

VIEW FROM MY SOFA

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

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