



CINEMA

GETTING THE **MINDHORN**

Julian Barratt is the real guy behind the fictional guy playing a fictional guy

MINDHORN IS ONE OF the best comedies of the year. Written by and co-starring Julian Barratt (*The Mighty Boosh*) and Simon Farnaby (*Yonderland*), the film's plot is fiction within fiction – where *Mindhorn* was a hit '80s detective show, with Richard Thorncroft (Barratt) as the lead. But his star has since faded.

When a murder suspect insists he'll only speak to Mindhorn, it's time for Thorncroft to dust off his eyepatch and leather jacket, and catch the first ferry to the Isle of Man to help the real police with their investigation. We spoke to Barratt ahead of the film's release.

What kind of TV shows inspired you to write *Mindhorn*?

Simon [Farnaby] and I were focused on *Bergerac* meets *The Six Million Dollar Man*, but with a slight sci-fi element. We watched a lot of *Shoestring* and *Starsky & Hutch* but it was all there in our heads already from when we were kids.

So Richard Thorncroft is a tribute to old-school detectives and the actors who played them?

We wanted to portray one of those guys, but not just create a parody. Simon had the idea of this fictional TV show that the suspect thinks is real. And then we thought there could be an actor who wants his career back, an actor who used to be a heartthrob but now can't get work and this is his chance.

And we always thought it was funny that an actor would find out that his ex is with his stuntman – it still makes me laugh. [Barratt laughs heartily, proving his point.] It's humiliating on so many levels.

Were you always planning on being Thorncroft yourself?

I didn't know if I wanted to play him, or whether we should get a proper actor who can do comedy and get them to play it as though they were in a TV show. I didn't think I'd be old enough but by the time we finished writing it, I was!


Thorncroft is pretty out of shape – did you work hard on that?

It was difficult to achieve his paunch, but I'm dedicated, so I ate a lot of curries and biscuits. It was like Robert De Niro in *Raging Bull*.

Is it every actor's worst nightmare to only be remembered for one TV show 30 years ago?

Yeah, I think we all have that with whatever we do. I often have that with *Boosh* – you make something that really connects with people, and you go "oh right, so this is what happens; I'm sure this will happen again and again," but it doesn't.

Richard Ayoade has the *Crystal Maze* gig and Noel Fielding has *Bake Off* – are you expecting a call to host a show next?

What, like *The Generation Game*? Yeah, I should! No, both of those guys are very funny and quick witted, and good at reacting. I'm too awkward and self-defeating, and would just collapse in on myself. 

Mindhorn is in cinemas from 5 May. Read our review on p184

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