

LUTHER



Luther: Context

Product Context:

- Luther is a British crime dram a TV series starting Idris Elba as the **anonymous** protagonist DCI John Luther
- Prior to Luther, Elba was established as a crime drama actor through his role in *The Wire*
- The first series comprised 6 episodes and first aired in May 2010 on BBC1 at 9pm
- The series is highly successful, receiving numerous awards and **critical acclaim** for the production, writing and stars of the show.

Social and Cultural Context

- Set in London with a number of London skyline shots in the titles and the first episode, i.e. skyscrapers and other modern buildings which suggests the success and financial strength of the city.
- This reflects the contemporary context as London is a major financial centre for international business. Also this helps to target a global audience as they would recognise the iconic landmarks



4.2 Genre

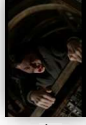
Conventions of TV Crime drama

- Luther is conventional of TV crime drama but is also a **hybrid** of other genres, such as thriller, horror and there are even some references to **film noir** in the visual codes and **femme fatale** character.
 - Luther's long overcoat and Alice's pale skin and red lips link to the noir style, as well as the use of red and black shadow in the title sequence and secretive sinister theme tune
 - Low-key lighting, intense non-diegetic music, dramatic cross-cutting all link to the thriller genre
 - Graphic shots of blood (the dog at Alice's parent's house) and jump scares (Alice grabbing Zoe outside the offices) are all conventional of horror
- There are clear elements of the **police procedural**, but there is an increased focus on psychology suggesting links to the more complex narratives in more contemporary TV crime drama.



Media Language - Opening Chase

- Establishing, low angle shot** - gritty industrial setting links to conventional areas for crimes to take place or criminals to hide. Low angle **foreshadows** the height from which Madsen will fall later in the scene.
- Tracking shots** - tracking Luther chasing and closing in on Madsen, creating a sense of urgency and suspense.
- High and low angle shots** - used throughout to show dominance of Luther and emphasise the danger Madsen is in and risk Luther is taking.
- Cross Cutting** - the crime scene and the chase showing they are happening simultaneously and there is a race against time.
- Fast paced dramatic music** - The low drones and building crescendos enhance the feeling of time running out for the audience.



4.3 Representations

ETHNICITY

- Luther is a **contemporary** and diverse drama reflecting the modern London that exists today.
- John Luther challenges stereotypical representations of black men in crime drama which is typically negative and portrays them as the criminals.
 - Zoe (Luther's wife) is a further positive representation of people of colour in that she is a well educated and highly successful mixed race woman.



GENDER

- Masculinity is represented in a complex way - conforming to and challenging male stereotypes
 - Luther is an aggressive **alpha male** but is vulnerable through is psychological instability
 - Justin is openly in awe of Luther and is not afraid to admit it
 - Mark is gentle and represented as a 'sensitive contrast' to Luther.
- Stereotypical femininity is challenged throughout in female characters but in different ways
 - Alice subverts expectation as an unemotional, intelligent, manipulative and violent villain - usually a male role in crime drama
 - Rose Teller is powerful authority figure in command of a group of male police officers
 - Zoe is by far the most typically feminine (vulnerable, weak, lead by love) but is also a very successful humanitarian lawyer



4.5 Key Terminology

- Eponymous** (of a person) giving their name to something.
- Critical Acclaim** to be looked upon very favourably by the Critics of any given industry
- Codes and Conventions** The expected elements that will be included in products from particular media forms and genres
- Hybrid** a genre that blends themes and elements from two or more different genres.
- Film Noir** a genre that emerged in the 1940s/50s where narrative focused on crime and stylish visual conventions such as low-key dark lighting and characters such as the world weary detective and the femme fatale
- Femme Fatale** A mysterious and dangerous female character who uses her sexuality to exert power over male characters
- Police Procedural** a subgenre that focuses specifically on how the police solve crimes
- Foreshadowing** Be a warning or indication of a future event in the narrative
- Establishing Shot** sets up the context for the scene ahead, designed to inform the audience where the action will be taking place
- Tracking Shots** any shot where the camera follows backward, forward or moves alongside the subject being recorded.
- Cross cutting** to establish action occurring at the same time
- Contemporary** belonging to or occurring in the present time
- Alpha Male** a man tending to assume a dominant or domineering role in social or professional situations.
- Vigilante** someone who undertakes law enforcement into their own hands because other methods are thought to be inadequate.

1.4 Theoretical Approaches

- Hero** = John Luther - troubled but brilliant detective; a rule breaker who will do anything to bring criminals to justice.
- Villain** = Alice Morgan, femme fatale, highly intelligent, manipulative and obsessed with Luther
- Helper** = Justin Ripley, faithful sidekick who idolises Luther and is eager to learn
- Dispatcher** = Rose Teller - Luther's boss, keeps him focused through her tough but fair approach. She sees Luther's brilliance and is prepared to put her job on the line for him.
- Donor** = Ripley and Benny both provide Luther with the means to achieve his goals.

