

# THE MCFADDENS

BBC Submission Pack

Created by Robyn Rudd

Prepared: 2025-09-26

Treatment

## THE MCFADDENS

A Two-Part Post-Watershed Drama

Created by Robyn Rudd

### LOGLINE

In 1990s East London, a working-class family battles poverty, addiction and violence while their youngest son hides a secret gift – a voice powerful enough to change their lives forever.

### SERIES OVERVIEW

The McFaddens is a gritty two-part drama (2 × 60') about survival, love, and ambition on a council estate in the early 1990s. The drama follows Betty, Angus, and their three children as they fight to keep their family intact in the face of poverty, jealousy, and abuse.

At its heart is Billy – the shy youngest son who hides under his hoodie to avoid the world, but who carries an extraordinary singing voice. When a teacher spots his gift, it opens a door to a new life. Yet as Billy's star begins to rise, his sister Angel falls under the control of a violent boyfriend, and his father crumbles under the weight of alcohol and illness.

It's a story about family resilience, cycles of addiction, and the possibility of escape – told with raw humour, authenticity, and a soundtrack of soul and 90s grit.

### TONE & THEMES

- Post-watershed realism: unflinching, raw, sometimes brutal.
- Authenticity: rooted in working-class East End life, true to the time and place.
- Music as salvation: Billy's voice is both a secret weapon and a potential curse.
- Family loyalty vs. escape: every child must decide – stay and fight, or break away.
- Cycles of addiction: alcohol as both destroyer (Angus, Jason) and temptation (Billy).
- Hope: even in despair, love binds the McFaddens.

Comps: Shameless, It's a Sin, This is England – with a musical heartbeat.

### CHARACTERS

Betty McFadden (late 30s)

Backbone of the family. Three jobs. Once dreamed of dancing. Fiercely protective; carries guilt and pride.

Angus McFadden (40s)

Glaswegian steelworker. Iron hand at home. Jealous, drink-fuelled. Later struck by a stroke.

Angel McFadden (18)

~~Sample Script, Episode 1 (Opening)~~  
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Approx. 12 minutes (Courier 12).

Benji McFadden (16)

Expelled, milk round lad. Tough, volatile, deeply loyal to siblings.

Billy McFadden (11 → late teens)

Shy, hood-up, extraordinary voice. From estate to Westminster choir to London music school to national TV.

Mr Clarke (30s)

Music teacher, first to see Billy's gift. Warm, patient, unconventional mentor.

Jason (early 20s)

Charming controller; isolates Angel; abusive.

Jamie (late teens)

Flamboyant Geordie at music school; Billy's lifeline and found family.

#### EPISODE BREAKDOWN

##### PART ONE - "Boy"

East London, 1992. The McFaddens live hand-to-mouth. Billy hides beneath his hood until Mr Clarke discovers his gift and persuades him to sing with the choir at Westminster. His performance is electric; a talent scout notices. Angel falls into Jason's control. Billy wins a scholarship to a London music school, tastes West End glamour – and alcohol. Just as doors open, disaster: Angel overdoses.

##### PART TWO - "Family"

Angel survives but traumatised, having miscarried. Betty nurses Angus post-stroke and keeps the home afloat. Benji nearly takes revenge on Jason but forces a confession and hands him to police instead. Billy lands a backing-vocal slot on national TV but must confront his own slide toward drink. In a cathartic finale, Billy dedicates success to Mr Clarke as the McFaddens, scarred but together, watch from home.

Title: THE MCFADDENS - Episode 1 (Sample)  
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Draft date: 2025-09-26  
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INT. BLACK - PRELAP (DAWN, 1992)

ANGUS (O.S.)  
Benji! Shift yersel' - the milkman won't wait all  
day!

EXT. EAST LONDON ESTATE - DAWN

Grey brick rows. A MILK FLOAT rattles; bottles clink a morning  
tune.  
Cold air. Laundry lines. A fox vanishes between garages.

INT. MCFADDEN HOUSE - STAIRS/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ANGUS MCFADDEN (40s, Glaswegian steelworker) plants himself at  
the  
scarred table, a chipped mug of tea steaming. BETTY (late 30s)  
plates  
fried bread with the casual speed of someone who works three  
jobs.

BENJI (16, broad, bomber jacket half-zipped) thunders downstairs  
still cramming his trainers on.

BENJI  
I'm goin', Dad. Chill out.

ANGUS  
Don't tell me tae chill.

ANGEL (18) breezes in with rollers and a revision book.

ANGEL  
Mum, can I go see Jason after school?

BETTY  
(eyebrows up, half-smile)  
Thought you had exams.

Billy (11), hoodie up, hovers in the doorway.

ANGUS  
No boyfriends till you've got your results.

Books first. Boys later.

Angel bites her tongue. Betty drops a plate in front of Billy.

BETTY

Eat, love.

Billy slides in small. Keeps his hood up.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - LATER - MORNING

Two single beds; cassette player; carpet patched thin. Benji rummages.

Billy guards a battered tape like treasure.

BENJI

You've been at my tapes again? Little puff?

BILLY

I haven't, you dick.

Benji steps in. A beat. Then ruffles Billy's hair – a rough, confusing

affection – and clatters off to work.

INT. SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

MR. CLARKE (30s, ponytail, warm) closes the piano with a gentle thud.

A class filters out. Billy lingers.

CLARKE

Stay a sec, Billy?

Billy tenses, nods.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

I've been listening. You've got a voice, son.

Proper voice. We're short a singer for

Westminster Church, this Saturday.

(off Billy)

Not a punishment. A favour.

Come sing.

BILLY

If people find out... I'm dead.

CLARKE

Talent's worth risk. Let me talk to your mum.

Don't waste a gift.

He slides an envelope toward Billy. Billy hesitates, takes it.

EXT. ESTATE - EVENING

Angel heads to the phone box with coins in her palm. Inside, the glass is clouded with tags and flyers. She dials. Sighs.

ANGEL

(into phone; bright)

Hey, Jason... yeah. I can come by later.

Her brightness fades when the call ends. She stares at her reflection  
in the smeared glass - swallows doubt.

INT. ANGEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Angel rifles through tapes. In her player - a hiss, then MUSIC.  
Billy's voice. Pure. Startling. She freezes.

She storms into the boys' room - cassette aloft.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

You taped over my Madonna!

Billy flushes. Hides inside his hood.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

(low, fierce)

You've got something, our kid. Don't you dare  
hide it.

Benji snorts from his bed, unconvinced.

INT. MCFADDEN HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The house hums. BETTY slips on her bar blouse, fixes lipstick at  
a  
cracked mirror. ANGUS in the armchair with a can.

ANGUS

Don't need all that slap. You're only pullin'  
pints.

BETTY

It's called lookin' presentable, Angus.

Doors slam. Voices rise. The row spills through paper-thin walls.  
Billy sits small on his bed, headphones on, no music playing.

EXT. WESTMINSTER CHURCH - SATURDAY MORNING

Rain freckles the pavement. A grand church looms. Billy stands in  
scuffed trainers, clutching the envelope. Hood up.

INT. WESTMINSTER CHURCH - NAVE - LATER

Warmth, light, vaulted stone. CHOIR warm-ups echo. Clarke  
appears,  
reassuring, places a hand on Billy's shoulder.

CLARKE

You'll be fine. Stand tall. Let the voice do the  
rest.

Billy nods, terrified.

INT. WESTMINSTER - SIDE AISLE - MOMENTS LATER

Billy stares at stained glass. Takes the hood down. A breath.

INT. WESTMINSTER - PERFORMANCE - LATER

The CHOIR swells under the organ. An intake of breath ripples  
along  
the line. Billy's cue approaches - panic and thrill collide.

CLARKE (O.S.)

(soft, near Billy's ear)

More important - don't let yourself down.

Billy steps to the mark. A beat of silence.

He sings - a clear, bright note that carries to the rafters.  
Surprised by his own sound, he holds it. The choir blooms around  
him.

IN THE NAVE - a MAN IN A SHARP SUIT clocks him from the pews.

INT. WESTMINSTER - VESTRY - AFTER - DAY

Applause still echoes. Clarke claps Billy's back.  
The SHARP-SUITED MAN (HARRIS) approaches with a smile and a  
card.



HARRIS

Heard you today. Name's Harris – youth talent.  
Wouldn't mind hearing you again.

Billy stares at the card, heart pounding.

EXT. ESTATE - DUSK

The milk float rattles home. Benji hops off, pockets jangling.  
Angel passes with a plastic bag of takeaway chips. They exchange  
a look – sibling code, everything and nothing said.

INT. MCFADDEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

BETTY reads the scholarship letter. Tears. ANGUS watches, jaw  
set,  
pride tangled with fear.

BETTY

Our Billy...

Billy lowers his head, overwhelmed. Angus squeezes his shoulder,  
rough.

INT. STUDENT HALL - LONDON - NIGHT (MONTAGE)

-- Billy arrives at the London School of Youth Music. Awed.  
-- Practice rooms. Scales. Theory. His confidence grows.  
-- JAMIE (flamboyant Geordie) bursts in on Billy singing.  
Instant chemistry; they laugh.

INT. WEST END CLUB - NIGHT

Velvet curtains. Table lamps glow. A JAZZ SINGER croons.  
Billy, Jamie, and students slide into a booth. Champagne  
refills.  
A FILM PRODUCER, FREDDIE (40s), clocks Billy and waves him over.

FREDDIE

You're music school? Come see a set in Dublin,  
next week if you fancy.

Billy flushes, flattered. Sips again. The awkwardness dissolves.  
Belonging hums like bass in his chest.

INT. STUDENT ROOM - MORNING

Billy wakes fully dressed, head pounding. He laughs, then

winces.

A moment of shame. Then – a grin. The drink worked... didn't it?

FADE OUT.