

NEW ITV DRAMA

**MANHUNT**  
**The Night Stalker**  
starring  
**MARTIN CLUNES**  
produced by  
**BUFFALO PICTURES**

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Martin Clunes stars as the former London Metropolitan Police Detective Chief Inspector Colin Sutton in a sequel to the critically acclaimed drama Manhunt.

Manhunt The Night Stalker, a four part drama, is the real life story of the police pursuit of a notorious serial burglar and rapist, whose 17 year reign of terror left thousands of elderly people in south east London living in fear. It is based on the diaries of Colin Sutton.

BAFTA award winning actor Martin Clunes will again take the role of DCI Sutton, the detective portrayed in the first series of Manhunt tenaciously pursuing serial killer Levi Bellfield.

The first series of Manhunt attracted an average audience of nine million viewers, and was the highest rated new drama on any channel during 2019. The drama also won many plaudits for Martin Clunes' portrayal of the dedicated detective.

Manhunt The Night Stalker is devised by Colin Sutton and Ed Whitmore. The drama is written by Ed Whitmore (Viewpoint, Silent Witness, Rillington Place, Strike Back) who also wrote the first series of Manhunt, which told the real life story of how the murder of Amelie Delagrang on Twickenham Green in 2004 was eventually linked to the murder of Marsha McDonnell in 2003 and the abduction and murder of Milly Dowler in 2002.

This sequel is based on the true story of the police investigation of a series of rapes, sexual assaults and burglaries which took place in South East London between 1992 and 2009. A dedicated unit, Operation Minstead, was established to hunt down the man who became known as the Night Stalker.

As the suspect continued to evade capture, Detective Chief Inspector Colin Sutton was asked in 2009 to review the case. Working with Detective Superintendent Simon Morgan and the Minstead team, the tenacious detective proposed a strategy he believed could catch one of Britain's most prolific rapists, focusing a vast surveillance operation around a key area of south east London.

Scores of additional officers were deployed to invisibly saturate the target area on a nightly basis. The clock was ticking, as the Night Stalker was becoming ever more brazen and prolific.

Both dramas are produced by Buffalo Pictures. The executive producer is Philippa Braithwaite, the producer is Jo Willett, the co-producer is Evie Bergson-Korn, the director is Marc Evans. Ed Whitmore, who is also an executive producer.

Commented Philippa Braithwaite:

“We are very pleased that ITV have given us the opportunity to dramatise another important case that Colin Sutton was involved in just before his retirement from the force. This inquiry has a very different emphasis to the Bellfield case; the victims were elderly and the crimes were unsolved for many years. The drama explores how Colin came late to the inquiry and helped solve it in a matter of weeks, taking an incredibly dangerous serial rapist off the streets.”

Commented Polly Hill:

“I’m delighted that Martin Clunes will play DCI Colin Sutton once again, taking on a case that had gone unsolved for almost two decades. The team behind the first Manhunt - Ed Whitmore, Marc Evans, along with Buffalo and Philippa Braithwaite - will make sure this is another compelling and respectful dramatisation of a truly shocking crime that affected so many families.”

## **MARTIN CLUNES**

### **What is the Manhunt The Night Stalker about?**

Manhunt The Night Stalker is the real life story of the investigation into the so-called Night Stalker: a notorious serial burglar and rapist whose 17 year reign of terror left thousands of elderly people in south east London living in fear of going to bed at night.

There are so many layers to the story because of the time in Colin Sutton’s life when he came to the investigation is central to the story, along with the age of the case. To start with Colin has successfully caught Levi Bellfield, and so it is celebrated. But also it makes him a bit of a tall poppy (someone who needs to be cut down to size) in police terms.

Then he gets asked to see if he can assist with this 17 year old case which already has a more senior officer at the head of it, but who is not making any headway. So you have got the case that needs fixing and you have the dynamics of a team which has been slogging its guts out over a horrible case for a great many years, and not getting anywhere.

Also they have just had a review before he turned up, so the sense of being supervised or criticised or watched over as they work doesn’t make Colin terribly popular with them. Coupled with what he perceives as a good dose of tall poppy syndrome, he has got to deal with that as well as trying to get through the case.

What brought about the stalemate of the case I think is that they found the offender’s DNA so early, so everything was invested in trying to match the DNA, with a mass DNA swabbing programme, and that is sort of what confounded them, although it is such golden evidence when it is the right DNA. But when you have got a DNA and you are just trying to find a match to it, it is very hard especially with a criminal who is so meticulous in his planning.

### **Why were you interested in taking the role of DCI Colin Sutton again?**

I was fascinated by the role the last time I played DCI Colin Sutton, and got very invested in the notion of the police to the extent that I now feel a bit defensive if they come under attack in the media, or feel disappointed when a police officer does something disappointing which is flagged up by the media.

The first Manhunt had gone so well, and everything about it we were happy with: not portraying the actual detail of the crimes, but the solutions. I think this case is in a way more dramatic than

the Levi Bellfield case in the first series. What Ed (Whitmore- the writer) did with the story is extraordinarily dramatic.

### **How did you prepare to play the role of this senior Metropolitan Police Detective?**

I met Colin on a number of occasions which was hugely helpful for playing him. Hearing Colin's stories about his former colleagues and his respect for people, just putting that into place when you see a real group of detectives was massively useful.

When Marc Evans, the director, and I spent the day with Hampshire Police serious crime squad and finding out how rank operated and fitting Colin into that rank, and then adding his personality to the operation, and how he worked within the rank system, was sort of a key to playing the role. Then adding his strengths and doggedness and decency.

### **You have not wanted to play police officers in the past why was this different? Why were you persuaded to play DCI Colin Sutton.**

Because of Colin Sutton in a way, and because it was real. I never really subscribed to the stock TV detective who was either an alcoholic, part time undertaker or oil painter as well as a cop. But this was really interesting because of the nature of Colin and his approach to resolving that crime.

### **How did you portray Colin Sutton?**

The character is my idea of a version of Colin. There were no prosthetics like when Gary Oldman played Winston Churchill. I didn't go for a photographic reproduction. It is just my version of Colin, which Colin told me his partner said I nailed, and said I was a better spoken, thinner Colin.

### **Did the glasses and the clothes help you to get into character?**

In a way they helped me. The tummy you look down on, and what it is wrapped, in is very helpful.

### **Does the drama show any of the horrific detail of the crimes committed by the Night Stalker?**

No nothing at all. How it reverberates is shown, but there are no scenes depicting the crimes. As with the first Manhunt, it is not about the crimes it is about the solutions.

I think we are honest, we don't glamourise anything, we don't sensationalise anything. Some things are altered for the sake of dramatisation, but it is a drama and not a documentary.

We don't see any of the crimes take place in the drama. They are real and abhorrent crimes, and to see them re-enacted would be wrong for this particular drama. Manhunt's focus is on dogged, painstaking, real police work.

Throughout the production process, it was crucially important to me that we respected the victims and their families. Equally, we wanted to portray the determination and dedication of former DCI Colin Sutton and his police colleagues, whose investigation brought the Night Stalker to justice.

### **Is this story shown through the eyes of Colin Sutton and his team or does it relate to some aspects of the earlier investigation?**

It relates to some of the earlier aspects of the investigation but none of that is included in the action. It is referred to because the offender is still active, even as Colin comes on board. On his very first day on the investigation there is a crime (suspected to have been committed by the Night Stalker).

They just keep happening, there is two in one night, which is why I think he thought something had to be done. The age of the victims meant his crimes were not making newspaper headlines.

### **How did the story of Manhunt affect you?**

It affected me just because of the nature of the crimes. With raping and sexually assaulting people, you think what is wrong with this guy. Obviously a lot is wrong with him. He is such an extraordinary mixture. The line that Colin had in the script when he's finally caught, Colin says 'I'm so pleased to meet you', which I loved. It seemed a very police way of dealing with it: happy to meet him because it meant he was in captivity, and happy to meet him in order to wrap up the case.

At the end of the day they did get him, and God knows how many more victims there might have been if the team hadn't caught the Night Stalker.

### **What did you learn about major crime investigations from working on Manhunt?**

With the first series I was interested to discover how the ranks in the police work, which I carried over to this second drama.

I observed the work of a major incident team at Hampshire Police who were investigating a murder when I was preparing for the role in the first series.

The one thing I was most keen to observe, because I live in a world without rank, was how rank affected people, and how people interacted in that working environment.

I learnt so much, particularly about how much teamwork plays a part in their work.

Everybody was completely focused. Seeing that focus and how that worked was invaluable. It helped me immeasurably.

I think it was important for us to show the teamwork involved in a major investigation and that it wasn't just about one person.

It was a massive eye opener. As an ordinary member of the public you are never going to see how a major investigation works.

### **Were you aware of this police investigation before the drama came about?**

I was aware of the crimes. I knew the area because I went to school around there.

### **Did you do any research into the Night Stalker crimes?**

I think there is more than enough detail in the script. I wasn't looking for every detail. I tend to stick to whatever is on the pages. That is the job of work I am doing on the day.

### **What other work you have been doing?**

I was filming a new documentary series for ITV - Islands of the Pacific -when the first Covid lockdown happened, so we still have that to complete. All the research is in place. We are ready to move fast as and when we can.

We were due to film the tenth series of Doc Martin this year, but we postponed filming until next year because of Covid.

## **FORMER DETECTIVE CHIEF INSPECTOR COLIN SUTTON**

### **Manhunt won many plaudits - were you pleased by the reaction to it, both the TV drama and your book?**

After the first series of Manhunt I had messages from constables to chief constables to say how they appreciated the authenticity of it, and how we had made it much more real for people who are not involved to see what it is really like to do one of these high profile serious investigations.

### **What did you think of Martin Clunes' portrayal of you?**

He took it on in his own way. It wasn't a mimicking of me. But he dealt with in the understated deadpan sort of way I think I used to work. So I appreciated that very much. People who know me say he managed to capture some of the essence of me in his mannerisms and the way he spoke. So he obviously did a good observational job in the time we spent together as well. I was thrilled with it. I thought it was a fantastic performance.

### **What do you hope the reaction to this new series will be?**

I hope that the main reactions to it are similar to the first series in some ways - 'didn't they do well in the end and wasn't that a terrible series of crimes these poor people suffered'.

What I hope is the general public take to it and find it as compelling as they did the first one. I hope I get as many nice messages from police officers of all ranks. I hope people see it as as very real, very authentic and tells the story in a way and from a viewpoint that is not often told in drama. That was the plan with the first one. From the scripts of the second series I think we have achieved that again. The people with the remote controls are the final arbiters of that.

### **You have been involved in a number of television documentaries. How did you feel about being involved in a dramatisation?**

By the time it was broadcast I had got used to it. When I saw the first cuts of it it was a little bit odd. I think it was done so well, both in the way they wrote it and the way Martin performed it. It didn't cause me any difficulties, or fears or worries about it. The whole thing was not just for me, but for the other people from the team as well.

We have all said we find it a little bit humbling in some ways that so many people are interested in watching what we lived for real. It makes you take a step back and think about things. As if we needed it, it is more realisation that we achieved something pretty fantastic.

### **What did you think of the attention to detail in the production?**

I was surprised by the fact that I was given so much credence and so much involvement in how we put it together and how the art department went into absolute painstaking minute detail to make things right. All the way through I was given the opportunity, from the scripts to the art, to some of the ways of the direction to make sure we get this authentic feel.

I was really pleased the way it turned out in that respect. Right from the very start what I wanted to achieve, and what Ed Whitmore wanted to achieve, was something that really felt and looked real.

That is one of the great strengths of Manhunt 1 and 2 is that we take this effort to make sure things are right. If you are dealing with real events as we are, then I believe you have to make it as authentic as possible, otherwise you start to lose credibility and people start to wonder how real is what is being portrayed. And of course we always tried to make sure as far as we can that the scenes and events are accurate too.

### **Did you go on set during filming?**

I managed to get to the set during filming three or four times during filming. Marc Evans the director came over when they were doing a scene with a search and asked me to brief the search team about what to do. It was just like turning back the clock. I also did a day before filming started with all the actors playing police officers talking about the individuals, the characters and how they related to each other.

### **Did the success of the first Manhunt give you confidence and encouragement to collaborate with Ed Whitmore again on a sequel? Why did you think this case should be brought to a television audience.**

The story in the second series is not one that is nearly as well known as the story in the first series. But I think having seen how we managed to portray the events in the first one and what a good quality piece of television the series was, I think the fact that fewer people know about the story in the second series won't really be an issue because we have gained their trust, if you like, from the first series, that it is worth watching the second series.

It is a case which, like many, was of desperate importance to those that were involved in it, at the centre of it, the police, the victims and witnesses, but because of the effect of the other case, having these murders of young girls it was a much more newsworthy and well known story. Indeed that is part of an issue that we explore and we deal with in series two is the fact that kind of below the radar status of the Night Stalker's crimes was even a factor in how it was investigated, and how the investigation had been resourced and how it was viewed over the years.

### **Were the Night Stalker's victims seen as the 'wrong victims' due to their age?**

Yes I think that is right. The whole line, which is in my book, and in the drama, where someone says if these victims had been aged 18 to 35 instead of 58 to 95 it would have been a whole different situation and different response, and I think that is true. It is sad, but it is true.

That is really topical because of what happened with Covid and the way the elderly have suffered disproportionately because of that. The whole business of care homes and how we deal with, and how we care for the elderly, and what status we afford the elderly in society, people have been looking at that and in ways we are looking at those things in Manhunt as well.

### **Why did you think this case was a good case to bring to a television audience?**

Because once again it was case where I wanted to showcase that, even if things are difficult and things haven't gone well over a long period, the police are still capable of turning around and doing a good job and doing things well. So you have the same sort of dedication by individuals and officers going above and beyond their ordinary call of duty which enabled us to get the Night Stalker arrested, prosecuted and convicted, in the same ways as we did in the first series.

My main intention in writing the book and then going into a television series with the first one was that the work that had been done was of such a standard and such a quality that it was worth recording and worth telling people about, and that is the same as happened with the Night Stalker.

**Manhunt The Night Stalker is again based on your diaries - have you written a book about this case too?**

I have written a book about the Night Stalker case. The title of the book is Manhunt The Night Stalker, and it is due to be published at the same time as transmission of the drama.

**The story begins when Detective Chief Superintendent Hamish Campbell - who had been the SIO who led the Jill Dando investigation - asked you to conduct an investigative review of Operation Minstead to see if any opportunities to catch the Night Stalker had been missed. This request followed the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson expressing 'deep concern' that Operation Minstead had failed to track down the Night Stalker.**

That's how I came to be involved. Sir Paul Stephenson took over as Commissioner. Someone highlighted Operation Minstead to him and he said we need to make this a priority to do something about it. Hamish Campbell's view of things was although Bellfield was a rapist he was a serial long time sexual offender, or motivated by sex in some ways, and it might be worth getting me to have a look at the Night Stalker because I had that recent experience (with the Bellfield case). So that it is how I came to be doing it.

**How did you feel to be asked to take on the review as you were approaching the end of your career in the police force, after nearly 30 years service.**

I was quite happy to do it, but in some ways it kind of crept up on me. At first it was very clearly 'no, you're not taking over the case. I want you just to go and have a look at it and then come back and tell me what you think could be done by the other team to try to get it working'. So I did, and I expected that would be the end of my involvement.

Gradually I got sucked into it in some ways. That sounds like I was doing it kicking and screaming, I wasn't. I was quite happy to be sucked into it because it is human nature and the mind you have to have to do that sort of job anyway, when you see something and you have some ideas, I would have found it quite difficult in some ways to say 'there you go then you lot get on with that and I will go back and do something else'. You want to be there to see it through. The plan at the beginning wasn't for me to stay.

**Were you apprehensive about what the Operation Minstead team would think and how they would react to you coming in?**

I was apprehensive at first of course. Nobody really relishes the idea of going in and looking over somebody else's work and judging it effectively, so that was always going to be hard. I think it is fair to say that at first there was a lot of scepticism and I expected that. The thing that really helped was that it was in part of London and a group of people I really didn't know. So there was no baggage there. I didn't know anybody on the team prior to going there. I said to them 'I am there to have a look and have a completely open mind about you and what has been going on'. There were no preconceptions.

What I have tried to convey in my book, and in the drama, the way they were working doing this DNA swabbing was a very demanding way for people to have to work, not in the sense of their time specifically but mentally it was.

If you have a task to do all week and you go out to do and you only actually succeed in doing it on one or two occasions in the whole week that's not good for job satisfaction, you feel you are banging your head against a brick wall.

So I had that on my side when I said I think we need to change the approach quite radically. They saw this as a chance to be doing something positive that wasn't just knocking on people's doors and asking them for their DNA and being told to go away. There was something else that could be done so the acceptance of the newer ideas and different approach and the enthusiasm with which they approached it was perhaps better than I had anticipated. They bought into it pretty well. That was a bit of a surprise in some ways.

I was in part excited at the prospect of getting to grips with such a difficult and important investigation, and yet in part terrified that I would fail, and in some ways blemish the record and reputation I had worked so hard to earn in the Bellfield cases.

Other colleagues said to me 'you must be mad' They saw it as a no win situation. It was just so difficult and people had been trying for so long and nothing had seemed to work, and why should you work. And they may have been right, but we had a bit of good fortune and it did work. It is right to say I was terrified of that, but I suppose that was a great motivation to me as well that if I am going to avoid that, the only way I can avoid that is by taking on and succeeding

I had no illusions that what I was about to embark on would be easy, either professionally or personally. Nor could I take co-operation from my colleagues for granted.

**You describe yourself as like 'an ageing heavyweight who everyone thinks is past it but I'm pretty sure I've still got one more fight left in me'.**

That was it really. That is in the context of people were saying to me, people I trusted were saying 'it's a real shame you couldn't just do Bellfield, do the lectures afterwards for six months and then retire', because that would be a nice way to finish.

So when this came up they were saying 'why do you need to do this, you can say no. What is the point of doing this, there is so little chance of succeeding'. I still genuinely felt I had more to offer and that there was one more fight in me, and more success in me.

One colleague said it was a poisoned chalice. He said that there was no way I could come out of it successfully. Thankfully he was wrong!

### **Did this investigation affect you personally?**

There was one victim, a wonderfully dignified, well spoken lady, who took my hand and confided to me that she had been indecently assaulted.

It was so poignant and really upsetting. It was as much as I could do not to burst into tears there and then, holding onto her hand. She died six weeks later. She didn't eat again. She just gave up. Moments like that are pretty rare- probably a handful I can think of in 30 years, and that was certainly the last one and probably the most impactful one.

She somehow represented, or embodied all the spirit of stoicism that these old people, the victims, all displayed. They came from a completely different generation and had gone through all sorts of difficulties and privations during the war, and rationing afterwards.

They had seen tough times and had had to be quite stoic about things, and they carried that forward into being victims of the Night Stalker. This lady, just sitting there holding my hand, just brought all that into sharp focus. It was a really memorable, tough moment.

### **During your career were you able to switch off from work?**



Very very rarely would I take things home. I have always said there were two Colins: a work persona and a personal persona. I accepted that things happened in other people's lives that impacted on me because I had to deal with the fall out from them or the consequences. I had become somewhat immune to the idea that people out there can do the most ridiculous, sick, unthinkable things. But things like that didn't happen in my life so it didn't worry me too much. I am very lucky that I was able to switch off.

**The huge surveillance operation you implemented began on Wednesday 28 October 2009. The briefing you gave to the team before it began you have said was the 'most important briefing I would ever give'**

I was nervous because it was so vital that everything had to be redone properly to make the surveillance work to catch the Night Stalker.

**The Night Stalker was arrested on the 17th night of the surveillance, after a 17 year investigation. How did you hear he had been apprehended.**

It was the first night I had not been at work. I was in bed. I had been working literally 18 hours every day for two weeks. Nathan the DI who had been on a course for two weeks offered to work the weekend to give me a break.

At 1.20am on the Sunday the phone rang, and Nathan said 'I think we've got him'. I said to him 'you're joking' and he replied 'do you think I'd call you at 1.20am to have a joke with you?'

I'd like to have been there when they got him, of course, but the important thing was that he was potted as it were. I knew I wouldn't sleep. So I got up, had a shower and went in to the police station where they were holding the suspect.

When I met the suspect for the first time I had a conversation about cricket with him. It was bizarre. It fitted in with what everyone told us about him - 'he was the life and soul of the party, of the cricket team, played dominoes and darts in the pub. You must have the wrong man' they said.

He knew he was just about to have a swab taken inside his cheek which was going to send him to prison until he was very old man, if not until he dies. And he was so relaxed, so calm and so cool about it. He was just a chilling sort of bloke you might have had a beer in a bar with after a cricket match. He was just so ordinary. A great contrast to Bellfield who was just pugnacious and repulsive all the time.

With the Night Stalker it was hard to reconcile it with yourself when you look at him and talk to him and think 'I know what you have been doing for the last 17 years'. He was quite clever, he was good at making sure he didn't leave a trail and didn't leave evidence which would lead to him being identified. He was quite happy to leave his DNA because he knew we had that but it didn't matter because we had nothing to match it to.

The man suspected of being the Night Stalker was arrested on November 14 2009. Colin Sutton retired a year later.

**How did you feel about retiring from a job you loved?**

I did love the job, but I thought it was time to do something else. I definitely subscribe to the theory that I had these two wonderful cases that we'd succeeded in, I wasn't going to get a third one. I'd struggled in the immediate aftermath of the Bellfield case to come back down to earth almost and to go back into the rota. But I did, and I got back into it. I wasn't sure I wanted to or needed to do that again.

## **What have you been doing since your retirement?**

The very first job I did after I retired was delivering flowers for a florist around Surrey. I did bits of TV, and a short term contract doing investigations for Trading Standards. I met Ed Whitmore when he wanted to talk to me about another project he was working on. We hit it off. Ed took the idea of my book to Buffalo, and without him I wouldn't be doing this.

I always said I was a lucky SIO. You have to recognise luck when you have it and do the right thing afterwards. It has been great, and still is, and hopefully there will be more stuff. I have had opportunities I never thought I would get.

I wrote and presented documentaries for Sky Crime, The Real Manhunter on Levi Bellfield, and the Night Stalker, and sixteen single episodes on other murder cases I'd investigated.

I've got a commission to do another book which I've started writing which is about a cold case investigation of three -now probably four - murders which took place in London in the 1970s. I did a review of one of them when I was back in the Met in 2002. It piqued my interest so I've kept a watching brief on these cases.

## **ED WHITMORE THE WRITER Q & A**

### **What reactions did you have to the first Manhunt?**

I heard that people felt they were taken into the body of a real life police investigation in a way they hadn't been before, not to that level of detail and minutiae and that the idea of seeing an investigation through the eye of a senior investigation officer, sticking so close to the SIO and seeing the case unfold, felt very fresh as a way into a true crime story.

I think that success was to a massive degree down to Martin Clunes' performance. It was justly widely praised for its nuance and restraint. Martin's performance really sat at the heart of the whole piece.

People really responded to the realism of it, and their response to the fact that there weren't car chases, and there was not lots of blood and guts. It was very restrained and very real, and we took the audience into the spade work and the detail that detectives have to wade through to get a result.

### **How did this Manhunt sequel come about?**

I first heard about Colin Sutton, not through his work on the Levi Bellfield case, but through the case of the Night Stalker. My wife, Tracey Malone, who is also a script writer, brought the case to my attention because I was writing a script at the time about somebody who came on to finish other people's cases, called The Finisher. She said to me you should get in touch with this detective because he was a real life finisher. He got on board this very long running case and solved it very quickly.

He sounded like a very interesting character and an exceptional detective. I was living in LA at the time so the next time I was back in London I arranged to meet Colin. I initially talked to him about the Night Stalker case, and then he said 'would you like to read my diary of my work on the Amelie Delagrang investigation'. So I got side tracked into that and it ended up becoming Manhunt.

When Manhunt did so well, and we were excited about the idea of doing another story based around another of Colin's cases, the Night Stalker was the obvious candidate. It was a huge case involving a big London wide manhunt, and it was just a no brainer that this would be the second season show.

**You have said previously that the challenge and satisfaction of dramatising someone's real life, and working with that person was new to you, and that you would love to do it again.**

It's been great working with Colin again. I think this goes to every relationship on this second season. The entire core team has returned so we have this great shorthand. The best way I can describe that is that we all know what Manhunt is, and what Manhunt isn't and those parameters are quite important. Every show needs to know what its parameters are particularly with Manhunt because we are dealing with real cases and real people.

We have this aesthetic of what it is, and if it is ever tipping into the melodrama which would be completely fine in another show, I am not criticising melodrama per se, but as soon as it strays over a line we all go 'that's not Manhunt' and it's brilliant. At some point even though I created the show I have my moments where I get carried away with something and I have written a scene which might be exciting and might be dramatic but it is not Manhunt. Then Philippa Braithwaite, the executive producer, or Marc Evans the director, or Martin Clunes will say 'that's not Manhunt'. It is brilliant to be in a position where you know where the show is and we are all in concert with that.

**You built up a great rapport and friendship with Colin Sutton. Did this make the writing process easier?**

I think we had such an easy time this time because we knew each other. I think Colin was understandably wary about how we were going to truncate this vast investigation into three hours last time. I had to educate myself to see it through Colin's eyes, somebody telling your story, and how personal that felt, and how important it was to get it right.

Equally Colin had to see things through my perspective. I had this quite formidable job of distilling the essence of this investigation which went on for months and in fact years into three ITV hours which is nearer two hours than three when you take out the commercial breaks.

This time around we had an extra hour, which was great. But still the same challenges were there and it was just a joy to sit down with Colin and say 'these are the things we absolutely need, these are the things we would like to have, if we are going to create space to keep Colin's personal life in the show then other things will have to go'. Those decisions about the core ingredients, ran right the way through to the fine tuning. With the research Colin was there every step of the way. It has been an absolute privilege to collaborate with him again.

**You talked about how working with the person a drama is about is incredibly efficient because they are the living breathing resource.**

Absolutely You get this ultimate resource. Any question you have, Colin can answer. It wasn't just me. He was great with production design. They would ask Colin about details of the office with things like the memo board for the investigation and Colin could really get into the minutiae of that.

Many decisions that you take have a different implication or ramification if they were in a fictitious drama. But when something is real it changes everything. That goes down to the first Manhunt. We took the decision, because he never did, that Colin, although he met Levi Bellfield briefly in his

remand cell, he didn't do the interviews. Obviously in a fictitious drama there would be understandably be pressure for your lead actor, having watched him successfully catch his prey would then be the one to sit down opposite him under the lights and dig into him.

But actually the real Colin didn't, and we didn't. Colin was very good about all those things. He totally understands that sometimes you have to shortcut things just to make the story fit the four hours and he is very good at understanding about that. If there is something that fundamentally feels false and not true to the essence of police work then he will always say 'no, we can't do that' and I would always listen to that.

**In the first Manhunt you sent Colin the scripts as you wrote them and he would return them with any notes. Is that how you worked this time?**

It was a very seamless process. Because Colin produced this fantastic diary I was always in this position where I'd got material to work from. That would my starting point. I'd have a block of Colin's diary, and turn it into a script and send that to Colin. He would send notes back to me and I would check it with script editor and co-producer. We had really efficient working methods, which is why it would be lovely to do more stories with Colin, although I am not sure what they would be at this point.

**You clearly have a high regard for Colin Sutton and for his achievements during his police career - what is it about him you most admire?**

What I admire most about Colin is that he balances a complete tenacity and focus on the goal of catching whoever it is he is after with being decent, humble, approachable and a compassionate leader. That balance, despite his achievements is very ego free and is very much about the task in hand. It is not about him. There is no grand-standing, he is meticulous, and if he gets something in his laser beam sights he won't stop until he has achieved his goal. And that is the thing about him I admire the most.

The unblinking tenacity he displayed, I am sure in many other cases as well, but certainly in the first Manhunt in his pursuit of Levi Bellfield, and in Night Stalker it was the same thing. He came onto this case which had been going on for over a decade and it needed somebody to look at this massive case work, a huge amount of evidence, huge amount of statements, huge amount of man hours without success, they had not identified the perpetrator and Colin has this almost chess player like focus on where are the weaknesses in the investigation so far, what do we need to change, what are the potential ways we could catch this person. Really just to focus on that and tune out everything else and that is what he did. That is what gave rise to the operation that ultimately ensnared Minstead Man (the Night Stalker).

**Was part of your aim in writing scripts for the Night Stalker to be respectful of the feelings of the people involved?**

It is vital you are respectful. We also wanted to give a voice to the case because there is an argument, which I broadly agree with, that if the Night Stalker had been attacking on the scale he was attacking, but that the victims had been younger and more visible, it would have been a much much bigger story, given the severity of what was happening. But because they were elderly it just didn't make the headlines, and headlines at some point crudely do translate into police budgets.

The community pulled together and came up with all kinds of inventive things - like a lot of the elderly single women didn't have cars and they felt the Night Stalker could see that, so they came up with a neighbourhood watch plan where cars were parked on the drives of elderly residents who didn't own cars. It is little things like that we put in the drama, lots of quite inspiring detail of where you see a community coming together.

You see the police really doing everything they can to stop this man. They were absolutely dependent on interviewing those victims closely even though it was a traumatic thing they had to re-live in answering those questions. That was very tough on the victims, but also on the police officers. That took its toll, especially considering the number of victims and how long it went on for. Telling that story of the human toll of what this man did and putting that on screen is something I was really glad to have had the opportunity to do, especially in the light of the case not even coming close to garnering the attention it really merited at the time.

**A key decision in Manhunt 1 was that there wouldn't be any kind of conventional melodrama - no scenes of victims being attacked, no gruesome scenes.**

Generally we followed the same ethos as we had for the first series to avoid melodrama, and to really get the drama from the real life pressures of running a big police investigation rather than turning the volume up. It worked so well the first time that we stuck to it the second time.

We did include a scene where the Night Stalker is chased for two miles by a police officer on foot after he'd broken into an elderly woman's house. The victim had shown great fortitude and courage in phoning 999 and making herself understood despite the absolute terror she was in. Her bravery meant the police were able to get to her quickly, and the chase ensued. so we did include that scene because it would have been disrespectful not to, but we shot it very carefully.

**You talked about putting the audience into the cockpit of the investigation and into Colin's shoes in the first series.**

The massive surveillance operation to catch the Night Stalker was taking its toll on Colin. The operation took place at night, but he also had many things to do during the day. He was sleeping for just an hour at night, and getting really seriously fatigued, and with all the pressure on him, just beginning to really push him to the very limits of his faculties.

So we really pushed the idea of putting the audience in Colin's shoes in Manhunt 2 and I think it works very effectively. The way the world feels when you are very very tired, the way things sound and the way things are far off, we wanted to get the balance right. It was an unsustainably hard schedule for anybody but he was absolutely determined, and that speaks to Colin's tenacity. He is the kind of person who is prepared to do that. He is a man of quiet self sacrifice.

**What have you gained from working on these two Manhunt productions. What did you learn about the police?**

The thing that has really impressed on me is, above and beyond the nuts and bolts of their job, which is catching criminals, how much the police also become involved with the victims and how much of their own heart and soul they put into not just catching the criminal but doing everything they can to make sure the victims' experience from there on is as painless as possible.

In the end they have a job to do and there has to be some separation but it is inevitable when you are getting into the detail with an elderly woman about her assault you can't but be moved, you can't not be affected.

That is something we explore a bit more in the new series. It is almost two jobs in one: there is the mechanics of a police investigation and accruing sufficient evidence to get the green light from the CPS to move to charging, and that in itself is a massive responsibility. Then on top of that they are dealing with people who have been through appalling ordeals, and actually to some degree have to perform similar functions as social workers.

The totality of what police officers give up in their duties is far beyond what I appreciated before I started on Manhunt. They give their all and that has very tough consequences on their own lives.

There is an inherent element of self sacrifice in police work that I didn't fully appreciate but find absolutely awe inspiring.

### **What impact did Manhunt 11 have on you personally?**

The fact that the Night Stalker's victims were all elderly did make me think very deeply about how we treat the elderly in society. The fact that the case had not garnered the headlines it might have done if the victims had been younger made me ask the question why not.

That is something we touch on particularly in the last episode. The family liaison officer gives a speech which came out of a lot of the research I did in how we don't really see the elderly. We register their presence but don't see them as individuals, we see them as a flock in a way. Part of the reason we do that is because we know that is our destiny. It is a destination we can't avoid. The slightly out of sight out of mind attitude that we can have as a society towards the elderly members of our community is rooted in our own fear of the future. The elderly have been very much in the forefront of the Covid story and how we as a society, have a duty to protect them and say an 80 year old's life is as important as an eight year old's. The themes of this series are very timely.

### **Did the crimes shock you?**

Absolutely, I couldn't recall coming across such a bizarre mixture of traits in a serial offender. He obviously had a vicious, brutal streak, he was rapist, he was violent. But he also, sometimes within the same offence would ask the victims if they would like a cup of tea. He would talk to them and take their pulse, sometimes because they were faking illness or the onset of a heart attack to get rid of him.

He displayed this meticulous preparation which as we comment in the drama seemed almost at odds with the depravity of what he was there to do. He displayed this almost forensic level of self disciplined caution, which all contributed to making him very hard to catch.

### **Were you disturbed to discover that these crimes had gone undetected for so long?**

It is absolutely mind blowing when I sat down and read the material Colin sent through, and the fact it had been going on for so long. The phrase that always came to mind was recurring nightmare. You read case after case and it sounds awful but they begin to blur into each other because he did the same thing again and again, following almost like a rehearsed script.

At the end of it you have got on the other side of the fence the police trying to catch him and they are always one step behind.

That is the frustration Colin feels when he joins the case. They are all working hard but something in their approach is not working, hence they haven't caught him and then there's this wonderful moment of Colin thinking I am just here to do a review, but actually I think there is another way of doing this. He brings this fresh eye - it is a really stirring moment. At the start it is quite difficult for him because the team don't make him super welcome understandably to some degree. He is there to review but then he has this moment of inspiration of where he thinks I could actually steer this ship in a different direction with a better chance of getting a result. That is really the story of Manhunt 2: when the rubber hits the road is when Colin begins to put his hand on the tiller.

Ed wrote Viewpoint for ITV, with Emmy award winning Fleabag director Harry Bradbeer. He is keen to collaborate with Colin Sutton again for a new Manhunt drama.

## **Philippa Braithwaite Executive Producer**

### **How did Manhunt The Night Stalker come about?**

After the first Manhunt Colin Sutton offered to share with us the diaries he had made of another major investigation he had been asked to become involved with.

### **Why did you decide to dramatise it?**

We wanted to show the dedication and tenacity of Colin Sutton and the police officers in the Operation Minstead inquiry which led to the arrest and conviction of the Night Stalker. The story is told through the eyes of Colin Sutton and it focuses on his approach to the inquiry.

### **Where was the drama filmed?**

The drama was mostly filmed in Bristol, with one week of filming in London. We made the decision to shoot in Bristol because we believed it would enable us to adhere more safely to Covid protocols, using carefully chosen locations which would reduce the risks to everyone involved. The health and safety of our cast and crew was paramount.

For instance we used a former bank to build the sets for interior scenes so we didn't have to go into working premises which may have compromised the safety of the employees there as well as our own cast and crew.

### **The story is based on Colin Sutton's diaries of the investigation how much has he been involved?**

Colin Sutton liaised closely with writer Ed Whitmore when he was compiling the scripts, just as he did on the first Manhunt. He shared his diaries with Ed Whitmore before he started writing the scripts. He has also acted as an advisor to ensure authenticity of police procedures.

### **Did you make contact with the police officers involved in the investigation?**

The police officers involved have been consulted throughout the process. If they chose not to be represented on screen we took them out, and used fictitious characters to tell the story. If officers who chose to continue to be portrayed in the drama had any issues with the contents of the scripts, amendments were made accordingly.

### **There was some criticism of the police in their handling of the inquiry. How do you deal with that in the drama?**

The drama tells the story from Colin Sutton's perspective, from the moment he was asked to step in to review the case. It does not portray what happened with the inquiry before he joined.

### **The victims of these brutal attacks, and their families, may be traumatised by seeing the horror they faced being played out in a television drama. How have you tried to protect them?**

We went to great lengths to try to contact the victims and their families to let them know how we planned to make the drama. Some victims have sadly passed away and it has not been possible to locate their families. But where we did make contact, we ensured they were happy with us proceeding with the drama.

None of the victims or their family members have been named in the drama. They are entitled to life long anonymity, and we maintained their anonymity by using fictitious names. Neither have we filmed at any of the homes of the victims.

**Will the victims and their families be offered a private screening before transmission?**

We will offer them a viewing of each episode in their own homes prior to transmission.