



Opinion Metropolitan police

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# The great Met police movie would be less Keanu, more Keystone

Marina Hyde



Undercover cops in the activist spying operation will have dreamt of Point Break. It was deep cover with comedy pratfalls

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📷 Policing, or picking up girls? Keanu Reeves as an undercover agent in Point Break. Photograph: 20thCFox/Everett/Rex Features

**I**n 1978, the US government waged a war against organised crime. One man was left behind enemy lines." That is the tagline for the movie [Donnie Brasco](#), the story of an undercover FBI agent who infiltrated the mafia. How do you think the trailer for the movie of the [Metropolitan police's calamitous undercover spying operation](#) would run? "For decades, Scotland Yard waged a war against pro-cycling campaigners and people worried about where some bats would go if a wood was reduced in size. Several were left behind enemy lines. But what they didn't bargain on was falling in love!"

Your cinephile ear may have detected the gear shift there, between searing underworld thriller and the sort of misconceived screwball comedy that bears the lottery funding kitemark. Actually, that's unfair. If the Met's activist spying programme were indeed the type of preposterously dire British comedy it calls to mind, the plot would have been deemed so preposterous that it would have failed to get lottery money at the first script meeting. It would have been laughed out of the door, in the wrong way, by the same body that backed [Sex Lives of the Potato Men](#).

Four decades of intricate and expensive attempts to disrupt the activities of such horrors as tree-huggers and anti-racist campaigners. And for what? The only thing that the operation appears to have done with any success is see its agents pull the people they were supposed to be undermining. It's basically a multimillion-pound dating agency. I don't mean to penny-pinch, but it seems a lot of money for getting a few weird coppers laid.

No wonder the established order didn't want that [American supercop taking over at the Met](#). Whether Bill Bratton was as super as billed is debatable, but

he presumably lacked the streak of maliciously misguided nitwittery essential to our own top officers, and would have taken one look at the undercover operation and bellowed something along the lines of, "I'm busting you down to traffic duty FOREVER!"

We always knew it wasn't the cream that rose to the upper echelons of the Met, but these ongoing revelations reveal a culture so absurd that it has rendered the idea of senior competence impossible. [Officers have concealed their identity](#) when giving false evidence in criminal prosecutions, trials have collapsed, and, would you believe, none of these undercover geniuses ever thought to infiltrate the News of the World. In a force where this appears to have been a major plank of what we must hilariously euphemise as "policing strategy", the stupidest recruit from the Police Academy series could make commissioner. It makes the Keystone Kops look like [CTU](#).

In the film [So I Married an Axe Murderer](#), Anthony LaPaglia's police officer bemoans the mundanity of the job. "Captain," he sighs, "when I joined the force I thought I was going to be Serpico." Well quite. We all fancy we're in a movie of our own lives these days, so I assume the Met's undercover cops had various inspirational films in their minds when they jumped at the chance to go deep cover.

Perhaps they'd always loved classier fare like [Hard Boiled](#); but something tells me they are of the vintage that saw themselves in [Point Break](#), the 1991 world cinema classic directed by Kathryn Bigelow, and way more deserving of being honoured by the Academy than her profoundly tedious later effort, *The Hurt Locker*. At least it had a story (and Gary Busey). If you haven't seen it, Keanu Reeves plays Special Agent Johnny Utah, who passed out top of his class at Quantico and has to infiltrate a gang of bank robbers called the Ex-Presidents: with one insanely cool twist - the Ex-Presidents are surfers! "This is your fucking wake-up call!" yells Keanu. "I am an F, B, I, AGENT!" "This is your fucking wake-up call!" his imitators at the Met would have echoed. "I am a relatively junior officer in the Met's WTF Unit. Let's object to a London Underground extension then go back to yours and shag."

Look, I get it. There's a part of all of us that wants to point a gun at someone with the words: "Speak into the microphone, squidbrain!" Isn't there?

Unfortunately, though quite understandably, events in Libya have moved this story down the news agenda. But were there any justice - which there evidently isn't, so at least the operation has proved something - this fiasco would be paraded before the world. It is internationally ludicrous.

Our so-called top cops should be forced to deliver a presentation on it at the next Interpol conference. After three days of fist-gnawingly dull lectures on cybercrime and security cordons in a changing world, there would be a sort of "and finally" item. Therein, the Met would be forced to share with the world their latest comedy pratfall, before playing out with the *Point Break* clip in which Reeves' boss screams: "Do you think the taxpayers would like





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