

EPISODE 004

ROGER SIMONSZ

Adam: It's Episode 4 and I'm in the grip of man flu. I've edited out the coughs, turned down the bass and the show must go on. This is Episode 4 of Partners in Crime. Welcome, welcome, welcome – how are you this week, Bob?

Robert: I am very well indeed, thank you very much. Been a very busy week and quite exciting.

Adam: I wish I could say the same. I feel absolutely dreadful.

Robert: You look alright to me.

Adam: I am indeed, yeah, I've spent the week trying to rest up and conserve my voice. Have you spent the week learning how to say Fontainebleau?

Robert: Yes, I have. Fontainebleau.

Adam: You've got the hang of it now.

Robert: I'm rather proud of myself. Yes, we had a lovely week. I've been looking at all sorts of things and I've got a 3-in-1 offer for you this week. It's a book by Dame Agatha Christie, it's a critique of that book.

Adam: Never heard of her.

Robert: Well, look her up. And also a critique of one of her most famous novels, Poirot book called The Murder of Roger Ackroyd which all crime fans will probably know. This came out of the conversation with my son, Ben. He was saying 'I don't really read crime novels at all – I'm 17, what would you recommend?' And he hadn't read any Agatha Christie, so I thought well the perfect place to start is probably The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, the third in the Hercule Poirot series with him as lead detective. It's about, for those who don't know, Poirot retires to a village near the home of a friend he met in London, Roger Ackroyd, who agrees to keep him anonymous as he pursues his retirement project of perfecting vegetable marrows. Must give that a try. So, it's one of my favourites, certainly, from the golden age. And I've reread it again recently. But I also came across another book called Who Killed Roger Ackroyd? which is by a French gentleman who called Pierre Bayard who disagreed with Agatha Christie's conclusion, Poirot's conclusion as to whom the murderer was. The punctilious Belgian detective's

explanation he considers is as motiveless as it is impractical, so this is the starting point for Pierre Bayard's book, *The Killing of Roger Ackroyd*. And it's an affectionate tribute to the queen of crime; Bayard asks the question: might Poirot have got it wrong and if so, why might he have been mistaken? Did Christie herself understand the ending of her own book or was she too being manipulated by a certain device she uses which I won't spoil for anyone who hasn't read it? In a display of literary intrigue worthy of Umberto Eco or John Sullivan, Bayard plots his own solution. And it's a fascinating book, incredibly good critique, but it's also been made into documentary which is my 3-in-1 thing. So, it's an original by Agatha Christie, it's another book written by Bayard and it's a documentary which is available, I think still on Sky Arts. *Agatha Christie vs. Hercule Poirot* in which Bayard hires a theatre in Paris, hires actors and meticulously goes through the entire plot of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and comes to another conclusion as to who might have done. So, there you are, it's been a fascinating journey, I enjoyed it very much but, in the meantime, Ben is going to sit down and read the original fiction by Dame Agatha and hopefully will enjoy.

Adam: Whether he likes it or not.

Robert: Whether he likes it or not.

Adam: Something else I'm currently excited about at the moment is we're currently sitting here sipping tea out of our brand-new Partners in Crime mugs that we had made up.

Robert: Does it improve the taste, you think?

Adam: It improves my ego and I think they look absolutely fantastic. I'm not quite sure what the connection is between Partners in Crime and a pair of mugs...

Robert: At least I didn't get a G where the C is.

Adam: Partners in Crime. It certainly took me a minute to get that, yeah.

Robert: So, no, they look nice, I have to say. Very tastefully done as everything that you tend to touch is tastefully done.

Adam: Well, I try.

Robert: Thank you very much. I walked in today and it was a gift for me and I'm going to go home, and I'll have my early morning green tea in it.

Adam: Good, good. I've been reading a very interesting book this week actually, while I've been lying on my death bed clinging on to life, I was reading a book called *Anything You Do Say* by Gillian McAllister which is absolutely fascinating. It poses a number of questions, but the easiest way to describe it is it opens with two female characters, youngish women around 30 on a night out. And they come across this guy who's trying to chat them up, trying to get a selfie with them, this kind of usual thing. And they say no, not interested. Anyway, they leave the club and go their separate ways to go home and the main protagonist of the book thinks she's being

followed by this guy from the club. And she gets down to some steps near a canal at which point the footsteps behind her are getting louder and she sees his arm come around in front of her and her instinct is to just flail her arms and she ends up pushing him down the stairs. At which point he gets, he's laying there not moving, assumedly not breathing either. And at that point she has a choice – does she call 999 and help the man, admit what's happened, or does she run? At which point diverges in two different directions and the chapters alternate between chapters entitled Conceal and chapters entitled Reveal. And two-story lines run concurrently and you see what happens depending on whether she stayed or whether she ran.

Robert: Sort of a sliding door scenario.

Adam: Yeah, there's one storyline, but two storylines. It splits off into two alternative realities. And you see them kind of diverge and converge back at certain points and it's really fascinating to see how it all plays out. And there's a lot of social commentary there as well and it's really well-written and really well-done in a number of ways and I heartily recommend that – Anything You Do Say by Gillian McAllister.

Robert: Good, right, that's another one for the list.

Adam: Good. And we haven't been paid to say that either, so that's a benefit: it actually was good. Would be nice, wouldn't it? We were also talking about festivals and crime writing festivals, crime fiction festivals coming up over the next few weeks and you're speaking at one in a week or so's time, aren't you?

Robert: Yes, flying up to Aberdeen to be a part of the wonderful Granite Noir which is a fantastic crime festival for anyone who hasn't heard of it, and for those who have, I'm sure they're all going along, going to have a jolly good time. It's a great line-up this year, there's [07:40], there's all sorts of fantastic crime writers.

Adam: Robert Daws.

Robert: Well, I do my little bit. And also, they're showing films. They asked me to nominate my favourite film noir which was unhesitatingly Double Indemnity and they're showing that as well up there and giving a talk about all those sorts of film. So yeah, it's a fantastic festival, it's on from the 23rd to the 25th of February, Friday, Saturday and Sunday in Aberdeen, Granite Noir, look it up and if you can, come along.

Adam: I'm very tempted to go myself actually, as a punter. I've not been asked to go and speak because I've not yet reached the echelons that you have. But one of the reasons I'm tempted to go is because I love Aberdeen airport. First thing's first, it's not in Aberdeen – that's the first slight incongruity there. It's in the middle of nowhere, a place called Dyce I think.

Robert: I'm glad you've told me this before I actually go.

Adam: Don't think you can walk from the airport, you can't. And it's amazing – it's a really small airport terminal actually. Everything is kind of together in this one room but it's got stonking great Wetherspoon's on the side which seems to be 3 times the size of the terminal.

Robert: Well as long as the pilots aren't in there, it's fine by me.

Adam: I love it. It's the quirkiest most fantastic airport.

Robert: How far is Dyce away from the Aberdeen?

Adam: I think about half an hour or something like that.

Robert: Really?

Adam: I can't really remember. I spent quite a lot of time in that Wetherspoon's last time I was out there.

Robert: I've never been to Aberdeen, but I'm certainly looking forward to go into Dyce now.

Adam: I never been to Aberdeen, I've been to Aberdeen airport and never actually made it to the city.

Robert: Oh, really?

Adam: No, I was on my way up from Dundee on the train. It's a lovely train journey up the East Coast of Scotland. Absolutely stunning.

Robert: It's just extraordinary countryside. But I've never been to Aberdeen, so I'm looking forward to it.

Adam: No, do, yeah, it's great fun. Yes.

Robert: And that's not the only one we're going to be at. We're going to be at the Books on the Beach in Scarborough. We're sticking to the East Coast of England and the East Coast of Scotland with these festivals. That's another great festival which we'll talk about in another podcast.

Adam: Absolutely. I'm doing London Book Fair as well in April which is on the same week as Scarborough. So I'll barely going to be home.

Robert: Pack a bag.

Adam: My wife might've forgotten who I am from all these festivals.

Robert: Pack the shabbiest in the case and off you go.

Adam: What can you say? Perks of the job. Now, we've got a fascinating interview coming up on today's show. One I'm sure you're going to love with Roger Simonsz who will be speaking to us about turning *Spiral* into the top French crime drama it is today working within top editorial constraints on *Death in Paradise* and how he shaved a stuntman and put a fat suit on him before shoving Bob out of a window. But before that – you're laughing away there, aren't you? You're trying to hold it in. I didn't tell him I'd written that.

Robert: Oh, what you go through.

Adam: I know. Before then, I should let you know that at Kobo, there are more than 5 million titles available. More than 5 million books you can get your hands on if you have time to read them all. You can head over to Kobo.com and if you enter the promo code **CRIME** at the checkout, you get 90% off your first eBook at Kobo, so just go to Kobo.com and enter **CRIME** at the checkout to get that.

Robert: So, consistent with our desire to bring you guests from all areas of crime/fiction, from all platforms too: books, film, TV, radio and audio production, we have a special guest today who straddles two great crime dramas. *Spiral Engrenages* and *Death in Paradise*. And these he wears two different hats as cinematographer and director. Now, speaking to us from his home in Fontainebleau just outside Paris, welcome to *Partners in Crime*, Roger Simonsz. Roger, how are you?

Roger: Hi! Very well, thank you. What a lovely introduction.

Robert: It's lovely to be talking to you. What's the weather like over there in France at the moment?

Roger: Actually, as you know, we had a lot of flooding and we had a lot of rain. I couldn't actually get to my local station by my usual route, but I live on the hill unlike some of my friends who are down by the river and they've got very wet feet indeed. But if they will build on the flood plain, I can't say anything about that really.

Robert: I know Paris was having all sorts of trouble with the river Seine and what have you, and famous statues being covered in water. So I think this is a problem that people are facing all over the world. But talking about Paris and the dangers of Paris' rising river levels, etcetera, we move to the crime area. I have to say, *Spiral Engrenages* has been one of my favourite if not my very favourite crime series since it began. I first got into it in 2006 when it was shown on the BBC over here and it's now showing over here in its 6th episode series and I think it's the most wonderful series. It's gritty, it's compassionate, it's beautifully shot. The storytelling is marvellous and all the main characters that remain in the series to this day feel very much like family to me. Now, you worked on series 3 as cinematographer which is as we all know a hugely important job. So can you tell us a little bit about what attracted you to working on *Spiral* in that capacity?

Roger: Well, it was a great honour to be asked in the first place. I had actually been asked to do Season 2, but it clashed with a feature that I wanted to do, so I didn't do Season 2 and they

asked me again to do season 3, the second part and I had followed it. I did some Canal + here in France which is a subscription channel which I don't have, so I had to watch DVDs and I'd heard about it. And it's interesting, cause you might remember, it had a clunky start, it took a while to find its feet and I think one of the things that I noticed as I'd gone through watching Season 1 and 2 was that there was a remarkable lack of sort of visual incoherence. Lack of coherence rather. And every director brought their own DP in – DP is Director of Photography. And the style just changed, you noticed it sort of halfway through and a new director takes over. The audience doesn't know this, but suddenly the whole style changes. Hang on, I recognize those characters but it doesn't feel like the same show. And as I've worked on quite a few TV dramas and stuff, I kind of got the producers and the channel and everybody who was involved in Season 3 in a room and said look, doesn't matter how we do it, let's at least all do the same thing. And luckily, the DP who started the series who was actually a good friend of mine, is Normal Jewison who has been in the business a long time. We basically decided together: let's try and do it this way so it was decided to kind of hand held and it had a certain look, a certain colouring. So at least when our team took over from their team, it didn't feel like there was an enormous break in style; you could just watch one season without feeling like you're watching 3 different series in one go.

Robert: That's fascinating because I have to say, I mean, I didn't notice in Series 1 or 2, it's not to the naked eye anyway any disparity in necessarily style. But I do remember thinking that Spiral really kicked in in Series 3 and I'm not just saying that cause I happen to be talking to you today. I mean I really did so that explains a lot that you came on board and that you all came together and just said right, let's get the style of this program, the way we make it, the narrative drive of this program consistent. Do you think that's carried over to the present series? I'm watching it now. It seems to have a similar style, so maybe they adopted that from series 3 and because it works they've run with it. Obviously different directors and cinematographers bring their own particular areas and talents to bare, but it seems to be pretty consistent since then.

Roger: Yeah, I think it is. It's interesting, they did ask me at the end of season 3 if it would help them; they didn't actually have a bible. Most series have a bible and the bible tells you the style and the characters and the background and most directors are given this to read when they start so everybody can be on the same page. And they didn't actually have one until they wrote one after season 3 and I was asked to kind of contribute to that part of it, so maybe they've been following that through. I myself haven't been involved since then. I did organize all the tests because my part was shot on film and they wanted to go digital and so we did a whole blind taste outside of Paris in a police station set with real actors, with a whole host of different types of cameras so they could decide which camera to decide to start going into digital. So far I only watched the last episode of the last season. The only thing I noticed which was I thought was a bit of a break was normally it starts with a long crackingly horrible murder of some sort or find some horrible human remains. And suddenly we find ourselves with Laure in the incubator with the baby and I felt that was a shame. I don't think they shouldn't have had that scene, but I personally, had I been, I wouldn't have opened with it.

Robert: That's interesting because I found that quite affecting. At this point, I should explain to people who may not have seen a single episode of Spiral...

Adam: Like me.

Robert: My colleague Adam here. It's set in Paris and it follows a team of investigators with the Paris police force led by captain Laure Berthaud and her team. It's very gritty. Series 3 which you worked on was subtitled The Butcher of La Villette – is that how you pronounce it? Which was an investigation into a serial killer operating in Paris. And one thing that I think is particularly special about Spiral Engrenages is that it introduces someone who isn't French to the whole structure of crime investigation and law and order in France. And it's a very different system to that carried out in certainly the UK and American and other countries where instead an investigation into a murder being carried out – it is carried out still by a detective, police detective, it is run, the investigation is run by a judge. Which is absolutely fascinating, I think one of the great successes of Engrenages is that it never spells out the system over there, but it makes it very, very clear. I was watching last night and again I was so impressed with the clarity of the narrative, the ability to deal with complex legal situations and investigative police procedure with great clarity, without patronizing, they just get on with their job. And I think that's one of the triumphs of it. Secondly to that it's the acting and certainly the script is quite exceptional. And as I said earlier, they feel like family to me, the leading characters. That is why with Captain Laure Berthaud starting that series 6 with her baby after the near tragedy after the end of the last series 5, giving things away now. I found that very moving and I find lots of it very moving. Roban I find an exceptional performance and Gilou – they're all fantastic and you get involved in their worlds with such clarity and such emotional depth and that's before you get in the intricacies and the extraordinary tensions of the murder investigations themselves. I'm going to stop talking now.

Roger: No, you're absolutely right. But what is interesting also historically of that drama, as I said, it's on Canal + which is a subscription channel and I don't know if you remember further back, subscription channels in the beginning didn't make their own dramas or if they did the sort of one-off. And then HBO started with Oz which was a fantastic prison drama which kind of proved to subscription channels that actually if you make your own original drama you have the benefit of no other channel has which is you have a captive audience: they're not going to walk away, they've already paid their ticket so you can put anything in front of them and take that risk, whereas before the model was well, you know, we put this on and we keep watching the audience figures and if it drops, we better pull the show. Certainly in America. And that kind of gave a knock-off effect to other subscription channels saying maybe we should do our own original dramas and Spiral Engrenages was the first one that Canal + did. Now they've got more, they've got Braco and Mafiosa and Down Noir and a whole host of other series and I think they bought The Tunnel and started doing co-productions and stuff. But Spiral was really the first one. And Son et Lumière who produced it had done a series before called Avocat Associee which is a sort of Paris Law rather than LA Law. Because the daughter of the producer, it's actually a family-run firm is a lawyer and she's the one that came up with the idea of Spiral. [22:27] she's also the front credits, series devised by. And you're absolutely right, it gives a

fantastic insight into the French judicial system which is so different. But it gives it in a very clear way because when you say to anyone outside of France we have this investigative judge who does you know what, and what is also interesting and you see this in the start of Season 6, in the French system that principle of the investigative judge works on something called Intime Conviction. That means that his own feeling is right, he's actually the right to say I don't feel this is right while he's got the evidence or not and pursues something. And that should be his primordial kind of drive to pursue a crime, not the evidence. The evidence is perfect – not every case comes in front of a [23:18] where is any doubt or any case where there's what's going on here, and that's why it's interesting in the first season of Spiral of this one is of course he's got a problem with it and he kind of says I don't want to take your case, had enough of you.

Robert: Yes, it's quite an incredibly powerful position to be in. And really, in this country we don't really get to that position until we actually get to court and a judge and jury actually consider a case. I find that absolutely fascinating. It's sort of done for me, it regards insights into a crime investigation in France what the West Wing did for American politics, really. I loved that series. Tell me, it's a wonderful cast, wonderful ensemble cast led by Alen Proust and I love them all. Philip Declour and Tier Goddard, they're all absolutely marvellous and what were they like? Was there a sense of ensemble when you were working on series 3? Was there a sense of them getting on, was there a sense of them realizing how successful the show was?

Roger: Well, they get on very well, all of them, which is fun because in a way also this series started a long time ago cause they don't do one every year. The gaps are usually bigger than that, so the first one, they were all unknown. Apart from [25:03] was known as a theatre actor and had done some TV but none of them had actually really been big part in long-running series before. It was kind of a risk to take. And in the process of, they all became quite big stars. Certainly Audrey Fleurot who then went on a few features is now a major star in France, but she still comes back in Spiral. Yeah. But it's interesting because in Season 3, right at the end, we suddenly had a scene between Audrey and Caroline and they both suddenly said this is great, this is our first scene together. And somewhere in the middle there was this clash in the sequence where Greg is accused of being a child molester and he gets arrested and she comes to the rescue and they finally meet in the corridor. But actually in that whole season it's the first time they actually interact. So it's not – if you look at it, it feels cohesive but quite often the judge is in his office doing his thing and Laure and the team are out doing their thing and the two lawyers are out doing their thing. It's not actually that often that they interact.

Robert: What I also love is there's a total lack of vanity with the project. You actually feel that this is as authentic as you can possibly get, the whole look at it, the way it's shot. It's very often the one of the stars you very well instigated is very much like you're observing these scenes, these characters carrying off instead of what happens in certain others shows where you're very aware that you're being led. The show seems to develop and it's obviously very brilliantly plotted, each scene being a personal, emotional scene or a case-related scene have tensions in them which have a beginning and a middle and an end. But basically you're looking at characters, developing emotional characters. The actors inhabit their part so wonderfully and I think that's one of the reasons it remains in my mind such an outstanding success. What's

filming like in Paris? You film all over the place. I filmed with you in the Caribbean, you filmed in London, you filmed in wherever – recognized as a big success in France now, hitting the streets of Paris with Caroline Proust and the guys, would that be a problem these days with crowds watching and fans?

Roger: No, actually. I shot a few series in Paris and one of them was Gossip Girl which is a big American show and the other one was Sex in the City and there you get followed by crowds and paparazzi. Nothing like that. Partly because the joy for me having done those other series, to do Spiral was for once I didn't have to film the Eiffel Tower. You never see either the Eiffel Tower or the Arc du Triumph, these big touristy places that always crop up in everything else.

Robert: The cliché setting of scene. We are in Paris. Big Ben, we are in London.

Roger: Exactly. You never see that in Spiral. We really are in the sewers, the backwaters, the underbelly of Paris that nobody ever sees and quite often not even in Paris, on the outskirts on the other side of the periphery they call the [28:55] in those sort of areas. I think you picked up on the realism of it and there's a couple of elements that help that, we do shoot it like a documentary in a way. It's handheld, do the scene. And at one point, we do this in Season 3, I said to the director wouldn't it be fun, there's a moment where the judge goes and does an investigation, he goes to somebody's house, he does [29:28] as they say in French, it's the equivalent of having a search warrant and he comes unannounced with a team and searches somebody's flat. And he does this to the Mayor, this dodgy mayor in season 3. And I said wouldn't it be fun if we don't rehearse it? Let them get the lines right, but this judge has never seen this flat before, he's been tipped off, he knows where he's going and I basically lit the whole space and I said to my operator who you know, Sebastian, and I said listen, you're not going to see it, and he's not going to see it. You're just going to follow him. So take one was totally unrehearsed and was just – they knew what they had to say, the judge knew what he had to look for, which cover cause he had been tipped off but he had never seen that apartment before. We kept the actors out of it, not the people that were living in it, but we kept the actors from going in until take one.

Robert: That's terribly exciting and that obviously adds to the sense of spontaneity and excitement and an edge that again is a trademark of the show. Adam?

Adam: Yeah, something I wanted to ask you Roger is your style is incredibly versatile even within the kind of the crime genre, you worked on shows like Spiral and Death in Paradise which both have completely different styles even though they're both extensible crime. Something I wanted to find out about, Death in Paradise to me as a viewer it's quite a formulaic show, it's a working formula, but it is quite a tight formula whereas Spiral from what you've been saying has quite a creative freedom. How did affect you differently working with those different styles and how does that kind of tight formula of Death in Paradise affect the creative freedom you had working on that show compared to that of Spiral?

Roger: That's an interesting question. A style for me is a style that gets set usually in the first season by that sort of team and you take it over. If you come in and you have to follow a particular formula, sometimes that can also be liberating because in a way you have the boundaries. So you know, ok, I can't go further than that, I can't go further than that, I don't like this, ok let's see what I can do within that. Any artist works within boundaries, you can do a painting of a 30 cm square or 2 meter square. It's not a bad thing necessarily as a creative person to have certain boundaries and then the trick comes how can you make this more interesting or more exciting within those boundaries. The trick is not to fall asleep at the wheel and say I know where this car is going, but try and keep it still an interesting ride for the audience and that they follow you. Because indeed there's nothing worse something and go it's exactly the same as last week's episode and of course that needs to get overseen by people we call the grownups. When I come in and do Death in Paradise I do two episodes, I can't stop and say the episodes after me are exactly the same as mine. I don't have a view on that. I need to make sure that my episodes are, to my standards, the most interesting and you have a little internal rivalry with your colleagues hoping you'll do the best episodes.

Robert: Death in Paradise continues to be one of the top 3 popular programs on British television and its job is even more impressive because within less than an hour, each episode has to tell a complete story. And it's a formula-driven show, every episode is pretty much the same in its formula. Do you think audiences find comfort in that?

Roger: Well, I don't know. It's interesting when you watch – globally speaking there seems to be a difference between the way the sort of Americans do it and the way the English do it. I've watched for instance Dr. House, House MD for all its seasons and I thought that was actually brilliant. It's a crime drama cause it's almost like a medical detective series, but they keep throwing things at it, they keep changing it and what they do in America they usually lock in 5 seasons, everybody signs a contract and it starts to take off and it takes off well over, or it takes off not so well. And the British approach seems to be we've got the show, we're not going to change it, it works well and wait until it dies and then they reboot it two years later and then they start making the changes. It's a different approach and I think personally, I mean I do think series have to grow, have to change. And in a way Death in Paradise does it by [34:33] we're on the 3rd detective now from the start.

Robert: I joined you out there to work with Chris Marshall who was playing Humphrey Goodman, and now of course [34:45] has taken over. I must say, it was a great show to do, it's the only television program I've ever done. I had to rehearse in my vest and underpants because it was so hot and humid, you daren't put your costume on until the very last minute because after one take you'd just be soaked through. It has great challenges working over because of course it's Saint Murray which is of course the fictional name of the island in the Caribbean on which it is set on but it is in actuality Guadalupe and I was there for a month I seem to recall, had a wonderful time and the first time I met you, this very distinguished lady and gentleman, he had a lucky costume I call it because he went to work Roger as I recall in pale linen trousers, pale linen shirt and a Panama hat. I think you looked a cross between a very young George Lucas and the man from Delmonte. And we immediately got on which was absolutely great fun but I was so

impressed with the way you actually conducted rehearsal because we were all sweating and perspiring and what have you. So this whole idea of improvisation which you mentioned you used in *Spiral*, let's rehearse a little when we possibly can and keep the spontaneity. That's something that you used in directing *Death in Paradise*. Is this something that you pursue or is this an MO that you use in all your work as a director?

Roger: Yes, very much so. I would think that my job as a director is to kind of tell other people how to have fun. I kind of build the playground and say there you go, go play in it. I don't think my job as a director is you say this line this way, you stand over there. That would be ludicrous, and I've seen directors who work that way and to me the result was never good. You kind of get a bunch of puppets in a predisposed frame and it does never feel spontaneous. I don't tell – I'm not the one in front of the lens. The actors tell that story, the DP tells that story, everybody is involved in that storytelling and if I start telling everybody exactly how to do it, it's not fun and I would always be making the same movie anyway. It's much nicer to see – I can predetermine things, I can say right, in this location of course, the kitchen is there, you come from the kitchen so you come from there. But if you land up at the counter, let's see how it goes and that's the joy of a rehearsal. Once we decided of course, then you start getting all the equipment in and then you need to start honing it down, but at least it's a joint decision and nobody feels uncomfortable in their role and where they are in the set. I think that's very important.

Robert: Working with you, Roger, on *Death in Paradise* as a director I was hugely impressed with your great command of the technology of filming, which I think is marvellous and you've made it very easy cause you're an actor's director as well. But the two things were very different and everyone felt very comfortable that we knew you were getting what producers like to say specific coverage. But you had all sorts – you had drones going out, you had cameras swarming all over the place. Very intense timetable when you work on these sort of things but you made it seem very easy. Is that part of your style as well – how much homework do you do on scenes you're doing, certainly ones as complicated as a big stunt setup.

Roger: Well, that's all very kind. You stepped off a plane and we flew you off a balcony.

Robert: I've been doing this for 35 years, nothing surprises me anymore.

Roger: And a lovely flow it was too. It's interesting because we do have a heck of a lot of technology at our disposal and to me, but like you said, we were filming in Guadalupe, and most of the equipment was actually shipped over before the season even starts. So it's not as you can say oh, we're such and such and somebody can go around to an area or to Panavision and pick it up for you. It's kind of a little bit – you have to play with what you've got. We had a drone and for instance we didn't have a crane. So the drone took over for where we maybe would've used a crane in certain circumstances. But for me, the primary drive is always the storytelling, because I don't want to impose technology on the story, with especially crime you have to be talking about preparation. I always think the director has to know the script better than anybody because it buys you freedom on the set. If you're constantly on the set going hang on, where am I in the story again, you lock yourself in. Whereas if you come on the set, you know the story better than

anybody there, then you can actually get on with the creative part of the process. Which is indeed playing around with how do we get you off the balcony, should we film it that way or should we film it that way? And then of course, your biggest enemy in any of these series is time.

Robert: Yes, there's never enough.

Roger: You only have so many hours in the day, you only have so many hours in the day to shoot it and I hate doing overtime. I've been on sets where directors were given doesn't care at all about overtime. But overtime is not there so the crew can earn more money. The overtime is actually a punishment payment you shouldn't actually go over.

Robert: Very often you feel that pressure, although I didn't on that particular shoot, I have to say. My only story was my absolute disappointment when I saw my stunt double. I mentioned the day before, there was this very young, handsome George Clooney look-alike and he's like I'm your stunt double.

Adam: So just like you, Bob.

Robert: And the next day, he turned up on set, he'd been to makeup and costume, they shaved the front of his head to make him look bald and they put a huge false stomach on him. I spent the day before going hey, thinking I was it, such is this profession.

Roger: I remember that very well!

Robert: Yes, I think I cried, Roger.

Roger: You bumped into him in the hotel corridor because we were all staying at the hotel where everything was taking place and nobody went very far. You bumped into him in the hotel corridor and you faced him – I hope I don't look like that.

Robert: Sadly I feel I do. One last question, if I may. Quickly, what do you think is the key to Death in Paradise's success. We sort of talked at length about Spiral Engrenages and why that is successful – what is the key to Death in Paradise is, why is it so popular?

Roger: I think it's popular because it's light. It's total escapism. There's a bit of culture clash going on, it's worldly in we're in another place, it could be anywhere, people can make their own ideas about it. Not many people have been to Guadalupe. And it's funny, you can watch it as a family, you don't want to get splattered with blood and horrible corpses and the joy in the way is there's no medical officer, there's no autopsy. Somebody dies, there's a little drama – there's nothing gruesome at all. And you also know he's always going to solve the case so you can just sit down and enjoy the puzzle with him.

Robert: The puzzle is the word we come back to again and again on this podcast. It's the enjoyment of working out the puzzle, second-guessing and seeing if you're absolutely right. Well, Roger, bless you, thank you so much. It's been a joy talking to you, thanks for your

insights into these two great series and from a director and cinematographer point of view. And I look forward to seeing you in London very soon, I trust, aren't you?

Roger: I was hoping to be there this weekend for a show.

Robert: You shuttle around the globe.

Roger: I try to.

Robert: It's all very impressive.

Roger: I just wanted to point one thing out which I maybe should have said earlier that you might want to put in is we were talking about realism. One thing that is fun in France is that we did this in *Antigony 34* and we did this in *Spiral* is we use off-duty policemen as extras. So we actually have the real police there in the office, and I think if you've seen, for instance if you've seen the last *Spiral*, there's this great hairy guy in the office, he doesn't say much, but he's actually a retired policeman.

Robert: Is he? I know exactly who you are talking about. He never says a word! But he's always, he's quite a presence.

Roger: And he's a real policeman. I did another movie with him called *419* and we talked about and he was doing that *Spiral*. He wasn't there when I was there but I know him because of the other film, so he's part of it. And all of the other extras. In fact, when we did *Antigony 34* which was complicated because we were shooting it in Montpellier, and editing it in Paris and we knew that by the time we got to Paris, all the sets would be gone, all the crew would be gone and if there's anything missing, you know, what do we do? Because you never know, especially when you do a new season. And so what I did I worked a little bit in advance on that last day and I had 20 minutes left over in our set which was the comisariat of Antigom quarter in Montpellier and I said ok, this is what we're going to do: as we've got all these policemen and actually our cast by then was pretty ok with how to do things, I just did a 20-minute improvisation with lead cameras running wild. So right, this is just a day in the life of the comisariat, the phone rings, you arrest people, whatever. And out of that improvisation we actually managed to create another scene in the editing suite months later that we had missed – we realized we're missing a scene here. Tell you what, let's look at what you got.

Robert: You shot it and – oh my god, that's absolutely extraordinary. I mean, all I can say I love this. In a cop series you're casting real cops and I think that's absolutely wonderful and it must add to depth and quality absolutely. The only thing I worry about is if that trend continues, we don't want you casting real serial killers.

Roger: The last thing is actually – we've been pulled up a couple of times. I don't know if you remember in Season 3 there's this whole car chase that happens in rush hour on the periphery. None of that was staged because we had real policemen and they had their cars with them, they just said listen, we're going to put a real policeman in the front and a real policeman in the back and you guys just drive in the middle and just follow us.

Robert: Good grief.

Roger: Literally just sat in the backseat with the cameras and we barged through rush hour Paris with the sirens blaring and there was no road locked, there was no loaded, there was none of that. We were just literally bombing around the periphery with sirens blaring in real life.

Robert: I have to say, my experience of filming with you was quite exciting too. I'm afraid that's all we got time for today. Roger, god bless you.

Roger: Thank you!

Robert: At home, in Fonton Bleu under sunny skies and hopefully not too wet due to the flooding. It's such a pleasure speaking to you, thanks for joining Adam and myself in Partners in Crime and see you very, very soon I hope!

Roger: I hope so! Thank you so much for having me on the show. It was a real pleasure to be able to talk about some of the things, pity it's radio, can't show anything. Talk about the visual medium

Robert: I'm sure you're wearing your Panama hat even as we speak.

Adam: It's probably for the best, Roger, you wouldn't want to see us two on the screen, don't worry about that.

Robert: Roger's the good-looking one.

Roger: A string vest.

Robert: All the best – au revoir!

Roger: Au revoir, bye-bye!

Adam: Fascinating guy, Roger, isn't he?

Robert: He certainly is. He's a renaissance man in many respects. He has so many different talents and I admire everything he does. He's got a particular style. He's a cinematographer and director which is very much his own, and he's truly international. He's constantly between here and Fontainebleau and London and Paris and travelling off to the States and what have you, and he's quite a big cheese in the world of cinematography as well. He hosts great big conventions and various other things and does nice videos with Sting and goodness knows what else. But he's a lovely, lovely chap and I learned a lot from working with him and look forward to working with him again.

Adam: I particularly enjoyed the story about the stuntman.

Robert: Yes, I thought you would.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Adam: I have a very visual mind.

Robert: People think it's easy being an actor. It's not.

Adam: It's certainly interesting, that's for sure. This podcast is very, very gratefully sponsored by Kobo who have more than 5 million eBooks available on their store. If you go to Kobo.com, you can browse through the wonderful crime and thriller section on there. Lots and lots of fantastic books to get your hands on and if you see one you like put it in your basket, head to the checkout and enter the promo code CRIME and they will give you 90% off the cover price of your first eBook. Now, if you have any suggestions for future guests on the podcast, please do get in touch or if you've got any feedback or comments or things that you think we should be talking about, we will read your messages out but you need to send them to us first. You can tweet us @crimeficpodcast; you can find us on Facebook under Partners in Crime or you can visit us on our website which is PartnersInCrime.online. You can send us an email at hello@partnersincrime.online. We'll be back very soon with our next episode on which our guest will be a man who needs no introduction: Mark Billingham, the worldwide bestselling author of the Tom Thorne novels. We will see you again very soon for another episode of Partners in Crime.

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