

David Macpherson's The Rig – premiere held in Edinburgh

David Macpherson had the outline idea for The Rig partly from the stories his dad told him about working in the oil and gas industry.

Now four years after he framed the original idea for the series, he and members of the ensemble cast enjoyed a star-studded night out in the capital's Everyman Cinema for the premiere of Macpherson's first series. The Rig will be exclusively launched on Amazon Prime Video in 240 countries worldwide from 6 January, taking a series made wholly in Edinburgh to living rooms across the world.

The first episode was screened at Everyman to an invited audience on Tuesday evening and was met with very warm applause before Gordon Smart led a Q&A session during which he notched up at least five digs at his chum, Martin Compston.

The writer, who now lives in Portobello, hails from Alness with oil rigs nearby at Nigg. He said: "Even when I was at school they used to tower over the town, when they were brought in to get repaired. That part of it – the oil part – has been with me throughout my life.

"But it was not until we did our location trip to a rig just off Orkney – when I was on board and realised there was about 70 feet of legs to climb up just to get to the top deck – that I realised this was the place that all these guys spend about half their lives."

David continued: “Again thanks to my dad – he was a fan of big American sci-fiction films with actors like John Carpenter and he introduced me to those. I always thought I would love to do something like that. I can remember the first adult film I was allowed to watch was Terminator 2 on video, and that is still probably one of my top films.

“I started the process of writing The Rig in December 2018 with my one page idea for the series.”

The filming for the six part series took place at First Stage Studios in Leith as well as some outdoor locations in Edinburgh, including in the dry dock next door.

But as to whether there is any room left for another series of The Rig everyone was tight-lipped. David did admit that he would love to do more however.

The pandemic clearly had an effect on the cast and crew who had to form a bubble when they came to Edinburgh to shoot the first scenes in spring 2021 just after our first interview with [Macpherson](#).

PIPER ALPHA

David admitted that Piper Alpha was a prime consideration all the way through, as although to many the disaster seems a long time ago there are others for whom it is a very live issue. He said: ‘It was very important to me that we treat people who worked there with dignity and respect. It is a titanic achievement what has been done in the North Sea – and also a dangerous one.

“I have been reflecting a lot on the trips my dad used to take – both how difficult that must have been for him to be away all that time and also for my mum as well. The scary thing she explained to me is that the coming home was the best and the worst time – it would be exciting that they were on the

helicopter but also the most dangerous time. You never quite knew if the phone rang on that day, if it was a good or a bad phone call.

“I think that as a child I wasn’t aware of it – and I wanted to stress that there are people who have given their lives to this industry. I hope the show gives real respect to these people. Of course it is a difficult time right now thinking about what the future might hold and that is what the show gets into as well. I wanted to tell the story about now.

“Oil has been important in Scotland’s history but we have to make choices about what the future is going to look like. My aim is not to present the answers but to open up the questions and discussions – as well as people enjoying the entertainment of the show.”

Rochenda Sandall who plays Cat Braithwaite has family who work offshore (and a brother who is a nuclear engineer). She said that it was a big responsibility to tell the right story in the right way: “Obviously a lot of men lost their lives that night so it is integral in the research to tell the right story and do it justice.” Sandall and Owen Teale, another member of the cast, had roles in Line of Duty which Martin Compston starred in as Steve Arnot, and John Strickland who directed Line of Duty also directed the first three episodes of this new series. There is an element of getting the band back together, but also some new faces.



Emily Hampshire pictured at a screening event for *The Rig*, at the Everyman, Edinburgh ahead of its launch on Friday 6th January.

Attending cast and creators included Martin Compston, Iain Glen, Emily Hampshire, Rochenda Sandall, Mark Bonnar, John Strickland and more.

Emily Hampshire, who plays Rose in the series, said: "For me, the first time I got on the set with everybody and they were all wearing masks so I could not understand anyone. Even without the masks it was hard! But i think it did make us all feel as isolated as all the characters are on *The Rig*."

The *Schitt's Creek* star (she played Stevie Budd with Dan and Eugene Levy) talked of the move between the two sets. She said: "I loved what a departure it was to go from the motel to the rig. I had never been on something of this scale."

Unlike some of her Scottish actor colleagues in the production, she was also unaware of the oil industry in general. She said: "I had no idea about Piper Alpha or any of

these things. I really got an education about all of that and I love the respect paid to the oil industry.”



Martin Compston pictured at Everyman Edinburgh 6 December 2022
Martin Compston agreed the set in Leith was an amazing one. He said: "Hats off to the production team. It looked right and when you were going through it you felt like you were really on a rig. It is a tribute to where we are as an industry at the moment that we can do that – take a studio and build something realistic.

Compston, who plays comms officer Fulmer in the series, grew up in Greenock and his own father worked in the oil industry, but as to a career option on the rigs that was clearly a no for Compston who admitted he is no good with his hands. He said: "I always had this glamorous idea of what Aberdeen was like because for working class people with a trade it was good money. But it is a hard hard life.

"I wish people could see the show the way I read it because the Director John Strickland – who I have worked with on a few things – he phoned me and told me about the series set on a rig and that there was a part he wanted me to play.

"He knew that my dad had worked on the rigs and there was an obvious connection. I thought it was going to be these hard-drinking men and some sort of social drama. But by part two I had no idea what was going on – in the best possible way. It takes this life turn that you don't see coming and to read it like that was wonderful because I knew nothing about it. It is great to be in something in Scotland with this size of ambition. It is great to be part of something which is a big ensemble – you don't feel you are carrying it alone as there are so many strands to the story. One thing is that this is not boring. It will get people talking, that's for sure.

"I am a West Coast boy but Edinburgh is my wife's favourite place. We had a great time here when we were filming and we became quite a close bunch."



Martin Compston and Iain Glen pictured at a screening event for *The Rig*, at the Everyman, Edinburgh

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

One of the people who was very important to the authenticity of the production was former Offshore Installation Manager (OIM) Derek Anderson who advised Iain Glen on his role as OIM Magnus. Glen said the best advice Anderson gave him was that “as an OIM you are responsible for everything but in charge of nothing. You are stuck in a difficult place – a bit like a focus puller – people only notice you when it goes horribly wrong. In the story within *The Rig* things go out of everyone’s ken, everyone’s knowledge and so you try to use the qualities you have as an OIM in a situation which is very much unknown.”

Glen said: “This was a very fine script but I was helped so much by Derek Anderson a recently retired OIM. David Macpherson clearly knew the world and had written a very plausible script and every scene to do with the way the rig

functions had been very well portrayed. I basically got Derek to read my lines and add a few practical and useful words. He was also present when we shot the scene and so I would get a wee nod from Derek after the scene to tell me it was okay.”

Glen clearly relished his role as the man in charge of the rig but for him being back here in Edinburgh was one of the best parts. He said: “I loved being here for three or four months filming every day in Edinburgh, and I definitely rediscovered the city and the beauty of it and the character of the city. It is hard when you have been pulled away from your folks. I’ve lived in London since I went to drama school, so to come back and just be able to pop in and see my mum on a daily basis – well that characterised the job for me more than anything.”



Rochenda Sandall, Mark Bonnar and Martin Compston pictured at a screening event for The Rig, at the Everyman, Edinburgh. The series was the first commissioned at First Stage Studios owned by Jason Connery and Bob Last in Leith. Mark Bonnar, who

plays Alwyn, loves the new production studio and said: "It's wonderful to see the blossoming of Scotland as a hub for this kind of thing, especially when it is a home-grown tale, a home-grown writer and a lot of the cast too. It is pleasurable to see this happening here."

And the former Leith Academy boy loved being back in Leith. He continued: "I used to drive my old school at Leith Academy every day – of course it is now flats. It was a bit weird remembering things from my childhood each day as we passed somewhere – but absolutely glorious of course."

Glen thinks it is also a positive that not only Amazon but also Apple and Netflix have made or are planning to make productions here in the capital.

He said: "There is a really good pool of talent here and just the doing of it nurtures it. Crews gravitate towards it. On The Rig there were trainees in all departments, and these people will go on and stay within the industry. I always felt a bit disappointed that I have not done more work in Scotland. I have always wanted to – I did Macbeth at the Tron in Glasgow way back, and Glasgow Kiss and Silent Scream – but outside that over the course of the years, I would have liked to be back more."

The thriller which was produced by Derek Wax will begin on Amazon Prime on 6 January 2023.

The series based on the Kinloch Bravo rig in the North Sea involves a crew about to return to the mainland when a mysterious fog covers it, while tremors rock the structure at the same time due to causes unknown....

There are no communication links to shore or anywhere else and the crew has to work on their own to discover what is driving the force.

A major accident occurs which provokes distrust among the

crew. Bonds are broken and new friendships formed while the crew is driven to their limits of loyalty and endurance.

The series also stars [Rochenda Sandall](#) (Criminal: UK), [Owen Teale](#) (A Discovery of Witches), [Richard Pepple](#) (Cobra), [Mark Bonnar](#) (Guilt), [Calvin Demba](#) (Life), [Emun Elliott](#) (Guilt), [Abraham Popoola](#) (Cruella), [Stuart McQuarrie](#) (Des), [Molly Vevers](#) (The Spanish Princess), [Cameron Fulton](#) (River City) and [Nikhil Parmar](#) (Foundation).

The Rig is produced by Wild Mercury Productions, written by [David Macpherson](#) and directed by [John Strickland](#) (episodes 1-3) and [Alex Holmes](#) (episodes 4-6).



Cast and Creators of *The Rig* pictured at a screening event for *The Rig*, at the Everyman, Edinburgh ahead of its launch on Friday 6 January. Attending cast and creators included Martin Compston, Iain Glen, Emily Hampshire, Rochenda Sandall, Mark Bonnar, and Director John Strickland.