

Cast for Stephen Merchant's The Offenders (w/t) announced as filming resumes in Bristol

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The Offenders (w/t) is a six part series from multi-award-winning writer and director Stephen Merchant coming to BBC One and Amazon Prime Video.



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The series follows seven strangers from different walks of life forced together to complete a Community Payback sentence in Bristol. As they become involved in each other's lives, they also become involved with a dangerous criminal gang.

At first, the Offenders seem like archetypes easy to pigeonhole, but gradually we see behind their façades, understand their hidden depths and what made them the people they are today. We are reminded that no one is all good or all bad. Everyone has a story.

Academy Award winning actor Christopher Walken becomes an offender undertaking community service in his first lead British television role, alongside writer and director Stephen Merchant, with Rhianne Barreto, Gamba Cole, Darren Boyd, Clare Perkins and Eleanor Tomlinson.

Meet The Offenders:

- Rhianne Barreto (Honour, Hanna) plays Rani, a gifted but rebellious maths student who has been hot-housed from a young age by her loving but controlling parents

- Gamba Cole (Soon Gone: A Windrush Chronicle) plays Christian, a young man struggling to raise his kid sister while staying one step ahead of the Brook Hill Crew, a notorious Bristol crime gang
- Christopher Walken plays Frank, an inveterate scoundrel trying to reconnect with his family
- Stephen Merchant (The Office, Jojo Rabbit) plays Greg, a lonely lawyer coping with divorce, work-place bullying and scary men with knives
- Darren Boyd (Killing Eve, Lucky Man) plays John, a businessman and law-abiding pillar of the community furious at being labelled a criminal
- Clare Perkins (EastEnders) plays Myrna, an ageing activist and campaigner who has lost none of her youthful radicalism
- Eleanor Tomlinson (Poldark, The War of the Worlds) plays Gabby, an aristocratic celebute whose glamour and life of leisure masks deep-rooted problems

Additional cast include: Jessica Gunning (Back, Pride) as Diana; the Offenders' Community Service Supervisor, who supervises with what she deludedly believes is an iron first, Dolly Wells (Dracula, Doll & Em) as Frank's daughter, Margaret, Ian McElhinney (Game of Thrones, Derry Girls) as John's father, John Snr, Nina Wadia (Goodness Gracious Me, Bend it like Beckham) as Rani's mother, Shanthi, Aiyana Goodfellow as Esme and Charles Babalola as Malaki.

Stephen Merchant says: "Like so many other productions, we'd just begun filming when Covid-19 struck and we had to shut down. I'm delighted that we're now finally able to resume filming with this incredible cast and finish this long-standing passion project. This is the first series I've made in my hometown of Bristol and I'm so excited to showcase the city and utilise the amazing local talent."

As the production is taking place during the current Covid-19 pandemic, additional controls are being implemented by the production team. Big Talk and Four Eyes are committed to creating a safe working space and have developed comprehensive protocols in accordance with current government guidelines to ensure that the series is produced in a safe and responsible manner. Production have worked closely with the BBC and Amazon Prime Video to develop the detailed Covid-19 protocol policy, implementing various safety measures and testing to keep the cast, crew and public safe.

These include; a designated Covid-19 supervisor on set to look after the production's safety precautions and efforts. Using local crew and supporting artists where possible. Soft isolation for all cast (two weeks prior to their first day on shooting). Twice weekly PCR testing for all those working within Close Contact Cohorts. Split departments into smaller cohorts (e.g. two make up trailers with separate teams working apart from one another). Ensuring all crew are working two metres apart from each other, wearing a face mask at all times and providing wash and sanitisation facilities in all workspaces. A strict zonal system (Zone 1, 2 & 3) - limiting the number of people within the set (both within the studio and on location). Finally, continuing to monitor ongoing changes to the government guidelines on any travel implications in regards to the re-introduction of the tier system.

The series is a co-production between BBC One and Amazon Studios. The series was commissioned by BBC Comedy and BBC One, produced by Big Talk (Mum, Friday Night Dinner, Defending the Guilty) with Stephen Merchant's Four Eyes. Big Talk is part of ITV Studios.

The series will premiere on BBC One and BBC iPlayer in the UK and on Amazon Prime Video in the United States, Canada and Australia.

The series is created by Stephen Merchant and Elgin James. Executive Producers are Stephen Merchant for Four Eyes, Luke Alkin Kenton Allen and Matthew Justice for Big Talk, and Kate Daughton is the Commissioning Editor for the BBC.

Directors are Stephen Merchant and John Butler (Finding Joy). Producer is Nickie Sault (The Virtues, World On Fire). The series was commissioned for the BBC by Charlotte Moore, Chief Content Officer; Shane Allen, Controller Comedy Commissioning and Kate Daughton, Head of Comedy.

Robert Del Naja from multi award-winning Bristol electronic band Massive Attack will compose the music for the series.

The US, Canada, and Australia deal with Amazon was brokered by BBC Studios who are also handling global distribution.

Filming is currently underway in Bristol, UK.

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