

Famous for his role as the steely Superintendent Ted Hastings, head of AC-12 in BBC1's *Line of Duty*, Adrian Dunbar took a demotion of sorts to play a retired Detective Inspector in the ITV1 crime drama *Ridley*. But the series, which returns this week, gave the actor his first ever lead as the grief-stricken Alex Ridley, who found himself returning to the force as a consultant. "Police procedurals give you a chance to develop character and backstory," the 67-year-old actor tells us. "They're the bread and butter of TV."

It's been three years since the last series of *Ridley*. What can we expect from this second run?

With a series like this, it kind of finds its feet the second time round, it starts to know more about what it is. Alex was two years on from his wife and child dying in the first series, and now it's another two years on. We don't lean so heavily into him being isolated and grieving – I think it's important for the audience to see that people can move on from grief.

What makes *Ridley* different, do you think, from your average crime drama?

It sets up its own niche. It's not cosy crime by any means, and yet it's occupying that Sunday-night slot where you can't be too visceral. So you have the serious police procedural that we devote time and thought to, and then there's the family aspect. I was insistent that we needed somewhere else to go, and that's the jazz club and the musical element.

As well as being an actor, you're also a singer. So, was it your idea to have Ridley sing in each episode?

Yes, I was thinking back to cop shows that I enjoyed when I was growing up, like *The Rockford Files*, *Columbo* and *Kojak* where they all had these quirks that made you really interested in the central character and the *mise-en-scène*.

This is your first show as a lead. Is there more pressure being first



TEN QUESTIONS WITH

ADRIAN DUNBAR

The *Line of Duty* star loves nothing more than a good crime drama – and clandestine curry club dates...

'The internet goes mad if Vicky, Martin and I are all seen together'

ADRIAN DUNBAR

on the call sheet, as opposed to being part of an ensemble, as *Line of Duty*?

There is extra pressure, yes. With *Ridley*, it's no secret that I'm working on the scripts myself as they come in, and I do a lot of

work tidying up and suggesting things. There is pressure in holding something together and there's physical pressure too, because you're in nearly every scene. So it's physically demanding as well as creatively.

Talking of *Line of Duty*, are you still in regular contact with your co-stars, Martin Compston and Vicky McClure? Is the WhatsApp group still active?

Myself, Martin and Vicky talk all the time, but Jed [Mercurio, the series creator], not so much, because he's working on a project in the US at the minute. So yeah, we're very tight, and we'll meet up



ALEX ON CALL
Adrian Dunbar plays retired detective Alex Ridley



THE LINE OF DUTY
From left: Steve Arnott (Martin Compston), Ted Hastings (Adrian Dunbar) and Kate Fleming (Vicky McClure)

and have a curry, then the internet goes mad if we're all seen together.

What's the latest news on a seventh series of *Line of Duty*? There were rumours last year that an official announcement was imminent, but we've heard nothing since...

There were signs that we were going to be doing something next year. We're all waiting for the BBC to say, "Yeah, it's happening". An official confirmation is what we're waiting on, but all the signs are very good. Jed hasn't given us any updates – he's beavering away, I suspect. He very rarely tells us anything – we're going to have to get hold of him and find out what's going on!

You guys must be as excited about reading the scripts as we are about watching it?

We're desperately keen to hear what the story is. God knows what's going to happen to any of us. If this is to be the last of it, then you suspect that something dramatic is coming. One of the shocking things that I realised after series two or three was the writer can just do away with you. Vicky usually gets the scripts first, and she's a very quick reader, so she will start sending us cryptic messages that I'll really unnerve me

and Martin. Like, "Oh my God, episode three – what happens to you!"

You guys have talked about wanting to do a project together away from *Line of Duty*. Do you have anything planned? Sadly, nobody's ever approached us. Maybe we

should try and think of something ourselves. We could do a travel show, if we could manage to keep Martin in check...

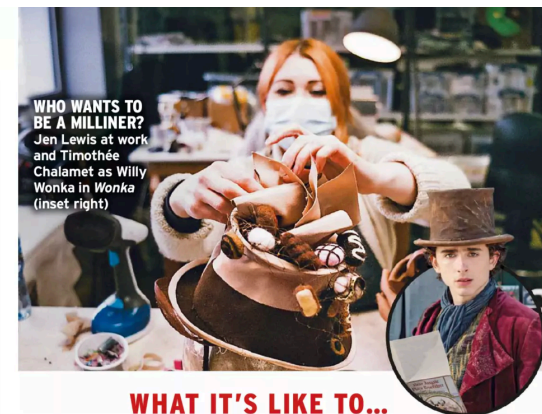
What's it like to find major success relatively late in your acting career? It must be satisfying to be able to have your pick of jobs now?

Even when the work wasn't coming in, I've always turned my hand to something else – writing, directing, producing. But the landscape has changed, you're absolutely right. For someone like me who devoured British television from the 1960s and 70s, to then go and create this iconic character with the help of my good friend Jed, that's the top of the tree for me. It provided me with the stuff I needed to go and do a series on my own.

If you're a vintage TV aficionado, are there any series from the past you would have loved to have been a part of?

The Sweeney – that was great, wasn't it? I love all that London-based gangster stuff. Those shows were the ones you really wanted to be in because you just had the feeling that everybody was having such a good time! STEVE O'BRIEN

Ridley is on at 8.00pm Sunday ITV1



WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLINER?
Jen Lewis at work and Timothée Chalamet as Willy Wonka in *Wonka* (inset right)

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO...

make sure the hat fits

Milliner Jen Lewis has stretched and stitched bowlers, berets and bonnets for films and TV shows including *Wonka*, *Wicked* and *Bridgerton*. For her latest job, she created hats for the giant, stony-faced superhero Ben Grimm, AKA The Thing (Ebon Moss-Bachrach) in *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*.

HEADS UP I was a creative kid and studied art at college in Manchester. I worked for a corsetier, then in a vintage shop. One day, the woman who owned the shop brought in a massive box of hats, a hat block and a steamer. I was fascinated. When I moved to Brighton, I got a job at the Glynedebourne Opera House in the costume department. I found out who made the hats, and he trained me for eight years.

GOOD MEASURE My closest relationship is with the costume designer. For principal actors, we'll be given specific briefs, but for crowd scenes, I'll get mood boards and be asked to work within a "world". I normally take measurements around the head, but if the hat needs to be more fitted, I'll measure ear-to-ear and front-to-back. Then I'll mock up the size using my dolly heads. The Thing is so gigantic that they had to

send me a big model of his head so the hats would fit properly. I'll make samples to get the shape, then I'll do a fitting with the actor and take notes before making it using the proper materials.

PULL THE WOOL I love felt, but I also use a stiff cotton called buckram, and sinamay, which is made from the stalks of a banana tree and is sustainable. Wools can be better for some things, and "blocking" is where you steam felt, stretch it into shape and pin it in place. I take wigs into consideration because it doesn't work if the hair is fighting the hat, or the hat the hair. We try to make it as easy for the hats to pin so they don't fly off in the middle of scenes, especially for dancers.

HAT TRICK Although *The Thing* is CGI, the hats are real – same with the Oompas' hats in *Wonka*. The hats are turned into digital replicas and are used with on-set stand-ins. For *Wonka*, I also worked with the prop department to make about ten trick top hats for Timothée Chalamet – where a jar of chocolates pops out, for example. For *Wicked*, we made over 1,000 hats. Every hat was different except for the soldiers'. By the end, I was sick of green!

JONATHAN WELLS



PERFECT FIT
The Thing's hat on a model head (right) and as seen in the film

The Fantastic Four: First Steps is in UK cinemas now