



****EMBARGOED UNTIL 09:00AM MONDAY 7TH OCTOBER BST****

CHANNEL 5 COMMISSION NEW CRIME DRAMA *THE PUZZLE LADY (w/t)* STARRING PHYLLIS LOGAN FROM FACTUAL FICTION & DECEMBER FILMS

Imagery can be downloaded [here](#)

Monday 7th October, London: Channel 5 has announced today the commission of brand-new crime drama, *The Puzzle Lady w/t (6x60')* produced by Factual Fiction and December Films with additional funding from Northern Ireland Screen. PBS Distribution is on board as the US distributor and the series is co-produced with Channel Zero and ZDF Studios, who are distributing in ROW.

BAFTA award-winning Actress **Phyllis Logan**; best known for playing Mrs Hughes in the award-winning television series *Downton Abbey*, will play the titular role of Cora Felton, the eponymous Puzzle Lady. The series is based on the best-selling books by American author Parnell Hall and begins when a strange murder takes place in the sleepy market town of Bakerbury. The local police are baffled by a crossword puzzle left on the body. With their case going nowhere, they turn reluctantly to Cora Felton, a recent arrival in Bakerbury; whose fame as the eponymous Puzzle Lady suggests she can help DCI Hooper and the Bakerbury police solve its first murder case. But the eccentric Cora isn't who she claims to be, and as she throws herself into a murder case that has the town's residents baffled, she starts to gather allies and enemies in equal measure.

The series was ordered by **Paul Testar, Commissioning Editor, Drama, Channel 5 and Paramount+** who will also executive produce alongside **Sebastian Cardwell, Deputy Chief Content Officer, Paramount UK** for Channel 5. Executive Producers for Factual Fiction are **Patrick Irwin, Dominique Moloney, Tom Dalton** and **Emily Dalton**; **Todd Berger** and **Julie Di Cresce** for December Films; **Jennifer Chen** for Channel Zero Studios and **Daniel Mekinda** for GroupM Motion Entertainment; and **Yi Qiao**, Director Drama and **Robert Franke**, VP Drama for ZDF Studios. Tom Dalton (*The Greatest TV Show Never Made, Agatha and the Midnight Murders*) will also direct the series with Dominique Moloney (*Land Girls, Father Brown and Shakespeare & Hathaway*) on board as writer.

Paul Testar, Commissioning Editor, Drama, Channel 5 and Paramount+ commented: *"We're very pleased to bring *The Puzzle Lady* to Channel 5, a compelling, cosy crime drama that will keep viewers guessing and entertained equally. Phyllis Logan will be excellent as Cora Felton, our Puzzle Lady."*

Emily Dalton, Managing Director, Factual Fiction added: *"With Cora Felton, Dominique Moloney has written a character that leaps off the page and we are so happy that the wonderful Phyllis Logan will bring *The Puzzle Lady* to life. This will be my fifth project in Northern Ireland, working with some of the best crew in the UK - it feels a bit like coming home."*

Todd Berger, December Films added: *"It's a huge pleasure to now be going into production on this show. We wish Parnell was still around to see this day, and are grateful for the support of his Estate, and to our partners ZDF, Channel 5, PBS Distribution, Channel Zero and NI Screen."*



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Yi Qiao, Director Drama, ZDF Studios, said: *“Since we announced the development of *The Puzzle Lady* several years ago there has been a tremendous amount of interest from our clients looking for a light-hearted, quirky whodunnit. Cora Felton is an absolute force of nature with her charm, wit and chaos that I am sure audiences around the world will fall in love with her right away.”*

The series has begun production in Northern Ireland and is set to air on Channel 5 in the UK in 2025.

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For more information please contact:

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About Channel 5:

Channel 5 is a multi-award-winning public service broadcaster and the UK’s third largest commercial TV station. Launched in March 1997, Channel 5 has been part of Paramount Global (formerly ViacomCBS) since its acquisition in September 2014. Its portfolio includes digital channels 5STAR, 5USA, 5SELECT, 5ACTION.

Channel 5 and on-demand platform My5 offer a diverse range of critically acclaimed, original programmes featuring well-known faces and fresh new talent – from issue-led documentaries, popular factual series and accessible history shows to premium drama and agenda-setting news & current affairs. Channel 5 is the only PSB to air children’s content daily through its much-loved programming strand Milkshake!, home to some of the world’s favourite pre-school characters. The free to air channel’s distinctive British programming aims to tell the story of modern Britain by reflecting the lives of people across the UK.

This year Channel 5 has continued to attract industry acclaim for documentary *White Nanny Black Child*, winning both a BAFTA Television Award (specialist factual) and an RTS Award, whilst *Endurance Race to the Pole* received a BAFTA nomination in the factual entertainment category. In 2023, *Who Killed Billie Jo?* won best documentary series at the inaugural True Crime Awards and home-grown drama *All Creatures Great and Small* took home the Stress Buster Award at the Radio Times’ Screen Test Awards.

About Factual Fiction:

With the backing of Great Point Media, Emily and Tom Dalton launched Factual Fiction in May 2020. Based on the edge of the Dales in North Yorkshire, Factual Fiction is the UK’s first off-grid production company. It combines Emily’s experience as MD of Banijay-owned Darlow Smithson, with Tom’s work as a commercials director and writer/producer of the hugely successful ‘*Agatha*’ series. Tom & Emily are joined by co-founders Patrick Irwin (‘*The Fall*’, ‘*Bang*’ and ‘*Miss Scarlet and the Duke*’) and award-winning writer/director, Chamoun Issa.

About December Films:

DECEMBER FILMS is a Canadian/American production company that was formed by Julie DiCresce and Todd Berger in 2020. Company primary business is to produce scripted television and film for the North American and International marketplace. Recent projects include *REGINALD THE VAMPIRE* for Syfy, Hulu and Bell/Crave in Canada; *WYNONNA EARP: VENGEANCE* for Tubi, and *OUT COME THE WOLVES* for IFC Films, Shudder, and Altitude Films. Berger is also an EP on Apple TV+ series *CIRCUIT BREAKERS*, and *MISS SCARLET AND THE DUKE* for PBS and UK TV. Company has offices in Toronto and Los Angeles.

About Northern Ireland Screen:

Northern Ireland Screen is the national screen agency for Northern Ireland. We are committed to maximising the economic, cultural and educational value of the screen industries for the benefit of Northern Ireland. This



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goal is pursued through our mission to accelerate the development of a dynamic and sustainable screen industry and culture in Northern Ireland.

About PBS Distribution:

PBS Distribution is a leading distributor of public media content around the world, entertaining audiences across platforms and formats. The company, a joint venture of PBS and GBH Boston, provides premium content through multiple digital channels and video services. PBS Distribution operates seven subscription streaming channels

— PBS Masterpiece (US and CA), PBS KIDS, PBS Living, PBS Documentaries (US and CA) and PBS America (U.K.) as well as numerous Free Ad-supported Streaming TV (FAST) Channels in the U.S and U.K. In addition, the company reaches viewers through Transactional Video-on-Demand (TVOD), Subscription Video-on-Demand (SVOD) licensing, Advertising-based Video on Demand (AVOD), DVD and Blu-ray, theatrical releasing, educational platforms, non-theatrical and inflight sales, and serves broadcasters and producers providing program sales and co-production financing.

PBS Distribution offers consumers and educators the highest quality factual, scripted, and children's programming including films from Ken Burns, hit series from MASTERPIECE and foreign language dramas from Walter Presents, entertaining and educational PBS KIDS series, and award-winning documentaries from NOVA, FRONTLINE, AMERICAN MASTERS, NATURE, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, and many independent producers. For over 10 years, the company has extended the reach of programming beyond broadcast while generating revenue for the public television system, stations, and producers.

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About Channel Zero Studios: Channel Zero Studios specializes in developing and producing scripted television series in collaboration with international partners. With a focus on creating content that resonates across borders, Channel Zero Studios forms strategic alliances with global networks, streaming platforms, and independent broadcasters to produce captivating, relevant stories that appeal to a diverse, global audience. The company is dedicated to innovation and storytelling, working with both established and emerging talent to bring fresh, bold narratives to life on screen. Channel Zero Studios continues to expand its portfolio with projects that inspire, entertain, and connect viewers across the globe. Channel Zero Studios is the dynamic production arm of Channel Zero, a Canadian media company based in Toronto.

About GroupM Motion Entertainment:

GroupM Motion Entertainment funds, develops, produces and distributes premium television, digital content and award-winning programming around the globe in partnership with the world's leading producers, talent, networks, and platforms. Through innovative commercial and creative partnerships Motion works alongside GroupM agencies to produce original brand-funded content and unique entertainment partnerships that create value and help clients play a positive and active role in culture. The company has co-produced over 2,100 series, equating to over 33,000 hours of television across all programming genres. Motion currently operates in 44 markets worldwide with headquarters in London and Los Angeles. GroupM Motion Entertainment is part of GroupM, a WPP company.

About ZDF Studios:

ZDF Studios is a commercial subsidiary of ZDF, one of the largest TV broadcasters in Europe. Founded in 1993 and headquartered in Mainz, Germany, the ZDF Studios Group operates more than 30 direct and indirect subsidiaries and affiliates in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom spanning TV production, distribution and services. The parent company, ZDF Studios, is responsible for global programme distribution, realisation of international co-productions, acquisition of licences and merchandising of successful programme brands under its own name, for ZDF and third parties. ZDF Studios has the largest German-language programme



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inventory in the world and a constantly growing range of international productions, consisting of series and mini-series, television films, documentaries and children's programmes.

The companies of the ZDF Studios Group cover the entire value chain from the development of scripted and unscripted TV content to production, marketing and monetizing, including TV and streaming licences as well as merchandising and online rights. The positioning of ZDF Studios as an integrated media company enables the development of innovative, outstanding and high-quality programmes and makes the Group an attractive workplace for German and international talent to flourish in a very inspiring and creative environment.