



UPRISING
PRESS KIT



Premieres on Prime Video in the US, Canada: 9/17/21

Review Embargo: None - but we ask that you hold any reviews until the week of our premiere, 9/13, if possible

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Executive Producers: Steve McQueen, Nancy Bornat, James Rogan, Soleta Rogan, Tracey Scoffield, Anna Smith Tenser, and David Tanner

Series Producer: Helen Bart

Directors: Steve McQueen and James Rogan

Production Companies: Rogan Productions, Lammas Park, Turbine Studios, and Amazon Studios

SYNOPSIS

Uprising: Fire (Part 1)

Amidst rising racial tensions, a fire kills thirteen young black people at a party.

Wayne Haynes and Denise Gooding recount the highs and lows of growing up in South London, as tensions with the police rise and the National Front brings racism to the forefront of local politics.

In the early hours of January 18th, 1981, in a house in South London, a birthday party ended in a fire. Thirteen young black British people died. The fire and its aftermath would ignite an uprising by the black British community. *Fire* - part 1 of the *Uprising* series - tells the stories of the young people who were at the party and the events that led up to it.

The series begins by chronicling the build-up to the deadly fire in New Cross, South London. It introduces some of the young people who would go to the party as they share their experiences of growing up black and British amidst the escalating tensions and violent racism of the 1970s. Their lives bring them into contact with police harassment, the rise of the National Front and the dramatic confrontation of the 'battle of Lewisham.' Sound systems, Lover's Rock and Reggae music offer an escape to these young people, but when 16-year-old Yvonne Ruddock decides to have a birthday party, it ends in a tragedy with far-reaching consequences.

Uprising: Blame (Part 2)

Blame deals with the aftermath of the New Cross fire and the run up to the Black People's Day of Action. It tracks the experiences of the victims and their families as the local community and the police seek answers as to how the fire started.

As news spreads about the fire at 439 New Cross Road, parents and relatives rush to find news of their loved ones. The scale of the tragedy overwhelms the local community. 13 young people die and dozens more are injured. Forensic experts search through the ashes and the police start their investigation.

Witness testimony suggests the cause may be a firebomb thrown through a window. Local activists fear a racist attack and form the New Cross Massacre Action Committee. But the forensic evidence does not support the firebomb theory and the police focus their attention on the young partygoers. The families of the victims receive racist hate mail and bomb threats. Anger mounts at the police investigation and the seeming indifference of the press and the government to the loss of so many black lives. The Black People's Day of Action, a mass demonstration, is organised to bring the tragedy to the attention of the nation.

Uprising: The Front Line (Part 3)

The Front Line tells how an unprecedented wave of riots swept the nation in 1981. After the New Cross fire and the Black People's Day of Action, tensions that have been brewing with the police boil over when a massive stop and search operation is launched, targeting black people on the streets of Brixton.

Brixton in 1981, with its sound-system scene and close-knit community, provided a welcome relief to the outside world of National Front racism. But young Black people in Brixton feel the pressure of daily encounters with the police. The backdrop of the New Cross fire and the Black People's Day of Action adds to an atmosphere of distrust and anger. When the police launch Operation Swamp to combat

Brixton's high levels of street crime, it brings tensions to a boiling point, as young Black people find themselves stopped and searched several times a day. On April 10th, an open conflict breaks out with the police. Over the weekend, it turned into one of the biggest riots in British history. Buildings are burned down and hundreds of police injured. Margaret Thatcher's government asks Lord Scarman to lead an inquiry into what happened. But no sooner has he started, riots flare up all over the country from Southall to Toxteth. His report will form the first official reckoning of the breakdown of relations between the black community and the police. But, as 1981 draws to a close, following an inconclusive inquest, the families of the victims of the New Cross fire are no closer to knowing who started the fire or why. And a lack of answers and justice has lingered over this case ever since. With testimony from those who lived these traumatic and turbulent events, the series reveals how they intertwined and defined race relations for a generation.

BIOS

STEVE MCQUEEN

Steve McQueen is a Turner Prize-winning artist and filmmaker. In 2008, McQueen's critically acclaimed first feature *Hunger* starring Michael Fassbender won the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. His second feature *Shame* won two Best Film awards when it premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2011. His third film, *12 Years A Slave*, starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, received numerous prizes, most notably winning three Academy Awards, including Best Picture. In 2018 he released *Widows* starring Viola Davis, who was nominated for a Best Actress BAFTA. McQueen's most recent project, *Small Axe*, for BBC One and Amazon Prime Video, is an anthology of five films which brings to life the experiences of London's West Indian community, starring John Boyega and Letitia Wright. An unprecedented two of the films were selected for the 2020 Cannes Film Festival. In 2020 McQueen was awarded a knighthood for his services to the arts, and alongside his film work, his artwork continues to be exhibited in major museums and galleries around the world.

JAMES ROGAN

Award-winning filmmaker James Rogan, the Creative Director of Rogan Productions, has a proven track record for making deeply impactful series and international feature documentaries. He directed and executive-produced the double-Grierson awarded *Stephen: The Murder That Changed a Nation*, the landmark series for BBC One. His recent credits include the award-winning, BAFTA-nominated *Putin: A Russian Spy Story* for Channel 4, on which James was Executive Producer; he is also a director on the upcoming 8-part series *1971: The Year That Music Changed Everything* for Apple TV+.

NANCY BORNAT

Nancy Bornat is a BAFTA winning documentary producer. She was an executive producer of the critically acclaimed BBC series *The Yorkshire Ripper Files* (2019) and *The Shipman Files* (2020). She was the factual producer of the BBC drama *The Windermere Children* and also executive produced the accompanying documentary *The Windermere Children: In Their Own Words*.

As well as these she was series producer of four of the BBC's popular series *Back in Time*, including *Back in Time for Brixton*. Over 20 years, she has worked in history and arts programmes as well as documentaries, exploring a wide variety of subjects and stories.

SOLETA ROGAN

Soleta Rogan co-founded the indie Rogan Productions in 2013, with a vision of delivering high-end films for broadcast and not-for-broadcast content. In addition to her operational responsibilities, Soleta performs Executive Producer and Production Executive roles across the production slate. Previous credits include *The Confession* for BBC Storyville/BFI, *Waiting for Invasion* for Al Jazeera and *The Craftsmen's Dinner* series, with Michel Roux Jr. for The Balvenie. At the same time, Soleta drives younger, sister brand Rogan Digital, delivering content for commercially-funded broadcast and advertising projects for brands, major communications agencies and NGOs.

TRACEY SCOFFIELD

Tracey Scoffield is an Emmy and Golden Globe-winning drama and film producer, whose career includes establishing and running the films books list at publishers Faber and Faber, ten years with BBC Films where she developed and Executive Produced films for the cinema and television, including *Dirty Pretty Things*, *A Cock and Bull Story*, and *The Gathering Storm*. She left the BBC to set up Rainmark Films with veteran HBO producer Frank Doelger and for HBO their work included *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight* starring Christopher Plummer and *Into the Storm* starring Brendan Gleeson. Tracey is now a founding director of Turbine Studios, and with fellow director David Tanner, produced and Executive Produced *Small Axe*, Steve McQueen's collection of films for the BBC and Amazon about the West Indian experience in London. Turbine are now in post production with *Municha* film for Netflix.

HELEN BART

Helen Bart brings a wealth of talent and experience to the projects she manages. Her background in BBC journalism, documentary-making and drama has allowed her to collaborate with those pushing the boundaries of programme-making and creativity.

Bart has been the Senior Producer across three separate documentaries which portray and highlight forgotten periods in modern, British social history relating to the UK's Black communities. This series covers Black Power, Education and Identity and is co-produced by Rogan Productions, Lammas Park and Turbine Studios. The documentaries are the factual counterparts to Sir Steve McQueen's *Small Axe* television series on which Bart was the Associate Producer and consultant in charge of the research and development for nearly seven years.

The series had a long period of development as Bart undertook around 150 interviews for the project, seeking out incredible stories. Using her journalistic experience, she took the testimony she collected and developed it using in-depth archive research to convey precise period detail, historical commentary and records of key public events. *Small Axe* has recently been nominated for several awards including two Golden Globes.

Prior to *Small Axe*, Bart was the Legal Lead Producer on the ground-breaking BBC documentary, *Stephen: The Murder That Changed A Nation*, about the killing of Stephen Lawrence. The documentary went on to win several prestigious awards.

From documentaries to drama and her early career as the senior community affairs reporter for BBC English Regions, producer at the World Service and Newsnight, a number of threads link her work. Bart is inspired by the world around her and the stories within it, by the characters and what they tell us about how we got here and where we are going.

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