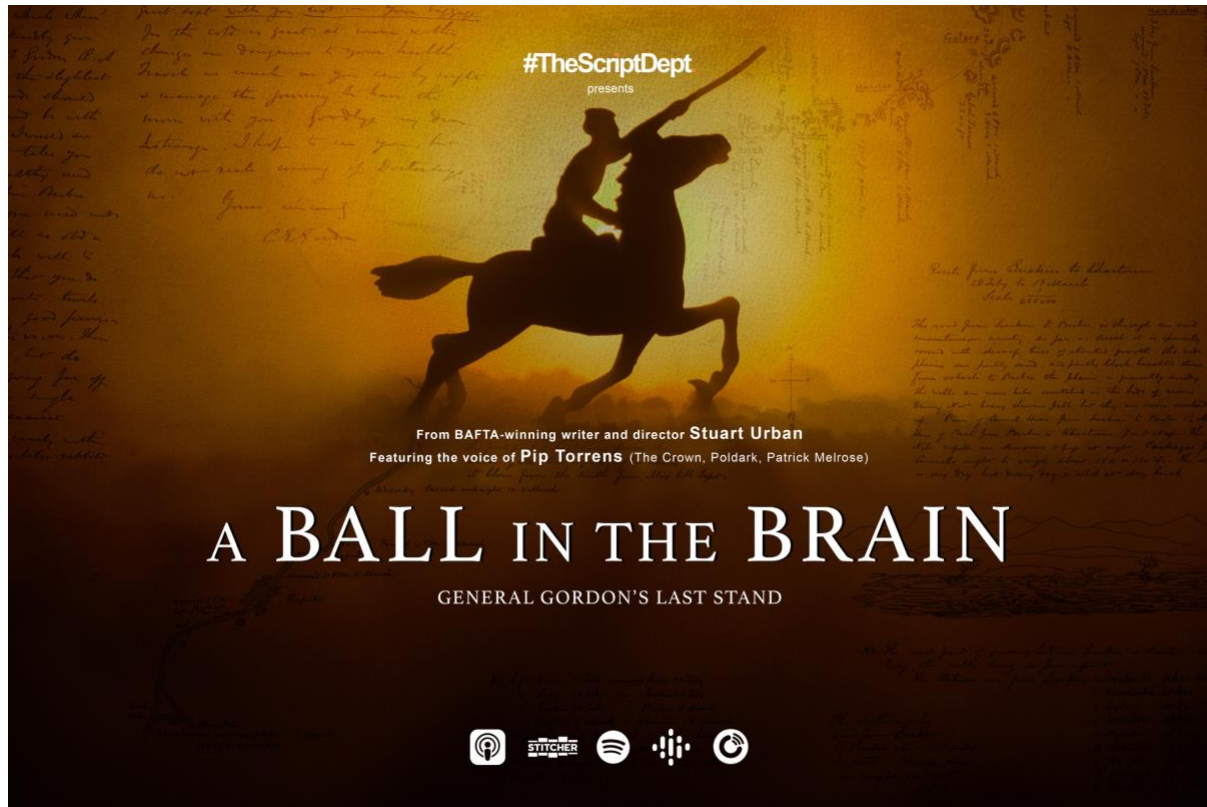


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 2021

A BALL IN THE BRAIN

The Script Department presents a podcast drama by [Stuart Urban](#),
Narrated by [Pip Torrens](#).



BRIEF SYNOPSIS: *A lone British general, besieged in his palace by an Islamist army, slowly loses his mind. A war film that links the past and the present, the political and the spiritual.*

This is the podcast drama debut of two-time BAFTA-winner writer/director Stuart Urban, whose recent credits include well-reviewed documentary “*The Mystery of Suzy Lamplugh*” (2021) for Sky Crime and miniseries *The Secret* for ITV, which he was BAFTA-nominated for in 2017.

Pip Torrens, praised for his roles in *The Crown*, *Poldark*, and *Preacher* in the last few years, reunites with Stuart to lend his renowned voice work and plays all the parts, also reading stage directions.

Like all The Script Department’s podcasts, it is an audio imagining of a film or TV screenplay. The Script Department has received critical acclaim from industry insiders who’ve called their work “a major step forward for the industry and a brilliant showcase for writers’ work”.

Renowned for his fact-based drama, Stuart delved deep into primary sources for an authentic retelling of the final, doomed, riveting journey of its principal character, General Gordon. Stuart describes the background and inspiration for writing of this siege, with its great resonances today of colonialism, Islamism, militarism, race and slavery, at his [blog](#).

Producer John Finnegan writes: our mission is to showcase the work of great writers and Stuart Urban is one of the finest screenwriters working in the British industry today. *A Ball in the Brain*, with its faithful and captivating account of Gordon's last stand in Khartoum, proved an exciting opportunity for collaboration with Stuart and an important addition to The Script Department's impressive catalogue of stories.

Stuart Urban, Pip Torrens and John Finnegan are available for interview c/o The Script Department.

SYNOPSIS:

Sudan, 1994. A new terrorist group trains on the battleground where the first modern jihad was won a century before. Meanwhile, CIA agents stalk the militants. The CIA officer hears the dervish drums at night, and in his dream state is transported to 1884, when war rages. General Gordon, a devout Christian and the ablest commander of his day, is besieged here by the army of the Mahdi, a visionary who believed he was Mohammed's messenger. Among the greatest war diaries of all time, Gordon's account of his courageous stand against the Mahdi, and the extraordinary and intimate correspondence between these two mortal enemies, form the core of the story. They were divided by politics but united by a common belief in the Supreme Being guiding their every action. An evangelical whose scorn for death matched any jihadist's, a mystic who believed in reincarnation, Gordon believed that he had no choice but to expand his mission and defend European civilisation.

Arriving in a land where hundreds of thousands had already perished in the Islamist uprising, Gordon hoped to repeat his success against rebels for the Emperor of Manchu, where he had arrived with no army but forged one to defeat the rebels by the age of 32 and become the only non-Chinese ever to wear the Yellow Jacket of the Imperial Guard.

Conducting himself with scrupulous fairness and modesty, allowing those he governed to choose democratically whose side to be on, Gordon championed in particular the black Africans who felt downtrodden under the Arabs in Darfur and elsewhere, then as now. As Gordon courageously faces his end, guided by his faith the relief expedition he clamoured for arrived 48 hours after he was defeated and decapitated - we reveal that the leader styling himself the modern Mahdi in 1994 is Bin Laden and the group is Al Qaeda.

The White House vetoes the CIA assassination plan of this unknown upstart.

- **WATCH THE TRAILER** [Trailer | A Ball in the Brain: General Gordon's Last Stand - YouTube](#)
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