

Time In

This week's television edited by **Matt Pomroy** TV listings **Elisa Mirzoeva**



Suburban warfare

Suburban Shootout was touted as the British response to *Desperate Housewives*, but this comedy drama is far stranger, and funnier, than anything found in Wisteria Lane. Words *Matt Pomroy*

When this series first came out in the UK, *Suburban Shootout* was talked up as a British version of *Desperate Housewives*, but ignore the hype by association – this is a strange little gem in its own right.

Made as a joint effort between the Paramount Comedy channel and the UK's Channel Five, it has *DH*'s wit and sex-obsession, but is more like a cross between the film *Hot Fuzz* and a British amateur-dramatics version of *The Stepford Wives* (with gender roles reversed) than any glossy American drama.

The premise is wonderfully British. After having her house burgled, a polite but frustrated upper-middle-class woman is comforted by her friend and they decide to make a stand. Together with four other women they make a pact that they would do their best to ensure that the street of Little Stempington would never again be the target of 'low-life law-breaking scum'. However, once

they start on their path of empowered vigilantism they realise they rather quite enjoy it – as Albert Camus pointed out, 'the slave begins by demanding justice and ends by wanting to wear a crown'. Soon their newly found girl-power sees them running the town under the leadership of Camilla Diamond, think Tony Soprano in appliqué knitwear.

The series begins with the arrival of a new couple to the town – innocent Joyce Hazeldine and her policeman husband, Jeremy, looking for a stress-free life away from the high crime rate of the big city. As wife of the new local superintendent, Joyce soon becomes an unwilling pawn in the power struggle as the group split into two rival gangs – those who want more power and want to run the town, and those who try and stop their devious ways.

Beneath the charity fundraising and mid-morning aerobic classes lies a secret, super-sexed, super-violent world where drive-by-shootings are carried out in mini vans and twee small-town shops like Trinket Time have shooting ranges in the basement. What's more, industrial strength Viagra is grated into husbands' dinners, high doses of illegal HRT patches are smuggled in from Marseilles (it's the menopausal *French Connection*), and every high street shop is at the mercy of a protection racket.

Joyce has to learn to adapt to their ways if she's going to survive. 'Squeeze off a full clip and you can stop a Fiat Panda at 50

yards,' one of the women says to her in crisp Queen's English, while handing over a Beretta pistol that had been hidden among the Tupperware. Joyce is played by Amelia Bullmore, who will be familiar to fans of English comedy having appeared as Alan Partridge's eastern European girlfriend, Sonia. Another *Partridge* alumni, Felicity Montagu, who played Alan's downtrodden assistant Lynn, is cast here as leader of the good gang, Barbara Du Prez. Her arch-rival, Camilla Diamond, is portrayed by the excellent Anna Chancellor, who will most likely be remembered as the woman who played 'Duckface' opposite Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings And A Funeral*, but on this showing she's carving out a rather fine career as a sexy, cold-hearted femme fatale. Ralph Inneson (Finchy from *The Office*) bumbles though as Joyce's dopey policeman husband.

While being twisted and funny, *SS* also acts as a neat parody of the Middle England, *Daily Mail*-reading woman, who monitors her domain from behind twitching curtains, but would secretly love a bout of vigilante action to 'smarten up the town'. There are only eight episodes, and that's probably about right, as the premise can only carry the series for so long, but for the twisted insanity of its run, *Suburban Shootout* is a funny, if utterly bizarre, comedy. ● *Suburban Shootout* starts at 9pm, Saturday 4 on ShowSeries2.

Meet the gangs



Camilla Diamond
(Anna Chancellor)
Leader of the 'bad gang'. Into racketeering and loan sharking.



Hilary Davenport
(Rachael Blake)
Looking to fund more plastic surgery by whatever means.



Lillian Gordon-Moore
(Emma Kennedy)
Tomboy with a great passion for firearms and a crush on Joyce.



Barbara Du Prez
(Felicity Montagu)
Head of the 'good' gang, who hates 'hoodies' and low-cost housing.



Pam Draper
(Lucy Robinson)
Very posh and well dressed, but deadly if you don't use the Queen's English.



Joyce Hazeldine
(Amelia Bullmore)
Meek and new to the village, she's caught between the two warring gangs.