

# CATHY TYSON

Despite her Bafta, the actor says that every role she gets is still like winning the lottery

### What's the view from your sofa?

I used to have a small TV because I was against letting it dominate the room, but my partner is a massive film geek and viewing is very important to him. So, I doubled the size of my TV, but it doesn't dominate the room. We have a corner suite that we watch it from.

### What have you been watching on your room-appropriate TV recently?

I'm drawn to documentaries, and I've just watched *Sean Combs: the Reckoning* on Netflix. I'm also enjoying *The Beast in Me*.

### Who controls the remote at home?

We share it. If I walk into the room and my partner is watching a programme, he will stop to talk to me. He doesn't just continue watching, which is incredible, isn't it?

### You recently starred as a crime boss in the drama *Blue Lights*, and you play the head of MI6 in the comedy *Black Ops*. Which genre do you prefer?

I like immersing myself in characters and I'm fascinated by good writing. As long as my mind is engaged, I'm a happy bunny. I just try to make things interesting and bring some humanity to even the baddies I play – they were kids once, too. But being around people who do a lot of comedy is always lovely.

### *Black Ops* also makes pertinent points about racism and corruption. Do you think comedy is an effective medium to explore difficult topics?

Yes, and I think it gets overlooked. Even though I'm not employed in a lot of comedic roles, I'm still aware of the need. I revere comedy and I don't think it gets the respect it deserves, budget-wise, as well as the kudos.

### Your breakout role was as a sex worker, Simone, in the 1986 film *Mona Lisa*, and you played another one in the 1990s TV drama *Band of Gold*.



### What's your opinion on how TV series and films represent that occupation?

In the area of sex workers, there are still loads of stories to be told from a realistic point of view. When *Band of Gold* came out, hearing and seeing these women at home, it was revolutionary. I let go of my prejudices of sex workers on that job, because I met them in person for research – the prejudices were there, but I thought, "I've got to drop them before I play this part." I've heard that the film *Anora* [starring Mikey Madison as a sex worker from Brooklyn] is exploitative, not that it shouldn't be, but the way it was done was exploitative. However, I do want to watch it.

### Were you offered a lot of similar parts after *Band of Gold*?

Yes, so I veered away from them. Kay Mellor [the series creator] asked me and the other cast members if we wanted to do a fourth series, and because of my desire to do something different – and even though I didn't have a lot of money back then – I said no. I thought, why not leave on a high, because I know things can be watered down.

### DOWN TIME



#### SNACK OF CHOICE

**Crisps, nuts, or popcorn. But it's not good to eat while watching TV, because you can't hear stuff.**



#### RADIO

**Radio 4 goes on straight away. I listened to *The History Podcast* about the arrest of Augusto Pinochet in hospital – and I found it so engaging.**

### Is having variety as an actor important to you?

I became an actor for variety, but I don't make a judgement on other people if they're happy in what they do. If you want to be in a situation for 20 years, the security and the feeling of family that brings is absolutely fantastic. When you finish a job, it's like a death every time, so I can understand why people would want to avoid that.

### You won the Bafta for best supporting actress in 2022 for the Channel 4 drama *Help*. How did that feel?

When you get a nomination, that's an honour in itself. Every job I get is like winning the lottery. *Help* was a very small part, and the other people in my category had a lot more screen time, so I didn't expect it. Sometimes you think, "I can stop acting now. I've done what I've needed, so if you want to retire, you can." But when I look at it, it reminds me to be a good actor, to work hard and to still have aspirations. **STEVE O'BRIEN**

*All episodes of Black Ops are available on BBC iPlayer*