



BEFORE WE DIE

The English adaption of the Swedish series "Innan vi dör"



Synopsis

When her married lover and fellow police officer Sean Hardacre goes missing under mysterious circumstances, Detective Hannah Laing launches an urgent manhunt. She manages to contact one of Sean's confidential sources: 'Issy', and with her partner starts investigating the Mimica family. They discover that the close-knit Croatian clan plans to smuggle a massive quantity of cocaine into the country, but when Hannah finds out the informant is her son Christian, she becomes conflicted about the investigation. Christian's carefully prepared cover story is put to the test, but far more drastic action is needed to preserve his cover and protect himself.

Based on the eponymous noir Swedish series *Before We Die* is breathtaking crime thriller, full of heart-stopping jeopardy and unpredictable twists.



Walter IUZZOLINO

Chief Executive Officer | Eagle Eye Drama



„Before We Die is a fantastic concept and a stand out piece of storytelling – I fell in love with the idea when I first read the scripts for the Swedish original a few years back, and always thought there was something universal at its core which would translate very powerfully into a must-see piece of English speaking drama. The series uses the architecture and grammar of a high octane serialised thriller to tell the story of a fractured relationship between a mother and her son. As such it is ultimately a compelling piece of character driven psychological drama.

The original series was really strong but it was often steeped into archetypal Swedish and Nordic crime tropes (a violent war between rival biker gangs as the backdrop for the main plotline) which do not have a similar resonance in the UK and US, so I always felt it was a perfect candidate for adaptation. The UK version sharpens the focus of the premise by concentrating exclusively on the main mother and son plotline, pitting two dysfunctional families against each other across the criminal divide and removing the sub plots which have no cultural or societal resonance for an English and American audience. The result is a much pacier rollercoaster thriller with a sharp, taut, vertical plot line developing without any ancillary ‘red herring’ crime sub-plots. This allows us to focus on character psychology without sacrificing pace. The tone, style and art direction create a sumptuous, glossy, cinematic vision which makes the series utterly irresistible.“

Press Quotes



Walter Iuzzolino on Reconfiguring Swedish Series 'Before We Die'

By Emiliano Granada



Credit: ZDF Enterprises

Set to air on May 26 on the U.K.'s [Channel 4](#), "Before We Die," the latest production from Eagle Eye, marks an adaptation of "Innan vi dör," the hit Swedish show of the same international title. The six-episode series eloquently translates the precise and effective narrative of the original.

Distributed by [ZDF Enterprises](#), while the U.K. makeover heightens the pace, leaving out secondary plot, it explores far more deeply the series' central emotional bond, ending up delivering a completely different take on the story.

Directed by Jan Matthyss, the Bristol-set crime thriller tracks the investigation of a Croatian crime family, the Mimica, made by senior police detective, Hanna Laing after the disappearance of a fellow police officer Sean Hardacre who was also her married lover. Professional and personal life entangle even more inextricably as her son works as a dishwasher in the Mimica family restaurant, which allows him to work as an informant for Sean. This is a face-paced crime procedural with a large sense of peril and a focus on a broken mother-son relationship.

Co-headed by [Walter Iuzzolino](#), best-known for Channel 4's [Walter Presents](#) – a VOD service specializing in judiciously selected foreign-language content – Eagle Eye's interest in adaptation underscores what Iuzzolino had already remarked at January's Göteborg Festival in Sweden, the ever growing market importance of IP.

Variety talked with Iuzzolino in the build-up to the show's premiere on Channel 4.

As the first episode unfolds, it becomes clear that the adaptation is condensing the Swedish original's action and finding its own more driven and focused pace, abbreviating moments from the original without losing the efficiency that they had. What were your guidelines when finding a new rhythm for the show?

Our main objective was to capture the powerful dramatic core at the heart of the original series and allow it to flourish by sculpting the story in a vertical fashion, without the distraction of too many unwieldy subplots. We decided to focus on the truly unique selling point, the dysfunctional relationship between mother and son playing out as a rollercoaster action thriller, and we removed all the outer layers of storytelling that were not related to that. It was a wonderfully inspiring process as the more subplots we removed, the more powerful the story became. On the one hand, our adaptation became a pure distillation of nail biting, adrenaline pumping action – on the other, by dispensing with unnecessary subplots and red herrings, the main characters were given more space to breathe, and the psychological depth of the narrative was greatly amplified as a result.



Before We Die
Credit: ZDF Enterprises

Of course when translating a show from another country a lot has to do with the idiosyncrasies between the two cultures. What elements were more difficult to translate to an English-speaking culture?

At its core, "Before We Die" is built around universal themes: the powerful but sometimes complicated bond between mother and son, the meaning of family loyalty, the impulse to defend our loved ones beyond moral boundaries. These elements were very easy to adapt and reconfigure as their emotional appeal to audiences isn't culturally specific. The only tricky element that we immediately knew would not resonate with an English audience within an English setting was the story of the biker gangs, which are a recurrent trope of most Scandi crime thrillers. In Scandi fiction, biker gangs have a very specific resonance within the context of the criminal underworld in the same way that *Mafiosi* are a key iconic signifier of criminality in Italian series. However, this does not apply to the U.K., where biker gangs have a completely different cultural significance, so we knew that storyline would need to be removed – but the power of the central narrative spine was greatly enhanced as a result.

Could you comment on your decision to focus on the mother-son relationship, a decision that profoundly changes the adaptation, making it a vehicle for a different sort of thematic exploration.

When we started to adapt the series, it became immediately clear to us that this was a psychological family drama built around the architecture and grammar of a rollercoaster action packed crime thriller. The mother and son relationship was the stand out dynamic that attracted us to the concept, but we knew that this was only the entry point – and that at its core, the series was ultimately about the meaning of family. When we started analyzing the premise from that perspective, it became clear to us that the series was effectively putting two very different families against each other. That we had two mothers and two sons – engaged in a lethal battle of survival. It is like a mirror with two faces, and this dramatic symmetry became the key theme of our adaptation and allowed us to take the series in a completely different direction emotionally.

Both shows feel immensely different due to choices in editing, art direction and overall directing. One standout aspect of "Before We Die" is also its rich cinematography, that finds texture, depth and color in every set-ups....

We wanted to create a completely different visual universe from the original Swedish show – the original used a deliberately 'street' hand held, paired back documentary style feel to bring a sense of rawness to the setting. We wanted our series to feel like a lavish movie – our inspiration was the elegance, glamour and visual richness of American thrillers of the 1940s. This is why we approached Jan Matthyss, a visionary director who can stage incredibly rich, complex and elaborate tableaux but never at the expense of emotional authenticity and psychological depth. Jan believes in beauty as a vehicle for emotional truth, so in his hands everything from a dilapidated warehouse to a country lane becomes incredibly arresting and poetic. This creates a heightened reality, a harmonious aesthetic universe where the actors' performances are amplified and captured with incredible sharpness.

Press Quotes

Critic's choice Before We Die

Channel 4, 9pm

If you knew your son was dealing drugs, would you shop him to the police? And how would your decision be affected if you were a senior police officer? That's the dilemma facing Detective Hannah Laing (Lesley Sharp) at the start of this compelling new six-part crime thriller. We soon learn that Laing is a woman so principled that she does indeed play a part in her son's arrest. As well as having a dysfunctional relationship with her son, Christian (Patrick Gibson, *right with Sharp*), because she is of "a certain age" she is being sidelined at work and shunted into early retirement. So when her married lover and colleague, Sean Hardacre (Bill Ward), is kidnapped by the Croatian criminal gang that he was investigating, she sees an opportunity to get involved in a juicy case. In a clever twist,

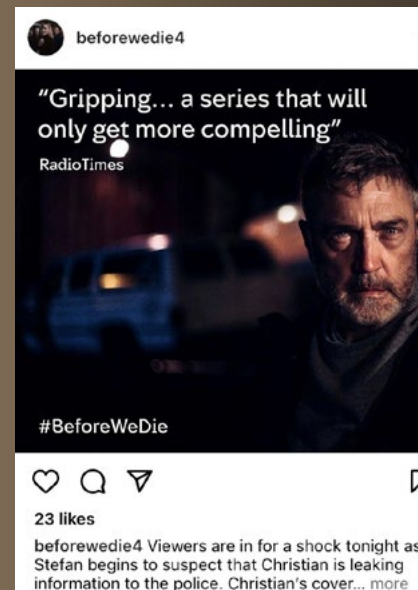
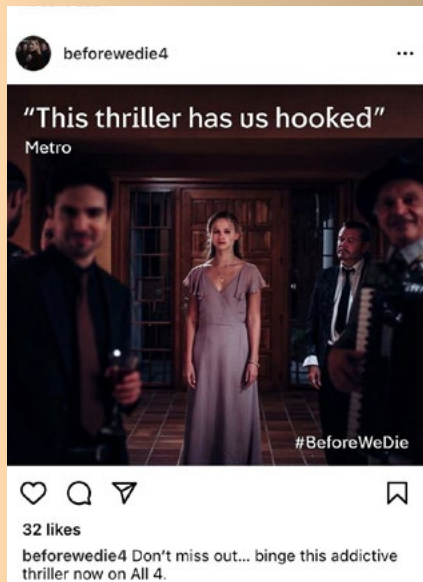
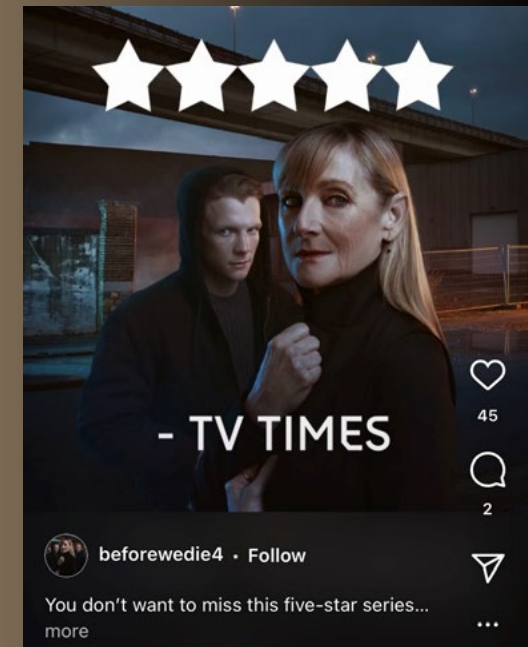
Christian, now working as a pot washer in a Croatian restaurant after a friendship made during his incarceration, ends up in the thick of it. The Croatian actor Toni Gojanovic, who starred in HBO Europe's hit series *Uspjeh* (Success), plays Davor Mimica, the leader of the criminal gang, while Vincent Regan is Billy Murdoch, a renegade investigator who is seconded to Laing's unit to advise on Eastern European drug gangs. If this all sounds vaguely familiar that's because *Before We Die* is a remake of a Swedish thriller of the same name that was shown on Walter Presents in 2018. The production company that makes this, Eagle Eye Drama, was launched by the team behind the global drama brand. The whole series is available to stream on All4 once the credits roll.

Joe Clay

THE TIMES



Social Media





Ratings

A top performing series for the UK's Channel 4, Before We Die Season One has established itself as a fan favorite, achieving 12 million streams with almost one million accounts registered to view the series. Retention of episode 6 Season One finale viewers rests at an astounding 84% of episode 1 viewers.

Currently in production on Season Two, the series has sold to major territories, already airing in the U.S., Israel, Australia, New Zealand, and will soon debut in the Nordic markets.



Nominated for:

European scripts award Geneva festival.

C21 "Best Scripted Format" by the International Format Awards from C21Media.

A photograph of two men sitting at a table in a dimly lit setting. The man on the left has a beard and is wearing a dark t-shirt with a watch on his left wrist. The man on the right is smiling and wearing a light-colored t-shirt. Both have tattoos on their right shoulders. A semi-transparent orange banner with the word 'Cast' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Cast



Lesley Sharp

known for *Naked* (1993), *The Full Monty* (1997) and *Afterlife* (2005).

” Hannah Laing, in her fifties, has been unable to acquire any of the niceties associated with the wisdom of the middle years. She is friendless. Overloaded and beleaguered by work. Engaged in a clandestine relationship. Estranged from her son. *BWD* is undoubtedly a thriller, a psychological dark night of the soul and it is also an exploration into how a leading character seeks to find themselves through forgiveness, connection to their child, courage to stand up to injustice and personal paranoia, vengeance for a terrible wrong and learning that bad people, frightening, amoral men and women might have areas in their lives that are not only enviable, but desirable. Hannah Laing is a fantastic, flawed, multi-faceted character. It's been a privilege to be part of this show.

“

Lesley Sharp about her role as Hannah Laing



Lesley Sharp as

Hannah Laing

Hannah Laing is a Detective Inspector with the South Western Police's Organised Crime Unit and is fiercely resisting a transfer to desk duties as retirement approaches. She has become a by-word amongst her colleagues for hard-core parenting, having engineered the arrest of her son, Christian, which led to him serving a 21-month prison sentence for possession with intent to supply. Divorced from Christian's father and estranged from her son, Hannah now lives alone but she's having an affair with a married fellow officer, Sean Hardacre.



Patrick Gibson

known for *The OA* (2016), *Guerrilla* (2017) and *What Richard Did* (2012).

” I was immediately drawn to the role of Christian as there was this intoxicating combination of a character with an unwavering determination met with obstacles of immense proportion. You sensed that the stakes for this person were his own life and yet he is by no means a superhero, without flaws. He is a normal guy with fears and inconsistencies but his purpose, his cause is so deep rooted that it forces him to break through his own limits. What we feel are the real life implications of things that are often glossed over on television, of grief, guilt, paranoia and love. Through the pages of the script, I sensed the gut-wrenching tension that Christian is pushed to operate under.

“

Patrick Gibson about his role as Christian Radic



Patrick Gibson as

Christian Radic

Christian Radic is Hannah's British-born son of a Croatian father, who is trying to put his life back together having gone off the rails following his parents' divorce. He's working as a dish-washer at the Vino Mondana restaurant, after being introduced to the family that owns it by Stefan Vargic, a small-time criminal whom he met in jail. Christian refuses to have contact with his mother, but he's still close to her boyfriend, Sean, and he's determined to make amends for his mistakes by helping Sean investigate the Croatian crime family that now employs him, who he suspects are using the restaurant to launder drug money.



Vincent Regan

known for 300 (2006), Snow White and the Huntsman (2012) and Troja (2004).

” Before we Die is a heavyweight drama. An intelligent, labyrinthine script which marries intense family drama with high stakes international crime. Billy Murdoch operates in a grey area between legitimate police procedure and barely legal paramilitary improvisation. He is a maverick who exists on the fringe of the investigative team. As the drama unfolds and his relationship with Hannah strengthens, he is drawn out of his shell and becomes more exposed emotionally and physically. As enigmatic characters go, Billy is right up there, and it was a challenge and a pleasure to play the man. “

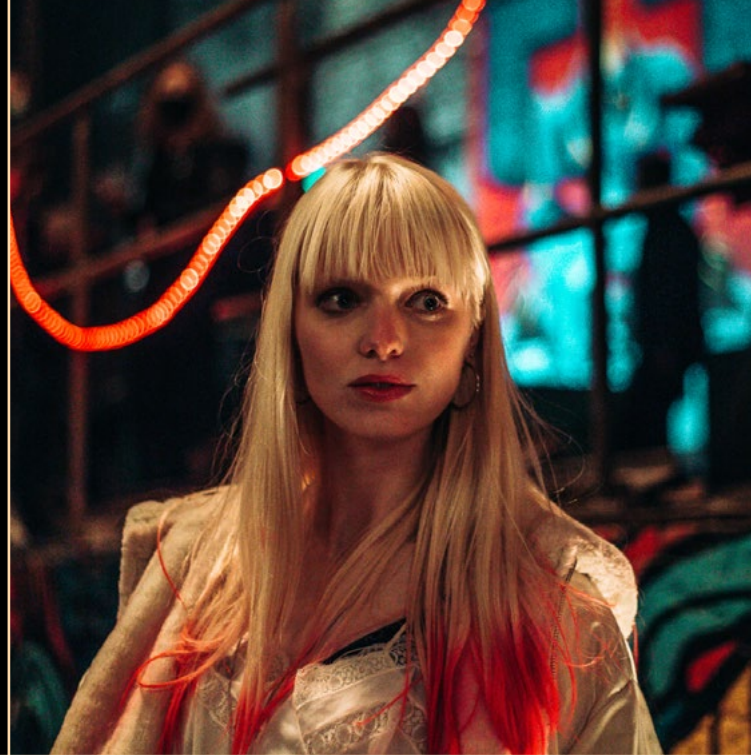
Vincent Regan about his role as Billy Murdoch

A man with a grey beard and hair, wearing a dark blue sweater, is talking on a mobile phone. He is standing in a dimly lit room, possibly an office or a control room, with shelves of books or equipment in the background. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

Vincent Regan as

Billy Murdoch

Billy Murdoch has been seconded to the OCU from the National Crime Agency as a specialist in Eastern European drug gangs. He isn't a regular police officer but is employed by the security services. Divorced, with a sixteen-year-old who 'hates my guts', Billy is a lone operator, who uses his contacts and his background in military intelligence to circumnavigate the police's labyrinthine bureaucracy and give his colleagues in the OCU 'plausible deniability'.





EAGLE:3YE

Eagle Eye creates bespoke British drama made with the very best talents, both on and off screen, from around the world. Utilising in depth knowledge of the global market, Eagle Eye specialise in adapting hit international series for English speaking audiences. We also adapt books, both well known and hidden gems and are currently working up a number of original scripted series. Our established reputation for spotting the world's best stories and story tellers, coupled with our unrivalled first hand knowledge of the best programme makers from around the globe, means our scripted series are distinctive premium brands, combining the highest production values with a unique look and feel.



As a private subsidiary of one of the biggest and most renowned television broadcasters in Europe, ZDF Studios is responsible for the worldwide distribution and the implementation of international coproductions of ZDF program brands as well as establishing itself as an independent market player in the national and international environment. Headquartered in Mainz in the heart of Germany, ZDF Studios comprises of three divisions: junior, unscripted and drama.

Drama is the home to series and event movies covering a wide range of genres, spanning from crime to comedy and drama in its multi-language catalogue. We draw our strengths from being part of ZDF as well as from co-producing and financing high end projects from third party producers around the globe.

Our latest hits includes **Hide & Seek** (ICTV Ukraine), **Freud** (ORF / Netflix) and **Top Dog** (TV4 Sweden).



A promotional image for a television series. It features a man and a woman standing on a green-painted staircase with ornate metal railings. The man, on the left, has dark hair and a beard, wearing a black suit jacket over a black shirt. The woman, on the right, has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a black lace top with a gold necklace. In the background, a large, round, white clock face is visible, partially obscured by the staircase. The overall lighting is dramatic, with a warm, golden glow emanating from the right side of the frame.

Credits

Format: Season 1: 6 x 52' | Season 2: coming soon

Broadcaster: Channel 4 / UK

Director: Jan Matthys

Writer: Matt Baker

Cast: Lesley Sharp, Patrick Gibson, Vincent Regan

Production Company: Eagle Eye Drama

SEASON 2 COMING SOON

BEFORE WE DIE

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