

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 a number of threads, a cold case disappearance that leads to the uncovering of a murder, rebuilding the agency after death and betrayal and 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 and other female PIs of the time, this is the 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 Parker (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 the gift for an 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 Pike (50s): An old police colleague of Lydia's father and with decades of experience Frank becomes Lydia's right-hand man and mentor. 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 a heart attack and dies in episode 1. Bill continues to appear in flashback throughout Series 1.

Alan Parker (late 20s): Alan, 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.

Alan joined the police because he wanted to do good, serve his community. The reality of the job hits home and hard. Alan is not really cut out for this work and struggles with the daily grind, not to mention the “corruption” that abounds. Alan 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.

Cyd (40s): A small pint-sized woman who is interviewed at the end of a very long day’s recruitment. Cyd is shrewd, wise and very calm. She fights for the part time female, carving out work that only they can do. Cyd vies with Frank for Lydia’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 being in the field is not for him, so he becomes the office manager. A job at which he excels.

Series Regulars from Episode 2

Lonely (50s): Lonely is the only PI to remain with Lydia. He served as a dispatch rider during the 2nd World War in Africa and suffers greatly from PTSD making him unable to form attachments in the traditional way. Lonely is very protective of LDA and those who work for it. He is supreme at finding the “dirt” on people. At the end of the war, he turned King’s evidence against a group of his squad who were making hay smuggling vital supplies out of the area. This comes back to bite him later as members of the group find him.

Beryl (35): Brought in by Cyd. 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.

Trevor (40s): A local spiv who has a special set of skills. Skills he acquired during the war. He can secure items for people in his community. He does this in exchange for small amounts of cash and favours. Trevor proves frustrating to the LDA as no matter how hard they try, they can't seem to catch him.

Galbraith (30s): Founder of his own detective agency, Galbraith is ruthlessly ambitious. On the death of her father, Galbraith poaches all the men working for Lydia. Leaving her with no staff. Not content with that, he offers Lydia and Frank a job working for him. When they decline the offer, he becomes hell bent on destroying their business and reputation.

Doolan (30s): One of the LDAs principal PIs. A smooth operator who challenges the status quo. He bails on the LDA after having secured a lucrative deal with Galbraith which included all the LDAs agents moving across.

Hession (30s): a blunt instrument that Doolan uses to great effect.

Synopsis:

Episode 1

Opening scene – the screen is dark, and we hear heavy breathing. Lydia is stuck in a wardrobe. She made a home visit to a potential client who was worried her husband was having an affair. The client's lover turns up and Lydia has been shoved into a wardrobe. Lydia begins to panic.

Frank, knowing where Lydia is, has come to collect Lydia to take her to the hospital where her father lies after a heart attack. After rescuing Lydia, the pair make their way to see her father. They make it just in time before Bill passes away

After Bill's death and funeral, the men in the agency's employ jump ship, seduced by a deal offered to them by a competitor and the fact that Lydia will now be in charge. It is not Lydia that they have in issue with but the fact that she is female.

Lydia returns to the agency office only to find it 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 finds Frank trying his best to tidy up. Lydia laments the fact that she has destroyed her father's legacy. Frank reminds her of who she is and where she has come from and what, as an agency, they have been through before. It is time for her to pull herself together, decide what she wants and who she wants to be.

Lydia knows Frank is right and taking courage from the depths of who knows where, decides that it is time for a fresh start. Time to modernise, upgrade, take her father's legacy and make it her own.

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.

Recruitment day – male PIs showing their skills in karate etc., which is of no interest to Lydia or Frank. We meet Cyd, who frightens Frank to death. The problem with recruiting women – they can only work part time. That suits Lydia and Frank just fine right now.

However, Frank is bored; the cases are not on the scale of the ones he worked on during his time in the police. A couple comes into the agency office and asks for help. Her daughter disappeared 20 years ago, and the police have given up. Her daughter was snatched by an adult male. 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.

Episodes 2 – 6 – Business is good, the cases begin to flow in. The team are busy. Divorce petitions, industrial espionage in a biscuit factory and the missing haute couture dresses. The press becomes interested in a female run detective agency. Lydia finds herself labelled – Liverpool's answer to Miss Marple, the Housewives Detective.

The series combines the solving of the missing daughter with paying cases - tracking down and serving papers on a comedian who leaves town without paying his hotel bills, an "undercover" job working in a jewellery store to catch a thief, a divorce petition, a car chase – the development of the characters within the team, the sub plot of Lydia's husband, and Lydia and Frank fighting off Galbraith.

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.