

An untrained spymaster meets an untrustworthy spy.  
They want to overthrow the government.  
They upend a lot more.

# THE NIGHTINGALE

6 X 50 min | DRAMA SERIES





When **“The Nightingale”**, an Apartheid Security policeman walks into the optometrist practice of **Moe Shaik**, his former detainee and ANC activist, with an arm full of explosive top-secret files he's stolen from under the noses of his bosses, the intel proves dynamite.

But as the flow of file-sharing escalates between these two unlikely allies, so too do the risks and potential for discovery...





LOCATION

# DURBAN

29.8587° S, 31.0218° E

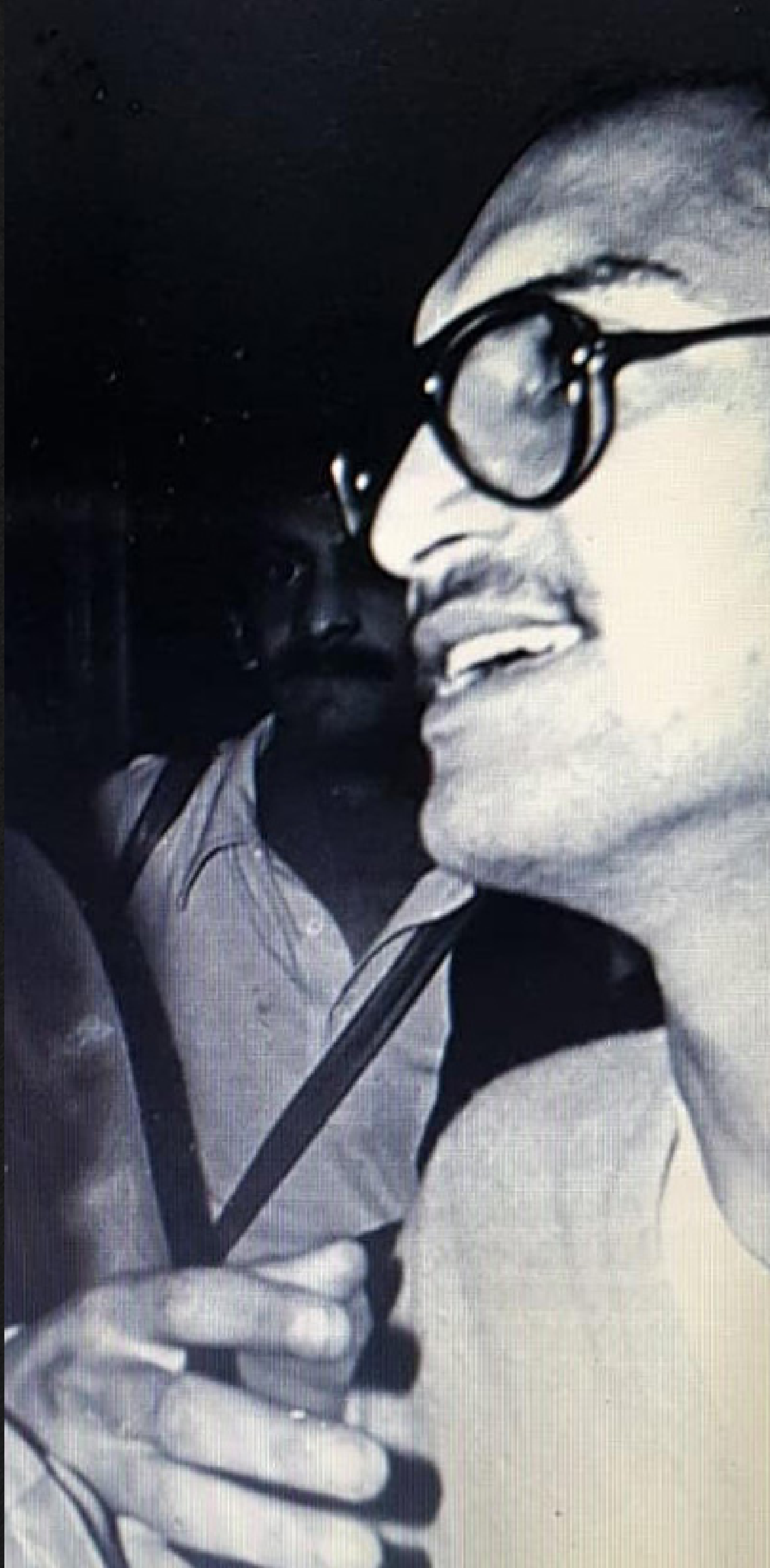


# LOGLINE

Each of three brothers from an Indian family in 1980s Durban deal with the turmoil of the times very differently, but it's the most cautious and conventional brother who is offered the chance of becoming a spy-master. It means risking everything.







## SYNOPSIS

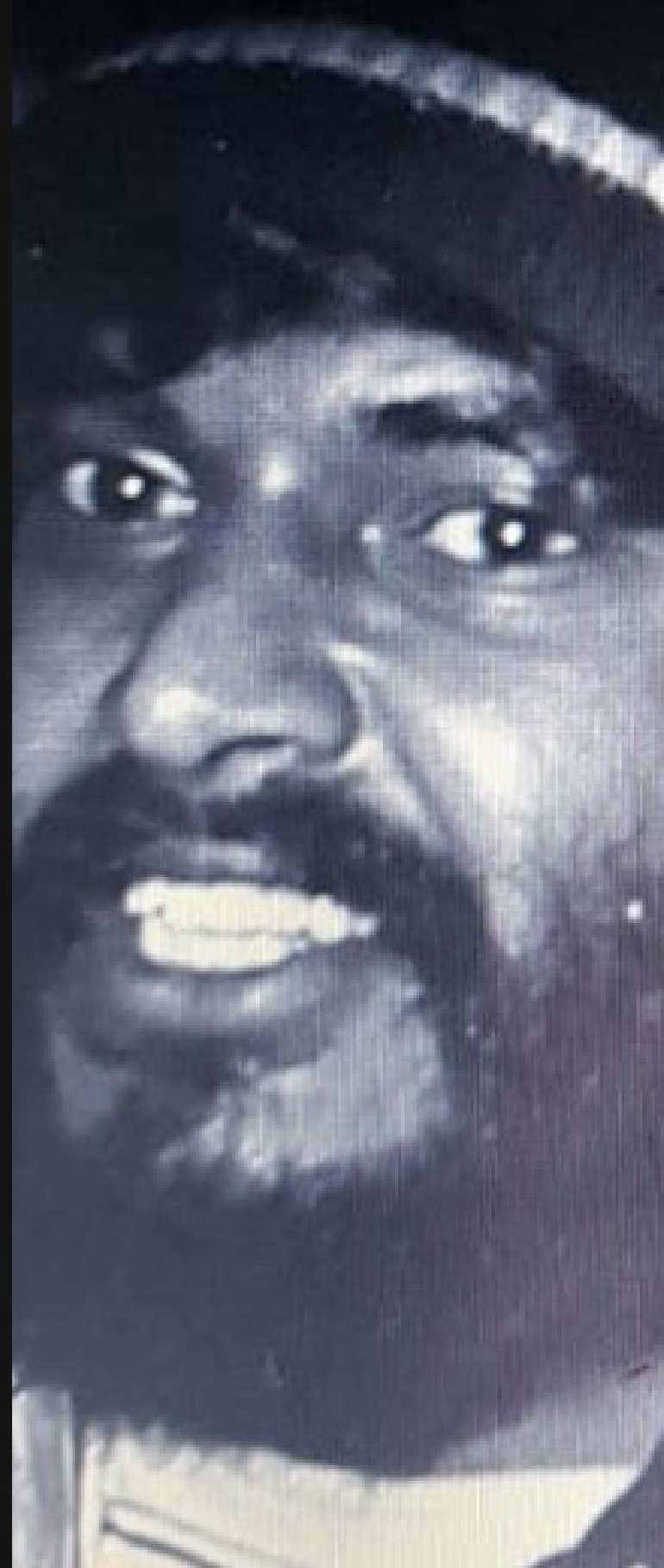
The political underground in Durban, South Africa in the 80s has been so compromised by informers and spies that no one can trust anyone else, and the police seem constantly ahead of the underground.

Conventional and fastidious, Moe is in the shadow of his dazzling activist older brother. When this brother needs someone untainted who he trusts to run a crucial secret mission Moe agrees, determined to show his brother how it should be done. He fails, and the repercussions of that failure reverberate through the rest of his life.

This six part series is loosely based on the memoirs of Moe Shaik, a man who became South Africa's spy boss and it's ambassador in multiple foreign capitals.

It's about his unlikely rise from being a cautious optometrist. It's about the most important element of that rise, his relationship with one man; a spy who, across many years, offered Moe crucial intelligence from the dark heart of the apartheid security establishment. Both men, handler and agent, did not fit the classic profile for their positions.





Moe was conservative and conventional while Ismail, the cop he worked with, was a gambler and risk-taker.

Moe is very analytical, Ismail seldom analyses anything, except the form of the horses racing next Saturday.

This odd-couple relationship is the heart of our series. This relationship is set against the backdrop of Moe's warm and devoted family, especially his relationship with his two brothers. Older brother Yunis is the one most engaged with the underground at the start of the series. When Moe claims to be too fastidious

and anxious for the dangerous world of the underground, Yunis agrees with him. In the course of our series Moe turns all of that on its head and finally eclipse Yunis as a freedom fighter.

Shabir, the younger brother, starts out as the good-time guy with the boot filled with bootlegged booze and ends up being the focus of a national scandal, one that threatens to destroy everything that his two older brothers have built.

Despite their massive differences, these three brothers have a rock-solid love for each other, a love

fostered by an early trauma. They were all deserted as young kids by their mother. Her sudden disappearance from their lives has been a taboo subject growing up, but as Moe advances in the art of unearthing secrets he digs into that one too, ultimately finding a tragic story and a broken woman.

The avalanche of secrets threatens to swamp Moe. The secrets he is unearthing are not just from the enemy nerve-centre, they are from his own dark past. He guards the story of his origins almost as fiercely as he guards his source, Ismail,



giving him a codename, The Nightingale, so that no one else can work out who he is. Moe is the uptight systems guy surrounded by unruly underground adventurers, so he fights to keep absolute personal oversight across all aspects of the Nightingale relationship.

But there really is no controlling the process he starts, nor the effect it has on the lives around him. He must strap in and go with the wild ride. His choices jeopardise

his relationship with the woman he loves and the safety of his devoted family. He repeatedly risks his life to outwit the enemy plans. He is learning on the job and he often gets things wrong, steps on toes, takes gambles others see as unnecessary, risks lives. Sometimes he causes deaths.

No one feels these mess-ups more sharply than he does. Even when the struggle for freedom is on the verge of being victorious there

is the shocking threat of the carefully engineered transition being derailed by spiralling violence and civil war. Moe and his small team of informants and agents must strain every sinew to make sure this doesn't happen, and once more the cost to him is massive and he ends up with blood on his hands.

And it's not the blood of the men who truly deserve to bleed.

SYNOPSIS CONT







Based on the best-selling memoir, **THE ANC SPY BIBLE**, written by **MOE SHAIK**, this is a layered and engrossing spy thriller, which, moving at a clipping pace, exposes one man's vulnerabilities, triumphs and regrets.

---



## TREATMENT

The transition from apartheid to freedom in South Africa is a story that has been told on screen many times in recent years, but there are several aspects of our story that set it apart from previous depictions.

Firstly, it's set in a section of society that's not often featured in those stories – Durban's Indian community. Secondly, this depiction acknowledges the darker side of the time; the fact that the struggle for freedom

was made a lot more difficult by how good the old regime was in penetrating the liberation forces. The underground was often inept; riddled with multiple spies and informants, very often chaotic, badly organised, riven by mistrust and hampered by bad communication.

Up until now the struggle against apartheid has only been told - and could only have been told - as a binary one, of good versus evil. With the passage of time and the advantage of hindsight we are now able to tell a more nuanced and multi-faceted story, one of mistakes made and detours taken.





The complicated human stories can step out of the shadows, stories of damage, and not just stories of daring.

This story is one of those. We believe that viewers don't want the story of emancipation, of the victory of progress over oppression, told in those terms any longer. The poverty, potholes and the power-outages of modern South African life can make the burning idealism of those struggle stories seem jarring. Our telling of Moe's story makes it clear that the drives of the early activists were often shot through with much more complicated, more selfish motivation.

That the seeds of today's dysfunction were sprouting alongside the blooms of freedom. Today's politics have brought it home that trading in power is a messy business, attracting many dubious characters on all sides. And it always was. Although this series is based on Moe's gripping book and on many hours of conversation with him and the other players, it's not a historical reconstruction.

Moe the character in this series is different from Moe the historical figure. We have taken some liberties with his own account to both accentuate the emotional

rather than the ideological in our telling, and to create additional tension and empathy around our key figures.

We have brought to the fore Moe, our protagonist's, fascination with power and the forces within his own past and emotional make up that compel him to seek it out. His early desertion by his mother, his repeated humiliations, in particular sexual humiliations, are posed as perhaps equally powerful drivers of action, as is his hunger for social justice.

The series hopes to share a space with cloak-and-dagger

classics like Homeland and Undercover, tales where the justice the central characters tries to bring to the world comes at the cost of the damage, they do to themselves in the process.

The Nightingale is focused on the relationships that form in the face of the huge distortions that entanglements with power bring, the emotional damage that is the | bedfellow of idealism, and the strange beauties it makes possible.



CJkBfZjkMo3Bs18YAcY291i1xxpca2CyAXhYWmalrIRB5Zydxkd6X3sMR7CreUFU8



## So, is there a follow-on season?

In season 2 we jump forward in time by 10 years.

The real Moe Shaik became a special advisor in the department of Foreign Affairs in the government of Thabo Mbeki.

Moe gets caught up in the president's mission to make sure that his deputy, Jacob Zuma, does not take his seat once his term in office expires.

Exposing Zuma's messy financial affairs are used as a means to do this.

By this time Shabir Shaik is Zuma's financial advisor, and Shabir becomes the major casualty in this war.

Moe tries to save his brother, but in the end sacrifices his own career to this cause. The bonds between the brothers are tested even further.





**FIN**



# TEAM

**THE NIGHTINGALE** will be produced by a Special Purpose Vehicle which has been set up specifically for this purpose called **ANDANI**.

It is 51 % black-owned. Between them, the directors have over thirty years experience producing feature films, documentaries and television drama. Many of these productions have garnered awards and recognition, both locally and abroad.



## KETSO GORDHAN

### DIRECTOR

Ketso's involvement with film production to date has been as an investment partner. He has invested in - **WHITE WEDDING (2009)**, **LONG STREET (2009)**, **IMPUNITY (2014)** and **ELELWANI (2012)**.

This will be the first film he produces. For him this is a deeply meaningful passion project as it explores the world in which he grew up in the inner city of Durban. Previously, Ketso has held executive positions in Government, Corporate and Private Equity.

## SARA BLECHER

### DIRECTOR

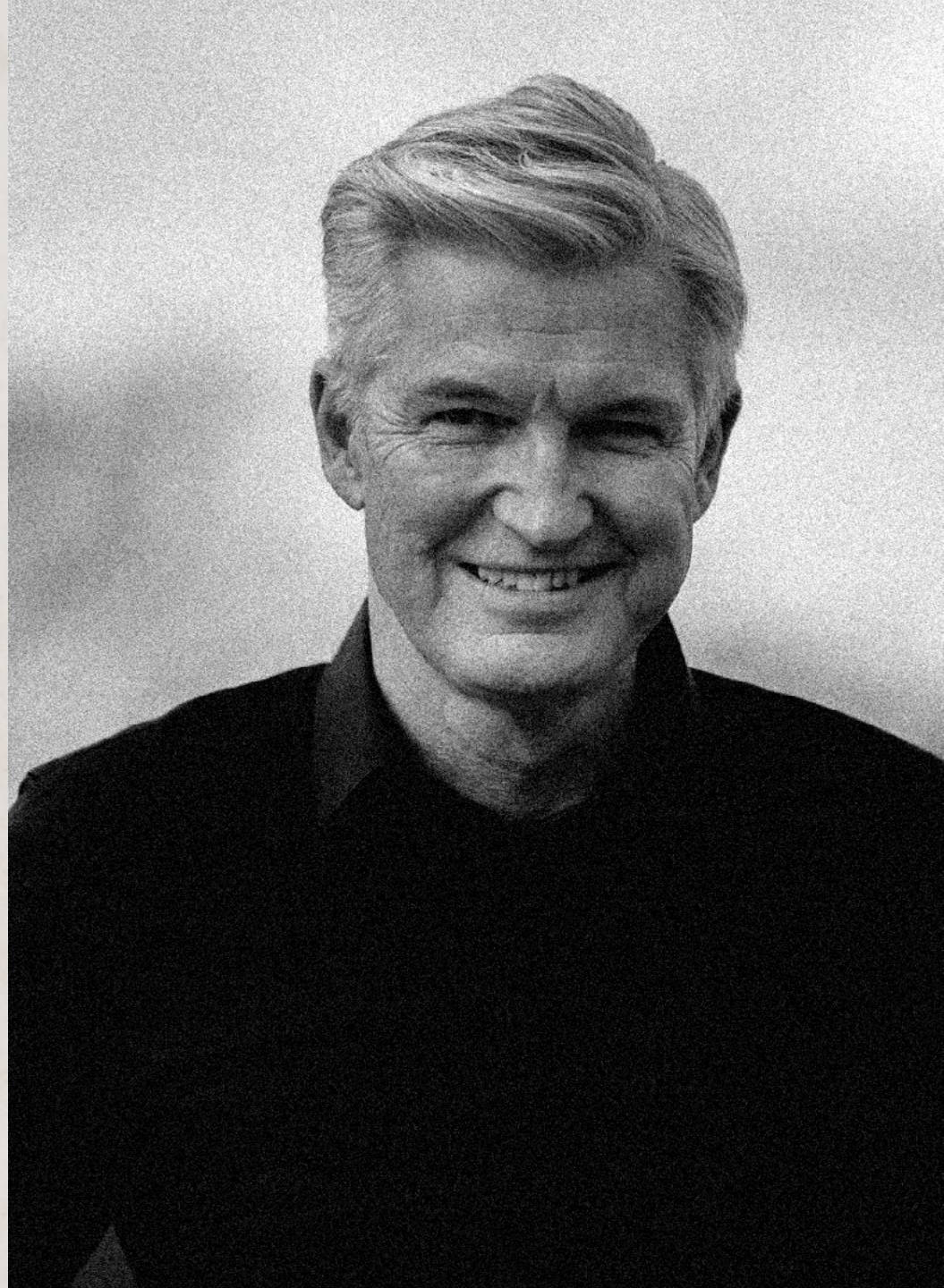
An award-winning documentary and fiction film director and producer, who has recently completed her fourth feature film **MAYFAIR (2018)**. Sara's previous film **AYANDA (2015)** premiered at the

Los Angeles Film Festival where it received a special jury mention and was selected to open the Durban International Film Festival. Her debut feature **OTELO BURNING (2011)** won 17+ international awards and was named one of the top ten African films of the decade by CNN.





fyzOeLeSxsASfcW1dW531pcs5kxUEW1NjDmVwtq5JLxhjUiqlFyzR7TOWy0FveyX



# NEIL McCARTHY

## WRITER

Neil has worked extensively in the South African entertainment industry as a scriptwriter, playwright, director, producer, actor and presenter, and is currently one of the most highly experienced screenwriters in the country.

He has won four **SOUTH AFRICAN FILM & TELEVISION AWARDS** as Head Writer on a daily drama across various series and has worked as senior creative on some of SA's most successful local TV drama productions across three decades.

Between 2010 and 2013 Neil was Senior Vice President in the Worldwide Drama Department of **FREMANTLE MEDIA UK**, based in London. In this position he traveled widely, consulting across the group's drama properties in both Europe and Australia.

In addition to developing The Nightingale, Neil is currently returning to his acting roots, playing an ongoing character in a telenovela for subscription channel, **MNET**.

