

Coroner: Seneca Aaron and Wendy "Motion" Brathwaite Talk "Confetti Heart"

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***** Warning: This article contains spoilers for the Coroner episode "Confetti Heart" *****

It's never an easy feat to tackle a timely and charged topic, but that's exactly what *Coroner* did in this week's episode. The story behind Jenny's (Serinda Swan) first inquest is sure to spark many conversations among viewers, and that's exactly what the team behind the CBC drama series wanted. In "Confetti Heart," written by Seneca Aaron and directed by Sherren Lee, Jenny's first inquest looks into a police shooting that also causes Detective McAvoy (Roger Cross) to examine his ties to both the community and the police force. The episode also features a powerful guest starring turn from July Black.

In order to have our own deeper conversation about the emotional topic at the center of the episode, we were joined for our weekly *Coroner* postmortem chat by both Aaron and fellow *Coroner* writer Wendy “Motion” Brathwaite. The duo spoke to us about why, along with showrunner Morwyn Brebner and executive producer Adrienne Mitchell, this episode meant so much to them, and how conversations had by the diverse writing team of the show was able to ensure they were telling not only a good story, but also highlighting all points of view.

The TV Junkies: How did you both become involved with *Coroner*?

Seneca Aaron: I had a meeting with Adrienne and Morwyn where we really hit it off right away. I actually had a bit of an accident on the way to meet them. It was very, very cold and icy out that day, and I slipped on some ice and fell on my back. I was fine, but this very nice elderly man walking past tried to help me. Before I could tell him I didn’t need help, he slipped as well and fell on top of me. The two of us laid on the ground laughing, so by the time I got to the Back Alley offices to meet, I couldn’t stop laughing. I thought it wasn’t going to go well because I was being so unprofessional and couldn’t stop laughing, but they started laughing as well. It really broke the ice and we had a lovely conversation. We talked about the source material for *Coroner* and some other stuff I was really reacting to emotionally. It was a really lovely chat and it felt like a meeting where it went so well I wasn’t going to get the job. When they did bring me on I was surprised and very thrilled.

Wendy “Motion” Brathwaite: My story is not as eventful as Seneca’s, even though I’m sure the day was just as cold. I met with Adrienne and Morwyn to speak with them about the series, but I actually had first met Adrienne many years before during the days of *Drop the Beat*. As a co-host of The Masterplan Show, a radio show at CUIT, the creators used to come by and do research and learn about the world of college and hip hop radio. It was interesting to come into a space where I was coming from the music world

and now writing for the screen. They said they had read some pieces I'd written and our first conversation was lively with a good connection.

When I heard I was going to be a member of the writing room, it was very exciting. This was going to be the first time I was part of a room in production. I had only been in development rooms, but that was a really great foundation for me to now get to be a part of a room like this.



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TTVJ: You're both still early on in your TV writing careers. How valuable was it to work in the *Coroner* room and what were some of the biggest lessons you learned from the more senior writers?

SA: I had the pleasure of working with Noelle Carbone prior to the *Coroner* room and we were familiar with each other, but I was meeting everyone else for the first time. It was an incredible opportunity to learn from some people who are well established and have decorated careers. I went in with the mentality that I want to contribute as much as I can, but I'm also comfortable having the conversation led by more senior people and finding my way in or moment to contribute. Once everyone became comfortable, it really became a free-flowing format after that and it starts at the top with Morwyn. From Day 1, she said she wanted everyone to have a voice and feel

supported and confident in their ability to contribute. I think that really set the tone for the duration of the room. Sean Reycraft, Noelle, Waneta Storms all are very experienced and very generous. It's a skill to listen, and one thing I noticed about everyone is that there's so much listening you can do and mine from that.

Motion: I would second all that Seneca said and would add that the biggest lesson for me was how different minds can come together and work towards a common narrative. What was exciting about being on a project like this, from the beginning, is collectively deciding what these characters feel like, sound like and what their voices and backstories are. The thing I got from this room is how much laughter is a part of the process. You could always think as big or crazy as you want, get it all out and be as ridiculous as you may want to. A lot of times the reality comes from the laughter or joke and being able to distill the story from the conversations happening in the room. All that brain work turns into dialogue, action and visuals. I also kept my ears open so I could learn from each member in the room because everyone brings a different POV.

TTVJ: The topic in this episode is very timely. Can you discuss the decision to address something like police brutality here? It's such a charged topic too, how did you approach writing it?

SA: I will say that Morwyn already knew there was going to be an episode that explored this subject matter when we joined the room. I was very honoured that I got assigned the episode, but it's a very collective effort breaking all the stories, especially something as timely and delicate as this. First and foremost, we always want to tell a good and interesting story. That still applies when you're dealing with sensitive topics. It's definitely not a new story we're telling, but how do we tell it in the world that we've created?

We explored so many different perspectives, and had so many honest conversations when discussing race and the relationship between the community and law enforcement. Often, these conversations got very

emotional because some of us have family members that have been affected negatively by scenarios like these, but then we have others who have family members that are law enforcement. Because the room was so inclusive and there was such a diverse collective built, we were able to have these very honest conversations and come to understand the multitude of perspectives that exist in these scenarios. The story really came from that — a lot of very long, difficult and honest conversations and a lot of research.

Motion: I remember when Seneca first brought in the initial outline and I got so excited thinking “this is going to be so dope! This is going to be so deep!” I was excited and moved because I felt that the way he approached it, and the opportunity to tell this story on a mainstream broadcaster in Canada, is not a regular occurrence. It was a brave treatment that really looked at the effects that this issue has on families, communities, emotion and the reality of living in a place like Toronto and still being othered. To do that dramatically, and at Episode 6 of this season, was a really great opportunity to put our narrative into the mix of conversation. I love that Seneca was the one to take all that conversation, all those feelings, points of view and then really create a poignant episode.

SA: It is a topic that everyone is so passionate about, no matter what your opinion is, so kudos to CBC in supporting us in doing an episode like that. You do see this on broadcast television, but not often, and we did want to get as much into the nuances of the story as we could and how it affects everything around it.

We tried to be as authentic and genuine as we could. It’s not a secret that our main character is a white woman, but that character has a perspective and opinion on this. It was great to be able to put Jenny in a position that so many people face — where you have to do your job despite how you feel personally about something. Serinda is so great in this episode.



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TTVJ: We also need to discuss Roger's performance in this episode and the fact that we get to learn so much more about Mac's backstory. I remember Morwyn saying that you guys auditioned him with a scene from this episode and I can see why.

SA: I don't get emotional a lot, but after we wrapped this episode I gave Roger a massive hug and thanked him. He gave such an honest, incredibly passionate and layered performance. That's what we wanted. He's a black man, but he's also a police officer, and there's so much complexity tangled in that. He really harnessed that and showed that, and no matter how well you write, you can't write that. That's something that the actor is going to find and bring out, and Roger was just incredible.

TTVJ: To get across so many different people's opinions and point of views on the topic in 44 minutes is really something. It was great to watch and very powerful.

SA: We didn't want to have tunnel vision on a topic like that because there are so many different opinions and you want to pay respect to all of them, instead of just propping up your own.

TTVJ: This episode also featured Jully Black as a guest star. How did that come about and how fun was that for you guys to have her join?

SA: Oh my goodness! That's one of those casting scenarios that you throw a name out in the room and everyone says "Yes! Wouldn't that be amazing?" But there's no delusion that you're going to make that happen. We all thought it'd be incredible to get her for it and knew it was a role for her, as we had seen her in the news recently and her performances, but didn't think it would happen. Kudos to Morwyn and Adrienne for going for it, aiming for the stars and I can't say enough about how incredible it was to get Jully for the episode.

Motion: In a lot of ways it was a part almost built for her and meant to be. We wanted the musical line throughout the episode because of the musical family that's a part of the story, and at the time Jully was going [viral](#) with her strong words as part of Canada Reads. That power of her voice and stance, as well as her natural talent and skill, made us think it had to be Jully. It's amazing that it happened and great to see her on the screen, even personally for me after knowing her for so long as a musician and a cultural force in this country. She really embodies the spirit of Imani Abanda and it was so great to have her.

SA: You see many times where someone can look the part, but you don't know if they can bring it. From Jully's first take, I remember us all thinking "whoa! She is really good!" This is an entirely different muscle for her and she's fantastic.



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TTVJ: On a less serious note, how much money do detectives in Toronto make? I really could just live in McAvoy's kitchen. [laughs]

Motion: He made good investments as a youth! [laughs]

SA: Motion, do you remember when we were messing around with all the ideas for McAvoy's side hustle? At one point, we were going to have him have a side business. One of them was making and bottling kombucha, but yes, he has a nice house!

TTVJ: I'm always jealous when he's outside at the beach, but then I saw that kitchen!

SA: Me too! I wish! From day one, there was such a visual component established in the framework of the show between Adrienne and Morwyn. Adrienne really had an idea of what she wanted to see and how she wanted to showcase Toronto. It's really been coming through in the episodes. That's the thing about Toronto, you can find a house like McAvoy's in a pocket neighborhood in the surrounding Toronto area. There's all these places to discover and that's something the show has done an incredible job of, just showing Toronto off.

TTVJ: What can you preview about next week's penultimate episode?

Motion: It's the first of two parts leading into a big season finale. Don't miss it! #KeepWatching #Coroner [laughs]

What do you think of this week's *Coroner*? Add your thoughts below!

Coroner airs Mondays at 9 p.m. ET on CBC and is available on [CBC Gem](#).



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