

TV Review: Topical Heist Drama of BBC America's Fantastic 'Inside Men'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 20, 2012 - 9:55am

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CHICAGO – BBC America's "Inside Men" isn't exactly breaking new ground. We've seen stories of heists gone wrong before. However, there's a thematic foundation here — the international recession — that makes the tale of three men who rob the counting house for which they work that much more topical.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

So many people around the world are desperate for that economic windfall that it adds a depth to a story like "Inside Men" that wouldn't have been there ten years ago. With a stellar ensemble driven by a fantastic lead performance from Steven Mackintosh, "Inside Men" is great TV.

To be fair, it starts as "good" TV. The first episode, airing tonight, June 20, 2012, is so heavy on character introductions and set-up that one might not appreciate what this show has to offer as it expands beyond its starting point. In particular, the second episode is near-genius in the way it details one of the biggest stumbling blocks when it comes to planning a heist — the way life deals you changes as you go from an idea to an actuality.



Inside Men

Photo credit: BBC America

It takes months to plan a heist like the one in "Inside Men." It starts when two low-level employees — a forklift driver named Marcus (Warren Brown of "Luther") and a security guard named Chris (Ashley Walters of "Outcasts") — get caught trying to skim a small amount of money from the cash depot at which they work. Instead of being turned in by the almost nondescript pencil pusher for which they work, John (Mackintosh, also of "Luther") realizes that he's been given an opportunity. Why take a little when you can take it all?



Inside Men

Photo credit: BBC America

"Inside Men" is structured not unlike "Lost" in that it opens with the start of the heist and then flashes back, moving forward in both timelines. So, we see the actual heist in the first episode along with how it came to be. The second episode covers the aftermath of the heist along with the tricky planning period in which the roles of the men start to come into light and their personal lives start to influence the entire affair. I loved the writing of the shifting grounds of the dynamic within this group. When John gets offered a better position, does that mean he may not need the money as much as he did when the planning first started? When Chris learns that his girlfriend is pregnant will he get more desperate? How will things change when Marcus can't keep a secret? The writing here is brilliant.

And so are the performances. Mackintosh is simply spectacular. He's been a great character actor for years but he shines in a lead role as a man who's supposed to be somewhat forgettable. He stammers a bit. He's often awkward around authority. But he's also a leader. As is brilliantly displayed in the second episode, he's not just the brains, he's the driving force behind the entire affair. And yet Mackintosh doesn't overplay the "wallflower who grows some courage" angle of the character, completely grounding John in believable ways. The whole ensemble is strong but it's Mackintosh's show.

It helps that "Inside Men" also has Hollywood caliber production values. This is smart, engaging TV, something closer to a divided film (it runs only four episodes and there will not be another season) than what most Americans expect from TV. Maybe we should expect more.

"Inside Men" stars Steven Mackintosh, Ashley Walters, and Warren Brown. It premieres on BBC America on Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 9pm CST.



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