

= Chris Ryan 's Strike Back =

Chris Ryan 's Strike Back , also known as Strike Back : Origins on Cinemax , is a six @-@ part British television series based on the novel of the same name written by best @-@ selling author and former soldier of the Special Air Service , Chris Ryan , and is the first series of Strike Back . It was produced by Left Bank Pictures for Sky1 . The cast of Strike Back is led by Richard Armitage and Andrew Lincoln , also starring Orla Brady , Shelley Conn , Colin Salmon and Jodhi May , including a variety of guest appearances including Toby Stephens , Ewen Bremner , Dhaffer L 'Abidine , Shaun Parkes and Alexander Siddig . The series follows John Porter (Armitage) , a former British Special Forces soldier , who is drafted back into service by Section 20 , a fictional branch of the Defence Intelligence (DI) of the Ministry of Defence .

The series ran on a multi @-@ million pound budget , and was filmed on location in South Africa , particularly in Gauteng . Ryan became a series consultant . Strike Back commenced airing on 5 May 2010 with two episodes showing a week . The first episode received unofficial overnight ratings of almost 400 @,@ 000 viewers in the United Kingdom , which increased to just over one million according to the more official Broadcasters ' Audience Research Board . It was met with generally positive reviews ; comments of the series ranged from a positive " British action series that packs a Die Hard @-@ style thrill around every corner , " to a more negative " pathetic male fantasy " . It was released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc on 7 June 2010 .

A 10 @-@ part second series , known as Strike Back : Project Dawn , a co @-@ production between Sky and the American network Cinemax , was first broadcast in August 2011 . A third series of Strike Back , also consisting of 10 parts , was released in August 2012 .

Following success of the second through fourth series , Cinemax began airing the six @-@ part series starting 25 October 2013 in the United States . It is airing as a prequel in the U.S. since Cinemax aired Strike Back : Project Dawn , Strike Back : Vengeance , and Strike Back : Shadow Warfare prior to the first season .

= = Episodes = =

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

= = Cast and characters = =

Richard Armitage plays series protagonist John Porter . Porter served with the SAS until he was discharged after he spared the life of a boy who was believed to have subsequently killed two soldiers in his unit following a rescue operation the night before the Iraq invasion . He is brought back into service by Section 20 seven years later . He is married to Diane , and has a daughter , Alexandra . Armitage described Porter as a " damaged hero " , and " sort of like Lucas North , only on some kind of go @-@ faster drug . " In order to fit into the role , Armitage had to " bulk up for the role , " and performed a lot of training for about ten weeks in the UK , and then flew to Johannesburg the day after filming the eighth series of Spooks wrapped up , where he proceeded with more training . He was trained from " how to hold a gun to how you can run through a door without getting your head blown off . " Armitage had not trained as hard as in the past ; the intensity of such training almost made him pass out after the first workout , stating " filming Spooks is demanding , but nowhere near as physical as this . " Armitage performed most of his own stunts .

Andrew Lincoln plays Hugh Collinson , former soldier in Porter 's unit and has since become the head of Section 20 . Lincoln was signed onto the role because he thought the series was a " great story " , and that his character was " completely re @-@ written from the book . " Out of the cast , the weapons instructor told Lincoln that he was the most instinctive he ever worked with .

Orla Brady plays Katie Dartmouth , a British war correspondent who was kidnapped in Basra by the " Sword of Islam " , an Iraqi terrorist group . To play Dartmouth , Brady used her inspiration from real

life BBC war correspondent Orla Guerin . During the filming of Dartmouth 's holding , a male stand @-@ in with a wig was used as a stunt double . The crew also added oil and dirt on Brady 's hair every morning . Brady stated that she liked playing extremes , and thought Dartmouth is " grown up " compared to Siobhan Dhillion , the character Brady portrayed in Mistresses .

Shelley Conn plays Danni Prendiville , an officer with Section 20 . Porter started an affair with her after he was redrafted into service . She signed on for the role because she " thought the concept of the scripts was very clever and once I heard who was involved it didn 't take me long to sign up . " In researching for her role , Conn had somewhat of a military background since her father and uncle both served in the British Army , and had since had a base understanding of military life .

Colin Salmon plays James Middleton , a civil servant who sits between the British government and the Ministry of Defence . Salmon previously worked with Sky1 on Hex . He was attracted to the role in Strike Back due to the script being " a page @-@ turner , and they 're rare . It 's really lovely to sit down to start reading something and then not be able to stop because you have to know what 's going to happen next , " as well as hearing of who was involved in the project . A member of The Prince 's Trust charity , Salmon took the opportunity to visit some of their projects in Soweto while the series was filmed .

Jodhi May plays Layla Thompson , a lieutenant in military intelligence and works alongside Collinson in Section 20 . At first , she came to resent Porter , but starts opening up to him after she grows some distrust towards Collinson . May described Thompson as an " incredibly challenging , assertive and ambitious woman working in a male @-@ dominated field that she 's climbed to the top of . " She was drawn into appear in the series because of the respect she has with Andy Harries and Left Bank Productions . May knew people who work in the same world her character does , and talked with them to conduct some research into her role , as well as reading on the subject .

The first series was also given a variety of guest appearances . Among them include Nicola Stephenson (Diane Porter) , Laura Greenwood (Alexandra Porter) , Fenar Mohammed Ali (As 'ad) , Dhaffer L 'Abidine (Hakim Al Nazeri) , Shaun Parkes (Felix Masuku) , David Harewood (Colonel Tshuma) , Toby Stephens (Frank Arlington) and Alexander Siddig (Zahar Sharq) .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

The inspiration for a television adaptation came when executive producer Andy Harries saw the novel while at an airport and took it on holiday with him . He did not manage to read it before returning to Britain , but pitched the idea to Sky 's Head of Drama Elaine Pyke , who commissioned it anyway . Pyke and Harries had enthusiasm for the novel , and were excited to take up the challenge to adapt it for television . It was planned to be shot in high @-@ definition because , according to Pyke ; " Sky1 HD drama is about trying to astound audiences , up the creative bar , and commission shows which make audiences love being Sky subscribers . " After seeing the success from previous dramas such as Terry Pratchett 's Hogfather and The Take , Sky made a multimillion @-@ pound commitment to Strike Back .

Harries commented that he " was interested in developing a quality action series out of the UK because it 's something we don 't do very often , but there 's no reason why we shouldn 't . " Richard Armitage called the series an " ambitious project for television . But the advantage of that is that these three feature films are linked together so you get a really interesting character arc through all episodes . American television is being brave and doing that at the moment , and this is stepping into that area . " Former SAS soldier and the original novel 's author , Chris Ryan , served as the series consultant and script advisor . Chris Ryan stated ; " When you produce a novel it 's like a child and to see it put onto screen opens it up to a greater audience . I class myself as a storyteller now , and to tell that story on paper is a great privilege , then to see it on screen is even better . "

= = = Preparation = = =

As Strike Back is a military drama , the production crew used a vast catalogue of firearms , including side arms , assault and sniper rifles , as well as rocket @-@ propelled grenades , hand grenades and other explosives . Cast members were first taught by carrying weights that mimicked the weight of the weapons so they could get used to carrying it during filming . Later , they were taught how to carry them professionally , including how to disassemble and re @-@ assemble them , as well as how to fire and reload . Though the majority were actually rubber , duplicates were sometimes used for some of the background characters . Three ex @-@ SAS soldiers gave the cast weapons and tactical training , and were also on hand to oversee how cast members carried the weapons during filming sessions .

= = = Filming = = =

Filming commenced on August 2009 , and concluded by the end of the same year . It was filmed on location primarily in the Johannesburg area in South Africa , as well as the same Province the city is located , Gauteng . Other filming locations in the series include Northern Cape , Augrabies Falls National Park , and the Kalahari Desert . Harries wanted to film the series in South Africa because he worked there several times in the past , and knew the country can replicate anywhere in the world .

One of the biggest problems for filming is the environmental impact they would cause , particularly with explosions . Location manager Jaco Espach often coordinated with a special effects team to use more environmentally friendly methods . In order to film sequences involving firearms and explosives in private property , the series crew often negotiated with property owners , as well as notifying all neighbouring properties , local police and the local hospital . In the city , leaflets were distributed to the filming location a week in advance . In airport scenes , the crew would inform the aviation authorities . The action sequences in the beginning of the first episode took five days to shoot , and was filmed in the Johannesburg suburb of Yeoville . On the scenes filmed on the Kalahari , filming temporarily halted due to the spotting of venomous snakes in the area . After they retreated from some rainfall , the crew swept the area to remove them and filming continued .

= = Release and reception = =

= = = Release and ratings = = =

The series aired two episodes a week from 5 to 19 May 2010 in the United Kingdom . BBC Worldwide acquired distribution rights to broadcast the first series internationally . Episodes 1 and 2 received unofficial overnight ratings of 398 @,@ 000 and 370 @,@ 000 viewers , with an audience share of 1 @.@ 7 % and 2 @.@ 1 % respectively . Both episodes more than tripled Sky1 's average audience share in their slots from the previous three months , and were also the third most @-@ watched non @-@ terrestrial viewing behind BBC Four 's Timothy Spall : Somewhere at Sea and a live Sky Sports football game . The overnight figures for episodes 3 and 4 were down somewhat to 337 @,@ 000 and 294 @,@ 000 with an audience share of 1 @.@ 4 % and 1 @.@ 5 % respectively . The overnight ratings for the finale episodes were both 386 @,@ 000 viewers , and received an audience share of 1 @.@ 7 % and 2 @.@ 3 % respectively .

Strike Back was released on both DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc in the United Kingdom on 7 June 2010 . Released by 2entertain , they contain all six episodes , as well as cast interviews and a Behind the Scenes featurette .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Overall , the reviews of the series were generally positive . Michael Conroy of GQ named Strike Back an " Editor 's Pick " for its " excellent cinematography , stellar performances and a surprisingly

balanced global perspective makes this story of two former British SAS soldiers a thoroughly enjoyable action romp . " Conroy compared the series to Green Zone , The Pacific and the Call of Duty video game series . Keith Watson of Metro called the series a " British action series that packs a Die Hard @-@ style thrill around every corner . " Watson praised Armitage 's performance , calling him perfect for the role , and that " for once in a British series , the action scenes kick some proper butt . " John Preston of The Daily Telegraph stated that Strike Back was " a slick affair , crisply directed by Daniel Percival , scripted with considerable sharpness by Jed Mercurio and full of belting action sequences . "

Jack Foley of IndieLondon rated the first episodes four stars out of five , stating that it " made for exciting viewing even if the politics and the script sometimes proved laughably gung @-@ ho and naive . " On review on the first two episodes , Jane Simon of The Mirror has said that between the cast , " there 's enough shock and awe to make you very glad they 're showing this in a double bill . " Gerard Gilbert of The Arts Desk dubbed Strike Back as " thin and lightweight next to [Armitage 's other gig] Spooks " , and although " not unexciting " , Gilbert did not find the series interesting . Andrea Mullaney of The Scotsman was positive about the casting , and the changes in storyline from the original novel , though the series was aimed " squarely at the blokey viewer who 'd rather watch paint dry than a costume drama . " Whilst also reviewing Luther and Lewis , John Lloyd of The Financial Times called it " fine for tension , " " good on sub @-@ Bond dialogue " and that the story lines make Spooks look true to life . Lloyd also called Richard Armitage " one of the best action men on television . "

The Guardian and The Independent have each released two separate reviews ; they were more mixed . Sam Wollaston enjoyed the first two episodes , but called it a " pathetic male fantasy . " Andrew Anthony has said that " no scene lasted more than about 25 seconds in the first two episodes and no element of plot information was left unspoken . The dialogue is close to pure exposition , with an occasional clunkily macho line thrown in as a concession to dramatic atmosphere . Show , don 't tell , say the screenwriting gurus . This was show and tell . " From The Independent , Tom Sutcliffe stated the series may be enjoyed by those who like explosions and Spooks @-@ like operations . Rhiannon Harries was almost negative in her review , believing Strike Back was " in almost every respect , a terrible piece of television drama , " although part of Harries enjoyed watching it . Harries noted that Luther was more recommended .