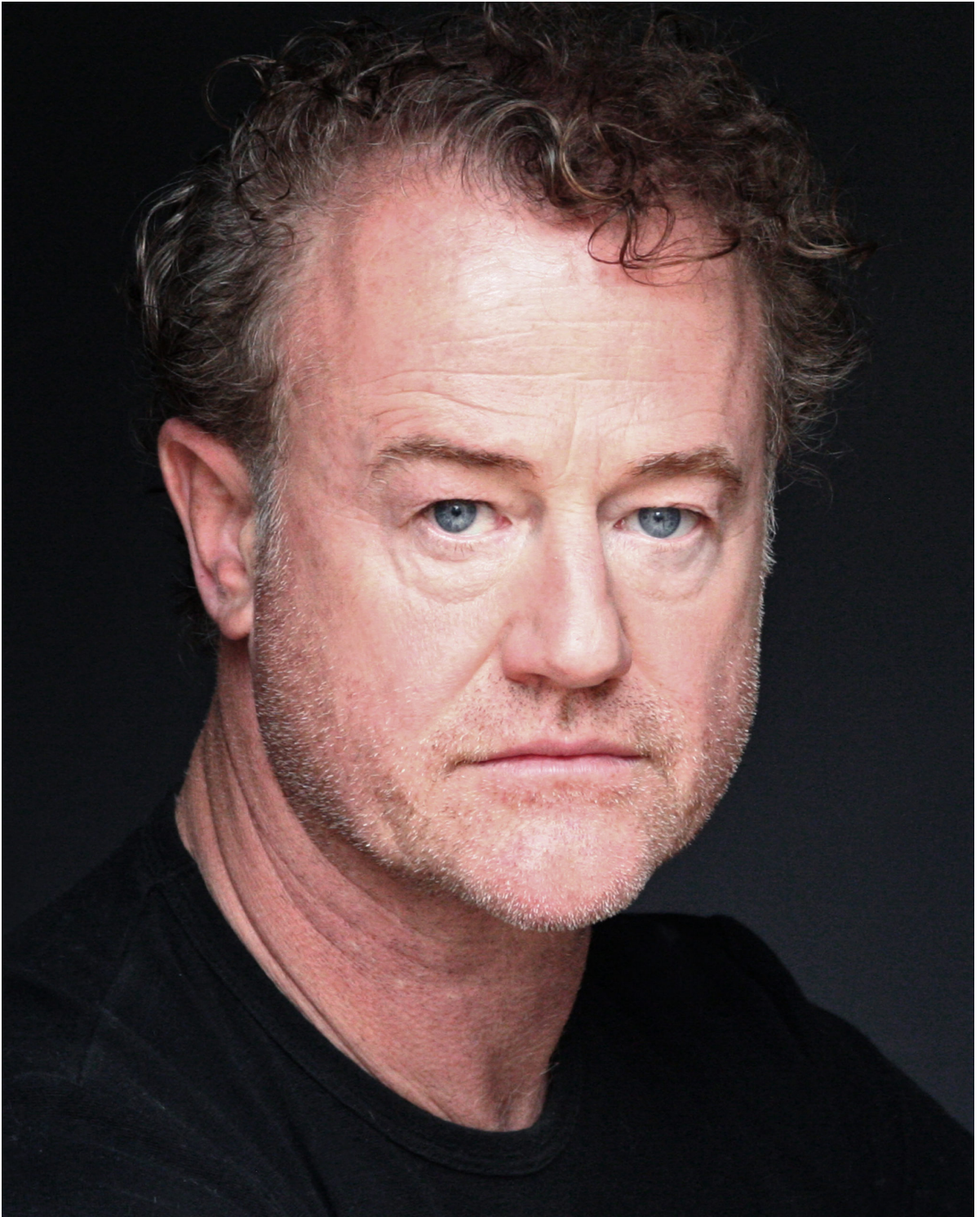


Meeting David Macpherson – the man behind The Rig – now filming in Leith

The opening of First Stage Studios in Leith is already paying dividends for the city with filming just started on a dark thriller penned by local screenwriter, David Macpherson.

The six-part Amazon Original series *The Rig*, which is being produced entirely in Scotland, includes a cast headed by Edinburgh's own Iain Glen, who starred in *Game of Thrones*, *Downtown Abbey*, *Resident Evil* and too many others to mention.

The cast also includes Martin Compston, DS Steve Arnott in the hit series *Line of Duty*, and also on board is *The Bodyguard* director John Strickland who worked on the popular police drama. Other confirmed cast include fellow Scot Mark Bonnar who recently starred in *Guilt*, Owen Teale (*Game of Thrones*) and *Schitt's Creek*'s Emily Hampshire.



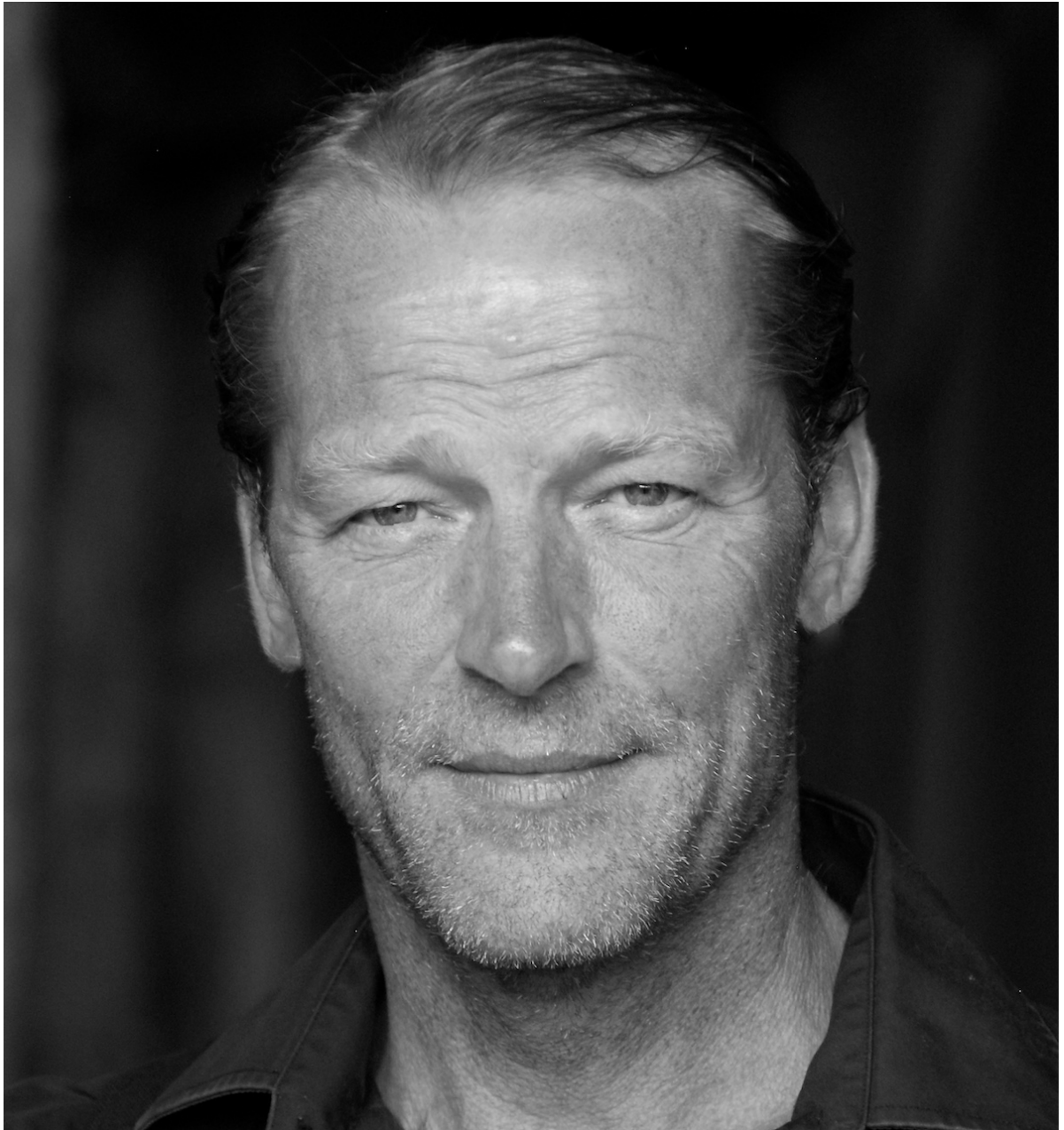
Owen Teale



Emily Hampshire



Mark Bonnar



Iain Glen



David Macpherson on set at First Stage Studios where filming has just begun. PHOTO Mark Mainz

After a spell working for the late Liberal Democrat MP Charles Kennedy, Macpherson left the Highlands to work in the party's whips office in the House of Lords, returning later to Scotland to work as a civilian researcher for the police in Aberdeen. To him Edinburgh is "the writer's city", but despite doing plenty of writing he wasn't brave enough to opt for a creative writing course, and instead plumped for environmental

studies when he returned to university in the capital.

It was back in August that Macpherson enjoyed a “wow” moment when he received the news that *The Rig*, based on a North Sea oil rig, had been picked up by Amazon. And he is delighted it is being filmed on his home patch at the Leith studios set up by Jason Connery and Bob Last, and which many believe could herald an exciting new chapter for the Scottish film industry.

He said: “In many ways it’s all the things that, when you try and become a screenwriter, they tell you probably won’t happen. It has been a brilliant experience, a wild ride, and very exciting.”

When we spoke, filming was about to begin and Macpherson was doing some redrafting of his script. He has enjoyed strong support from Amazon, as he explained: “Their whole thing when we started was, ‘don’t hold back, go big’, and they’ve been incredibly helpful.

“When I got the go ahead from Amazon, I had just written a Twitter thread about being unsure if I had broken into the industry yet, or if I was still an amateur screenwriter. Literally half an hour later our producer Derek Wax called me to say we had the green light.

“I love showing off Scotland and cannot wait to get the crew here and let them see the country. I often set my stories here because I think we’ve got some of the best landscapes and vistas in the world. And now we have this great facility at Leith as well.”



Photo. of David Macpherson Mark Mainz

This *Rig* is the first of his scripts to make it into production, although he has written other pieces which are at various stages of development. During an essentially self-taught career path he wrote *WRATH* – developed with Balloon Entertainment – which was shortlisted for the All3Media New

Voices Award 2018 and also for the 2019 TV Brit List of the best unproduced scripts in the UK.

He believes it was WRATH which probably got him noticed. He is also a previous winner of the Edinburgh Short Film Festival Script Pitch Competition with CAPES, and was one of Edinburgh City of Literature's Story Shop participants in 2015.

Produced by Wild Mercury Production, The Rig is set on the "Kinloch Bravo" platform where the crew find themselves cut off from all communications as a mysterious fog rolls in and they are "driven to the limits of both their loyalties and their endurance, into a confrontation with forces beyond their imagination".

The plot's twists and turns are under wraps but Highland-born Macpherson did share a little insight: "It has a strong mystery element, and there's a touch of sci-fi and thriller. There will be big stunts and big action, and it crosses lots of genres. But we are trying as much as possible to ground everything in the real – so even the more sci-fi elements will all trace back to as close as we can to real scientific phenomena. And we are trying to make our rig as real as possible and authentic."

Macpherson has leaned on earlier memories from stories told by his father Keith who worked in the Nigg yards on the Cromarty Firth building massive oil and gas rigs and later on rigs all over the world. Growing up in Ardrross, between the Cromarty and Dornoch firths, Macpherson felt that oil platforms have always been in his life, towering over the town when they came back in for repair.

He said: "My dad always came back with stories and I just find them a fascinating sort of microcosm of life – so important to Scotland, but also still a very hidden world unless you're working in it."

He added on Twitter: "We can't wait to take you to one of the

harshest environments on Earth for an action packed story that pushes to the absolute limits. You won't have seen anything like this before!"

It may be an ironic twist that a screenplay and drama series based on the oil industry is being filmed in studios which were once home to a wave energy company and part of the move away from heavy oil to green energy, but he's happy he can propel himself by bike to the location in 20 minutes from his home in Portobello.

A release date is yet to be announced for The Rig which will be available on Amazon Prime Video.



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