Because we don’t really look alike and so on. But when I did the audition I thought, ‘Oh, I think I can actually do this.’”

### **Although now living in America you are originally from Russia?**

“I grew up in St Petersburg. I was a young rhythmic gymnast and owned by the government. It sounds very dramatic when you say that but it was just a fact at the time when you were an athlete. Going through their rigorous training from a very early age. That was my life in St Petersburg.

“Then when I was 11 my mom took me and my twin brother to America on a visitors’ visa. Not unlike the scenario which happened to Marina and Sasha where he said, ‘We’re going on vacation. Pack a bag.’ Then told her they were going to leave Russia for good.

## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

“As a Russian-Jewish family the anti-semitism we experienced was a major part of the decision my mother took. I didn’t know much about Judaism growing up because we weren’t allowed to talk about it. In Russia at the time you had your religion written in your passport. So I technically wasn’t Russian, I was Jewish. We used to hide our passports because we didn’t want people to find out.

“I remember the one time when we were little when our parents took us to a synagogue and there was a demonstration so we couldn’t go in. We couldn’t talk much about it at the time because it could have got you in trouble. My brother used to have fights at school because some kids called him a ‘kike’. That was normal. My mom couldn’t go to a school she wanted to go to because she was Jewish. That was definitely part of life.

“Going on a visitors’ visa to America we then stayed illegally at the time. We left everything behind. My father, our whole family, grandparents, everything. After we had moved our father moved from St Petersburg to Moscow. I wasn’t allowed to go back to Russia for about 10 years after leaving because we were illegal and it took us a long time to get any sort of papers. But once I was able to go back I started going back to Moscow.”

**Did you know about this story in detail before this production came along?**

“When I started doing the research obviously a lot more of the details of this story became clear. When it was happening and in the news I was shocked and not surprised at the same time. But I didn’t know about how much of the poison was traced, where they had been and so on. Those things I didn’t really know until I started doing the research, including reading the book *A Very Expensive Poison* by Luke Harding. Just learning about the scope of this story was fascinating.

“A man called Alex Goldfarb happens to be friends with my stepdad. And he sent him a script of his to ask him what he thought. My stepdad read the script and called me and said, ‘My friend has this script and I think it could be quite interesting. There’s a really good female part in it, maybe you should read it.’ So I read it and I liked the script and I loved the part and I said, ‘I’d love to meet with your friend.’ So I had a meeting with Alex Goldfarb and he was shocked when he found out I was my stepfather’s daughter because he had been wanting me for this part in his script. We met and decided to work together on the script.



## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

“So for about two years before I was cast in this drama I was developing a script with Alex Goldfarb. Except I didn’t realise it was the same Alex Goldfarb who had been the unofficial spokesman for Alexander Litvinenko in the last weeks of his life and had then written a book with Marina about Sasha’s life and death. He had brought up Litvinenko and the idea that if they ever did a movie I would make a great Marina. Then when I got the audition for this and I saw the name Alex Goldfarb in George Kay’s script I thought, ‘I know that name.’ Then I realised it was the man I had been working with on a script for two years.”

### **Have you met Marina?**

“We spent a lot of time together in London. I was so grateful. It was my first time playing someone who is living. In the show *The Deuce* my character was loosely based on a real woman but she didn’t want to be involved and we never met. So this was my first time meeting someone who is so well known and documented. I was terrified because I thought, ‘Gosh, she is going to judge this casting and not be satisfied.’

“A friend of mine who writes plays based on real stories gave me a good hint. She said, ‘Anyone who has gone through something horrific and whose story is being told is really grateful for that story being told.’ That was good to know then going into our first meeting. Marina was so gracious. She was so excited that I was playing her and when she found out I knew Alex that was a bonus. We have since become quite good friends

“Marina is remarkable. The thing that resonates even stronger when you meet her in person is the fact that her level of positivity and optimism through it all is just extraordinary. This belief that first of all she is not a victim. That this is not something that happened to her. This is not a curse from God. This is life and this is what happens. She is so grateful for the love, support and friends she has around her.

“Marina really does look at life through the lens of love. She said so much of the love that her and Sasha had together had carried through. He left her with all of this love, with all these people that support her now. Obviously it has been a battle for her but it hasn’t felt like a battle.

## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

“I watched the interviews she gave a few weeks after his death and wondered how she did that. Having never been in the public eye herself before. She said, ‘It was very easy. I wasn’t nervous. Because it wasn’t about me. I had to tell his story.’ The idea that she has been this voice for her husband. She almost makes me think of Joan of Arc. Someone who is so grounded in their belief and faith. It’s unwavering and much bigger than just something personal.

“Marina is such a force. But at the same time she is a small, tender woman. What she carries inside of her is massive. Yet on the outside she is a little lady so full of light and positivity. She has always held that space. I believe they are still held together even though he is gone. That chord that lives between their hearts is still attached.”

### **Marina had to convince others that her husband had been poisoned and was not mentally unwell?**

“It’s unfathomable. To put yourself in those shoes. Not only has your spouse been poisoned but now you have to make sure people believe you and him. Because it is so out of the realm of reality. Who would poison a British citizen on the streets of London? Who would do that? Who would go to such extreme lengths?

“It was fascinating talking to Marina about Sasha’s last statement. He dictated it before he died and it was read out after his death, accusing the Russian leader Vladimir Putin of being responsible for his death. Putin then cast doubt on whether Sasha had written those words by saying ‘Mr Litvinenko is, unfortunately, not Lazarus.’

“Each time that story gets told, Marina says, ‘But he is Lazarus. Even though he’s not here, he is up there accusing Putin, accusing those people, telling his case and getting justice.’ In this drama we get to do what Marina has been doing this whole time, which is telling his story and making sure the truth is told.

“Sasha always said these people were going to kill him. That’s why he left Russia because he didn’t want to be in prison for the rest of his life where he would die or be killed. That’s something he lived with daily. After he was poisoned Marina did believe he might get through it. That’s why those last few days of his life were so excruciating, especially with him spending all of that time being interviewed by the police. Because Sasha and Marina’s time together was cut short.

“They did feel safer in Britain. Marina still does. People ask her in interviews how she feels about her own safety. And she has felt quite safe living in Britain. They believe Sasha was killed because for Putin and that regime the idea of betrayal is met with revenge. What more can they do? They killed the person who betrayed them.”

## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

### **Filming the hospital scenes, was there time to reflect on how it would have felt for Marina and Sasha?**

“It wasn’t a moment of reflection. It was the entire time of being there. Our director Jim Field Smith was so instrumental in this production. He said from the beginning that he wanted to shoot this drama like a documentary. Many of the locations are the real ones where these events took place and he said he cast us all for a reason. He saw us as these characters so he wanted to give us space to come in and interact with one another.

“That was so helpful to hear at the beginning. The way he directed, the way the set designers and whole production team were able to provide us with the environment to feel like we are living the story. Everyone works differently. All of the actors have their own styles. But, for me, as Marina when I was on set I felt like I was just living the circumstances of these people and these places.

“We filmed at Highgate Cemetery at the real grave of Alexander Litvinenko. That was so powerful. It served so much of the story throughout. I was shooting another scene in a court room with James Esler, the actor playing the older Anatoly - Marina and Sasha’s son. I would look through photos or videos while I was on set just to stay in the story.

“During one of the filming breaks I saw a photo of Marina and Anatoly at the courts and showed it to him. I said. ‘This is who we are doing it for.’ You don’t often get to tell stories like this.”

### **What was it like working with David Tennant as Alexander Litvinenko?**

“Having spoken beforehand to some people who had worked with him, it was everything I was told it was going to be and more. Besides him being insanely talented they all said what a lovely man and generous actor he is. That was all true.

“There was a scene at the hospital where David Tennant as Alexander Litvinenko tells the detective Brent Hyatt, played by Neil Maskell, to promise him that he will get justice. And, of course, David Tennant is so extraordinarily talented and so good in this part.

“So from the first rehearsal, those of us sat around the bed were sobbing when he spoke the words. I wondered how we would get through that scene without us all crying. We had to really focus. We all agreed we were going to hold it together so we could film the scene. It felt like listening to Sasha. That we were in the room with him. You had to be inhuman to not feel emotional when you heard those words.

## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

“Because those hospital scenes were so condensed, David and I ended up working together for just over a week. He was so instrumental in making this story come to a life by really embodying Sasha and giving us something to carry for the rest of the filming.

“There were so many times when I was on set and I would think back to those hospital days and that scene where he said to the police, ‘Promise me.’ I was like, ‘OK. He made a promise. We have to do this for him.’ It was a real gift to work with David.”

### **Both Marina and Sasha had huge faith in the British police?**

“The detectives were phenomenal. Knowing the factual story. Knowing from Marina. Just seeing and experiencing the work and dedication of these men, it was extraordinary. The police did their jobs the way they were supposed to. Trying to keep their promise to Sasha and the wife he left behind. Both really believed in the British police. Sasha was so proud to be a British citizen. It meant so much to him. To be part of a system that felt like for him was not broken or corrupt.”

### **Stripping away the headlines and politics, this was the murder of a husband and father in his early 40s, a British citizen assassinated on the streets of London?**

“The interview that I watched a lot as part of my research had two lines that got me every time. They reminded me of why I was telling this story. It’s an early interview with Marina and Alex Goldfarb when they’re promoting their book.

“Someone asked her about how she felt about being in the public eye. I’m not going to quote her directly but she said something to the effect of after all this was a really good man who was killed. And without me no-one will know that. The importance of that.

“At the end of the day, take away all of the political stuff and this was a good man who loved his wife and son, who just wanted to give his family a better life. Some might ask, then why continue to speak out against Putin? It was because he was a good man and believed in justice and a moral code. He didn’t think it was fair these things were happening in plain sight and nobody was doing anything about it. I think Marina understood that about him. She knew what was important to him. She loved him. Nothing is going to stop her.”

## INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA LEVIEVA

**The September 2021 European Court of Human Rights ruling that Russia was responsible for the murder by radiation poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006 was announced while you were filming?**

“It was our second day of filming at Highgate Cemetery when that ruling was announced. I remember I came to work and everybody was saying, ‘Have you heard?’ What was really cool was that everyone on the crew, from catering to PAs, was so excited about the news.

“Because they were all so invested in the story. I can’t tell you the amount of people that I’ve met, whether one of the drivers or someone working way behind the scenes, who knew the story, cared about the story and was really excited to be a part of it.”

**Are you able to reflect back yet on this role as part of your wider career?**

“It’s all still so fresh in my mind. It was definitely one of the harder, more challenging jobs of my career. So much of that is due to the fact I really wanted to honour Marina. It wasn’t about me being a selfish actor worrying about my performance. Whether it was the way that I speak or the way I look, I wanted to get it right. I got emotional a lot because so much of that is part of the story.

“At the same time Marina is not someone who is always on the brink. She really holds herself. So I wanted to honour that and not get too emotional. So much of it was about really just wanting to honour her.

“I would love to do more work in Britain. I actually got agents in the UK because so much of the work I admire and respect comes out of here. I would love to be a part of it. I’m an American actress but I’m also Russian. So I feel like I have a European sensibility.

“I hope a lot of people watch this drama and it has a big reach. I know that people in England are very familiar with the story. Not as many people are in America. I would love for more of them to get to know it.”

INTERVIEW WITH MARK BONNAR



## INTERVIEW WITH MARK BONNAR

### **What attracted you to this role?**

“I’m fascinated by Russia. There has been a thread of Russian wool that’s gone through my career, it seems, and that of many other actors. Because Chekhov is one of the most performed playwrights. And I’ve done various other Russian writers as well in the theatre. I’m fascinated by Russia as a country and I’ve become more fascinated by it in recent years with the advent of social media and the way they seem to have cornered the market in the weaponisation of social media, with Facebook and Twitter’s help.

“But also the fact they can murder British citizens with relative impunity and have continued to do so even since Alexander ‘Sasha’ Litvinenko was murdered. I think it’s a vital story to be telling at this moment in time when we find ourselves in a sea of misinformation. And a lot of that is perpetrated by the Russian state.

“The other thing that really attracted me to this script was the fact it was telling a story about good police work. Which is a rarity today. In most shows that are about cops or police work, be they character driven or procedural, there’s always a bad penny or a copper with a problem. This is a story about a really good team of police officers working their socks off to get a result. Which they did.

“That’s the overriding thing about Clive Timmons. He was bound by his duty. He wanted to make a difference. That was his whole reason for going into the police in the first place. He said you can’t do this job unless you want to help people and do good. That was his overriding drive. That’s where it came from. This investigation was described by Ben Emmerson QC as ‘the most meticulous, professional and most extensive murder investigation in British criminal history’.”

### **Did you know this story well before working on this drama?**

“As soon as you mention the name Litvinenko most people know who he was. The event sticks in people’s minds because it was shocking. As do the Salisbury poisonings. But beyond that I had very little recollection in detail of anything at the time.”

### **Did you meet Clive Timmons?**

“I had a two hour Zoom with Clive about four or five weeks before we started filming where I just asked him about everything, from his hobbies to his memories of the police force. He was incredibly open and honest. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for that. We have remained in touch through the occasional email. Clive is an incredible chap.

## INTERVIEW WITH MARK BONNAR

“Then I was lucky enough to actually meet him when he was en route to play some golf. He doesn’t live in this country anymore but he visits a lot. So, he was en route to Scotland and stopped off on set. We only had about half an hour together but it was really lovely. He’s one of life’s sparklers, Clive.

“Clive had been in the force all of his life. He started as a bobby on the beat in Stoke Newington and worked his way up through the route that most people who eventually find themselves at that high level take, going through various different departments.

“He was the senior officer in charge when the Litvinenko case came in. At that time Sasha was still alive. It’s one of those random things that land on your lap and you suddenly find yourself in a maelstrom of international espionage. He just happened to be in charge when the case came through.

“A month before this case landed on Clive’s desk, Special Branch and Counter Terrorism had been amalgamated. So it was a time of tumult in the department as well. Clive said this case, as it often does with a big case of this import, really drew people together and helped bond this new police department.”

### **Did he embrace the challenge?**

“I think that’s part of Clive’s make up. He definitely relishes those kind of opportunities when they come along. He very quickly realised this case was going to be a big one and also tricky and difficult. But he likes a challenge.

“This was a murder investigation like no other because, initially, they had a murder victim who they could question. He was still alive at the outset. Apart from that there was the nature of the weapon that had been used. The seriousness of that. How dangerous Polonium 210 is - the most toxic substance known to man - and the fact they had used such a large amount.

“It left a huge trail. We don’t know still to this day, because it’s impossible to know, how many people were affected by this. It was the strangeness and the unknown elements - at that time - of the weapon that had been used against Sasha. Clive and his team were learning as they went along.

“Clive is very charismatic and a strong leader. He is genuinely interested in people and getting the best out of them. Having spoken to him at length and found out what drives him, it was important to me to get as much of that in as possible. He’s a people person with a photographic memory.



## INTERVIEW WITH MARK BONNAR

“The reason that Detective Inspector Brent Hyatt and his colleague were kept on the case when it became a huge investigation attracting international headlines was that Clive knew they had a personal connection to Sasha. They had already done a great job so what would be the point in replacing them with others just to stamp their authority on it? Again, he knows how to get the best out of people.

“That’s what’s fascinating about the police side of it. It’s really brilliant people management and leadership at the highest level. Clive has got a wonderful way of finding a way to get things done. Which I think is hugely admirable.”

### **This is also the story of Sasha’s wife Marina’s (Margarita Levieva)?**

“Marina is an incredible person. Her husband was murdered by a foreign state and she has taken the bull by the horns and crusaded ever since for justice for Sasha, as well as for other people that it’s happened to.

“I think Sasha thought that by moving to Britain and becoming a British citizen he would be safer for longer. Then when he knew he had been poisoned and was dying he gave up his final days to help the police. It’s very brilliantly dealt with in George Kay’s script.

“The scenes of the two detectives coming out of his hospital room with Marina waiting out in the corridor are heartbreaking. They all know it’s for the greater good. But she is missing out on these last few days with the man she loves.”

### **Where did you film?**

“We filmed at Highgate Cemetery in London right next to Sasha’s grave. They placed the coffin in our drama a few plots up from the actual gravestone. It was eerie and strange, to be honest. But there were many echoes like that. They filmed in the actual Itsu restaurant in London’s Piccadilly, downstairs at the actual booths in part of this story involving the Russians Andrey Lugovoy and Dmitry Kovtun. Because we wanted to tell the story well, you were hyper aware of things like that.

“Filming this drama was full of coincidences, which I always take as a good sign that you’re on the right track. If there’s lots of weird things that happen. I was standing beside a supporting artist one day when we were doing a scene in a Heathrow hotel foyer, doubling for the Millennium Hotel in London. I got chatting to her and she was actually a member of the cabin crew on the flight that Lugovoy and Kovtun came in to London on from Moscow. What are the chances? I couldn’t believe it.”

## INTERVIEW WITH MARK BONNAR

**Behind the global headlines and politics, this was the murder of a British citizen, a husband and father, on the streets of London?**

“That’s what the writer George Kay has done very cleverly. Is balance all of those levels - the domestic, political, international. We go from their London domestic setting to Moscow. It spans all aspects of humanity this story.”

**At one point the British government blocked a public inquiry into the assassination before later relenting?**

“There was a lot of pushback from the British government at the time. In cases like this it’s like a playground and Russia are the bullies. Everybody is too scared to stand up to them. So the British government were very reticent because of the power that Russia has on the world stage. And we can be hurt by them in all kinds of ways - politically, financially. But eventually, to Theresa May’s credit, she did order the public inquiry and she did announce the findings in parliament.”

**How do you reflect back on this role?**

“I’m probably more terrified about seeing the end results of this than anything I can remember for a while because of its importance to the people involved. Every time I think about it, I find myself getting really nervous and hoping I’ve done a good job. And I was like that all of the way through filming. I recorded lots of Clive speaking because I had to get his London accent right. I used to play that back just before a take, just to try and do it justice. Because this drama is important to so many people.”

INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MASKELL

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## INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MASKELL

### Why did you want to play this role?

“A lot of it was to do with the people that were involved. George Kay is a really great writer and I had worked with some of the other people involved before. And then the part, for me, was quite unusual. I’m quite often employed to play characters that bash people up or terrorise people. It was nice to be part of the heart of this story. It’s a character you follow home and see his relationship with his wife and how the case impacts on that, uniquely among the detectives in the script.”

### Did you know this story well?

“Like most people I have spoken to since we started filming I knew about the story from the news reporting at the time but had not known some of the detailed facts. I was in the middle of something else when I got this role and it was only reading Luke Harding’s book - A Very Expensive Poison - and through the research they sent through that I started to understand the depth, scale and weight of the whole story.”

### Who is Detective Inspector Brent Hyatt?

“I was lucky enough to speak to now retired detective Brent Hyatt before we started filming. He was a very committed lifelong police officer who had worked all over London and across lots of different departments. At the point where we meet him he’s in the Specialist Crime Directorate. It was late at night that he was called in to go and interview this guy at University College Hospital who was claiming to have been poisoned.

“The information he had been given at that stage was that they were dealing with a man called Edwin Carter who was very ill and insisted he had been poisoned. It turned out to be Alexander Litvinenko, who was previously a very fit, healthy man who was mentally astute and knew exactly what had happened to him and when it had happened.

“As far as I know, Brent believed Alexander Litvinenko (David Tennant) and his wife Marina (Margarita Levieva) straight away. He saw Marina’s integrity and bravery and has maintained a friendship with her to this day. I think from the very start he was pretty certain what Litvinenko was saying was the truth.

## INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MASKELL

“Brent said he wasn’t particularly sociable with anyone else at work. It was really all about the job for him. He’s also a news junkie. A keen newspaper reader and always had one eye on the television news. So he knew a lot already about Russia and about Russian money in London. It was something he had quite a keen interest in before this case came along.

“This began as a quiet investigation and developed into the biggest case the Metropolitan Police were handling with media attention from around the world. But he was kept on the investigation even though it wasn’t really his department. That was his own commitment to it and his own desire to stay on that case. He really pushed for it.

“Brent Hyatt was a decent and determined police officer who wanted to do his duty. He said he was pleased we were making this drama and he really hoped that one day I would be able to tell him there was a sequel being made about the arrest and conviction of the people responsible for this murder.”

**This was a murder investigation like no other as the victim was, initially, still alive?**

“Alexander Litvinenko was an eyewitness to his own murder. He was a man of incredible fortitude. Something of a physical specimen to have been able to withstand the assault on his body from the polonium for so long. Incredibly brave. Making a personal sacrifice of losing the time he could have had with his family to try and get at the truth of what had happened to him by helping the police in his final days.”

**‘Litvinenko’ is also the story of his wife Marina?**

“Marina’s bravery is astounding. Because you have to imagine she is in personal danger, possibly to this day, for keeping campaigning. You can’t fail to be impressed by Marina. I think the family felt they had achieved a certain amount of safety by coming to this country and becoming British citizens. Because he exposed himself to all sorts of possible danger.

“She was determined to get at the truth of what had happened to her husband, as much as anything to show the world the overarching corruption that ties Russia, Russian money, property speculation and whatever else into London and into our government.

## INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MASKELL

“It wasn’t that big a surprise to me that the British government initially blocked a public inquiry into murder by another state because of the amount of Russian money here, particularly in London.”

### **What was it like filming the scenes when police interview a dying Alexander Litvinenko?**

“Shooting the scenes where Hyatt interviews Litvinenko in the hospital was about as immersive a bit of filming as I’ve ever done in my career. For a number of reasons. We filmed at a disused hospital in west London and it was an exact replication of what the actual circumstances were at University College Hospital, with him lying in the hospital bed. Then Margarita and David’s performances which were completely committed and truthful.

“And then also...most of us have sat next to a hospital bed while someone has been dying. That’s not something you forget. Something that goes right to your heart. So actually controlling my emotions was tricky. Knowing Brent was an incredibly professional police officer committed to getting the answers and the evidence he needed rather than getting lost in whatever feelings he might have had emotionally and empathically at the time. Because it was quite overwhelming.

“By the time we were shooting Litvinenko’s death it was more a case of trying to hold it together. When they were on Margarita’s close up I was just weeping when the camera wasn’t on me because I found it very difficult.”

### **Where else did you film?**

“We filmed at Highgate Cemetery at Alexander Litvinenko’s actual grave. I had been to Highgate Cemetery before. I used to live not far from there. But I hadn’t been to that part of it. We had rain machines going, which is always difficult. The rain is heavier so it registers on film. So it’s not like being in a shower, it’s like being hosed down by the fire brigade.

“We were under these umbrellas with this rain coming down. But despite all of those technical conditions of filming, it still felt incredibly real and moving. In all of the research I hadn’t seen the inscription on his grave. We were a couple of takes in before I leant in and saw what Marina had chosen to put on the grave. It says, ‘To the world you are one person. But to one person you are the world.’”

## INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MASKELL

### **What does David Tennant bring to the role of Alexander Litvinenko?**

“I have only worked with less than half a dozen people whose hard work and endeavour is so clear. David kept questioning the dialect coach about his English-Russian accent when the coach was obviously bowled over by it and just saying, ‘It’s perfect.’ David also had chunks of actual Russian that he had to say. I never saw him fluff a line or miss a cue, despite the fact he was playing someone on the very edge of death. It was incredible.

“Margarita Levieva was also amazing. She is someone who does completely immerse herself in the role. She was unrecognisable to the Margarita outside of filming. From when she arrived on set in the morning to when she left in the evening it was much more like having Marina there than anything like Margarita. She carries the weight of that commitment. I think that’s what she had to do for that part. An extraordinary actress.”

### **How do you reflect back on being a part of ‘Litvinenko’?**

“It’s one of the best jobs I’ve ever done with some of the best people I’ve ever worked with. This was a really amazing job. I was excited to be doing it in the first place and the longer it went on, the more proud I was of being involved in it.

“There was no weak link. Everyone really cared about the project. The scripts were ace with a committed cast and crew working hard to do as much good work as they can. I’m not sure if whatever comes next will be able to match it or be in the same league.”





## INTERVIEW WITH LUCY BEDFORD - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

### **Q: How did 'Litvinenko' come to the screen?**

"We were lucky enough to see an early copy of the documentary Richard Kerbaj made for Channel 4 - *'Hunting The KGB Killers'* - which was broadcast in 2017. He has close relationships with many of the key people involved in the police investigation into Alexander - 'Sasha' - Litvinenko's death and also with Alexander's wife Marina and their son Anatoly.

"We were immediately struck by the scale and consequence of the story. One of the first things that resonated for all of us were the juxtapositions involved with the story of Sasha, his past in Russia, his commitment to building a life in the UK with his family and how passionately they all felt as British citizens. Along with the horror of what happened to him. Then the tenacity and commitment of the British police. The extraordinary journey those detectives went on when they not only had to deconstruct a very complex crime but also step outside of their comfort zones as police officers and as men.

"When we watched Richard's documentary, we were struck by just how brilliant it was but also about the way you can inhabit that story in a different way through a drama. And it felt like we would be able to do that.

"Myself and a colleague, Catherine Moulton, who was working in our team at the time, went to meet Richard. He wouldn't disclose the location of our meeting until the very last minute. He told us to arrive at a tube station and then he would text us with the details of where he wanted to meet us. Because he was, quite rightly, concerned about the security implications. Being someone who has a lot of involvement and insight into quite complex international relations. So, we went off to meet him fascinated by this story he had brought to our attention.

"Right from day one Richard was brilliant, incredibly articulate, committed and had over the years built up those crucial relationships with the real life people whose stories we ended up telling. He is co-producer of this drama."

### **Q: What stories did you want to tell?**

"What was really interesting about Richard's documentary was that he approached it from the angle of the police investigation. That is the point of view that has shaped the whole drama and what our writer George Kay picked up on and evolved.

## INTERVIEW WITH LUCY BEDFORD - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

“You also cannot tell this story without telling the story of Marina Litvinenko. She is the most extraordinary woman and in a great many ways the beating heart of the drama. The emotional centre of the whole piece. But crucially the way into this was through the policemen. That’s why the story starts with the two detectives arriving at a hospital, not being quite clear about what they are going to do there. Then being completely blown away by what they discover when they walk into that hospital room.

“George has the ability to cut through complex stories about international relations while at all times making you feel you are actually watching a human story. A group of people who are caught up a complex geopolitical situation which extends so far beyond the scope of their everyday lives. It’s amazing to think about those detectives and others, their struggles, human vulnerabilities, concerns about their safety and that of their families. But at the same time being plunged into the wider context.

“Later in the story we see the police going to Moscow as part of their investigation where there is a fish out of water element. As we go from the opening episode and the pure shock, trauma and loss of Alexander Litvinenko’s death to then travel through a series of moods as the drama evolves. And bizarrely, as in real life, some of that is strange and surreal with touches of British humour.”

### **Q: What did David Tennant bring to this drama?**

“David Tennant’s attachment to this project and early support was absolutely essential. His commitment to playing that role, his recognition of what it meant and the astonishing execution of everything he brought to it. We probably wouldn’t have this drama today if it were not for him.

“His performance is incredibly intimate. The craft which he brings to that performance - the accent, his ability to speak Russian and everything about the way he embodies that character. But also just how vulnerable he is and yet proud. How intimate it is yet also how epic in its consequences.

“When I watch David Tennant in that role I am so wholly involved in it as it plays out before me, I almost forget that we are watching a true story. I feel completely bound up in it as a human story. And the connection between him, the police officers and Margarita Levieva, who plays Marina, is so compelling.”

## INTERVIEW WITH LUCY BEDFORD - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

**Q: Aside from her acting talent, Margarita Levieva, who plays Marina, also brings her own Russian heritage and understanding to the role?**

“Margarita feels wholly authentic as Marina. There were important early conversations about who we would cast as Marina. First and foremost, it was obviously important to have an actor who could relate to, respond to and inhabit the role. But there were technical questions, including about accent and her look - Marina Litvinenko is very striking and beautiful - and so there were a lot of different things to align in the casting of that role. I don't think we could have done any better. Margarita is fantastic.

“There is a phase in this story when it becomes clear Marina is fighting not just the Russian State but also the British government, who at that stage just wanted this case to go away. We see her resilience and tenacity. Marina would just not lie down and let that happen. Seeking justice for the murder of her husband, a British citizen, poisoned in the middle of central London with Polonium-210, the most toxic substance known to humanity.

“We also feature the quest that Marina and Ben Emmerson QC (Stephen Campbell Moore) went on in terms of the inquest and fighting for the later public inquiry. A man of great intellect, passion and commitment to doing the right thing. The contrast between the different people who came together to support Marina through this journey is really interesting. Marina is an incredibly strong and committed woman and all of these other people came together to help her. They all contribute to some very compelling moments in this drama.”

**Q: Neil Maskell as Det Insp Brent Hyatt typifies a man determined to do his duty and fulfil a personal promise to Alexander Litvinenko?**

“One of the huge draws for our writer George Kay was about telling a story in which the policemen were the heroes. Brent Hyatt is an everyday hero in this story. A man we can all relate to who immediately finds himself moved, transported and emotionally connected to the Litvinkos. He is, alongside Marina, the beating heart of this story. With a final connection between him and the Litvinkos revealed at the end. Going so beyond the ordinary and expected. It speaks so clearly as to how profoundly transformative this murder was. So far beyond someone just getting up in the morning to do their job. It spoke to so much more than that.”

## INTERVIEW WITH LUCY BEDFORD - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

**Q: Mark Bonnar plays Det Supt Clive Timmons, the senior investigating officer who embraced the challenges he and his team faced?**

“Clive Timmons really wanted to take charge of this case. To be involved in something big, high profile and challenging. And, like Brent, seek justice for the Litvinenko family. It’s about more than finding the killers. It’s about doing the right thing for Alexander’s wife Marina and son Anatoly. Something much more human.

“Then we have Detective Inspector Brian Tarpey, played by Sam Troughton. Brian Tarpey wasn’t officially on the case to begin with but eventually felt compelled to do what he did because it was the right thing. To do right by Sasha, Marina and Anatoly.”

**Q: What did director Jim Field Smith bring to this production?**

“Jim has made four extraordinary films and brought so much as the director. There were many people involved in the journey.

“Richard Kerbaj brought the story through, George Kay wrote these extraordinary scripts and then Jim took the scripts and pulled together this amazing story and shot incredibly beautiful, empathetic, tonally interesting material. We didn’t have an enormous budget but he was passionate to deliver at a world class level. And I think he has.”

**Q: Where did you film?**

“We were able to film in some of the real locations, such as Itsu in London’s Piccadilly and at Alexander Litvinenko’s grave at Highgate Cemetery. There is nothing like being able to use a real location for filming. When you are able to take the actors and put them into the real place, they feel something. It is an incredible privilege.

“Our producer Chris May and the whole production team worked very hard to make all of that happen. It’s very complicated shooting in the middle of London and doubly so during a pandemic. It does have that feel of authenticity to it. It was just amazing that the production team were able to pull that off.”

## INTERVIEW WITH LUCY BEDFORD - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

**Q: The story of Alexander Litvinenko is a warning from history about Vladimir Putin. How do you reflect back on being involved in this production?**

“This is a story of profound importance and the drama speaks for itself about that. My main reflections on this piece are about the way the whole team came together with great understanding about the importance of the story.

“We went quite early on as a team to meet with Marina. I was extremely moved by that meeting. By Marina’s openness and her vulnerability. A woman who has been through so very much and is able to carry herself with such grace and dignity. Her willingness to share her story, to let us, as producers, directors and writers, into her world. And then allow us to share that with the rest of the world is incredibly touching and a huge credit to the amazing team we had on this.

“Richard Kerbaj has been a guardian of the project right from the beginning and George Kay wrote the most brilliant, extraordinary scripts. With an ability to synthesise and distil the most enormous amount of incredibly complex information while making it human, emotional and occasionally funny. While the whole cast, brought together by Jim Field Smith, were stunning.

“It has been a great privilege to be involved and play a small part in the telling of this story. Having remembered those news headlines from the time and the photos. Now looking at it from a different perspective. It has been so rewarding to develop and brilliant that we were able to bring together such a fabulous team and have amazing support from ITV and our other partners.

“It makes me really proud that we are able to put this drama, that everyone has worked so hard on, out into the world right now. But it also makes me very sad that we are where we are today.”



## INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD KERBAJ - CO-PRODUCER

**Q: Where were you when the Alexander Litvinenko story first made headlines in 2006?**

“I was a journalist on The Australian newspaper and remember reading it in the foreign section. Also seeing that photo, which became iconic, of Alexander Litvinenko in his hospital bed. When it first broke it seemed like one of those stories that had way more questions than answers.

“I was interested because of Alexander Litvinenko’s background as a Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officer - the FSB being one of the successor organisations to the Soviet Union’s KGB - and in seeing how the authorities would go about tracking down the suspects. But journalistically I had nothing to do with the story at that point and was very much a bystander.

“I moved to Britain in 2008 and worked for The Times and then The Sunday Times as security correspondent. But it was a filmic interest that first got me involved in this story in 2015. I had been filming my first documentary - My Son The Jihadi - and met Peter Clarke, who had been Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and head of what became the Counter Terrorism Command (SO15).

“I said to him, ‘The Litvinenko case is fascinating. It would be amazing to see it from a perspective of the detectives. Of all the struggles and setbacks, they had along the way.’ And if he wasn’t going to write anything about it, I would do something. That’s where it all started.”

**Q: How did your idea progress?**

“After that I kept pestering Peter Clarke to introduce me to people. Because of my national security background and reporting I also spoke to American contacts, to diplomats, and slowly started to connect the other threads of the story. And the more time I spent with it, the more I realised the story is most compelling through the eyes of the detectives who were involved.

“The person I really needed to speak to was former Det Supt Clive Timmons. As the senior investigating officer into the murder of Alexander Litvinenko he was closest to the events. He also connected the dots between the grassroots police officers on the ground and the high command.

“Clive eventually returned my calls and said, ‘I’m at the airport on the way to Dubai and I’ve got 10 minutes.’

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“So I took out my notebook and started making notes. And we were on that first call for about 35 minutes. I said to him, ‘The story is so much stronger with your contribution and I really would like to turn this into something.’

“At the time my thought was to do the story as a drama, not a documentary. But because of the success that my first documentary My Son The Jihadi had (2016 BAFTA winner), I pitched the Litvinenko documentary idea to Jay Hunt, the Head of Channel 4 at the time, pretty much at the BAFTAs. And within 72 hours we had it commissioned and I then made the 2017 Channel 4 documentary ‘Hunting The KGB Killers’. With Clive and his team interviewed on camera along with Alexander Litvinenko’s wife Marina and son Anatoli.

“Lucy Bedford of Tiger Aspect, who is an executive producer on this drama, and Catherine Moulton, then working in TV drama development, got in touch with my agent to say they had watched a preview copy of the Litvinenko documentary and wanted to meet me. So we met and they said, ‘We want to do this as a four part drama.’ They came on board very quickly. I then met with Patrick Spence, now the Creative Director of ITV Studios, and the writer George Kay and we pitched it to Polly Hill at ITV who commissioned the drama in December 2019.

“The first person I called was Marina. And she was so excited. So happy. She said, ‘You told me you were going to do this. And you did it.’ Then shortly after that, when I thought this is incredible, the dream I had turning this story into a drama series is coming true...Covid hit.”

**Q: David Tennant plays Alexander Litvinenko on screen. Did he also have another crucial role?**

“David Tennant saved our show. You will get a lot of people praising his exceptional performance as Alexander Litvinenko. It lives up to his high standards. But what he did for the show is much greater than play that part. He saved our show because it was commissioned a few months before Covid hit. We were then on the rocks for a little while wondering if we would ever be able to film this. Had David Tennant decided not to stay involved, I’m not sure if the drama would have been made.

“He was so determined to play this part. He committed to it. Even before I set up a meeting between him and Marina Litvinenko. At no point did he wobble. So this is his show as much as anyone else’s, if not more. He played a key role. Much bigger than just the actor he is on screen. Playing one of the most famous illustrations of Russia’s disregard for human rights, human beings and international laws.



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“David also did it with such a great deal of sensitivity. I invited Marina and Anatoli over for dinner and I sat them in the living room of my home to watch the drama for the first time. Marina was so moved. David Tennant has done something extraordinary for her. Because so many people had promised to tell her husband’s story in a drama and no-one did it. David is beyond an actor. He is exceptional on screen. But his even greater contribution was through the way he connected with Marina and the project and saved it during Covid.”

### **Q: How did you first meet Marina Litvinenko?**

“I connected with Marina through a friend who knew her. She was introduced to me and we caught up for a coffee. I mentioned my idea for a project - it was a loose idea at that stage but I knew I wanted to put something on television. She was hopeful but, I think, deep down she didn’t know whether or not this would happen. Because she’d had so many false starts with so many people. She had met at that point with people who were way more impressive than I could ever be - Hollywood bigwigs - over a period of years. Because when I first met her in 2015 that was nine years after her husband had been killed.

“So Marina was very polite and willing to help but she didn’t think it would really happen. And then I met separately with Anatoli. He wasn’t willing to begin with to do an interview on camera. In fact he was the last person I interviewed for the 2017 documentary. He was very young when his father died. Any death is tragic. But when your father has been killed by a state-led operation and it ends up in the news...I don’t think any of us can really appreciate the difficulty of that.

“Marina’s interview for the documentary was the very first interview before anyone else. That took around eight hours. One thing I remember is we were probably crying for about five hours. I would say that was one of the most difficult interviews I’ve ever done - and I’ve done a lot. Because it was just so emotional, so raw and real.

“Her bravery is not just in her ability to stand up to Vladimir Putin. Her bravery is her ability to remain in touch with her feelings. From the day this happened to now, her feelings have not changed. There is a huge amount of strength in that. I think that’s what keeps her going and keeps her activism alive.”

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**Q: What does now telling this story in a drama allow you to do that the documentary didn't?**

“There are certain things you can do in a drama that you can't do in a documentary. You can build the suspense by telling this story in a drama. It becomes really compelling. There are all of those moments and discussions that you can't reflect in a documentary. You can almost re-live those moments through the writing and portrayals by the actors. That's why I think this drama is so powerful.

“The writer George Kay and I worked very collaboratively and I put him in touch with all of the people involved. The greatest challenge that screenwriters have is in trying to capture a moment that has already passed and he really managed to do that and capture all of the characters.

“All of the key contributors - the real people involved at the time - read the first script we showed them. Then they came to the set and saw how it was playing out. Everyone from the most cynical among them to the most accepting and easy going, they were all uniform in their opinion about how well this story was being portrayed.

“Marina is incredibly polite. But she can also be very direct. That's a good thing because you want honesty and directness.

“From the very beginning I said to her, ‘Anything you don't like or anything you see that doesn't fit it, raise it. You can challenge anything you want.’ Because she was not a paid contributor here involved in the production. We didn't have her life rights. She was very much an observer and I kept her in the picture at all times. So I became the link between the contributors and the team and then the actors.”

**Q: What stories did you want to tell in ‘Litvinenko’?**

“What makes the police story so compelling are moments of revelation. If you approach a case and you instantly track down the suspects, there's no dramatic arc to that. The 2006 killing of Alexander Litvinenko, ordered by the Russian state, reset Western thinking about the Kremlin.

“Up until then the West - predominantly the US and the UK - had brought Russia back into the fold. They had reunited their efforts geopolitically in the wake of the war on terror, united in their fight against Islamist extremism. Until the Litvinenko case happened. That showed the West they could not really be friends with Moscow, certainly not under Putin's regime. And from that moment everything changed. The murder of Alexander Litvinenko also brought the UK and US even closer together operationally.

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“Although this was happening at a local level with a man dying in a London hospital - poisoned with Polonium-210, the most deadly substance known to humanity - it had massive international ramifications. And those are the things I wanted to unpick. The Litvinenko assassination using radiation poisoning showcased Russia’s willingness to exact its revenge against anyone it wants regardless of laws. It killed a British citizen in broad daylight in London with a complete disregard for its relationship with the UK and a complete disregard to international laws, human rights and any sense of humanity.

“So I wanted to illustrate the human dimension of this story through the people who were involved. Marina’s story is such a compelling starting point. Then when you juxtapose her personal story with the detective tale you’ve got yourself the incredibly moving and compelling drama that we now have.

“The police were also doing their job against a great deal of institutional resistance from within the British establishment. The Foreign Office agenda was, ‘Let’s just keep relations going with the Russians.’ The MI6 agenda was, ‘We’ve got operations going on globally and particularly in Russia.’ So you had the intelligence community and the diplomatic community at loggerheads with the police who actually wanted to bring about justice for Alexander and his family.

“What’s fascinating here is that in some cases in the past maybe the police looked the other way or they allowed the diplomatic services and intelligence officials to dictate the terms. But in this case it took a certain amount of leadership, integrity and a willingness to stand up to the external establishment.

“And that was very much under Pete Clarke’s leadership. He stood up and said, ‘We’re going to go for this. This is not some random Russian guy who has been hit. This is a British citizen who has been killed on our streets.’ So Peter Clarke became this buffer zone between his team conducting the police investigation and the establishment trying to push up against him.”

**Q: What was the attitude of the cast, crew and the rest of the team during filming?**

“It was very collaborative. I’ve made TV documentaries but this is my first drama. I remember saying in one email, ‘I am the least experienced drama film maker among you. But I think I can safely say I am more excited than any of you because this is my first experience.’ It was wonderful to see so many people invested in this drama on the set and in the wider team, with a story I have been nurturing now for almost eight years.

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“To see it come to life and see people so invested in it was not just creatively fulfilling but it really mattered to me. It mattered to me more than just the idea of bringing this to life and seeing it on the screen. Because I could see that it mattered to them.

“I would bring Marina on to the set and you could just see the way that people reacted towards her. You can’t fake that type of feeling, that type of approach. People were genuinely taken by the story and everyone was able to reflect on where they were when they first heard about the Litvinenko case.

“This was a huge moment for me, Marina and the other contributors. I also took the real detectives involved on the case on to the set, including Clive Timmons. He was so moved and he’s a proper cynic. Peter Clarke as well. Everyone has been so appreciative of the way it has been done. Not just so professionally but also with such a great deal of emotional investment.”

**Q: The drama shows detectives flying to Moscow to interview the two suspects believed to have poisoned Alexander Litvinenko in London. Who were they?**

“We know that two men - Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun - were the killers responsible for Litvinenko’s murder. That was made very clear in the 2016 public inquiry report and re-emphasised in a 2021 judgement by the European Court of Human Rights. And that he was probably murdered on the personal orders of Vladimir Putin.

“Yet they were celebrated in Russia. It’s not dissimilar to those who were thought to be behind the 2018 attempt on Sergei Skripal’s life in Salisbury 12 years after the killing of Litvinenko. When the Russians set out to carry out an assassination of Skripal by using chemical weapons on the streets of the UK. Again, the two people who returned to Russia claimed it wasn’t their fault.

“In Litvinenko’s case, Lugovoi and Kovtun claimed Alexander Litvinenko himself had tried to poison them - and not the other way around. They were trying to build this concept of fake news. The Kremlin tried to turn Lugovoi and Kovtun into victims of a crime, as opposed to the perpetrators. Lugovoi became a Russian MP in 2007, so giving him parliamentary immunity from prosecution. While Kovtun died in June 2022 allegedly from Covid.”

## INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD KERBAJ - CO-PRODUCER

**Q: This drama feels even more relevant today. Do you agree?**

“We filmed Litvinenko before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and more suspicious deaths of people critical of Putin. It re-emphasises those suspicions that have been held now for more than 15 years by the West in relation to how Russia is operating under the Putin regime. The invasion of Ukraine had been foreseen by Western authorities, particularly Britain and the US along with other countries. They were reluctant to believe that would happen. But, of course, it did happen.

“There are parallel dimensions between this story relating to Litvinenko, which is a singular story relating to one individual, and the story relating to Ukraine, which is one that relates to an entire nation and its people. Many of those people have now been killed and many others have been displaced. And the parallel is the Kremlin’s disregard for human rights and international laws. They are willing, under the Putin regime, to carry out their mission regardless of criticism and backlash. We saw it on a micro level in the Litvinenko case and we’re seeing it on a macro level in Ukraine.

“I don’t think anyone is shocked by the steps that Putin has taken in Ukraine. But it’s quite depressing to see so many people having to live through it. His intention was always to try to defeat the West, almost as revenge for the collapse of the Soviet Union. So the timing of this drama is incredibly relevant.”

**Q: How do you reflect back on making ‘Litvinenko’?**

“Every time I make a film I sit down with the contributors and I watch it with them. You are always nervous because there is a huge amount of responsibility that comes with portraying someone on screen. Whether it’s telling their story through their own words in a documentary or telling their story through actors in a drama. You want them to walk away feeling you have done the story justice and have told it fairly and accurately.

“For all of the discussions you have had leading up to that, the real proof is when they are actually in front of the screen and have watched it. Once you start watching their reactions as they are sitting there absorbed in the moment watching the series you can get a sense of where it is going. With Marina it was almost instant. She was really drawn into the moment. I think that comes down to that brilliant film making that comes out of the brilliant direction by Jim Field Smith and the brilliant writing of George Kay.

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“Marina was so in the moment that she reacted to everything as though she was reliving it. There was something painful about that. Because I realised she did have to relive it while watching it. At the end she was in tears. I also had to take it all in because it was a big moment for me hoping that we had got this right. Then she gave me a big hug and there were tears on both sides. Marina said, ‘Thank you for doing this.’

“I need to praise Jim Field Smith and George Kay. Everyone else did some really great stuff. But it was Jim who was behind the lens. This is his directorial vision. And when you are directing you are directing in isolation. You are in charge of turning those actors into what they are on the screen. The writing is also really important and it just came together so well. It’s got the same amount of emotional strength and depth that you would get from the documentary where you’re hearing the voices of the real people. That’s a masterful stroke.

“The documentary was 90 minutes and low budget. Very basic. I felt proud of the documentary but I didn’t think it was there yet. So when we decided to make the drama I thought, ‘This is the time to really tell the story and be completely proud of everything behind it.’ And I now feel that. I think we have nailed this.”



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## INTERVIEW WITH JIM FIELD SMITH - DIRECTOR

### **Q: When did you first become involved in ‘Litvinenko’?**

“The writer George Kay and I went to school together and run our own production company. We have long been interested in the story of Alexander - ‘Sasha’ - Litvinenko. Very early on, when George raised it again, I was listening on headphones to an online article about it and just happened to be walking through Grosvenor Square in London at the time. And I walked past what was then still the Mayfair Millennium Hotel where Litvinenko was poisoned by two Russian agents. So I walked into the hotel and sat down in the foyer, still listening to the article with the events of 2006 being described as I was sitting in the actual location where it happened. I felt the ghosts of the story around me and it came to life very vividly in my head.

“A lot of the events happened within that square mile of central London. So I was able to trace out the steps of the story. From Grosvenor Square you can walk down to Piccadilly to the Itsu restaurant, where it was initially believed Litvinenko had been poisoned.

“I remember it being in the news at the time back in 2006 and following it with interest. A lot of people do have a decent surface level knowledge of the story. They will be aware of that photo of Sasha in his hospital bed that was used by newspapers and TV stations across the world and broadly aware of details of the story. But in reality it is an incredibly detailed and complex story which goes to epic geopolitical levels. Yet also a story about a family that lost a husband and a father. So it’s very wide ranging. We were so fortunate to have all of the access we had to all of the real people who are so closely involved.”

### **Q: How did the project progress?**

“George had written the first episode having gone through the transcripts of the 16 hours of interview tapes between Sasha and Metropolitan Police detective Brent Hyatt which were recorded at what ended up as Litvinenko’s death bed at University College Hospital in London.

“From there we knew we wanted to tell the story of how the investigation expanded and also how his wife Marina’s quest for justice persisted across the years. We were also very keen to tell the story of the attempts to get an inquest and a public inquiry.



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“We knew we had to find somebody who could convincingly portray Sasha. Both physically and in terms of the moral qualities of the character. We were working at the time with David Tennant on the drama ‘Criminal’ and there was a sudden moment of inspiration for all of us, thinking this was something that David could really nail down. Thankfully he took to it very quickly. And it snowballed from there.”

### **Q: What does telling this story in a drama allow you to do?**

“We wanted to put people in that hospital room with Sasha. To take the audience through the eyes of Detective Inspector Brent Hyatt, who interviewed him and took on the case on a personal basis as well as a professional one. We wanted to experience this in the way that Brent did. Of the utter disbelief at what this case might involve through his growing realisation that this was something deeply serious. Along with his personal conviction to seek justice for Sasha, his wife Marina and their son Anatoly. That is something we are able to do with a drama that a documentary or news stories cannot do.

“George Kay has an incredible ability to find the human in what could otherwise be quite dense detail. Ultimately you could make this show and have it be a very sensationalist piece.

“But George’s instinct from reading those transcripts and meeting Brent Hyatt, senior investigating officer Clive Timmons and Marina Litvinenko was to lean into the human aspect of the story. To tell the story of the impact of this giant geopolitical case through the humans at the heart of it.”

### **Q: What did you want to achieve in terms of the look and feel of Litvinenko?**

“It was a two-pronged approach. I wanted to have a feel of events unfolding, as if we were seeing it through the eyes of the detectives. The people who are, like the audience, learning this information for the first time. Then following the detectives through the story.

“But also wanting to do justice to the events that happened and recreate them as faithfully as we could. Not to try and overstate or overdramatise something that is already inherently incredibly dramatic. So we were trying to be faithful to the story and let the events speak for themselves.

“In terms of the casting, there is a part of you that wants to try and find someone that physically represents the person they are portraying. But equally I didn’t want that to be the be all and end all.

## INTERVIEW WITH JIM FIELD SMITH - DIRECTOR

“What was important for us was that we found people that embodied their human characteristics. Apart from that famous image of Sasha in the hospital bed, how people look is not important to how we tell this particular story.”

### **Q: What was it like filming the scenes with David Tennant as a dying Alexander Litvinenko?**

“David was on set filming for around 10 days. As, obviously, Alexander Litvinenko very sadly died as a result of the radiation poisoning. That is the core of the first episode and then the story spins out from there. A very wide ranging, intricate, story that goes from that hospital bed in University College Hospital to Moscow.

“Sasha spoke reasonably good English. But he spoke Russian with his family and wasn’t generally needing to speak a great deal of English. The only reference we have is the interview transcripts themselves and a fair amount of recordings of him speaking in Russian. So we were able to surmise from the transcripts and from hearing him speak in Russian what his spoken English would sound like.

“I said to David, ‘I want these police interviews with Sasha at the hospital to feel like we’re there in the room, like they are unfolding live in front of us.’

“That’s very much how we shot it. As if we were there documenting those interviews happening. It makes for an incredibly intense experience. Particularly as Sasha gets sicker. Filming those scenes was fairly harrowing for everybody.

“I always try and scrape away at the machinery of film making and ask how can we strip this down to allow the actors to be in the scene and not feel like there are lots of people standing around them? We worked very hard to create an environment where the actors could feel that way. As a result the actors really did feel like they were in that hospital room.

“I remember shooting one scene and it was all I could do to walk over to David and just give his hand a squeeze. Because I couldn’t really say anything. It almost felt like we had parachuted back into that room.”

### **Q: You also recreated the iconic photo of Litvinenko in his hospital bed?**

“A huge amount of work went into getting that image of Sasha in his hospital bed right. I wanted there to be a moment in the first episode where the audience connects into the story from the one bit of iconic imagery they might remember themselves. Where suddenly you are locked into the story. You’ve had all of the information that leads up to the reason that photo was taken. And then there it is in front of you.

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“That involved a huge amount of work from prosthetics, hair and make up, getting the right background out of the window, the equipment, the exact positioning of the wires on his chest, the right colour of gown...the right everything. It was really important to us that it was as faithful as possible.”

**Q: Marina gave up time with her dying husband to allow the detectives to do their work?**

“In many ways the greatest sacrifice Marina made was knowing she needed to give what time Sasha had left to the detectives in order for her to then be able to pursue justice. Initially she didn’t believe Sasha was dying. But as time ticked on it became clear that was the case. And she still allowed the detectives to have all that time with him.

“In terms of casting, Marina is reasonably high profile in terms of being in the public eye but, again, it was more important to us to find someone that could embody that struggle. It was also important to find someone with Russian heritage to play that character. Which Margarita Levieva, who plays Marina, has.

“As much as we could, I’d always strive for authenticity. We spend so much time with Marina in the drama, particularly in the later episodes, that I wanted us to feel that struggle.

“Along with her husband and son, she came to the UK from Russia and by the time Sasha was poisoned, they were all British citizens. And we see her fight for justice over a number of years.

“Having people like Marina and Anatoly visit the set during filming - along with some of the Met Police detectives - brought home to everybody that this was a real story we were telling. It was amazing to have her around. She’s got incredible energy and was so gracious to everybody. It was a memorable day.”

**Q: The drama also highlights the work of the police officers involved in this investigation?**

“Cops are people. They are not infallible and they are not superheroes. They are, by and large, incredibly hard working, diligent, smart, savvy people. In Brent Hyatt’s case he is a man with an unshakeable moral sense and he, to this day, wants to continue to see justice for Sasha. Because Sasha looked him in the eye and asked him to do that. And that was Brent’s job. He took that on personally, more than anyone else in the story outside of the family.

## INTERVIEW WITH JIM FIELD SMITH - DIRECTOR

“Clive Timmons was also an exceptional police officer with a slightly different approach to the case. But still took it on himself to push that investigation along. It’s a certain amount of luck which Senior Investigating Officer gets assigned to which case on which day. In the case of Clive Timmons he happened to be the on call SIO on the day the case came in. It could have been someone else. But it wasn’t. It was Clive. And you could argue that if it hadn’t have been Clive Timmons and Brent Hyatt then the case might not have got to where it did. Ben Emmerson, the QC who took the case on with Marina, will tell you that the case the Metropolitan Police put together was absolutely flawless. They did their jobs to an exceptional degree.”

### **Q: Where did you film?**

“We recreated the University College Hospital room in a disused wing of a hospital in Ealing. I was really keen to visit the actual real locations to shoot or, if that was not possible, to recreate them as authentically as we could. We did a huge amount of work on that.

“We shot in the real Itsu restaurant on London’s Piccadilly, in and around the table in the basement where the police originally believed the fatal poisoning had happened. Even though it subsequently turned out to have taken place at the Millennium Hotel in Mayfair. Ironically the reason Sasha chose to have his meetings in Itsu was because he felt it was one of the safer places to eat as the food is all sealed. And as it turns out, he wasn’t poisoned there.

“The Millennium Hotel in London’s Grosvenor Square has now turned into a luxury hotel called The Biltmore. So we filmed some exteriors in Grosvenor Square but had to recreate the interior of the Millennium Hotel elsewhere.

“We also filmed at Alexander Litvinenko’s real grave at Highgate Cemetery in London. That was an incredible few days filming around Sasha’s grave and having permission from the family to do so. We recreated his funeral, again as authentically as we could from the available press photos from the time.

“The day we were shooting those scenes at Highgate Cemetery was the day the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Russia was responsible for the murder of Litvinenko. That he had been killed by two Russian agents acting on behalf of that state. Findings consistent with those of the 2016 UK public inquiry that found he was probably murdered on the personal orders of Vladimir Putin.”

## INTERVIEW WITH JIM FIELD SMITH - DIRECTOR

**Q: The Alexander Litvinenko story feels even more relevant today than ever?**

“There is a through line from the murder of Alexander Litvinenko to the invasion of Ukraine. To all of it. This is about a megalomaniac headed regime. The reality of how Vladimir Putin runs Russia and maintains a position on the world stage is ruthless. Sasha’s death was an example of that.

“If anything, this story has become even more relevant since we filmed it. The events in the drama span almost 10 years. And there have been similar events since the murder of Litvinenko, including the Salisbury case in 2018 and massive political events with the war in Ukraine. It’s astonishing how this story continues to be relevant. And Marina is still fighting on behalf of her husband.”

**Q: How do you reflect back on making ‘Litvinenko’?**

“It was a really special job and very intense. Shooting entirely on location, often in the real locations themselves, gave it a quality unlike anything else I’ve filmed. There was a heavy weight to what we were shooting every day.

“Everyone involved in making this drama went off to do their own research in order to find that authenticity. To dig into a level of detail in the story which was just amazing. It was incredible to see people so invested in the thing they are making. Also being able to connect cast members to some of the real life people involved made a huge difference.

“I’m really proud of the drama and of the whole team who worked to bring it to life. The experience of making it will remain with me forever.”

# EPISODE SYNOPSES

## EPISODE ONE

November, 2006. Detective Inspector Brent Hyatt and Detective Sergeant Chris Hoar, are summoned to University College Hospital in London to interview a man named Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian spy who claims to have been poisoned. Litvinenko's wife, Marina, tells the detectives that the doctors are sceptical of his story, though the Russian's deteriorating physical condition is clear for everyone to see. Over three agonising days, Hyatt and Hoar interview the dying Litvinenko, who provides a meticulous account of who he believes to have killed him, and also the man responsible for ordering his murder, none other than Vladimir Putin.

## EPISODE TWO

The day after Litvinenko's death, radiation teams swarm across London to secure potentially contaminated sites visited by the Russian spy. Officers discover traces of Polonium at Itsu, a sushi restaurant where Litvinenko met Mario Scaramella before a later encounter with Andrey Lugovoy and Dmitry Kovtun at the Millennium Hotel, which has also tested positive for Polonium. Eliminating Scaramella from their enquiries, Timmons realises Lugovoy and Kovtun are their main suspects and resolves to send a team to Moscow to interview them directly. Now living in an apartment owned by Boris Berezovsky, Marina receives a chilling phone call from Lugovoy.

# EPISODE SYNOPSES

## EPISODE THREE

A team of detectives, led by Brian Tarpey arrive in Moscow to interview Lugovoy and Kovtun, now the prime suspects behind Litvinenko's murder. Back in London, Timmons and Hyatt search for evidence as to how Litvinenko was poisoned. At Litvinenko's funeral in Highgate Cemetery, Hyatt updates Marina on the investigation's progress. She leaves the service considering taking matters into her own hands. Meanwhile, a breakthrough occurs when a teapot from the Millennium Hotel tests positive for polonium: the police now have their murder weapon.

## EPISODE FOUR

With their investigation complete, Timmons' team submit their file to the Crown Prosecution Service, who charge Lugovoy and Kovtun with Litvinenko's murder. However, with the killers safe in Russia and protected by Putin, the chances for true justice appear to be slim. With the encouragement and financial backing of Russian dissident, Boris Berezovsky, Marina hires Ben Emmerson, a charismatic human rights barrister, to push for an inquest into her husband's murder. This begins Marina's 8 year battle to try and find justice for her husband's murder.

# CAST CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Alexander Litvinenko..... DAVID TENNANT  
Marina Litvinenko.....MARGARITA LEVIEVA  
Young Anatoly Litvinenko.....TEMIRLAN BLAEV  
DI Brent Hyatt.....NEIL MASKELL  
DS Jim Dawson.....BARRY SLOANE  
Dr Justine Adams..... SARAH NAUDI  
DS Clive Timmons..... MARK BONNAR  
Alexander Goldfarb.....MARK IVANIR  
Professor John Henry.....ROBERT MEADMORE  
DAC Peter Clarke.....DANIEL RYAN  
DC Deborah Maxwell.....KAYLA MEIKLE  
DCI Duncan Ball.....RICHARD PEPPER  
Nina Tupper.....BEA SVISTUNENKO  
Jenny Hyatt.....KIRSTEN FOSTER  
James Cairns.....DAN SKINNER  
Dr Nick Gent.....IAN CONNINGHAM  
Dr Onome George.....ESTELLA DANIELS  
Professor Pat Troop.....MAGGIE EVANS





## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE TWO

DS Clive Timmons..... MARK BONNAR  
DCI Duncan Ball.....RICHARD PEPPER  
Aidan.....MARCUS ONILUDE  
Marina Litvinenko.....MARGARITA LEVIEVA  
Alexander Goldfarb.....MARK IVANIR  
Sir John Scarlett.....SIMON PAISLEY DAY  
Professor Pat Troop.....MAGGIE EVANS  
James Cairns.....DAN SKINNER  
Dr Nick Gent.....IAN CONNINGHAM  
DAC Peter Clarke.....DANIEL RYAN  
Young Anatoly Litvinenko.....TEMIRLAN BLAEV  
Alexander Litvinenko..... DAVID TENNANT  
DI Brent Hyatt.....NEIL MASKELL  
Dr Justine Adams..... SARAH NAUDI  
DC Deborah Maxwell.....KAYLA MEIKLE  
DI Brian Tarpey.....SAM TROUGHTON  
Michael.....KAREEM ALEXANDER  
DS Jim Dawson.....BARRY SLOANE

## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE TWO CONTINUED

Martin Svensson.....EDWARD BAKER-DULY  
DC Deborah Maxwell.....KAYLA MEIKLE  
Dr Onome George.....ESTELLA DANIELS  
Andrey Lugovoy.....RAD KAIM  
Mario Scaramella.....ANTONIO MAGRO  
Dmitry Kovtun.....ALEKSANDER MIKIC  
Jenny Hyatt.....KIRSTEN FOSTER

## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE THREE

DS Clive Timmons..... MARK BONNAR  
Dr Benjamin Swift..... SIMON HAINES  
Marina Litvinenko.....MARGARITA LEVIEVA  
Alexander Goldfarb.....MARK IVANIR  
Young Anatoly Litvinenko.....TEMIRLAN BLAEV  
Aidan.....MARCUS ONILUDE  
DI Brian Tarpey.....SAM TROUGHTON  
DS Jim Dawson.....BARRY SLOANE  
DC Oliver Gadney.....SAM MARKS  
Russian Driver.....DANIEL PATON  
DC Deborah Maxwell.....KAYLA MEIKLE  
DCI Duncan Ball.....RICHARD PEPPER  
DI Brent Hyatt.....NEIL MASKELL  
Ingrid Campbell.....ZOE TELFORD  
Nika Privalova.....JOANNA KANSKA  
Dmitry Kovtun.....ALEKSANDER MIKIC  
Dr Onome George.....ESTELLA DANIELS  
Jenny Hyatt.....KIRSTEN FOSTER

## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE THREE CONTINUED

Hotel Concierge.....MITYA SAVELAU  
DAC Peter Clarke.....DANIEL RYAN  
Andrey Lugovoy.....RAD KAIM  
Boris Berezovsky.....NIKOLAI TSANKOV

## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE FOUR

DC Deborah Maxwell.....KAYLA MEIKLE  
DCI Duncan Ball.....RICHARD PEPPER  
DI Brian Tarpey.....SAM TROUGHTON  
DS Clive Timmons.....MARK BONNAR  
DI Brent Hyatt.....NEIL MASKELL  
DS Jim Dawson.....BARRY SLOANE  
DAC Peter Clarke.....DANIEL RYAN  
Oscar Enrique.....GREG KOLPAKCHI  
Boris Berezovsky.....NIKOLAI TSANKOV  
Marina Litvinenko.....MARGARITA LEVIEVA  
Young Anatoly Litvinenko.....TEMIRLAN BLAEV  
Jay.....MARCUS ONILUDE  
Louise Christian.....SELENA CADELL  
Alexander Goldfarb.....MARK IVANIR  
Ben Emmerson.....STEPHEN CAMBELL MOORE  
Sir Robert Owen.....BRIAN PROTHEROE  
Robin Tam QC.....KEVIN SHEN  
Jenny Hyatt.....KIRSTEN FOSTER  
Older Anatoly Litvinenko.....JAMES ESLER

# PRODUCTION CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Executive Producers.....PATRICK SPENCE  
.....LUCY BEDFORD  
.....GEORGE KAY  
.....JIM FIELD SMITH  
.....DAVID TENNANT  
.....JOSEPHINE ZAPATA GENETAY  
Writer..... GEORGE KAY  
Director.....JIM FIELD SMITH  
Co-Producer.....RICHARD KERBAJ  
Producer.....CHRIS MAY  
Production Executive.....FAIZA TOVEY  
Script Producer.....JOE WILLIAMS  
Line Producer.....DEBORAH MORGAN  
Director of Photography.....ED MOORE BSC  
Production Manager.....CHRISTIAN RIGG  
Production Designer.....PAUL CRIPPS

# PRODUCTION CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

First Assistant Director.....PETER GRIFFITHS  
Second Assistant Directors.....JADE NAGI & CALLUM TAYLOR  
Third Assistant Director.....JIM PENFOLD  
Floor Runners.....LAUREN RENSHAW, GEORGIE SARTIN & LAURA SHANNON  
Base PA.....DYLAN HENRICSON  
Script Supervisor.....KAREN CARTER  
Production Manager.....CHRISTIAN RIGG  
Production Coordinator.....KERYNIA MELEAGROS  
Production Secretary.....SAMUEL PLAYER  
Production Runner.....TONI-ANN ROBERTSON  
Unit Manager.....DANILO ANTONELLI  
Location Managers.....ELLIOTT MEDDINGS, KEVIN RAMSAY & TOM BOSANQUET  
Assistant Location Manager.....PATRICK MCLOUGHLIN  
Location Assistant.....BENEDICT HUDSON  
Production Accountant.....JENNINE BAKER  
Assistant Production Accountant.....JOANNA SANDERS  
Cashier.....TAMARYN PITOUT

# PRODUCTION CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Covid Supervisor.....CRAIG THOMAS  
Covid Managers.....SARAH WONG & MARIA WOLLGAST  
Dialect Coach.....FABIEN ENJALRIC  
Boom Operator.....STEPHEN LEE  
Sound Assistant.....MADDIE QUARM  
Camera Operator.....JASON ELLIS  
First Assistant Camera.....JASON CUDDY & DANIEL VILLANUEVA  
Second Assistant Camera.....KATE MCMILLAN & ADAM FARQUHARSON  
Camera Trainees.....MONAYA ABEL, EDWARD HARPER JONES, SAM MASON & NATHAN OKANLAWSON  
Grip.....MAJA JENSON  
Grip Trainee.....PATRICK DIXON  
Digital Imaging Technician.....TOM ROGERS  
Gaffer.....YURANDI POOTS  
Best Boy.....GARY MOORE  
Electricians.....GABRIEL KERBS, MARTIN KLOUD, LARA GRACIA MURCIA & AMY WYATT  
Prop Master.....SIMON DREW  
Standby Props.....LAURIE HEARD & TIM SILVERSIDES



# PRODUCTION CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Dressing Props.....MIKE BARTLETT, ROBERT SMITH & NICHOLAS TOLLDAY  
Rigger.....MICHAEL RUTTER  
Art Director.....BETHANY DOUGHTY  
Set Decorator.....KATE GOODMAN  
Standby Art Director.....CAROLINE REILLY  
Production Buyer.....SOPHIE COATES  
Graphic Designer.....LUIZA PISSURNO  
Art Department Assistant.....KATHERINE PICKUP  
Petty Cash Buyer.....RACHEL MATHEWSON  
SFX Technician.....MUHAMMED ABDULLAH  
Costume Supervisors.....MARTA CALVIN FONT & ELLA GASKELL  
Costume Standbys.....JESSICA CONSTERDINE, THEA KAY & BIANCA NICOLE  
Costume Trainee.....GRACE POWER  
Costume Designer.....CAMILLE ADOMAKOH  
Hair & Make-up Supervisor .....JONOTHON MALONE  
Hair & Make-up Artist.....MAIREADE CALVER  
Hair & Make-up Trainee.....SOPHIE MIDDLETON  
Prosthetics .....RED GIRL LTD

# PRODUCTION CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Assistant Editor.....GARY LEON BOWYER  
Trainee Assistant Editor.....RAYSHAUN DAVIS WILLIAMS  
Dialogue Editor.....EMMA BUTT  
Supervising Sound Editor.....STEPHEN GRIFFITHS  
Co-Supervising Sound Editor.....BLAIR JOLLANDS  
Re-Recording Mixers.....KATH POLLARD & PATCH ROWLAND  
Online Editor.....GUILHEM COULIBALY  
Colourist.....ANDREW DANIEL  
Post Production Supervisor.....JUDITH FLEETON  
Post Production Co-ordinator.....SUE BOWYER  
Visual Effects by.....GOLDCREST POST PRODUCTION  
Development Executive.....CATHERINE MOULTON

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Head of Production Control.....KLAUDIA VAN PROOSDIJ

## PRODUCTION CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Casting.....AMY HUBBARD CDG & OLIVIA LAYDON  
Costume Designer.....CAMILLE ADOMAKOH  
Make-up & Hair Designer.....SAMANTHA KININMOUTH  
Music by.....GABRIEL PROKOFIEV  
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