

'These are the sort of people who are controlling the way we see the world' - *Succession* creator Jesse Armstrong

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"I look forward to people getting to know this family," says creator Jesse Armstrong about the Roys, owners of one of the world's largest media and entertainment conglomerates in his hit new HBO show, [Succession](#), currently streaming exclusively on [Showmax](#) in Africa. "I think they'll find them understandable and sort of terrifying if you think that these are the sort of people who are controlling the way we see the world."



Emmy-winner Brian Cox (*War & Peace*) plays Logan Roy, the ageing family patriarch. "The first episode is really about a man giving his empire away and then by the end of the first episode he's beginning to take it all back. And then nature intervenes."

This sets in motion a battle for succession between his children: Kendall (Jeremy Strong from *The Big Short*), Roman (Golden Globe-nominee Kieran Culkin from *Igby Goes Down*), Siobhan "Shiv" Roy (Sarah Snook from *Steve Jobs*), and Connor Roy (Alan Ruck from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*).

"Families are fascinating: if you dig deep enough into the surface picture of any family, there's relationships that have gone wrong."

"All through history, successions are points of conflict," says Armstrong, who was nominated for an Oscar for *In The Loop* and a Writers Guild of America award for his work on [Veep](#) and won a BAFTA for *Peep Show* and a Writers Guild of Great Britain Award for *The Thick Of It*. "I'm interested in power, I'm interested in politics, interested in money, super interested in family, and when I started to feel like that could all come together on this canvas, that was exciting."

All families are complicated, even those whose tea-time rows aren't likely to end up as front page news. As Armstrong says, "Families are fascinating: if you dig deep enough into the surface picture of any family, there's relationships that have gone wrong. Creatively it's a gift that keeps giving."

Things only get more complicated when you throw family businesses into the mix. "The family has a hard time trusting each other," says Strong. "In a sense, the language of our family is just the language of business."



This is particularly true when family loyalties collide in a feud over company control, especially since all the heirs have been brought up to aspire to run the company. "They have been taught that running this company is the most exciting thing you can possibly do in the world," says Armstrong.

Strong agrees. "Our father has raised us to expect to be running this company. He's given us the tools to do it and then he's tied our hands behind our back... at all times thwarted us and hindered us."

Kendall's relationship with his father is at the heart of *Succession*. "My character has gone through drug and alcohol addiction. I think that was precipitated in large part by growing up in this family and having an eternally disapproving father, who believes that the only language is the language of strength. I think the question of the show will be, 'Does Kendall become someone like his family or become his own man and walk away from that kind of ethic?'"



None of which is meant to imply that Logan Roy doesn't love his children. "I asked the writer: did I mean that when I say, 'Everything I've done, I've done for my children,'" recalls Cox. "I thought he did mean it. And I spoke to Jesse about it and he said, 'Yes, I think he means it.'"

It's a poignant moment that is also very funny, which is almost the blueprint for the series. As Slate wrote, "It's a comedy and then it's a tragedy, in the same show, but not at the same time... The show's ethos: to gut you while you're laughing."

"There's something very Shakespearean about the script," says Cox. "Just in terms of how the story is shared between the different characters. And yet it's modern and blackly funny. It's going to be a rollercoaster."

Streaming exclusively on [Showmax](#), *Succession* is currently at number 32 on IMDB's Most Popular TV chart, has an 82% critics rating on Rotten Tomatoes, and has been hailed as everything from "my favourite show of the summer... the only thing I've been able to think about" by Vox to "King Lear for the modern media age" by The Telegraph. [Watch now »](#)

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