

TV crime dramas, whether true or fictional, seem never to have been more popular. Are we all just morbid?

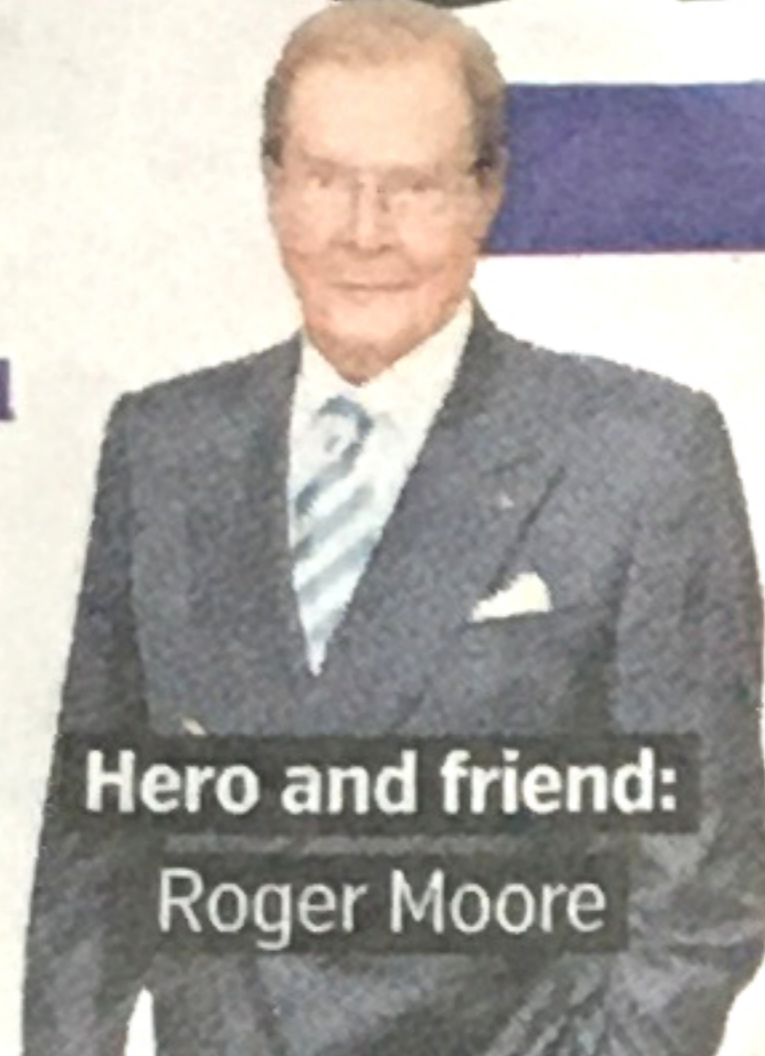
I was watching one on Netflix recently. I think it was Night Stalker. You are watching it, going, 'This is horrific, this is a serial killer, this actually happened.' But there is a bit of you that is going, 'How did they catch him?' I want to know that there is a sense of justice in the end that makes my life hopeful, the fact that there is some order.

Your cold-case drama Unforgotten is back soon. Did you wonder how you were going to top the third series?

By series four you know that the scripts are going to be good, you know the guest actors are going to be brilliant. I've read all of the scripts for all four

SIXTY SECONDS

With **Sanjeev Bhaskar**



Hero and friend:
Roger Moore

series as one would read a novel. There are four mini dramas within a whodunit. Each mini drama could be a series of its own.

Series four explores society's relationship with the police. Why do you think your character DI Sunny Khan became a copper?

Sunny's life probably had disorder in it. It's about finding structure and

THE ACTOR AND WRITER, 57, ON SURPRISE REUNIONS AND WHY SIR ROGER MOORE LOVED HIS CRIME SERIES UNFORGOTTEN

INTERVIEW BY PAUL SIMPER



order and wanting to contribute. I've met people who joined the police force for that reason. They wanted to serve their communities. I don't think Sunny joined because he watched The Sweeney. He probably joined because he watched Dixon Of Dock Green with his dad when he was a kid in the 1960s.

He doesn't do a lot of throwing people up against cars, going, 'You're nicked', does he?

Yeah, well, not so far! I don't want to give any spoilers but he might just start driving a car very fast and screaming, 'Guv!'

The production had to break for six months because of Covid but it's hard to spot which scenes were filmed before or after the new regulations...

In the interview scenes, most of which we did in that last month, the table across which we talk to the suspects was suddenly twice the size. It was like somebody had suddenly put a pool table in the room but with cameras you can lessen that distance.

I said The Saint was why I wanted to act. He said, 'You thought if he can get a job, anyone can'

Your co-star Nicola Walker says she had to relearn her lines because it had been so long. Did you have any such problems?

It was strange coming back after that hiatus simply because you were picking up on storylines and themes you hadn't thought about for months.

Phaldut Sharma has a guest role. Is this the first time you've worked with him since the show that became Goodness Gracious Me?

Yes. Phaldut was in the live show we did in 1995 called Peter Sellers Is Dead that became Goodness Gracious Me. About seven months after that we got a pilot for Radio 4 but Phaldut decided to do other things. About 12 years ago I did a documentary series in India. I was in Rishikesh, where The Beatles wrote The White Album. We're up in the Himalayas and I bumped into Phaldut, who was there with his family. We both stared and pointed and went, 'What the hell?' What are the chances that I would randomly bump into him on the other side of the world?



Back on the case:
Nicola Walker

The Saint was your favourite TV show as a kid. Is it true that you became good friends with your idol Sir Roger Moore?

I still pinch myself. Early on in the pandemic I was talking to Meera [Syal, his actress wife] and we were talking about where everything was heading with all the theatres closed and

incredibly limited avenues of work for us. I said to her, 'I was friends with Roger Moore.' She said, 'What's that got to do with anything?' I said, 'It's everything.' I cannot have become friends with Roger Moore and now at any point consider myself unfortunate. My mother used to refer to him as Hamara Roger Moore, 'Our Roger Moore' in Hindi.

Did you work together?

No, I was at an event hosted by the Prince of Wales and Stephen Fry, who had been on The Kumars At No 42, introduced us. I told him Live And Let Die was the first Bond film I went to see and I enjoyed it so much I saw it twice on the same day because it was continuous programming. He said, 'You owe me £4.50.' When I told him that The Saint was probably the reason I wanted to act, Roger said, 'Of course. You thought if he can get a job, anyone can.' Our friendship grew to the point that when he was here, we would meet and have tea and go to his shows.

When was the last time you spoke?

The last contact I had with him was an email a few months before he died. He said, 'I watched your show, Unforgotten. Marvellously directed, marvellously acted, marvellously written and at the centre of it all there is my friend being utterly believable as a detective.'

Unforgotten returns to ITV on February 22