

The Liverpool Detective Agency

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Format Description: A crime drama serial, *The Liverpool Detective Agency*, is a suspenseful, intriguing and spirited drama, sprinkled with light comedy. Each episode looks at a different case but running through the series are two threads, one is a cold case disappearance that leads to the uncovering of a murder and the other is Lydia's (our main character) errant husband, a police officer, and his downward spiral.

Logline: 1960s Liverpool had one of the highest numbers of detective agencies of any British city with four listed in the world directory. Only one was run by a woman.

Setting: Set in Liverpool through the 1960s, the feel is that of a gritty city coming to life after the long darkness of the second world war. Culture abounds thanks to the sailors visiting the city from distant shores enabling a prolific music scene to emerge.

Premise: Inspired by Zena Scott Archer, the first woman president of the Association of British Detectives in 1968, this is a story of a young woman, the agency she took over on her father's death, the cases she worked and the city she loved - counterfeit coiners, adulterers, jewel thieves, imposters, conmen, poison pen writers, railway robbers, wizards, shoplifting syndicates, stamp cartels, racetrack gangs, romance scammers, and killers. Phew!

She sleuths to conquer!

The **theme** is about a woman making it in a man's world at a time when the woman's place was very much in the home and not out and about chasing down criminals and ne'er do wells.

Main Characters:

Lydia (24): married to a feckless policeman. Lydia is warm, funny, generous with an acerbic wit, a sharp tongue honed over the years from working in the detective agency and has a gift for the ideal put down. Lydia is clever and thinks outside of the box. She does not really understand the barriers within which she has to work and tramples all over them without a care. It is easier to apologise than seek permission could have been written with her in mind. She is smartly, even glamorously dressed and has a flare for disguises.

Frank (50s): An old police colleague of Lydia's father and with decades of experience Frank becomes Lydia's right-hand man. Steering her through the early days of owning the agency. Their relationship is close but with that comes conflict as he seeks to do what he feels is best for her. They have a lot of spats with him often threatening to leave. Frank is widowed and doesn't see how attractive he is. This causes great hilarity in the office. A proud man, Frank is not content with "divorce sightseeing" as he calls it so when a cold case comes into view, Frank leaps on it with the fervour of a thirsty traveller.

Bill (60s): Lydia's father. Lydia's mother passed away when she was young. Knowing that she needed a steady home, Bill left the police force in 1950 and scratched a living to support them doing private security work. During the security work, Bill detects theft amongst some of the workers and once he could evidence this, brought it to the attention of the business owners. They suggested that this was a lucrative market and that Bill ought to set up as a PI and so a new career and the Liverpool Detective Agency was born. Bill is very much a by the book type with strong morals and matching ethics. Never remarried, his heart broken by the death of his wife, Bill smokes like a chimney, pipes, cigars, cigarettes, you name it, he will smoke it. This has impacted his health so at the tender age of 65, Bill finally succumbs to cancer and after a hard-fought battle dies.

Alfred (Al) (late 20s): Al, Lydia's husband of 3 years, is a constable, a bobby on the beat. He has high ambition but not the smarts. A copper on the take. Wide as Lime Street yet cowardly covering it up with bluster. Al has got himself into a mess that he cannot get out of. His fall from grace and the impact of that on his relationship with Lydia forms a thread throughout the series culminating in his "disappearance" in the last episode.

Beryl (35): One of the new recruits taken on by Lydia and Frank after Lydia's father's "men" deserted the agency, Beryl is self-contained and appears unemotional. Through depression and desperation, Beryl left a loveless marriage only for her husband to take their child, denying her access to him. Beryl suffered a nervous breakdown and received psychiatric treatment. She needs a steady job and a home if she is ever going to get her child back. Applying for a job in the LDA was a last resort. Frank advocates strongly for her.

Syd (40s): A small pint-sized woman who is interviewed at the end of a very long day's recruitment. Syd is shrewd, wise and very calm. She fights for the part time female, carving out work that only they can do. Syd vies with Frank for Zena's attention, but they come to realise they need each other. There are sparks.

Albert (Bertie) (early 20s): A homosexual hiding in plain sight in a dangerous time. He is another recruit of Lydia's, finding his spiritual home in the LDA where he is safe to be himself. Bertie is organised and likes the glamour of working for a detective agency but proves to himself and others that being in the field is not for him so he becomes the office manager. A job at which he excels.

Synopsis:

Episode 1 - Opening scene – its January 1960, a new year, a new decade, a rainy cemetery and a funeral. There is a full police guard of honour and a small family group. Focussing on Lydia, we go into flashback as she looks upon her father's coffin.

Flashback to 1950 a middle-aged man and his young daughter are in a vacant office which has seen better days. "What do you think?" he asks her. We find out that her father has recently retired from the police and needs something to do. He is a single

parent hence retiring early and has decided to set up a detective agency thinking that it will be mostly small crimes and day work.

Cut to 1953, Lydia is now 17 and is running the office and helping her father with some of his cases as he becomes unwell. Her dad has been joined by a former colleague, Frank and a whole host of other detectives some of whom work for the agency on a case-by-case basis. The case load of the agency is principally around tracking down witnesses for court cases, chasing suspects, theft in the workplace, trailing cheating husbands & errant sailors with the odd serious case to unpick.

Back to funeral, Lydia is now 24, her father's "right hand man" and married to a policeman who is not in attendance. Frank is protective of her and has no good thoughts about her feckless husband. Lydia looks at the detectives employed by her father and wonders who will stay, who will make a play for the business and who will immediately jump ship to the competition. They all look twitchy, knowing that Lydia has inherited the business. Worrying times. The funeral finishes and the attendees drift off.

The following morning, Lydia returns to the agency office to rally the troops. A speech prepared. The agency may be thriving business wise but financially is in trouble with the company accountant suggesting streamlining etc.,

The office is deserted, desks are out of position and paperwork is strewn everywhere. It looks like a tornado has swept through. My, that betrayal was fast! Devasted, Lydia begins to tidy. Frank arrives and takes in the scene. The phone is ringing off the hook, but Lydia is not interested. Frank answers. A new case. He stops Lydia's manic activity. What do you want to be? He asks her. This brings her to, and they begin planning. Recruitment and a new office space. A fresh start.

Episode 2 – It's a busy time, Lydia and Frank are moving into a new, smaller suite of offices above a jazz club known as The Cavern. The building houses many other businesses, an agency for performers, an insurance broker and an office that remains a mystery. Lunchtime, it's a noisy place to be as the jazz club comes to life for lunchtime revellers. The music is not always jazz but a new form of music. Lydia doesn't mind.

In the midst for moving, Lydia and Frank are trying to balance interviewing for new staff as well as working on the couple of cases that are on their books. One is trying to track down and serve papers on a comedian who left town without paying his bill and the other an "undercover" job working in a jewellery store to catch a thief.

Recruitment day – male PIs showing their skills in karate etc., which is of no interest to Lydia or Frank. We meet Syd, who frightens Lydia and Frank to death. The problem with recruiting women – they can only work part time. That suits Lydia and Frank just fine right now. We also meet Bertie and at the end of the day Beryl. The cases begin to flow in. The team are busy. Divorce petitions, industrial espionage in a paint factory and the missing haute couture dresses.

Episodes 3 – 6 – Business is good, and the press become interested in a female run detective agency. Lydia finds herself labelled – Liverpool's answer to Miss Marple, the Housewives Detective.

Frank is bored, the cases are not on the scale of the ones he worked on during his time in the police. A woman comes into the agency office and asks for help. Her daughter disappeared 10 years ago, and the police have given up and she has heard about Lydia's exceptional tracking skills. Her daughter was snatched by an adult male, driving an ice cream van. Lydia is sceptical, this is outside the agency remit and besides, how do you charge for something like this? We can barely cope with what we have on the books now. Frank persuades Lydia to take it on and suggests a pro bono approach. Lydia agrees.

The series combines the solving of the missing daughter with paying cases, the development of the characters within the team, new additions, and the sub plot of Lydia's husband.

The series ends 12 months after her father's funeral, with the missing daughter case being solved, a new cold case comes in, the office is vibrant and busy, Lydia's husband disappears.

Conflicts during the series are with the police, the competition, former employees and the cases themselves.