

TRIGGER POINT



PRODUCTION CONTEXT



- Premiere:** *Trigger Point* is a British **crime drama** series that **premiered** in January 2022 on ITV and ITVX.
- Producers:** Produced by **HTM Television** with Jed Mercurio (creator of *Line of Duty*) as executive producer, and **Hat Trick Productions**.
- Writer:** Series 1 was written by the unestablished writer, Daniel Brierley.
- Development:** Series 2 began **broadcasting** in 2024 and Series 3 released on **ITVX** in 2025. Series 4 scheduled for release in 2026.
- Ethos:** ITV are committed to developing/supporting new talent – risk mitigated through established production talent (Vicky McClure).
- Protagonist:** Lana Washington, an **ex-military bomb disposal operative** (or 'Expo') and **Afghan War** veteran – leads **Metropolitan Police** bomb disposal squad dealing with terrorist threats.
- Scheduling:** Sunday evening **prime-time post-watershed** (3pm) slot associated with **prestige drama** as a form of 'quality television'.
- Ownership:** *Trigger Point* is produced by **ITV plc**, a **conglomerate**, with **parent company** **ITV** and its **subsidiaries** **ITV Studios** and **Media & Entertainment** – **vertically integrated producer-broadcaster** and **streamer**, including both **production** and **distribution** of content.
- Broadcasting:** **ITV** is a **commercial broadcaster** that holds a **public service broadcaster (PSB) license** – it is primarily **funded** by **advertising** and is a **profit-driven** company.
- Industry context:** Reflects audience demand for "quality television" and **serialised crime narratives**.
- Cultural context:** Released in a period of continuing public awareness of terrorism and security threats in the UK.

GENRE CONVENTIONS

- Trigger Point** is a **police procedural crime-thriller** with recognisable codes and conventions from the genre such as:
 - characters:** the troubled **protagonist** dedicated to their work (Lana Washington), **EXPO** colleagues, anonymous terrorists as criminals in law enforcement/criminal binary.
 - settings:** urban city, police station, power station, residential zones.
 - mise-en-scene:** uniforms, protective equipment, explosions, dead bodies.
 - sound:** **diegetic** police sirens, bombs detonating, police procedural jargon in dialogue; **non-diegetic** music generating tense atmosphere.
- Genre repetition**
 - Police procedural (investigation, evidence gathering, specialist terminology, institutional hierarchy) and crime drama (criminal threat) are all evident.
- Genre variation**
 - female **protagonist** in **male-dominated genre** (focus on bomb disposal unit rather than the typical police force).
 - bomb disposal thriller** rather than **conventional police procedural**.
 - the lack of resolution (**open-ended**) at the end of the first episode challenges **crime drama conventions**, opting for a **series-arc** over **contained narratives**.
 - serial narrative**, with long-running mysteries across episodes.
 - psychological** focus on trauma and grief.

5 Act Narrative Structure

- Equilibrium** – Lana returns from secondment abroad giving a presentation to security officials about bomb-related terrorism preparing to return to active duty.
- Disruption** – Lana witnesses a major explosion at a London power station in the distance whilst presenting, which causes widespread power outages and a new terrorist threat. Lana is drawn immediately back into operational work.
- Recognition** – Further devices are discovered with the discovery of a co-ordinated attack. The Counter Terrorism team realise that they are facing a high-scale, ongoing threat. In a car park, two officers are killed by explosive traps.
- Repair** – Thom is caught on pressure plates with Lana responsible for deactivating the device. Thom confesses his love for Lana despite being in a relationship. They kiss.
- New Equilibrium** – Thom is rescued but the terrorist network remains unidentified. The ongoing threat creates narrative suspense for future episodes.

NARRATIVE

Propp's Character Types

- Hero** – Lana (Senior EXPO officer) who stops bomb threats and protects the public.
- Villain** – unidentified terrorists and bombers.
- Helpers** – the EXPO team (Lana's colleagues) assisting bomb disposals.
- Dispatchers** – Counter Terrorism police unit and security services who direct Lana towards attacks, responding to incidents.
- Princess (symbolic)** – Thom is rescued by Lana as a male damsel-in-distress.

- Binary oppositions** – order/chaos, law/terrorism, perpetrator/victim, safety/danger, life/death, knowledge/ignorance.
- Enigma codes** – who are the terrorists? How will Lana track them down?
- Themes** – terrorism, public fear, duty, sacrifice, friendship, loyalty, trauma.

MISE-EN-SCENE

Props

Bomb disposal equipment – wire cutters, specialist defuser tools, communication earpieces, EXPO team radios, improvised explosive devices, EDs, drones, including a toilet bomb, car boot bomb, explosive-filled van, CCTV, digital surveillance technology.

Pressure plates – **MacGuffin** – the catalyst for the episode that kills John Hudson and an unnamed officer, whilst the plate that Thom accidentally stepped on needs to be deactivated by Lana.

Counter-terrorism props – police cordon tape, evidence bags, forensic equipment, police vehicles, emergency response units, command boards, mobile phones, radios.

Costumes

Lana – bomb disposal suits, tactical equipment and protective gear (casual clothing when off-duty).

Police officers – uniforms highlighting professional hierarchy (Senior EXPO, EXPO officers, Detective Inspectors, Sergeants).

Settings

Police station – whether command posts, conference rooms or office spaces, show conforms to aspects of police procedural.

Abandoned multi-storey car park – location of pressure plates.

Performance

Lana – Senior EXPO who is portrayed as calm under pressure, with controlled facial expressions and focused eye contact.

Thom – EXPO officer who panics when he accidentally stands on a pressure plate. Lana helps him to keep his composure.

John – officious and upper-class Commander who seems nervous whilst attempting to establish his authority on his first day.



EDITING

- Continuity editing** – the episode features **cause-and-effect narration** with **match-on action shots** and **shot-reverse shots** for conversations. This represents the logic of **continuity editing** that creates a **chronological** sense of story progression that focuses on seamlessness and **spectator immersion**.
- Cross-cutting** – **intercutting** between Lana defusing bomb devices (mid shots of Lana and extreme close ups of bomb devices) with close-up reaction shots from other EXPO officers and Commanders. This combination of shots conforms to **crime-thriller conventions** of parallel action. By showing multiple vantage points, it builds suspense and a wider context to the events at play.
- Fast pace of cutting during bomb threats** – during high-intensity sequences involving bomb defusing, quick cuts between Lana, the bomb and police officers to increase tension – this reinforces the urgency of resolving the crisis and conforms to **crime-thriller conventions**.
- Slower pace of cutting after dramatic sequences** – the aftermath of dramatic sequences often features dialogue-focused or expositional scenes with a **slower pace of cutting** – the **pace of cutting** often reflects the level of tension at any given moment in the narrative of a **crime-thriller**.
- Cuts to extreme close-ups** – emphasis on key props and character reactions is punctuated by motivated **cuts to extreme close-ups** of Lana's face, bomb components and wires, countdowns and radio/communication devices.

SOUND

- Diegetic sound** – police radios, sirens, vehicle engines, footsteps, bomb disposal equipment, dialogue – these sounds create realism and a sense of immersion.
- Non-diegetic sound** – **low-key** electronic, atmospheric and minimal soundtrack.
- Silence** – used as **dramatic punctuation** for bomb disposal sequences.

CHARACTERS

CORE BOMB DISPOSAL EXPERTS (EXPOs)



Lana Washington (Proppian Hero) – ex-military bomb disposal operative and Afghan war veteran who leads bomb squad.



Hassan Rahim (Helper) – acting Senior EXPO during Lana's absence



Danny Markham (Helper) – EXPO officer assisting Lana.



John Hudson (Potential False Hero) – EXPO officer under suspicion who is killed in the episode.

POLICE & COUNTER-TERRORISM OFFICERS



DI Thom Youngblood (Helper/ symbolic Princess) – detective inspector working with team (romantic connection with Lana)



Commander John Francis (Dispatcher) – senior officer overseeing the investigation.



DS Helen Morgan (Helper) – counter-terrorism officer and Thom's girlfriend.



DI Amar Batra (Helper) – police officer.

OTHER CHARACTERS

The Wave (Villains) – anarchist terrorist group who are introduced later in the series (Hope, Alex and Nick).

Unnamed Officer (Helper) – An unnamed officer is killed alongside John Hudson in multi-storey car park.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Close-ups

- Frequent use of close-ups** for Lana's reactions to new terrorist threats with poise and professionalism under duress.
- High angle or over-the shoulder close-ups** of bomb components and devices to align spectators towards Lana's high-stakes operations.

Extreme close-ups

- during high intensity bomb disposal operations.
- extreme close-ups** of wires, timers and trigger mechanisms are used to ratchet up tension conforming to **crime drama** and **thriller conventions**.

Tracking shots

- Camera alignment** through **tracking shots** are used to foreground Lana's perspective throughout bomb disposal operations.

POV shots

- surveillance footage, bomb disposal robots and CCTV monitoring shots act as **POV shots** to highlight the **voyeurism** of terrorists on the multi-storey car park scene.

Wide shots

- Establishing wide shots** are used for the power plant and the 11th floor of the multi-storey car park.

Handheld camerawork

- during scenes such as John Hudson's death after stepping on a pressure plate, **handheld camerawork** is used to highlight the chaos of the situation – crime scenes out of control use **kinetic camera movement** to create a **visceral effect** for the spectator to become fully immersed in the drama.

REPRESENTATION

Changing gender roles – programme reflects **increased visibility of women** in the media after several **waves of feminism**, but also reflects evolving representations of masculinity (**male vulnerability** through Thom's panic positions men as needing to be rescued by heroic women such as Lana).

Increased diversity and multiculturalism – **diverse** casting compared to exclusive White casts in previous generations of TV programming (*The Sweeney*) – contemporary **multiculturalism** is reflecting in programming – **ethnic diversity** is **normalised** rather than exceptional – for example: Hassan as Senior EXPO, DS Helen Morgan, and Danny as an assistant EXPO – **diversity** is not **tokenistic**.

Contemporary context – themes such as **terrorism**, **radicalisation** and **gender politics** are embedded in *Trigger Point*'s narrative – representation of the police force reflect cultural changes in approaches to policing – more sophisticated, with technology playing a part (computer screens, drones, specialist equipment, high-tech bombs and mobile phones).

Empowered femininity – Lana is represented as highly effective, determined and calm under pressure – her costume highlights her status within the squad – her vocal delivery is clear, firm and **authoritative**, with expertise as the Senior EXPO operative – her **professionalism** is prioritised in her representation.

Role reversal – **Stereotypical** gender roles are reversed – Lana saving Thom from a room full of pressure plates, and Commander John Francis as seemingly inexperienced, contrasts Lana's composure, skill, bravery and authority.

Masculinity – Thom represents a man who is caring, with a confession of love for Lana that highlights male romantic vulnerability despite the risk, whilst other men are not represented through **stereotypes** of aggression or dominance, including Commander John Francis.

Under-representation and mis-representation

– people from **ethnic minority** backgrounds in TV are often **negatively stereotyped or absent** – *Trigger Point* challenges this. For example:

– British Asian Muslim, Hassan, as a highly **competent** and accomplished officer – Hassan is shown to fight against terrorism, where **stereotyped** portrayals in police procedurals may position him as a terrorist himself.

– Black British male, Danny, challenges **negative stereotypes** as a significant male colleague that Lana values and trusts.

– White characters, including John Hudson, are disliked and not trusted by Lana, as he expresses racist views and is arrogantly resistant to female authority.

– Diversity is represented as normalised and unremarkable.

Representation (Hall) – Lana's representation challenges **dominant stereotypes of female authority** by presenting her as the most competent and respected character in the narrative.

Racial Stereotypes (Alvarado) – **dangerous, exotic, to be pitied, vulnerable** – *Trigger Point* challenges **Alvarado's racial stereotypes**, with Hassan, Danny and Helen all **subverting racial tropes** that often undermine the representation of non-White characters.

Feminism (Van Zoonen) – there is **no objectification** of female characters that appeals to the **voyeuristic male gaze**. Women are portrayed as **active and empowered** professionals rather than **passive victims**. It is Thom, who becomes a **symbolic Princess** and **male damsel-in-distress**, who needs to be rescued by Lana after standing on a pressure plate. Female rescuers are centred and normalised in the narrative.

KEY SEQUENCE ANALYSIS – SEASON 2 EPISODE 1

EQUILIBRIUM – LANA'S PRESENTATION (0:00-6:30)



Lana (Senior EXPD), the central **protagonist** is introduced with **mid-shots** talking to a colleague (Danny, EXPD officer) for a **police presentation**, with **over-the-shoulder** and **shot-reverse shots**. Their teasing interaction highlights their **mutual respect**, highlighting **ethnically diverse portrayals** of Counter-Terrorist officers. Diversity is represented as normalised and unremarkable. **Camera alignment** to Lana signals her **female empowerment** (calm, confident, authoritative) with **no stereotypical objectification** evident. The presentation establishes the **theme of terrorism** in the evolving **crime drama genre** that **varies conventions** with **thriller** elements. This **police conference** takes place in a central London metropolitan **skyscraper** and is **intercut** with ominous shots of a **tracking mid shot** of a suspicious looking man at a power plant in a **yellow hat**, seemingly inconspicuously installing an **IED**. This **cuts** to Lana presenting mock **IEDs** in **close-up** to highlight the advanced weaponry now adopted by terrorists in various militia groups. **Parallel editing** between the work presentation and the **power plant** builds until the **IED** is detonated. A **match-on-action** shot from a **close-up** of Lana to a **POV long shot** of the explosion from her vantage point.

DISRUPTION – LONDON POWER STATION EXPLOSION (6:30-23:00)



Frequent **close-ups** of Lana's face communicate **shock and concern** at the aftermath of the **power station explosion**, which acts as a catalyst for the Disruption stage of the narrative. **Low-key lighting** and **blue colour grading** sets the brooding tone of the episode in line with **crime drama conventions**. **Dialogue** between EXPD officers using **specialist police procedural terminology** is **intercut** with **long shots** and **close-ups** of the flames, smoke and emergency vehicles at the power plant. The night-time environment signifies **danger and uncertainty** with **close-ups** of bomb disposal equipment establishing **genre conventions**. The use of **diegetic sirens** and a subtle **non-diegetic minor key soundtrack** reinforce the **tension and realism** of the scene. The increased **pace of editing** matches the **tension** of a scene and is employed during **extreme close-ups** of a timer counting down to zero to signify a potential **detonation** unless **deactivated** by an EXPD officer. Lana's return to duties positions her as a **Proppian Hero** with **courage to confront danger**. She acts as a **gender countertype** within the **patriarchal** legacy of the **crime drama genre**.

RECOGNITION – CAR PARK ATTACK ON OFFICERS (23:00-33:00)



The use of **silence** and the **pleonastic sound** of footsteps heightens **suspense** as EXPD and police officers carry out **surveillance** (**low-angle** and **restricted framing** to create feelings of **entrapment**) of an **abandoned multi-storey car park**. After the red herring of finding a homeless couple squatting in a car, the **low-key lighting** that surrounds the litter-infested floors of the car park **foreshadows** the dangers of the **plausophobic** concrete location, with **hidden explosive devices** as a **conventional signifier of crime dramas**. The **delayed reveals** build **tension**. Terrorists are represented as invisible and omnipresent, reflecting **cultural anxieties on terrorism**. The **pleonastic sound** of a police officer standing on a **detonator** of a **pressure plate bomb**, acts as the **MacGuffin** prop of the narrative. Two officers (including John) are portrayed as **unprofessional** (a **countertype** of masculine incompetence) when Lana instructs them to stop wandering around a floor where **surveillance** has not been carried out. This **cuts** to a **POV shot** of a hidden camera that is monitoring the officers before **cutting** to an explosion in **long shot** as they step off the **pressure plate**, as a **sudden audio shock**. At this **Recognition** stage of the narrative, the EXPD team realise that the attacks are co-ordinated, and that the stakes have escalated through officer casualties. The unseen terrorists (**Proppian Villains**) appear more **powerful and organised** than initially assumed.

REPAIR – THOM: PRESSURE PLATES/ LANA AS RESCUER (33:00-43:00)



Repeated **close-ups** by Thom's feet are used to signify the **pressure plate bomb** under them. **Cuts to close-ups** of his face acts as a **reaction shot** to reinforce his **sense of terror**. He is positioned as an **atypical male damsel-in-distress** who must be rescued by the **female Proppian Hero** and bomb disposal expert, Lana. His panic, vulnerability and fear contrasts her calm and authoritative leadership under pressure. The **role reversal of gender stereotypes** acts as a **crime drama genre variation** to challenging **traditional gender stereotypes**, due to Thom's **emotional openness and dependence** on Lana. The extreme **close-up** of the intricate wires of the **pressure plate bomb**, as Lana deactivates with specialist skills, is **intercut** with **close-up reaction shots** of Lana and Thom. The **high-stakes life/death binary opposition** of the sequence is matched by **rapid editing**, crescendos in the **non-diegetic soundtrack** and **tight framing** of shot-reverse shots. The **romantic sub-plot** is established after the bomb is deactivated, with Thom's love confession and kiss.

NEW EQUILIBRIUM – DRONE ATTACK/ LOVE TRIANGLE (43:00-END)



Before the **New Equilibrium** stage, with decreasing levels of **conflict and tension** is executed, a **plot twist** of the terrorist group's continuing threat is revealed by a **long shot** of a drone with an attached bomb. **Drone technology** (and the episode's use of mobile phones, surveillance cameras and digital messaging) represents **contemporary terrorist methods** and the evolving networked nature of criminal activity. The **urban location** of the **abandoned multi-storey car park** in Central London reinforces **crime drama conventions**, along with the suspenseful **non-diegetic music** signalling unresolved danger. Thom restores some level of **stereotypical masculine heroism** by shooting down the drone to rescue both Lana and himself. **Multiple narrative strands** are evident with the **romantic sub-plot** of Lana and Thom's romance through the **mid-shot** of Thom and Helen's embrace at the scene, whilst Lana gives **avoidant gesture codes** in the foreground. This establishes the **dramatic irony** of an affair. The final **POV close-up** shot of Lana viewing a terrorist meme featuring her with the **dialogue** "Who the hell are these people?" reinforces the **ongoing serial narrative** structure beyond the **conventional self-contained narratives** of 1970s crime dramas.

REGULATION



- ITV is **regulated** by **Ofcom** with content meeting their regulatory requirements.
- Although **ITV** is **commercially funded** through **advertising**, it operates under **public service broadcasting (PSB)** obligations set by **Ofcom**.
- **Trigger Point** received a **15 BBFC certificate** in the UK for violence, gore and frightening/intense scene.
- **Trigger Point** is broadcast on **linear television** after the 9pm **watershed** time to protect younger viewers.
- The **Trigger Point embedded video** on **ITVX** includes additional guidance that the show 'contains scenes of terrorism and peril and some strong language' and allows users to turn on **parental controls**.
- The **DVD release** is also classified with a **15 BBFC certificate**.

CONVERGENCE

- **ITV** has **diversified** into digital and online content - distributing through **streaming services** to reflect the **convergent** nature of media industries in a bid to increase **profit and revenue**.
- **ITVX** was launched in 2022 as ITV's free **streaming service**.
- **ITVX** is free to all users who pay the television **licence fee** and is **funded** by **advertising and sponsorship**.
- **ITV** generate further **revenue** through **ITVX Premium**, a **paid-for service** that offers benefits including advertisement-free viewing, the ability to **download** shows and accessing additional content.
- **Trigger Point** can extend their audience beyond **older demographics** of **linear television**, creating greater **overall audience reach** - premiered on **ITV** and **ITV X** can be viewed through **third-party streaming services** like **Amazon Prime**, with an additional release on **DVD**.

FUNDING & MARKETING STRATEGIES

- Writer Daniel Brierley received funding from a **bursary** provided by the industry body, **ScreenSkills**.
- **Trigger Point** is financed through a **commercial model** (commissioned by **ITV**) - series funded by advertising revenue generated from **ITV's linear** **ITV channel** and **advertiser-funded free streaming service, ITVX**.
- **Advertisers** pay to advertise products in **commercial breaks** during episodes of the series.
- **ITV** has a **mainstream reputation** that appeals to **high-end advertisers** whose **target demographic** matches **Trigger Point's** target audience.
- **Revenue** is also generated through **sponsorship** (Domino's Pizza pays to be associated with the service with branding displayed on the **official website**).
- **Guerrilla marketing strategies** were also used to promote the show - TP projected a countdown clock onto buildings in London to create a sense of anticipation for Series 1 - prior to Series 2 launch - an immersive escape room was created, **generating buzz** and excitement around show's return.
- **ITV Studios** creates, owns and distributes content on a **global scale** across 13 countries, generating 59% of revenue outside UK - **ITV's diversified business model** (developing, managing, owning and distributing content rights) allows it to maximise revenue and compete in global markets - **ITV Studios**-biggest UK commercial producer- **ITV's subsidiary, Media & Entertainment** =largest **commercial/VoD streamer** in UK.
- **ITV** reduced **financial risk** by casting established television star **Vicky McClure** due to her **Line of Duty** fame.

AUDIENCE

- **ITV** often attracts older **2000s demographics** who spectate **post-watershed** 15 BBFC rated programmes - fans of Vicky McClure may also engage with it - the set episode attracted 6.36 million viewers in the UK.
- **TP** appeals to various **audience needs and desires** - some viewers may enjoy the **familiarity of genre conventions**, as well as modern updates to the **police procedural**, some may appreciate **diverse representation** (gender, ethnicity) or engage with **romance sub-plots** and react to themes of racism within the police force.
- Fans of **Vicky McClure** and **Line of Duty** may appreciate **intertextual references**.
- Audiences may interpret **portrayals of policing, terrorism and gender** differently depending on **personal beliefs and experiences**.
- **Hall - Reception**
- **Preferred reading** - Audience encouraged to admire Lana's professionalism and **align** with counter-terrorism officers.
- **Oppositional reading** - audiences may be **alienated** by the drama's messages and values on gender, ethnicity or law enforcement.

USES & GRATIFICATIONS

- **Entertainment Needs** - **appeals** of dramatic spectacle on bomb disposal operations helps audience escape and be diverted from reality.
- **Knowledge/Education Needs** - **appealing** to themes of terrorism, radicalisation and gender inequality to **inform** viewers, such as **Reformers**.
- **Social Interaction Needs** - **appealing** for debates on show's content with family/friends and on social media can be explored.
- **Personal Identity Needs** - **appealing** to compare life experiences with show's characters, particularly identifying with Lana, the **Proppian Hero**.