

= Strike Back : Project Dawn =

Strike Back : Project Dawn , as it is known in the United Kingdom is a ten @-@ part British @-@ American action television serial and is the second series of Strike Back . However , the only cast member to return from the first series was Richard Armitage in the first episode . The main cast for the series includes Philip Winchester , Sullivan Stapleton , Amanda Mealing , Eva Birthistle , Michelle Lukes and Rhashan Stone . The series follows the actions of Section 20 , a secret branch of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) , particularly two of its officers , Michael Stonebridge (Winchester) and former American Delta Force operative Damian Scott (Stapleton) . Section 20 leads a worldwide manhunt to find and capture Pakistani terrorist Latif , who is plotting an operation of his known as " Project Dawn " .

Sky announced Strike Back would be returning for a third series after the first aired . They entered a co @-@ production deal with the American premium cable network Cinemax , who wanted to introduce new original drama series to the network . In order to prepare for their roles several main cast members spent a month training with former officers of the Special Air Service and Special Boat Service . Filming began in February 2011 and took place across South Africa and Hungary .

The series began broadcasting on Cinemax in the United States on 12 August 2011 , with the premiere being seen by nearly 1 @.@ 1 million viewers , the highest ratings achieved by the network since 2005 . It later began broadcasting on Sky1 in the United Kingdom on 21 August with higher ratings than that of the first series . Critical reaction of the series was generally favourable in the United States , however British reviewers were more mixed . Reviewers made comparisons to various other television dramas including 24 , Sleeper Cell , Spooks and The Unit . Project Dawn was released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray disc in Region 2 on 14 November 2011 . In October 2011 , Cinemax announced it has renewed Strike Back for another 10 @-@ part series , to be titled Strike Back : Vengeance .

= = Episodes = =

In this table , the number in the first column refers to the episode 's number within the entire series , " US viewers in millions " refers to how many Americans watched the episode on Cinemax , while " UK viewers in millions " refers to how many Britons watched the episode on Sky1 . The series plays out as five two @-@ part episodes .

= = Cast and characters = =

Philip Winchester plays Sergeant Michael Stonebridge , a " by @-@ the @-@ book " Royal Marine and former Special Boat Service (SBS) commando , now assigned to Section 20 who is partnered with Scott to help track down a kidnapped Porter . Stonebridge works for Section 20 and is in charge of his team on the ground . Although the character is married to his wife Kerry (Alexandra Moen) , he has an affair with colleague Kate Marshall (played by Birthistle) . Winchester describes Stonebridge as " dedicated , disciplined , always plays by the rules and often saves the day . Stonebridge directs his energy trying to protecting others , " though as the story unfolds , the audience would see that Stonebridge " is not the knight in shining armour . "

Sullivan Stapleton plays Damien Scott , a former United States Delta Force operator who is familiar with the antagonists of the second series , and an acquaintance of John Porter . He is recruited by Section 20 to help Sergeant Michael Stonebridge find and rescue the kidnapped Porter . Stapleton describes Scott as cocky , rebellious and arrogant , and that it was good to have somebody like him in Section 20 because " he is the one that usually goes in first and takes the bullets , whereas Stonebridge arrives at the last minute and saves the day . " The actor opined that Scott is chosen for the dangerous role because he is daring and does not have any immediate family members who rely on him . Of Scott and Stonebridge 's working relationship , Stapleton said " they have a professional respect for each other " but start to annoy each other . When the actor first read the script for Project Dawn , he saw himself for the role as Scott . Because Stapleton is an Australian

actor , he had to speak with an American accent throughout the series . He was wary whether he did it right because he barely worked with Americans on the show , but believed he did okay when HBO , the network that operated Cinemax , was satisfied with it . Stapleton has signed up for another Strike Back series should it be commissioned .

Amanda Mealing plays Colonel Eleanor Grant , a " smart , tough military leader who is skilled with a gun and diplomacy , but knows when to break a rule or two . " She is the new head of Section 20 , replacing Hugh Collinson from the first series . Mealing described Grant as " hard as nails , " " very contained , very direct , " and " very driven . " Grant is also very distant from her team ; " she commands so she is not their pal but , at the same time , the guys are like her family . They spend so much time together moving from place to place . But , in a kind of motherly way , she has to keep them in check and sometimes they need a firm hand . " The actress called her role " the best role I 've ever had , " adding " when I 'm doing action scenes like flying in helicopters , the hardest thing is to keep a serious face as all I want to do is scream for joy . " She researched for her role by taking advice from a female officer in a similar high @-@ ranking position as Grant is . One piece of advice the officer gave Mealing was " you mustn 't try to be one of the boys or they 'll lose respect for you , but you 've got to be in charge . "

Eva Birthistle plays Captain Kate Marshall , a " crack commando " who oversees Section 20 's military personnel . She and Stonebridge have an affair . The actress was taken by the script , and although she was cast for the role , she had not done action in her past acting career , and felt it would be a " fun experience " to play the character . When Birthistle went through military training , her goal was " just to keep up with everybody and not give up , pass out , throw up or cry . " Rhshan Stone plays Major Oliver Sinclair , Grant 's right @-@ hand man who helps her gather intelligence . Mealing called their working relationship as " very strong " and " simpatico . " Sinclair is the section 's second @-@ in @-@ command . Michelle Lukes plays Sergeant Julia Richmond , one of the newer recruits of Section 20 . Lukes describes her character as " exceptionally bright and technically brilliant , " with the ability to speak seven languages . Jimi Mistry plays the antagonist Latif , the terrorist mastermind behind Project Dawn . Richard Armitage returns as John Porter , the protagonist of the original Strike Back series , in the first episode . Originally , Armitage 's role in the series was not clarified when production was announced . In January 2011 , the Herald Sun reported he dropped out of the series because he would be playing Thorin Oakenshield in The Hobbit films . However , it was later reported he would return for the second series in a secondary rather than primary role .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Strike Back began as a six @-@ part series from Sky1 , based on a book of the same name from former Special Air Service (SAS) soldier turned novelist Chris Ryan . It transmitted two episodes weekly from 5 to 19 May 2010 . The first two episodes more than tripled Sky1 's audience share in its timeslot in the past three months . On August 2010 , Sky1 controller Stuart Murphy commissioned a second series to consist of a longer run of ten episodes . Left Bank Pictures continued their role as the production company . In February 2011 , it was announced that Sky entered a co @-@ production deal with the American television network Cinemax , as the network wanted to introduce new drama series . Strike Back became one of two television projects to be produced by British and American networks in 2011 , the other being Torchwood : Miracle Day , which was produced between the BBC and Starz .

Frank Spotnitz , Richard Zajdlic , Tony Saint and Simon Burke were contracted as the series writers , while Alex Holmes , Bill Eagles , Paul Wilmshurst and Daniel Percival serve as the series directors . Andy Harries and Elaine Pyke were the show 's executive producers , with Percival and Spotnitz working as Co @-@ Executive Producers . In addition , Michael Casey , Trevor Hopkins and Sue De Beauvoir were the series producers , with Bill Shepard serving as co @-@ producer . Spotnitz

wrote the first episodes . He was approached to write for the series because the producers needed somebody to reimagine the show as Armitage was committed to The Hobbit in New Zealand , by introducing two new leads . Spotnitz described the process ; " We had this great format , this great world of ' Strike Back ' and then we had to imagine who were the new characters who were going to drive the show in the second year . " Before Project Dawn was even announced , the crew were scouting for locations in South Africa , where the first series was shot , as well as investigating other parts of the world including the United States , South America , and Europe .

= = = Training = = =

Before filming began , several of the main cast members were sent to a boot camp in South Africa and went through intensive and rigorous military training by former SAS and SBS soldiers . Stapleton and Winchester had more training than Birthistle , who just wanted to make sure she could at least be a believable soldier . The actors were trained in several aspects including running , teamwork , and weapons . Mealing meanwhile , did not go through as much training as the other actors , but did spend mornings training with a commander for the SBS who is also a military adviser on the show . Winchester recalled , " Sully and I would meet every morning at 6am . We would run to a chosen location and on the way we had to memorise street names and directions and then our trainers would say ' that car that you just passed what was the licence plate number ? ' Our trainers were ex @-@ SAS guys who made us study everything in detail , for example , we learnt step by step how to enter a room in twos , then alone . At the same time , we had to be constantly aware of where our weapon was trained . "

The physical trainers also had to ensure that not only do the actors look like soldiers before filming , but they had to remain that way throughout the shoot . In addition , Stapleton and Winchester had to lose and gain weight , respectively . Winchester had to be on a diet of 4 @,@ 000 calories a day , which included taking protein shakes between meals . The actor described the diet as " a workout in itself , " having found it " exhausting " eating more food than he was used to . In total , training took approximately one month .

= = = Filming = = =

Filming began in February 2011 , and concluded in the late summer (from the Northern Hemisphere 's perspective) . Filming largely took place in South Africa , particularly in Cape Town , but also in Durban and Springbok , Northern Cape . Outside South Africa the series was also filmed in Budapest , Hungary , and the UK . Among the separate locations the series takes place in , the New Delhi hotel in the first two episodes were shot in Cape Town , and the suburbs of Hout Bay doubled as Mozambique . Throughout the shoot the actors were allowed to perform the majority of their own stunts . Military advisors were on hand to teach the actors how to perform certain stunts , and to tell them what they did wrong during the take . The series includes a number of sex scenes , many of which were performed by Stapleton . In an interview with the British newspaper Metro , the actor stated " I 've done my fair share of nude scenes in the past but not as much as this ? not as risqué , anyway , " adding that while he got used to it , he was always " a bit nervous running around in front of 50 people with no clothes on . The sex scenes were usually with an actress I 'd just met , so it 's like : ' How 's it going ? I 'm Sullivan and this is me nude . ' It 's nerve @-@ racking at first but you have as much fun as you can with it . "

= = Release = =

= = = Broadcast and ratings = = =

Project Dawn began broadcasting on 12 August 2011 in the United States . The first telecast at 10 pm was seen by 567 @,@ 000 viewers , while the 11 pm and midnight encores almost doubled

viewership , adding 500 @, @ 000 , giving a total of nearly 1 @. @ 1 million viewers . Although Cinemax is available in 16 @. @ 7 million homes at the time of the broadcast , it was the best ratings performance for the network since a broadcast of the film Titanic in 2005 . It was also on @- @ par with the pilot of the Starz series Spartacus : Blood and Sand in 2010 , which also aired on the same timeslot . In the United Kingdom , the series began broadcast on 21 August 2011 . The first episode , airing at 9 pm was seen by a total of 616 @, @ 000 viewers , with an audience share of 2 @. @ 6 per cent . As far as overnight ratings are concerned , it performed better than the first episode of the previous series , which was seen by 398 @, @ 000 , and a 1 @. @ 7 per cent audience share .

= = = Home video release = = =

Project Dawn was released on both DVD and Blu @- @ ray Disc , published by 2entertain , in the United Kingdom on 14 November 2011 . It was released with an " 18 " British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) certificate (indicating it is unsuitable for viewers under the age of 18 years) . Special features include Top Secrets : Making Strike Back : Project Dawn , Firearms Training and Scott Vs Igor Fight Scene featurettes , as well as broadcast titles . In the United States the series was released on DVD and Blu @- @ ray on 7 August 2012 , with the inclusion of audio commentaries by Daniel Percival .

= = Critical reactions = =

= = = United States = = =

The American review site Metacritic rated the series a 64 out of 100 , indicating " generally favorable reviews " from 12 critics . David Hinkley of the New York Daily News rated it four stars out of five , stating it is " a little cartoonish in the same way Seagal or Arnold Schwarzenegger action movies were cartoonish , exaggerating characters and action . But " Strike Back " also differs sharply and significantly in that the villains here aren 't the random abstract caricatures from those films , like throwback Nazis or Jamaican drug lords , " adding that the villains give the series " an added level of intensity , because we have a more visceral sense of the potential consequences . " Linda Stasi of the New York Post rated it three out of four stars , summing up the series as ; " Good action , good characters and , besides , it 's the only show in the history of TV where the term , " [fucking prick] " is code . I mean , you gotta love that , no ? "

Aaron Riccio of Slant Magazine also rated it three out of four stars , stated " Strike Back isn 't brilliant television , but it 's plenty entertaining , and by fitting the action of 24 with the grit of The Unit (and the nudity of Cinemax) , it fills a .22 caliber hole in American television . " However Riccio added that the downside to the series was that " not enough time is given over to the fractious " buddy @- @ cop " relationship between the two main characters , Scott and Stonebridge , whereas quite a bit of time is spent with the villains . " Hank Stuever of The Washington Post called it " surprisingly stylish and addictive , " adding " Fans of " 24 , " which bowed last year , still ask me how to fill that void . They want just enough intelligence @- @ agency hooey to make the unbelievable seem somewhat real . Until " Strike Back , " I didn 't have a good answer . " Stuever lauded Scott and Stapleton 's portrayal , stating he is " the real find here , a thoroughly unlikable loser " who " saves the show from a dour sense of duty , " adding that Staplton " seems to have been created in a laboratory experiment that grafted Ewan McGregor 's personality and smile onto Hugh Jackman 's body ? with more than adequate results . "

Matt Fowler of IGN rated it seven out of ten , noting that American viewers do not have to see the first series to be caught up , but added " British fans might lament the absence of Richard Armitage 's John Porter who was the ass @- @ kicking hero of the original series . " Mike Hale of The New York Times described the series as a " variation on " 24 " that offers reasonably competent action scenes , depressingly casual depictions of torture and death , and a comic @- @ book conspiracy story line while also being an efficient nudity delivery system . " Brent MacKnight rated the series

five out of ten , calling it a " decent enough action yarn with slick production values , " but was critical that the series was " more concerned with gratuitous nudity [...] each episode includes a lifetime 's worth of breasts and butt cheeks ? than creating a story with any substance , character , or emotional weight . " Rob Owen of the Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette was more critical of the series , stating " At first , " Strike Back " seems like a highbrow series on the order of " [Spooks] , " but after a few minutes it " conforms to the Skinemax nickname with a graphic sex scene , " with " multiple exclamations of the f @-@ word and bloodshed galore . " Owen summed " Strike Back shows off high production values and an intense , fast @-@ paced story reminiscent of 24 or Sleeper Cell that occasionally dips into the ridiculous [...] It 's too bad the show 's graphic nature , especially the bloodshed , is so off @-@ putting as to make the series unwatchable . "

= = = United Kingdom = = =

After the series premiered in the United Kingdom , British critics were mixed in their reviews . Jonathan Bernstein of The Guardian gave the series a positive review , stating " It 's awesome ! Everything that 's capable of exploding explodes . What was a decent but unexceptional military action show is now Naked 24 . " Jonathan Angwin of CultBox rated it three out of five stars , called it " the body of Spooks with very little of the brains , " adding that the series is " silly , immature , shocking , but undoubtedly entertaining and certainly not boring . " Patrick Samuel of Static Mass also rated Project Dawn three out of five stars , stating that the main story was " an intriguing one with implications of a conspiracy deep within MI6 , " but was critical that the series mostly focused on Scott rather than the other main characters , the movement of the storyline , and that Scott and Stonebridge " seemed to be most inapt pair to lead missions as they blow their cover on several occasions , endangering others . " However , Samuel praised the series ' action sequences , saying that they " [did] not disappoint . "

Paul Dean of Faded Glamour believed that Strike Back " remains pretty good at what it does ? providing Sky viewers with their weekly Die Hard fix , " adding " series two won 't win any new converts , but it looks very much like it will continue to serve up the same pacy , unpretentious and unambiguous action as its predecessor . " Jack Foley of IndieLondon rated it 2 @.@ 5 out of five . Foley felt the death of Porter in the first episode was " striking " since Armitage was the " main reason for watching . " The reviewer also believed that while the first series " offered a keen mix of Spooks and 24 that expertly blended top @-@ drawer action with some emotional complexity and intrigue , " the second series " already feels inferior to both by virtue of the fact that its brains appear to lie in its pants , or blown from Porter 's head . " Keith Watson of Metro stated that Project Dawn was merely " gung @-@ ho nonsense . "