

2012 has been a record year for **BBC America**, according to General Manager Perry Simon. "The channel was one of the fastest growing in U.S. distribution, up 11 percent year on year, and now in over 80 million homes," said Simon during the Television Critics Association's (TCA) winter 2013 press tour. "We're also on pace to celebrate our highest ratings year ever, thanks in no small part to 'Doctor Who." But it's the network's new slate of original shows that's currently demonstrating the breath and quality of BBC America's programming, with the co-productions of "Luther" and "The Hour" being most noteworthy. And last summer's launch of "Copper," BBC America's first original scripted show, became the channel's highest-rated drama series ever and will return for a second season this summer.

Following the success of "Copper" is the new detective drama "Ripper Street," a gripping thriller set in Victorian London's East End. "This show has just launched on the BBC in the U.K. to big audiences and great critical acclaim, and we can't wait to bring it to BBC America starting January 19th," said Simon. "No one does mystery, murder and mayhem quite as well as the Brits, and 'Ripper Street' is no exception," noted Richard De Croce, BBC America's senior VP of

programming. "Created and written by Richard Warlow, who did 'Mistresses,' it takes place in the aftermath of Jack the Ripper's reign of terror in London's East End. It's a brutal world fueled by suspicion, rumor and fear, where imitators are rife, journalists are corrupt, and the police are trying desperately to keep order, still haunted by their failure to catch one of the world's most notorious killers."

"Ripper Street" Creator/Writer/Executive Producer Richard Warlow was on hand at the TCA press session, along with the show's lead actors Jerome Flynn (who plays Detective Sergeant Bennet Drake), Matthew Macfadyen (Detective Inspector Edmund Reid) and Adam Rothenberg (Captain Homer Jackson). Warlow reported that the format for the series will have through lines for all three main characters and various other people connected to their lives. "Each week will be a standalone crime that is solved," Warlow explained. "The whole idea for us setting out on this journey was to actually discard Jack the Ripper, in terms of trying to find out who he was and trying to catch him. Instead we wanted to tell stories about the streets where he committed his crimes, and what happened in the wake of those terrible murders, and how it affected the community. And, most importantly, what happened to the police that tried and failed to catch him."

Stepping into that particular Victorian period didn't require a great feat of imagination, as filming took place in parts of Dublin, Ireland that evoke another era. "We had this fantastic set and an incredible production designer called Mark Geraghty," said Macfadyen. "We shot it in Dublin. We had an old Victorian barracks called Clancy Barracks, which we sort of used as a playground to build the streets and whole sets. So it was great and very easy to get into the world." Macfadyen revealed he didn't do a lot of research for his copper role, because he found Richard Warlow's script to be so fresh and fantastic. "What I found interesting is that Reid wasn't a sort of stock detective character," noted Macfadyen. "He's a very free-thinking, forward-looking kind of man, not a sort of jaded 'seen it all' copper. So I was intrigued by that."

The Victorian era is certainly an interesting time for a police show to explore. "There's a great change within the way the police were working," said Producer Will Gould. "But so many [new] things were just around the corner, things like fingerprinting. We're kind of ten years away, I think, from Scotland Yard using fingerprinting. So there are so many things just out of reach, but so many things they're experimenting with. So I think, for us, the period was interesting because you could look at it as a modern age. Our characters, the three policemen, kind of felt that they were in a modern age with a kind of cutting-edge excitement."

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Caption: "Ripper Street" with Detective Sergeant Bennet Drake (Jerome Flynn), Detective Inspector Edmund Reid (Matthew Macfadyen) and Captain Homer Jackson (Adam Rothenberg).