

CAST COMPLAINS ABOUT WEBCAM IN IAN BEALE'S BEDROOM – PAGE 5

# Walford Gazette



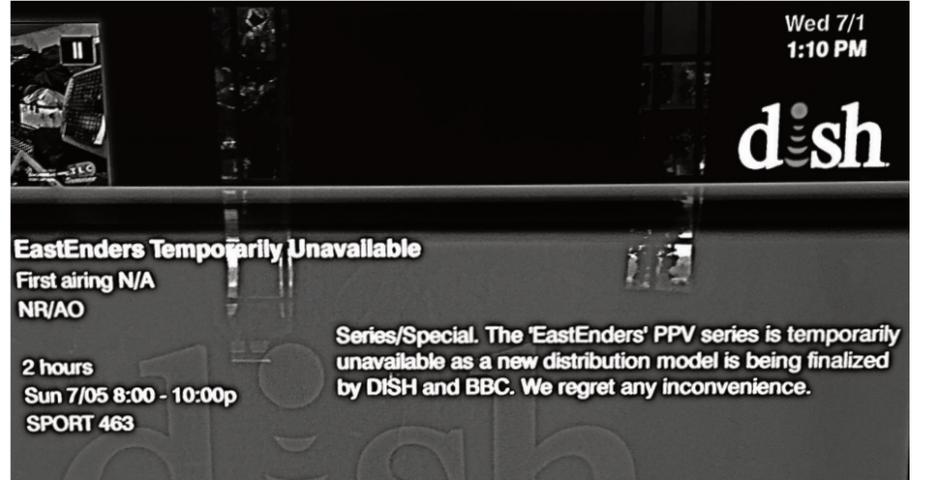
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The Newspaper for EastEnders Fans

<http://www.wgazette.com>

## EastEnders Fans Ready to Break Dishes

The late June rumour turned out to be true. *EastEnders* fans who watched via DISH Network can no longer do so. Turn to pages 3 and 15 for full story.



BYE-BYE PPV – DISH Network, the US satellite TV service, pulled the plug on its *EastEnders* subscription package.

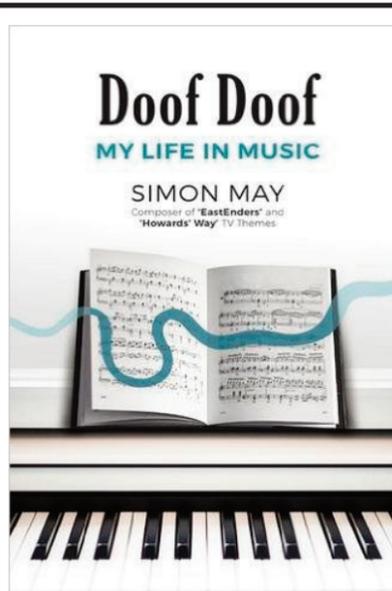


LOOK WHO CAME HOME – Kathy left Albert Square for good in 2000 for a new life in South Africa, but she's suddenly returned ... on BBC-1 screens in the UK. More on page 3 about Gillian Taylforth's dramatic reprisal of one of *EastEnders*' original castmembers.

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- Lapsed fan reconsiders *EastEnders*' best characters – page 7
- What if Shakespeare staged his plays in Walford instead of Stratford? – Pages 8-10
- Martin Kemp directs a thriller – page 11



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# Around the Square

## EastEnders Actors Get In Shape with Workout Videos



LONDON – Many *EastEnders* actors have starred in workout videos. Among those trading on their celebrity while getting in shape are: Letitia Dean (Sharon), Jessie Wallace (Kat), Danniella Westbrook (Sam), Martine McCutcheon (Tiffany), Natalie Cassidy (Sonia), Barbara Windsor (Peggy), Nick Berry (Simon), Patsy Palmer (Bianca), Nadia Sawalha (Annie), and Charlie Brooks (Janine).



**BIRTHDAY CARD?** – Nick and Dot Cotton adorn a UK new greeting card, most likely an unauthorised product. One could picture Big Mo hawking such contraband at the Bridge Street market.

## Shane Richie in Cast of 'Dad's Army' Remake

LONDON – One of Britain's most beloved sitcoms, *Dad's Army*, is being remade with Shane Richie (Alfie Moon) among the cast, reports *Radio Times*. The one-off programme on BBC-2 will be a dramatisation of how *Dad's Army*, which ran on BBC-1 from 1968 to 1977, was made.

The show will chronicle the friction that writers Jimmy Perry and David Croft had to overcome BBC management scepticism, focus groups and problems with the cast to get the much loved wartime sitcom on air. Richie will play Bill Per-twee – aka Chief Air Raid Warden Hodges.

Ian Lavender (*EastEnders*' Derek) played the character of Private Pike in the original *Dad's Army* cast. Wendy Richard (Pauline) also appeared in the show early in her career. Croft later used her as Miss Brahm in *Are You Being Served?*

The approach of the new, yet unnamed show is similar to an ITV one-off in 2011, *The Road to Coronation Street*, which featured Jessie Wallace (Kat) as *Corrie* actress Pat Phoenix.

"Who can resist the behind-the-scenes story of the making of British legend *Dad's Army*, brought to us by a highly talented on and off screen team," said BBC2 controller Kim Shillinglaw at the Edinburgh Television Festival.

# Kathy Comes Home to Walford After 15 Years

BOREHAMWOOD, ENGLAND – An original *EastEnders* cast member, Gillian Taylforth has returned to *EastEnders* as Kathy, a regular character on the UK episodes, meaning that she's about 10 years away from US viewers watching via public television.

After divorcing second husband Phil Mitchell, Kathy had been living in South Africa. The character briefly returned this past February for the live episode that marked *EastEnders*' 30th anniversary, and the show's creative team indicated at that point there was a possibility for Kathy to return more permanently.

Talking about her return to *EastEnders*, Taylforth told the BBC, "When Dominic [Treadwell-Collins, *EE*'s Executive Producer] approached me with his plan, I was so shocked I got into my car and burst into tears! 'Kathy' has always been so close to my heart and it's absolutely wonderful to be returning to the show and reprising the role."

Treadwell-Collins said, "I have always made my feelings on Kathy Beale and Gillian Taylforth very clear – she is part of *EastEnders* history, mother to Ian and Ben and one of the most important and iconic television characters on British television. Six months ago, we set ourselves the challenge of bringing Kathy back to the Square in a credible way. And I believe we have succeeded. Viewers will have to keep watching to find where Kathy has been all these years and why she now wants to come home to Albert Square. This is only the beginning of one of the most earth-shattering storylines *EastEnders* has ever seen."

Kathy was last seen in 2000 before her departure to South Africa, where viewers believed that Kathy was killed in a car crash. Her return has been shrouded in secrecy. To keep it under wraps the scenes were shot live on location to prevent her being seen prior to her episode transmitting.



**IAN GETS HIS MUM BACK – Vintage shot of Gillian Taylforth and Adam Woodyatt**

The official *EastEnders* website reminds us that "Kathy had affairs with Laurie Bates, Eddie Royle, Tricky Dicky... even Vicar Alex tried to give up the cloth for her! A brief affair with Phil's brother, Grant, made her come to her senses. She fled to South Africa with son Ben to live with brother Ted. Whilst there, she met and married a guy called Gavin; but in 2006 they reportedly died in a car accident. Or so we were led to believe...."

Adam Woodyatt, who plays Gillian's on-screen son, adds, "I'm thrilled, I couldn't be

be happier. I've finally got my mum back! I've been keeping this secret for so long and now I just can't wait to work with her again."

Tim Wilson interviewed Taylforth for the *Walford Gazette* in 1995, at which time she confided, "I still joke to this day that I only got the job on *EastEnders* because I slipped through the back door."

Leslie Grantham (Den Watts) told the *Gazette*'s Larry Jaffee a funny story about how Taylforth was in danger of getting sacked by *EastEnders*' co-creator Julia Smith for always being late and failing miserably in lying about her latest excuse for being tardy.

Taylforth reminisced about her *EastEnders* audition process with Wilson: "My first audition was for the part of Sue Osman, Ali's wife. But [series creators] Julia Smith and Tony Holland had other ideas apparently, because they called me back for another audition, and this time it was Kathy. They whipped out a calculator and kept punching in numbers. 'We're trying to work out if you could be old enough to be Ian's Mum,' they said. I said, 'I can look older. I'll put my hair up. I'll have a few late nights and I PROMISE I'll look old enough to be Ian's Mum.'"

On her relationship with Woodyatt: "He's lovely. Really lovely. Everyone's watched him grow up on this show. One of the most emotional moments in our time together was when Adam told me he was going to be a dad in real life. I was feeling particularly down that day and that was just the news I needed to send me into floods of tears – and I was so happy for him. He said, 'That means you're going to be a granny.' I was so thrilled – it was if my own son was telling me this."

After quitting *EastEnders*, Taylforth was featured in ITV's popular drama, *Footballers' Wives*, its topical chat-show *Loose Women* and police drama, *The Bill*. Most recently she was on for more than a year the UK soap *Hollyoaks*.

## Dish Pulls Plug on EastEnders

**BY LARRY JAFFEE**

Well, just as the last issue (No. 90) was delivered to the printer in late June, a rumour started circulating that the satellite TV service DISH Network was killing the monthly \$9.95 subscription that offered on Sunday nights four back-to-back episodes a few weeks behind what is broadcast in the UK.

The rumour turned out to be true. By early July DISH subscribers to the package were greeted by a screen that stated BBC Worldwide was working with DISH Network on a "new distribution model" for *EastEnders*. More than two months later, mum's the word from both DISH and the BBC.

The *Gazette* is getting reports of DISH customers cancelling their service (see page 15). DISH Network's withdrawal of the PPV package comes on the heels of the BBC pulling the plug on the global iPlayer, which was never

launched in the US. We don't know why DISH and the BBC reexamined the PPV offering.

**If it was a lack of subscribers, they certainly did nothing to promote its availability.** When you called the toll-free number, the representatives had no idea what you were talking about, and *EastEnders* wasn't even mentioned on the website.

Here's a brief chronology of *EastEnders*' difficult history in the States.

- **Late 1987/early 1988 – about 50 US public TV stations launch *EastEnders***, which debuted in the UK in February 1985. National PBS is comprised of 300-plus stations. *EastEnders* does not become the coveted *Masterpiece Theatre* must-run ratings powerhouse that will happen nearly three decades later with *Downton Abbey*.
- **Late 1992 – *Walford Gazette* starts publishing, and there are about 25 public TV stations left carrying *EastEnders*.** Every year since, addi-

tional stations have dropped the show, typically citing the expense and disappointing viewer support.

- **Late 2001, BBC announces video-on-demand offering for *EastEnders***; it never launched.
- **Sept. 2003 – BBC America kills *EastEnders*.**
- **June 2004 – DISH Network starts monthly subscription for *EastEnders*** with episodes that run roughly concurrent with BBC-1.
- **July 2015 – Dish Network discontinues *EE*.**
- **Sept. 2015 – Ten public TV stations still air *EastEnders***, and the episodes are now at least a decade older than what BBC-1 airs because of the series first going three times and then four times a week. The public TV stations only broadcast two half-hour episodes a week.

Fans have privately raised money to keep *EastEnders* on public TV stations in New York; Washington, D.C.; and North Carolina, reversing cancellation decisions; but it's a constant challenge.

It'll be interesting to see if the BBC and DISH's "new distribution model" for *EastEnders* ever emerges. Let's hope for the best.

# Peggy Mitchell & Johnny Allen: Chalk & Cheese

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

No love lost between them, Peggy Mitchell and Johnny Allen are East End archetypes: proud survivors who return to the neighbourhood of their youth after living elsewhere during most of their adult years. Despite the obvious gender differences, they're similarly cunning, seen it all, mostly on the wrong side of the law, and at times, ruthless.

In this corner ... Peggy, who recently came back strutting on Albert Square as if she'd only been away for a long weekend. Nobody, save Alfie or Billy, either knew or saw any reason to treat her as the Duchess of Walford, her status for at least the previous decade or longer.

Son No. 2, Grant, is living abroad, while son No. 1 Phil, and daughter Sam are in the nick, Phil about to go on trial for the armed robbery set up by Den Watts, and Sam charged with the murder of Dirty Den – a somewhat ironic development since the two plot events really had nothing to do with each other.

At one time, the Mitchells were top dogs in Albert Square, owning the café, Kathy's, The Arches, the snooker hall, and the jewel in the crown, the Queen Vic. Ian Beale (technically Phil's former stepson) now owns Kathy's (named after Ian's mum and Phil's ex-wife), and the Arches.

Thinking she's raising money to get Phil out of the slammer, Sam is snookered out of the various businesses by family solicitor Marcus Christie, who was in cahoots with Den.

Meanwhile, Den's guilt-free widow Chrissie Watts owns the Vic, having successfully framed Sam to take the rap as the murderess.

Peggy's council house – once owned by the late Andy Hunter – is now ironically owned by Pat Evans, who gives Peggy a roof



over her head. She really had no place else to go, and considering their personal history (Pat's ex-hubby Frank, although married to Peggy, carried on an affair with ex-wife Pat, who was married to Roy), Pat took pity on her former rival out of the kindness of her heart.

No good deed goes unpunished on *EastEnders*.

In short order, Peggy has found out that it was Chrissie – not Sam – who bashed in Den's skull and buried him in the Vic's cellar. She's on a crusade to free Sam, aided by Billy, who lost his job working for Johnny Allen because of divided loyalties. It has come down to this key matter: Who will own the Vic?

Chrissie wants to sell to Johnny Allen, who knows that Chrissie murdered Den, a confession she made to new boyfriend Jake Moon, captured by the security camera. However, Jake and Chrissie know that Johnny killed Andy Hunter. Talk about a stalemate. Peggy approaches Johnny, trying to get him to help her buy back the Vic.

What the Vic has to do with



freeing Sam is too complicated for this correspondent. Suffice it to say that what was business between Peggy and Johnny is now very personal. Peggy's long-deceased husband Eric, the father of the Mitchell brood, was once associated with Johnny. It was he who stepped aside, letting Peggy marry Eric, an abusive husband who made his living as a boxer when not being a two-bit gangster.

Peggy thinks that Johnny owes her for all the abuse, physical and mental, she suffered. As far as Johnny is concerned, he feels he owes her nothing.

At this juncture, Peggy takes her fight a step too far. In the heat of the moment, Peggy – in her blind fury to save Sam – chooses the Queen Vic as the place to confront Johnny about a criminal past most

of the Square knew nothing about. Peggy produces a broken man who many years ago was beaten to a pulp by Johnny, who almost killed this unfortunate baker for misspelling a word on a birthday cake.

Johnny's daughter Ruby enters the Vic just in time to hear the accusation, and decides to spend the night with Stacey Slater.

The next day, a confused Ruby confronts her

father in his office about the baker's story. For fear of losing his only surviving daughter, Johnny admits yes, he did beat the baker. When Ruby asks did he ever use the gun that she found in his safe to kill someone, Johnny says yes, but pleads with her that such transgressions are all in the past. He tries to convince her – and himself – that after losing his wife and other daughter Scarlet in the fire, the gangster in him died (that doesn't fly considering what he did most recently to Andy Hunter), and that he's now an honest businessman, club owner and devoted father.

Ruby senses he isn't being totally honest, and refuses to return home. She won't leave the Slaters until he comes clean. Johnny realises he might have lost Ruby for good, and he blames Peggy.

A chastened Peggy runs into Johnny on the street. He warns her she will pay dearly. A fuse has been lit, and it's only a matter of time until Johnny's bomb blows up in Peggy's face. A line has been crossed, and grave consequences await her, he promises.

The black-and-white photos on Johnny's office wall portray a younger, one-time lover, adding to his mystique. Billy Murray, the actor playing Johnny, embodies a menace inhabiting the soul of a charmer. I can't stop watching him.

## The Perfect Opening Act

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

NEW YORK – Fate and the whims of a programmer at WLIW21 conspired to create the perfect opening act.

*Call the Midwife* precedes *EastEnders* Wednesday nights in prime time. Both shows are located in the East End of London, albeit in different time frames.

*Midwife* features a cast of novices and seasoned veteran actresses in a drama set in the 1950s, sets, costumes and props to match.

The period music combined with excellent scripts and script direction keeps the illusion and drama moving with just the right amount of empathy.

The hardscrabble lives of these hardy survivors leads one to believe they could be distant relatives of the Fowlers, the Beales and the Mitchells of *EastEnders*.

Cliff Parisi is the actor link between the shows, playing the affable auto mechanic Minty Peterson in *EastEnders*, as well as the convent/clinic handyman Fred Buckle in *Midwife*. The characters are not too dissimilar in temperament.

*Midwife's* stories are dramatised from a series of memoirs by nurse/midwife Jennifer Worth. Vanessa Redgrave provides voice-over narration taken from the books in the voice of the author.



AFFABLE HANDYMAN – Cliff Parisi as *Call the Midwife's* Fred, a character similar to Minty.

The show, created and developed by women, cuts across all demographics. It only proves that a good story, compelling characters

and minute attention to detail are hallmarks of both *Call the Midwife* and *EastEnders*.

(*Midwife* is on national PBS.)

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER'S DIARY*****Mad Mullahs in Ian Beale's Bedroom*****BY MATTHEW ROBINSON**

*Editor's Note: In 1984, Julia Smith hired Matthew Robinson as 'Lead Director' to help her set up the production side of EastEnders. He worked on and off the show until 1987, directing dozens of early episodes, including episodes 1 and 2. In 1998, he returned as Executive Producer, surviving a mind-blowing two years. He agreed to allow the Walford Gazette to serialise his blog about memories from both periods. Matthew now runs a television production company in Cambodia.*

May 1998

I remember a battle with the *EE* cast when I first came up with the idea of an Albert Square webcam.

Not so much the actors, most of whom in 1998 hadn't the faintest idea of what a webcam was. Actors then prided themselves on being technologically illiterate. Not so today. Oh no!

The battle was more with their agents. Mention any six-letter word beginning with CAM and ending ERA to a theatrical agent and images of pound signs six-foot high dance before their eyes.

Not that *EastEnders* actors were ever remotely underpaid for services rendered – but that subject is reserved for a future blog.

"Ian Beale's bedroom!" I explained to the company I'd assembled in one of its lunchtimes.

"That's where it'll be."

"So will it be part of the episodes?" was one stupid question.

"So Adam Woodyatt will be able to watch us walk around?" was another, presumably an attempt at humour.

"So we'll be spied on when we take a leak break during shooting?"

And so on, and so on.

"Guys and gals! We'll be first!" said the exasperated Exec Prod.

"*Corrie* hasn't got one. *Emmerdale* hasn't got one. Nor has *Brookside*, nor *Hollyoaks*! First! What a coup! What a boost for the show! The fans will love it. Could add a million to our audience figures."

The ranks of blank faces indicated most still hadn't got it.

"Have you spoken to our agents?" was the main collective question.

"Not yet. I wanted to explain to you directly how it might help the show."

The blank faces, with one or two enthusiastic exceptions, Adam Woodyatt, bless him, being one, looked even blanker.

"We're not sure. It sounds strange. We're *EastEnders*; why do



we need it?"

"Guys and gals. Tell you what. Let's try it for a month. If any of you find it embarrassing, unprofessional, I give you my word I'll take it down."

Silence. They looked at each other. Then Adam Woodyatt nodded, followed by Richard Elis and Patsy Palmer. Once Bill Treacher\* (Arthur Fowler) nodded, I knew we'd be able to hook up.

"There won't be any extra money," I said looking as many as possible in the eye. "I want you all to understand that."

"Check it with our agents," was the general refrain as the company trooped out to enjoy the rest of its lunch break.

I started that afternoon, phoning the agents. One after another they were hostile. Rather, they wanted to know, "How much?"

"Nothing!" I said.

"So why should we agree?"

"Because it's modern, smart, and will be good for the show."

"How much?" they asked again and again.

In the end, I hadn't time to waste. *EastEnders* in May 1998 needed a much more forceful kick in the pants than a webcam in Ian Beale's bedroom.



**BIRD'S-EYE VIEW – The webcam installed in the window of Ian Beale's bedroom window provided much cast and crew aggro, remembers Matthew Robinson.**

I wrote a standard letter, sent it by registered delivery to every agent in town saying this is what the BBC intended to do; that the webcam would go up in a week's time; that we would review any serious objections on a 'case-by-case' basis.

To my amazement, not a whiff of grapeshot from either agent or client singed my whiskers. Within three months, it was a well-loved fixture and the other shows were copying us.

Within a year, we had two more up so that virtually every cubic inch of Walford was covered day in day out, night in night out. And it didn't cost the BBC a penny apart from the price of the cameras and wiring.

The only real problem was when Salman Rushdie, always a huge fan of the show, and smack in the middle of his fatwa nightmare, requested a celebrity visit. Forgetful of his circumstances and our 'spying eye', I walked him nonchalantly right across Albert Square in front of Ian Beale's bedroom.

The moment his security guards realised he was live, in full view of the world, Salman was pounced on and pulled, protesting loudly, to the back of the Queen Vic, well out of sight of any Mad Mullahs who also happened to be *EE* fans.

(\*As *Shamelessness* notes below, Bill Treacher left *EE* two years before I joined as Exec Prod. Apologies for my 'senior citizen moment.'

*I had worked closely with Bill, directing him in many 1985–87 eps. Nevertheless when at the 'webcam' cast meeting the first older member tentatively supported the project, I felt the battle would be won.)*

Posted 23 Apr 2015, 6 comments

1. Comment by DirtyDen: Lol love it. It's a shame the webcam was stopped. I really enjoyed popping in to see what was going on.

2. Comment by Jade: Yeah, I miss the webcam. It was fuzzy and we would all obsess if we saw anything over it like the hardcore fans we are.

3. Comment by Shamelessness: Strange that Bill Treacher was still working there in May 1998 when his character was killed off in 1996, and I believe he finished shooting in 1995?

4. Comment by Matthew Robinson: Indeed Shamelessness, very strange. But in the supercharged world of *EE* even stranger things have happened: The Resurrection of Den Watts being one and, apparently, soon-to-be-foisted upon you all – The Regeneration of Kathy Beale.

5. Comment by ForeverPauline: Matthew, Is *EastEnders* aired in Cambodia? Is the general population aware of the show?

6. Comment by Matthew Robinson: Hello ForeverPauline: no *EE* here in Cambodia, nor likely to be. Most of the storylines and issues would be of little interest to the Khmer TV audience. Different societal norms, culture and traditions.

# Kat and Zoe's Showdown in the Men's Room

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

It's been a long time – births, deaths and all kinds of angst in between – in Albert Square since a confrontation between the Slater “sisters” that ended with Kat confessing to Zoe that she was really her mum and a rape victim of their Uncle Harry.

It began in the Vic, then it moved outside to the Square, finally ending at their council house. Kat had been practically an innocent child, even younger than Zoe, defiled by a trusted blood relative, while her parents had been apparently blind to the criminal acts going on within their home. Other than Kat's admission to Zoe, we have no details.

Fast forward to Zoe getting pregnant by Den Watts, and she, unlike Kat, decides to abort, despite the emotional damage. True, Zoe was tricked into consensual sex, while Kat was raped.

While Charlie and his wife had no idea what exactly happened, they raised Zoe as though she was their own, protecting her from the truth, which only Kat really knew. Conversely, it took a lot of courage and love for Kat to deny her motherhood and be Zoe's big sister, not her mum. It was Kat's fear of what her recently resurfaced uncle might do to the late teen Zoe after offering her a job in Spain. Kat was essentially a mother protecting her child, even if it was the first time the truth emerged.

That was then, and this is now. Zoe has her own secret, one that she fears to share. Kat wasn't around when Zoe most needed her mother, but now she's come back and senses something is awry with her flesh and blood.

Zoe's decided to leave the Square, but it has nothing to do with her abortion, it's more because of her guilt in playing a role in Den's death with Chrissie Watts and Sam Mitchell. They will go down in Walford folklore as the Three Witches of *EastEnders* (with apologies to Eastwick). Den might have been a dirty old man, but only Chrissie – not her guilt-ridden co-conspirators – believes he received what was coming to him.

When Chrissie sent Zoe upstairs to find something to cover Den's body, the Dirty Den of Albert Square was not yet dead. Chrissie's original idea was to blame Zoe, so the most innocent of the trio would bear the brunt of the guilt. Chrissie figured Sam was a bit more worldly, and after all, she was a Mitchell, with all the criminal baggage that surname represents. She obviously had had to cover up her brothers' transgressions over the years.



**MOTHER AND CHILD REUNION – Zoe and Kat's relationship has never been easy for obvious reasons. Here's the latest angst.**



Zoe was coming unhinged, and Sam no angel of truth.

Kat arrives on the Square trying to mend various fences, namely with Alfie, whom she abandoned and who's fallen in love with her other sister, Little Mo, but that's another story....

Kat comes home seeking forgiveness, after making a stay in one of Her Majesty's penal establishments. Zoe understandably wants to have nothing to do with her. It's now or never: Kat's last chance to salvage their relationship.

No stranger to taking the bull by the horns, Kat locks them in Zoe's room and won't let out her daughter until she finds out what's eating her. Just when it looks like Zoe will crack, Charlie, Big Mo and Stacey all invade Zoe's room.

Zoe, overnight bag in hand, makes for the Tube, only to find

where Billy is combing his hair. He senses female problems from his former sister-in-law and knows when to beat it.

Kat closes the door, as if it's a cell to a room with walls that will lock them in. Zoe finally confesses her role in Den's killing and burial in an unmarked grave in the cellar of the Queen Vic.

What does Kat do? She lovingly throws her arms around her child, as if to protect her. But then minutes later, when Kat comes to the grips of the cover-up she becomes nauseous, vomiting off camera in a stall.

Kat agrees that Zoe must leave town immediately.

Alfie enters the men's room, completely in the dark as to what's going on. And on cue, Zoe runs away; the Tube is running again.

A barefoot Kat catches Zoe on the platform, and they embrace.

Zoe jumps on the train, as one story ends and a new story pits Kat against Chrissie, a Lady Macbeth with blood on her hands to wash



out that the trains aren't running – and as anyone who's travelled the London Underground knows, this is always a possibility. Kat spots Zoe and drags her off the street into the public men's washroom,

off. Yes, she's a conniving bitch who almost destroyed Zoe, and now she must deal with her mum. Cruel and unusual punishment?

All I can say is ... stay tuned.

# The Greatest EastEnders Characters of All Time

Albert Square's finest aren't considered representative of East London's modern residents. Who cares when you've got this lot to entertain you?

BY JOSHUA BURT

*Editor's note: This article, which first appeared on the website [sabotagetimes.com](http://sabotagetimes.com) and is reprinted with permission from the author, received the following 10 comments. But the Walford Gazette welcomes your suggestions of omissions from the list.*

*EastEnders* was in the UK news recently because it's now not considered representative of East London. The media have a point.

There's no one self-consciously milling around the Square with a silly moustache and jeggings, and why aren't dirty burgers on the menu at the Queen Vic?

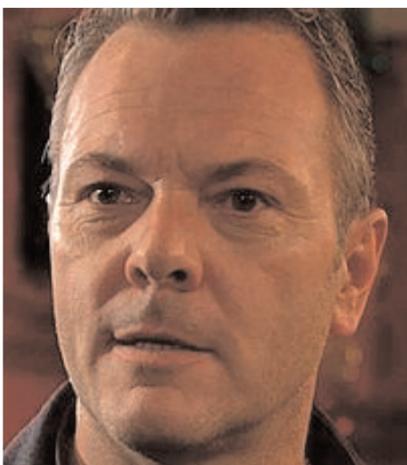
Other things that aren't there: rolled-up trousers, neck tattoos, lesbians. Although, actually, there might be some lesbians, but I don't know since I haven't watched *EastEnders* since about 1999.

Anyway, with that fact resounding in your mind, here are the 10 best characters from the soap EVER....



## Dot Cotton

Quite definitely the greatest human being to ever walk the Square, Dot spent years scrubbing skid marks out of Arthur Fowler's underpants at the local launderette and not once did she complain. Not about that anyway. The episode where she chats to Ethel about the olden days, and then Ethel whispers "Willy" before slipping away into the eternal night had me crying like a drain. With laughter. I'M KIDDING, I'M KIDDING. It was very sad.



## David Wicks

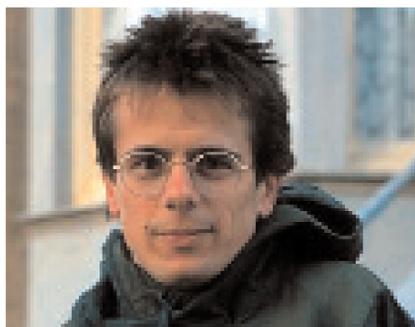
Smoother than a blancmange shaped like George Clooney, and

with hair slicker than an oil spill in the middle of the ocean that's killed lots of birds and animals, men don't come any more alluring than David Wicks. His greatest achievement was somehow wrestling a natural beauty called Cindy away from the muscular arms of a sexy chip shop entrepreneur called Ian.



## Tiffany Mitchell

Never have the three beats that signal the end of another instalment been more pronounced and devastating than when Tiff lay there in the road with blood trickling out of her nose to confirm that she was dead. You didn't need to check her pulse, it was all there, bold as the daytime, oozing gently in a deep crimson from her beautiful pixie face. She'd been run over or something. One of the true greats, her legend lives on in yoghurt adverts.



## Lofty

Wise beyond his years and gorgeous like a bass-playing Adonis, Lofty really did have it all. Oh no, hang on, I was thinking about Martin Kemp. Sorry. Lofty was the gormless asthmatic trying to finger Michelle Fowler without nervously farting and having another panic attack. He also wore penny specs, which is a sign of weakness.



## 'Punk Mary' Smith

Back in the mid-1980s all manner of people were catered for, with Mary representing all of the ex-punks in the viewing demographic who'd also started stripping to support their children, before very nearly going on the game after a chat with Nick Cotton over a half of Stella in the pub over the road. You know the ones.



## Huw and Lenny

In soap operas you need some comedy fools to balance the drama, and the best of all time were Huw (pictured) and Lenny who combined Welshness with West Indian or African heritage to create something glorious, light and modern. Other excellent double acts were Colin and Barry who championed gay marriage in the 1980s, Beppe and Gianni who smouldered like hot coals on a barbecue, and Grant and Phil.

## Angie Watts

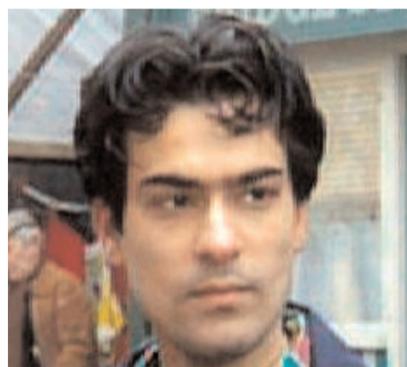
There have been lots of great land-



lords and landladies at the Vic – Peggy, Den, Dan, Don, Kat, Kit, Phil, Grant, Roger, Mick, Keith, Paul, George, Ringo, Shane Richie, Danny Dyer, Sylvester Stallone. But none can come close to Ange, who could hide her crippling inner heartbreak with a smile and a gossip and a barnet modelled on her pet poodle Roly.

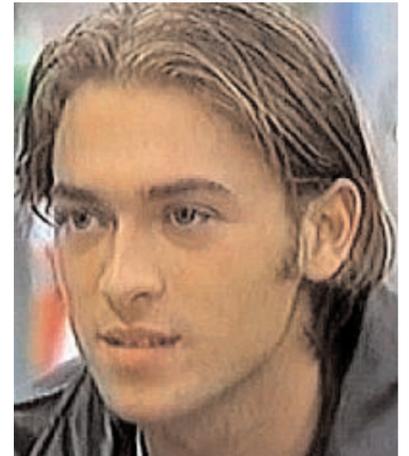
## Sanjay Kapoor

Poor Sanjay was a sucker for a get-



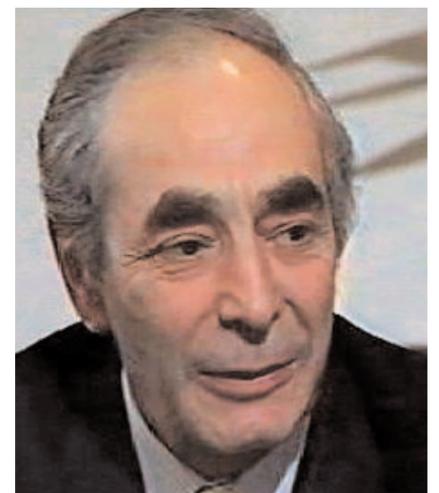
rich-quick scheme, only most of them turned out to be get-bol-

locked-by-Gita schemes, which were generally less appealing. I include him on this list because I once met him in a club restroom and we had a chat and he seemed nice.



## Joe Wicks

For nearly a decade men had been spoiled with gorgeous women roaming the markets and popping into the caff for a salad sandwich and a glass of Lucozade, so it came as sweet relief to watching girls when Joe Wicks came along. Unfortunately in the end he went completely insane and started wearing tinfoil helmets to scare off aliens, but you'd probably go mad too if your own mum kept getting your name wrong and calling you "Jaw" – so demeaning.



## Dr Legg

If I was on the wrong side of a lurgy, there's only one man I'd want peering into my ears or holding my balls and telling me to cough, and that's Dr Legg, the greatest medicine man and soothsayer ever to grace a television screen. A close second is Dr Fonseca, who was hilarious redubbed Dr Funseeker when it transpired that he liked to shag his girlfriend outside of office hours.

Now who did I miss? Was it Kat Slater?

Send your suggestions via email to [walfordgazette@gmail.com](mailto:walfordgazette@gmail.com) or East End Company, P.O. Box 271, Kings Park, NY 11754

# Why Shakespeare Never Gets Old

BY BARBARA ARNSTEIN

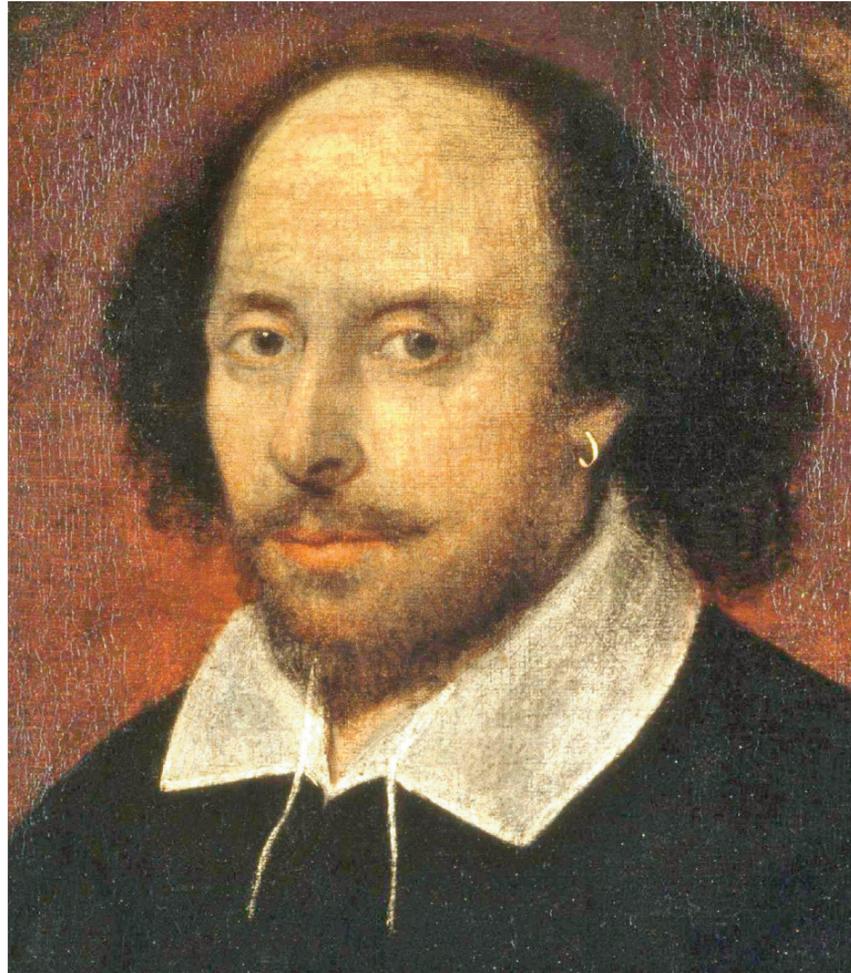
How is Shakespeare relevant today? Simply, Shakespeare will never be irrelevant.

Viewing him through the lens of the 21st century reveals countless intriguing connections to modern times. For example, *Romeo and Juliet's* female lead speaks a line that eerily seems to foreshadow the constant texting of today's social media/cellphone-connected teens: "I must hear from thee every day in the hour, for in a minute there are many days..."

Ever felt intimidated by Shakespeare buffs, quoting all their favourite lines in your face? Next time someone does that to you, say, "Tell me, what's your favourite Shakespearean bit?" and you respond, "Don't you love it when Katharina breaks a lute over someone's head in *Taming of the Shrew*? Or how about when Falstaff gets crammed into a laundry basket and smothered in filthy underwear in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*?"

I'm guessing they'll be speechless, because the popular idea, the MYTH, is that Shakespeare plays contain only the most sophisticated humour. Obviously, these two examples demonstrate that Shakespeare enjoyed a simple, classic bit of comedy as much as the next person, particularly if that next person is a fan of 21st-century comedies such as (fill in your favourite recent movies featuring pratfalls here).

Go ahead, admit it: sometimes you wallow in the guilty pleasure of watching one of those sitcoms



focused on people pulling intricate pranks on other people. Well, you're in good company, because Shakespeare used prank humour again and again. In *Twelfth Night*, for example, several people team up to cause a man to make a complete and utter fool of himself by, first, giving him the idea that his employer is secretly interested in him, and second, that she wants him to wear the silliest-looking legwear to show he likes her too.

Do your TV guilty pleasures run

to game shows? *The Merchant of Venice* begins with a scene that has "game show" written all over it.

The contestants have to choose one of three boxes, one gold, one silver and one lead. No one picks the lead box (would you?) which has a note inside telling them they've won the prize (marriage to a beautiful heiress ... it was a very different time) until she supplies a major clue to the player she likes (a song with words that rhyme with "lead").

Have you seen any TV shows featuring an egotistical character who is completely oblivious about how ridiculous his supposedly profound comments sound?

Two of the many who leap to mind are Phil Dunphy in *Modern Family* and Larry David in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, both of which hark back to *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Nick Bottom, an amateur actor whose enthusiasm for emoting far surpasses his talent.

While making an ass of himself, he has his head magically transformed into an actual ass's but never stops spouting unintentionally hilarious comments.

How then does one explain Beatrice's behaviour towards Mr. "I-think-I'm-God's-gift-to-women" Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*? Mr Modest tells her directly, "It is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted."

He later says, "It's best to be the trumpet of his own vitality. I praise myself."

Why she's interested in this human selfie, who the heck knows, but she gets his attention and ultimately a proposal with what is nowadays calling "negging," the supposed art of trying to pick someone up by continuously putting them down.

Curiously, in Elizabethan times, the meaning of "putting (me) down" is obsolete today: "having sex with," a meaning Beatrice references at one point, which eerily links her to 21st-century hooking up. Beatrice is not

*continued on page 9*

## What if Shakespeare Was Staged in Walford Instead of Stratford?

BY LARRY JAFFEE & BARBARA ARNSTEIN

How does the three-decade-old *EastEnders*, set in contemporary times, relate to the nearly 500-year-old works of William Shakespeare?

Well, our new Shakespeare expert Barbara Arnstein has selected the basic plots, subplots and characters from eight of Bard's classic plays, to which the *WG* editor applied them (in italics) to various goings-on within Albert Square in recent years.

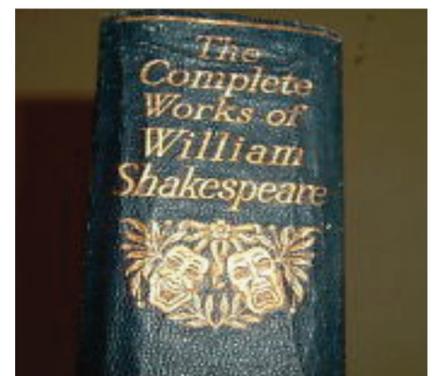
So without further ado about something...

**1. *Midsummer Night's Dream*:** Subplots include: A) Parent disapproves of daughter's romantic choice, pushes her to marry someone else. *The storyline of Johnny Allen trying to break up his precious Ruby and Juley is the obvious current PBS storyline; another older example would be*

*Jim Branning disapproving of his daughter Carol marrying Alan Jackson. Interestingly both romances that cause great aggro for the dads involve mixed-race couples.* B) Amateur actors bumble around to rehearse a play. *Derek's attempt to organise the Christmas Pageant at the Walford Community Centre comes to mind (see "Casting Call" sidebar on next page); one could picture Derek trying to mount a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream with his ragtag troupe.*

**2. *Macbeth*:** A man gets an idea in his head that he could succeed spectacularly at something but fails tremendously instead. *The obvious EastEnders character is Walford's serial entrepreneur, often bankrupt Ian Beale, whose first wife Cindy might have be evil enough to earn Lady Macbeth status.*

**3. *The Tempest*:** Subplots :A) very naïve young girl thinks the first young man who shows interest in her is practically a god. *How about teenaged Ruby infatuated with Danny Moon as her driver for school?* B) A man gets drunk for the first time, and naively thinks the guys that brought the liquor are really great guys but when he sobers up, realizes they're idiots. *That's easy: Ricky's bachelor party (before marrying Bianca), in which the boys end up hungover in a field in France, and Nigel attempts to speak French to the locals.* C) An isolated man creates an illusion (modern-day version: lies about something to them) to get even with some guys. He gives them the idea there's been a disaster, then finally reveals the truth. *Desperate Arthur Fowler, after losing his job, stealing the Christmas club money to pay for Michelle's*



*wedding. Arthur stages a fake burglary at his house and tells the police that the Christmas Club money (which had come from his neighbours, relatives and friends) has been stolen. However, Arthur's attempts to make the robbery look legitimate fail, and the police soon realise that Arthur is the culprit.*

**4. *Hamlet*:** A) A man is very upset that his mother remarried. *Ian Beale distraught over mum Kathy's marriage to bully Phil Mitchell, who more than once has stuffed his stepson's head in the toilet.*

B) A young woman goes nuts because the guy next door, whom

*continued on page 9*



## Why Shakespeare Is Hip

continued from page 8

seeking a mere hook-up with Benedick.

Wikipedia defines negging further as “a seduction technique whereby a person makes a deliberate backhanded compliment or otherwise insulting remark to another person in order to undermine his or her confidence.”

Important note: It won't get you anyone's long-term love and probably not their short-term affection either, in case you're wondering.

One of the first things Beatrice says to Benedick in their first scene together can be expressed in modern terms as “Why are you still talking? Nobody's paying any attention to you!”

After that, she calls him ugly, he says she has a big mouth and after countless worse insults, they wind up exchanging their version of mushy endearments (like this question of Benedick's, “Tell me, for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?”).

While their “loathe at first sight” and classic (verbal) S&M interaction leads them to marrying, they really only make it to the altar because other characters team up to force them, I would guess to make sure the two most vicious people they know get together and don't wind up torturing two other people by constantly deluging them with acidic put-downs.

Let's not forget the bazillions of films (every one of which was written after Shakespeare created Beatrice and Benedick), in which the couple destined to connect romantically by the end of the movie start out hating each other's guts but gradually bond by being thrown together in some type of fast-paced, demanding adventure.

Beatrice and Benedick's “adventure”? Well, he dances with her wearing a disguise (kinky!) but the most adventure-movie-like moment is when she asks him to do her the “little favour” of murdering someone they know (which he doesn't, and she basically calls him a spoilsport).

While we're on the subject of movies, note the link between Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Julie Andrews's title role in *Victor/Victoria*: both Rosalind and Victoria are females who pretend to be males pretending to be fe-

males. Plus, behind the scenes of Shakespeare's performances at the Globe Theatre, the young boy who played Rosalind was (take a deep breath if you're reading this out loud): a male playing a female pretending to be a male pretending to be a female. Basically, he accomplished this by merging the first two layers into the latter two, and just focusing on his usual demanding acting requirement of performing in drag, melodramatically releasing his female side on stage by (as the script specifies) fainting at the sight of blood.

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**“Because Shakespeare's plays tap into universal human experiences, they will always be relevant.”**  
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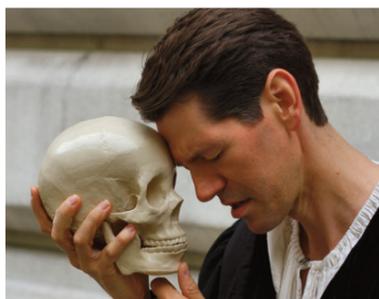
—JASON MARR, HIP TO HIP

Speaking of blood, gifted and versatile actress Joy Marr, after performing her latest role, (Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*), was told recently by a backstage visitor that she'd expected to see fake blood spurting in a scene in which a chest stabbing seemed imminent.

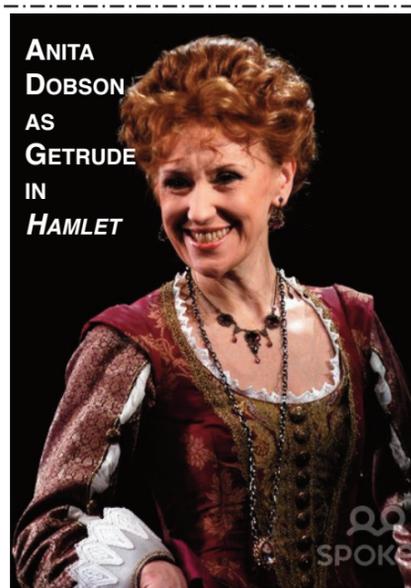
Twenty-first century film fans accustomed to gory cinematic special effects should realise there are countless effective ways to end a scene that doesn't involve gratuitous gruesomeness.

Marr is the leading lady of the Queens, New York-based Hip to Hip Shakespeare Company ([www.hiptohip.org](http://www.hiptohip.org)), which she co-founded with her husband Jason Marr, the artistic director of the troupe, which celebrates its tenth anniversary next season in 2016.

“Because Shakespeare's plays tap into universal human experiences, they will always be relevant,” explains Jason Marr. “We all know something about first love, jealousy, honour, betrayal, ambition, etc., and therefore will always connect to these stories.”



JASON MARR AS HAMLET



### Staged in Walford

continued from page 8

she's always had a crush on, seems to have gone nuts. *Sarah Hills realising how mentally ill Joe Wicks is.*

**5. Romeo and Juliet:** A couple gets together despite their clashing families (or, could be clashing friends) ... but big problems occur when two teenagers act too impulsively to try to keep their relationship going. *Teenagers Ricky and Samantha elope; both the Butchers and Mitchells know it won't last.*

**6. Much Ado About Nothing:** A man and a woman who are crazy about each other won't admit it to each other because neither wants to be the first one to say it. Friends force them to admit it. *That's easy, Kat and Alfie, still Walford's best-ever suited couple. Runner-up: Ian and Jane.*

**7. Twelfth Night:** Subplot involves people tricking a man into thinking a woman he likes is interested in him, and he makes a fool of himself as a result. *Gary takes Billy Mitchell's mobile phone and sends dirty texts to Honey, who gets the wrong idea about Billy.*

**8. Othello:** Subplot involves a parent who doesn't approve of a mixed marriage. *Need to go back to Johnny trying to break up Ruby and Juley, and Jim's disapproval of Carol and Alan's marriage.*

Walford Gazette readers, it's your turn. The best EE/Shakespeare example will win a year's subscription. Send your ideas to East End Company, P.O. Box 271, Kings Park, NY 11754 or by email to [walfordgazette@gmail.com](mailto:walfordgazette@gmail.com)

## CAST CALL FOR THE WALFORD SHAKESPEARE PLAYERS

BY DAN ABRAMSON

*Editor's note: The Walford Gazette's co-founder, who died in 1999, was a bit of a Shakespeare buff himself, and we published his humorous casting suggestions in this publication's third issue in 1993.*

Den and Angie as Lord and Lady Macbeth

Ian as Hamlet

Arthur as King Lear

Colin as Richard II

Michelle and Clyde in *Much Ado About Nothing*

Vicky and Kofi as *Romeo and Juliet* with Young Martin as The Priest

Tricky Dicky as *Richard III*

Mark as *Henry V* with Mandy as the French Princess

Grant, Phil and Sharon Mitchell as Othello, Iago

and Desdemona

In *The Tempest*, Celestine

as Prospero; Hattie as his daughter Miranda; Nick Cotton as Caliban; Young Barry as Ariel



YES, THAT'S MARTIN a/k/a James Alexandrou on the left as Othello. Turn to page 10 for more about his and some other *EastEnders* actors' Shakespearean roles.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE, AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN MERELY PLAYERS.

—William Shakespeare

## EastEnders Actors Stretching Outside Their Comfort Zones

With *EastEnders* being a British production, obviously many of its cast at one time or another tackled Shakespeare. Here are a few of our favourite thespians' notable stage performances.

An acclaimed stage actress, Anita Dobson (Angie Watts, the Queen Vic's original landlady) played the role of Gertrude in the English Touring Theatre production of *Hamlet*, at the New Ambassadors Theatre in London's West End, following a UK tour in autumn 2005. In 2012 Dobson played Mistress Quickly in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Classically trained for the theatre, Rudolph Walker's (Patrick Trueman) first professional role in 1966 was starring as *Othello*, and he won great notices for his roles in *The Tempest*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, at the Young Vic.

Ross Kemp, best known as Grant Mitchell in *EastEnders*, made his first stab at Shakespeare in 2003, playing Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, in Guildford. The show then toured Britain.

Commented *The Guardian's* reviewer: "Kemp's Petruchio is scuppered by an indifferent production – the first I've seen for some time that plays the chauvinistic plot straight – and his lack of verse-speaking skills. He is a charismatic presence, but not a pleasant one to hear."

"Looking in his tweeds and riding boots like a character from P.G. Wodehouse who has accidentally wandered into early 1960s Italy, Kemp enunciates every word in the style of an Englishman abroad talk-



ROSS KEMP in *The Taming of the Shrew*: "A charismatic presence, but not a pleasant one to hear."

ing to stupid foreigners. It sounds as if the entire text is being spoken in inverted commas. Meanwhile, his eyebrows wildly signal that this Petruchio is having his little joke."

James Alexandrou (Martin Fowler) in April 2014 played the classic villain Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello* at Leicester Square Theatre. *What'sOnStage's* reviewer wasn't too kind regarding Iago remoulded as a skinhead East Londoner.

"[Alexandrou's] blokeish characterisation has all the grace and subtlety of Phil Mitchell after a few too many at the Queen Vic. Worse still, his scheming is played for laughs almost throughout, with the result that when he asks 'How am I then a villain?' the simplest answer is that he isn't. Neither the hero, nor the villain, nor anybody in particular is convincing enough to make us care very much at all what is going on."

Alexandrou also toured the UK and Norway with the British Shakespeare Company from June to September 2007. He played Pistol in *Henry V*, and Orlando in *As You Like It*. A critic seeing the

show in Leeds said Alexandrou has "a natural aptitude for comedy." In March 2009, Alexandrou played the part of Romeo in the Globe Theatre's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. In 2011 he took part in BBC Learning project, "Off By Heart Shakespeare," where he played Mercutio from *Romeo and Juliet* delivering the speech; "'tis not so deep as a well."

As we noted last fall, Joseph Marcell (Aubrey Valentine) toured the world playing the title role in *King Lear* with the Globe Theatre. Marcell's first professional job was as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company in *Julius Caesar*.

He serves on the Globe's board, and he previously starred as Leonato in its production of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2011, and in its *Coriolanus* in 2006.



JOSEPH MARCELL (above) as *King Lear* in 2014



RUDOLPH WALKER (left) as *Caliban* in *The Tempest*.

## The Unseen Shakespearean EastEnders: A Dialogue

The plot of *As You Like It* is about a young woman who is shipwrecked and decides to disguise herself as a male to be safe, notes Barbara Arnstein.

The young woman gets a job as a page, working for a guy she gets a huge crush on, at first sight. He's crazy about a neighbour (who doesn't care about him), and has his page take a message to her.

As soon as the neighbour gets a look at his page, she falls in love with "him." Got that? She loves him but he (who doesn't know she's a she) loves her (no, not her, the "her" next door), who loves "him," who she doesn't know is a "her."

Okay, now here's the really unbelievable part: amazingly, JUST as the supposedly male page's twin brother turns up on the same shore, the female neighbour has only JUST decided she can't live another minute without being married

to the supposed "cute guy" she just met (like what, the day before?) ... and guess what? She runs right into the brother, is too dumb to tell he's not his disguised sister, and proposes to him.

(Aren't they wearing different clothes? Shakespeare's really straining the heck out of coincidence here, I have to say.)

The man's been in town for, let's say, two minutes and when a total stranger proposes marriage, guess what he says? Not only does he say yes, but they're married like, what, five minutes later?

Did I mention the shipwrecked woman's new boss gets hitched to her, too? That nut, Shakespeare! He never lets the beyond-extreme implausibility of a plot get in the way of a good time!

**Larry responds:** Unfortunately, *EastEnders* has not done much with cross-dressing with the exception of a "drag night" at the Queen

YouTube

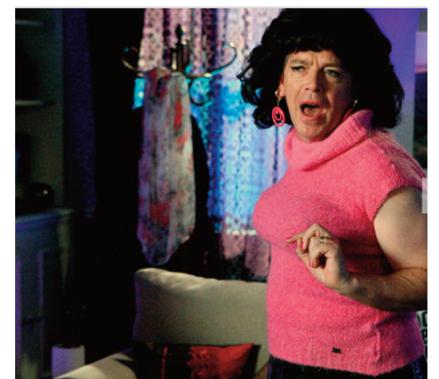


Vic 29 years ago in which only one character, Pete, took it seriously and was thoroughly embarrassed when he realised he was only the one dressed up.

The Vic also once employed a professional female impersonator, but it was a one-off that didn't go anywhere. Pete had a twin sister named Pauline, so the potential existed to have done something with it, but they also didn't take advantage of Ian's twins: Lucy and Peter Beale.

While we're on the subject, it's worth noting that it's almost an annual tradition that a few *EastEnders* blokes dress in drag for a Children in Need skit and lipsynched to Queen's "I Want to Break Free," as you can see below, Adam

Woodyatt (Ian Beale), who ironically was responsible for the aforementioned embarrassment suffered by his on-screen dad Pete.



# DVD's Commentary on 'Martin Kemp's Stalker' Serves as an Independent Filmmaking Primer

BY LARRY JAFFEE

In the last issue (No. 90) we talked about how Martin Kemp (Steve Owen) had put his independent filmmaking career on hold to concentrate on the return of Spandau Ballet, the popular 1980s band in which he plays bass.

In researching that article, I came across a 2010 film called *Martin Kemp's Stalker*, and recently bought on Amazon.co.uk a British DVD (that requires a multi-region player). The thriller/horror film will be of interest to *EastEnders* fans, no doubt, with Billy Murray (Johnny Allen) in a featured role, as a sleazy magazine journalist seeking to confirm a rumour that a best-selling novelist had a nervous breakdown.

In the DVD extra commentary track, we learn that Murray was a partner in the production company that made the film, Black and Blue Films, with Kemp and Jonathan Sothcott, who notes that it was nice to see Murray playing something other than a gangster, an on-screen vocation he often inhabits.

The commentary track – a conversation between Kemp and Sothcott – serves as a valuable primer to the making of the movie, as well as independent films in general.

For example, we learn such interesting tidbits as:

- Sothcott and Kemp originally planned the film as a remake of a 1976 British horror film, *House on Straw Hill*, with Kemp playing the author protagonist named Paul Martin, but he wasn't too happy with the script. After that deal fell apart, Kemp decided he'd rewrite the script and turn the main character into a woman named Paula Martin (played by Anna Brecon), as well as making the film his directorial debut.

- Kemp notes that Murray's film career harks back to 1960s' UK "kitchen-sink" classics including *Poor Cow* and *Up the Junction*, and they marvel how he still handsomely resembles Roger Daltrey, The Who's lead singer. "I told Billy to just be himself; I think he pulled it off," says Kemp. Sothcott believes it's Murray's "best work since *The Bill*."

- The director and producer were at odds as to what type of film *Stalker* was; Sothcott thought horror and Kemp wrote the script as a thriller. "I didn't want to make a film about how many people can you kill and how many different ways you can kill them," Kemp points out.

The director/writer apparently won out over the producer's



BEHIND THE CAMERA – Martin Kemp, once *EE's* Steve Owen, on the set of the thriller he wrote and directed.



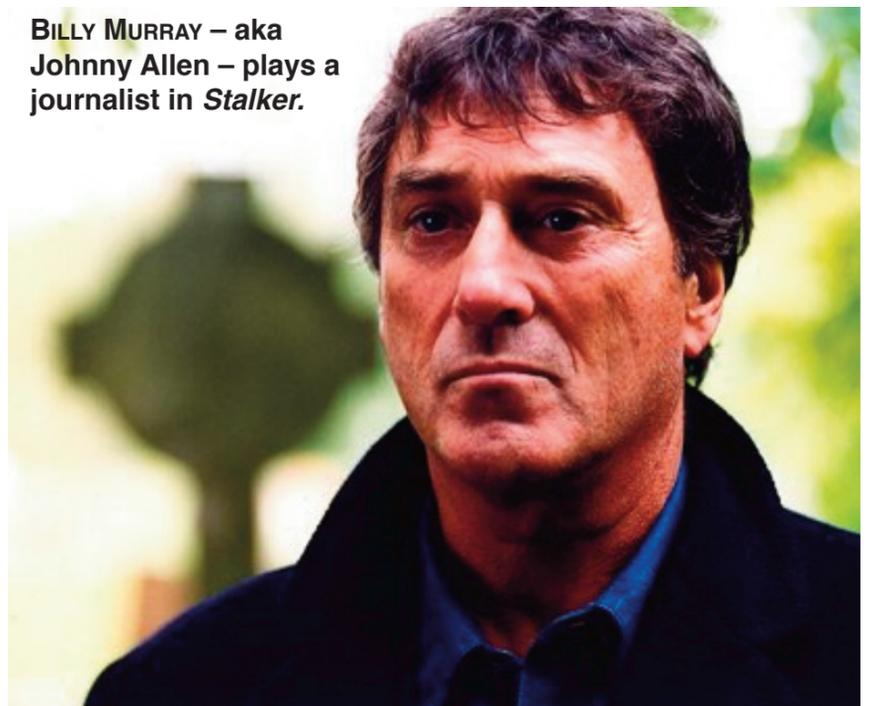
wishes. Kemp goes on to explain in great detail how his goal was to pay homage to the great Hammer films, which didn't rely on gore, and he also used such effects sparingly in *Stalker*. Sothcott and Kemp concur that Murray's death scene is their favourite. (*Editor's note: Let's just say it would be a fitting end for Johnny Allen.*)

*Stalker* does a good job dwelling on Paula's fragile state while she is trying to write her new novel, eagerly awaited by her agent, who sends her to the country to get inspired. The plot brings to mind Jack Nicholson's writer in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, another psychological thriller set in an old, gothic-looking mansion.

Kemp and Sothcott are correct that the movie *Stalker* most resembles is *Misery*, starring James Caan (named Paul) as a novelist abducted and terrorised by a fan played by Kathy Bates.

In *Stalker* a female production assistant named Linda (Jane March) suddenly appears, and initially appears helpful. Linda turns out to have sinister motivations, and preys on stressed-out Paula's insecurities. In Kemp's direction, Linda quickly gains the upper

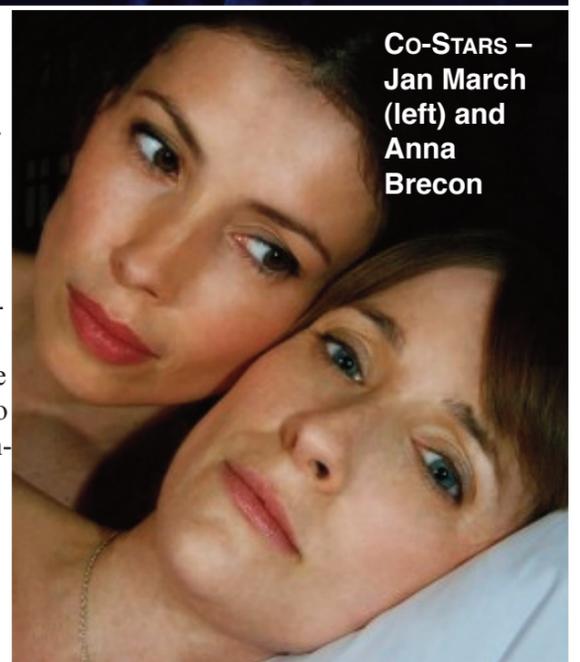
BILLY MURRAY – aka Johnny Allen – plays a journalist in *Stalker*.



hand, as Paula submissively allows her tormenter to make her lose faith in her writing abilities, as well as her mind.

In the commentary, Kemp explains that he was careful not to give away the killer on a platter, but most revelatory of the conversation is the inner workings of how to make a movie. For example, Sothcott reveals *Stalker's* budget was "just over £100,000," and the production team skimped to finish it.

"We never had enough lighting," Kemp laments, explaining that family members and crew chipped in with everything from cars to locations. In fact, one of the last scenes was shot in Kemp's own driveway. He's been on enough film sets to figure out how to be resourceful, and let's hope we'll see other di-



CO-STARS – Jan March (left) and Anna Brecon

rectorial efforts from him.

The DVD also includes a short he directed called *Karma Magnet*, starring his brother Gary Kemp (with whom he co-starred in *The Krays*) as a famous chef who thinks his good luck brings misfortune to people close to him. It ends with a clever twist.

# Hodgson Still Eating 'Breakfast in America'

BY LARRY JAFFEE

With the continuing feuds between Roger Waters and David Gilmour, and Robert Plant and Jimmy Page recently in the news and likely derailing forever any full-scale Pink Floyd and Led Zepel reunions, it's easy to overlook another successful 1970s British rock band's dispute.

Supertramp are not quite in Floyd or Zep's rock icon's league, but for a while they certainly had a lot more successful singles circa 1979 than the other two bands.

So it's under that backdrop that Supertramp's former lead singer and chief songwriter last fall embarked on a North American tour called "Breakfast in America with Roger Hodgson, The Legendary Voice of Supertramp."

*Breakfast in America* was the band's most successful album, selling 20 million LPs in 1979 and the top-selling album worldwide that year. During the time that Hodgson led Supertramp, the band sold more than 60 million albums.

The model portraying the waitress on the cover jacket recently resurfaced on Facebook, and last November at the Paramount in the Huntington, Long Island, I caught Hodgson's last US show of 2014.

Hodgson, who hails from Portsmouth, England, quit Supertramp at the height of their global arena rock success in 1983, deciding instead to focus on family life in Northern California and being a parent, which is he what he has been telling interviewers and concert audiences then and since.

Meanwhile, Supertramp's other main songwriter and singer Rick Davies periodically has carried on under the band banner with two other original band members and some new musicians. Their most recent outing was a Canadian tour in 2011.

On the official Supertramp website there's a May 2010 "A Message from Supertramp" stating: "In June of 2008 Rick Davies went to meet with Roger Hodgson to discuss the possibility of a reunion with him. After fifteen months of discussions, last fall Rick and Roger did not come to an agreement as was hoped. Roger decided to continue his solo career as he has since leaving Supertramp twenty-seven years ago."

In any case, as with the aforementioned Floyd and Zeppelin feuds, we'll probably never really know the crux of the current dispute between Hodgson and Davies, whom together co-founded Supertramp in 1969.

Apparently Hodgson and Davies have had a gentleman's

## HISTORY OF BRITISH ROCK

agreement to not play each other's songs, which is how Hodgson explained it from the stage when an audience made a particular request mid-show.

Hodgson's website offers some insight: "Although Roger shared writer's credit with Rick Davies, they wrote and composed separately. They continued to share writer's credits much like Lennon and McCartney did."

From the opening familiar piano chords and harmonica phrase of "Take the Long Way Home," it was clear that Hodgson could take the mostly baby boomer audience on a nostalgia trip to rekindle "fond memories" from three decades ago when Supertramp ruled US radio airwaves.

In concert, the 65-year-old Hodgson exudes an affable personality and a warm hippie-era ethos. He easily fills a two-hour show with enough touchstones to put a smile on your face.

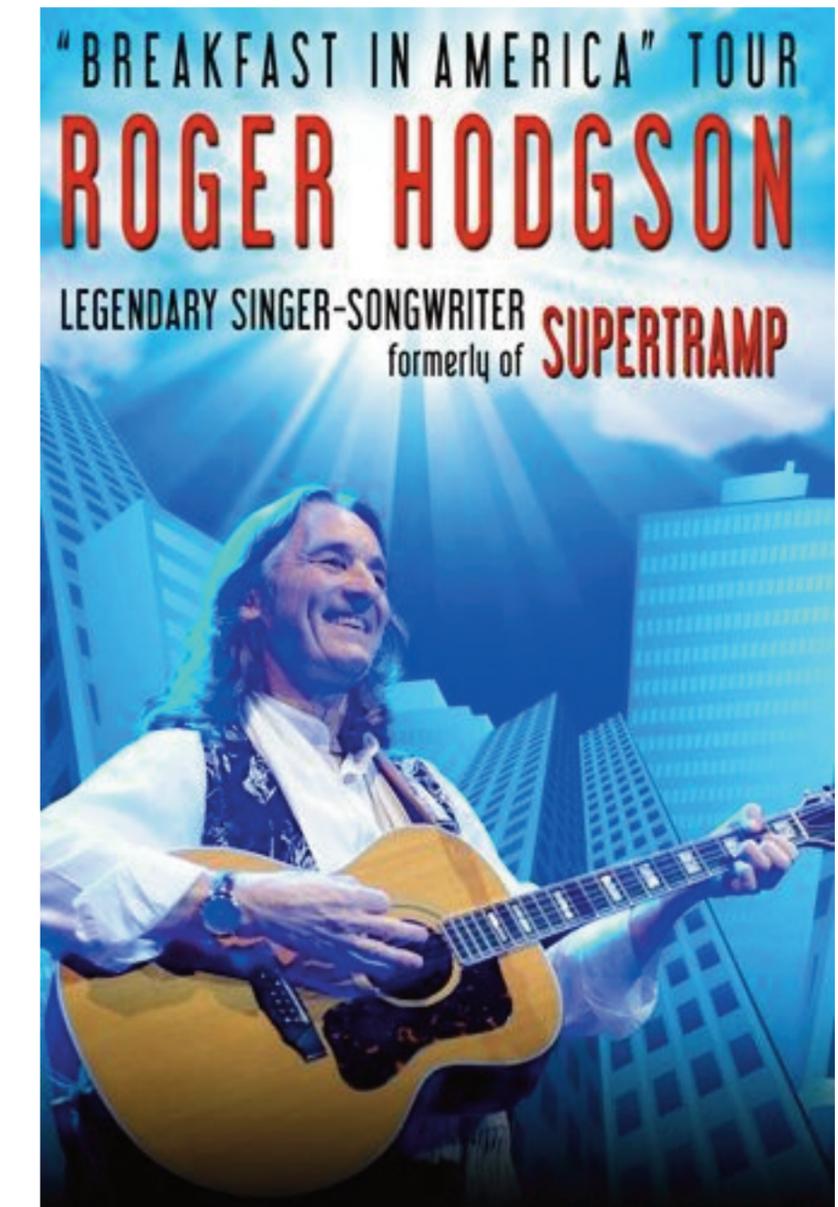
His voice hasn't deteriorated any despite the years, and his crack band has no problem conjuring note for note the trademark sounds, such as sax solos, that made Supertramp famous.



**BEST SELLER – 20 million LPs sold in 1979**

I wouldn't be surprised if Davies & Co. does the same with his hits (e.g., "Bloody Well Right," and "Goodbye Stranger.")

Hodgson on keyboards and acoustic guitar is supported by current tour members: Aaron Macdonald - Saxophones, Harmonica, Keyboards, Backing vocals; Bryan Head - Drums; Kevin Adamson - Keyboards, Backing vocals; and David J. Carpenter - Bass, Backing vocals. They're all great players, but Macdonald in particular, gets most valuable player status. More than a few occasions, they entered into Beatles-like harmonies.



The hits hold up, despite being

from another time. Interestingly, Hodgson said as a prelude to launching into "Breakfast

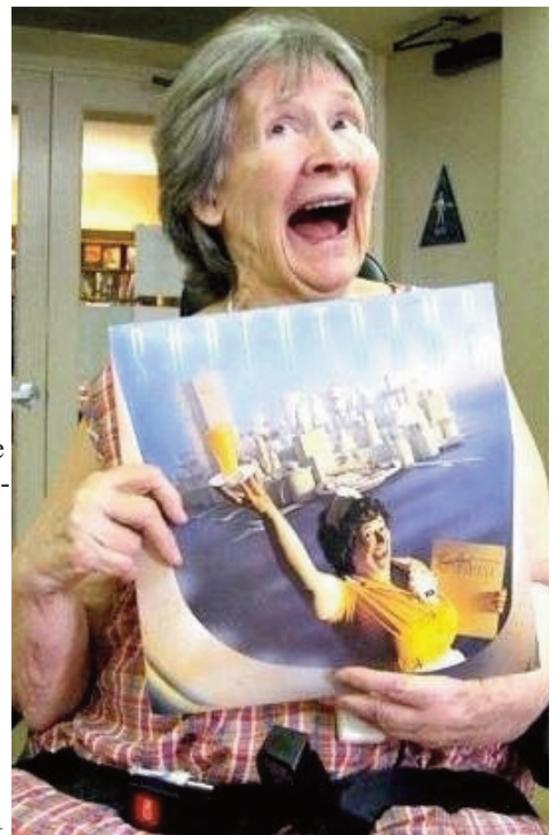
of "The Logical Song," Hodgson's lyrics convey a sardonic self-assessment worthy of Donald Fagen. Yet Steely Dan from that era always earned more of a "thinking person's band" crown, perhaps unfairly slighting Supertramp.

The show ended with the audience tossing around hundreds of multicolored balloons amid the encore "Give a Little Bit," one of

in America" that he wrote the song when he was 19, yearning for superstardom and the "girls of California."

If that's the case, one wonders why it took Supertramp so long to put such an infectious tune on an album. (The album *Breakfast in America* was their sixth; the first came out in 1970 and their first commercial breakthrough wasn't until 1974.)

Despite the commercial success



Hodgson's most endearing tunes that could get even the most cynical hum along, despite mulling over whether it might be a bit twee.

# Brit and Yank TV: A Very Special Relationship

BY BUDD MARGOLIS

*Editor's note: A version of the following article first appeared in UK: Cue magazine in 2012, but is reprinted here in recognition of the recent passing at 89 in Los Angeles of All in the Family producer Bud Yorkin, who adapted that show with Norman Lear from the English comedy Till Death Do Us Part.*

The media exchange between America and the United Kingdom has several challenges given the vastly different realities of commercialism and perceptions of risk.

American showbiz entrepreneurs have always had to be more ambitious than the Brits when comes to exploiting TV. The Yanks know business.

Great series such as *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *The West Wing*, *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *Desperate Housewives* and many others have succeeded and drawn much deserved popularity and accolades across the British Isles and the continent.

As channel capacity exploded in what was once a monopolised national TV channel market across Europe, so to did the demand for content, and America had plenty of affordable content to provide.

The Brits started work in the protected environment of the BBC, at times referred to as "Auntie," and are focused on cultural "period pieces" and the ability to work in a risk-adverse creative environment.

Such endeavours were seen as contributing to the national fabric, as befitted a national TV channel subsidized by the £145.50 (\$230.50) annual TV tax per household, which raised US\$5.8 billion in 2010–2011. Nothing like the constant fund-raising that PBS has to endure.

Today, much of the creative genius for American TV resides in the wealthy cable networks HBO, AMC, Showtime and others.

British and European TV and film concepts are often re-engineered for the American audience while American fare and formats generally end up unaltered on UK screens.

The European audience is able to tolerate and adapt to different cultures more readily than American audiences, mostly because geography has always made this skill a necessity.

But clearly, as cultures are exposed to each other, terms, phrases and slang are mixing into the everyday jargon of US and UK society.

One can listen to this influence across all strata of society, from the high end to pop and street culture.

British film production is growing as success after success has fu-



**ARCHIE AND EDITH BUNKER –** There would have not been any *All in the Family* in the US in the 1970s without first *Till Death Do Us Part* on British television in the 1960s. It's one of numerous examples of the cultural exchange that goes on between both countries. By the way, Gretchen Franklin (Ethel Skinner of *EastEnders*) co-starred in the pilot episode of *Till Death Do Us Part* and turned down the TV series to be in a play. Gretchen told the *Walford Gazette* in 1993 she didn't regret the decision; that's show business.

elled the investment interest in this industry.

*The King's Speech* was created for an estimated US\$15 million and has earned over £375 million, and the *Harry Potter* series continues to earn.

Historically, there is a long tradition of British influence on American culture. Walt Disney, the factory studios and TV companies bought, borrowed and lifted stories from the very beginning and employed actors, writers and other creative talent from abroad.

Viewing the Academy Awards from Britain, one would think it was a British affair with either a great or good outing for the British connected candidates and winners.

## American Remakes

The 1960s British programme *Till Death Do Us Part* (the pilot co-starred Gretchen Franklin – *EastEnders*' Ethel Skinner) was transformed into the 1970s' American classic *All in the Family*.

It's perhaps the best example of the telly cultural exchange that has transpired over the past few decades. Here's another: *Steptoe and Son* became *Sanford and Son*.

It goes in reverse too: Britain's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* admittedly is somewhat similar to the 1954 American show *The \$64,000 Question*.

But let's not forget there would be no *American Idol* and *America's Got Talent* without first *Pop Idol* and *Britain's Got Talent*.

*The Office* (2005–2011, NBC) and *Shameless* (2011–present, Showtime) are two of the more successful US adaptations, underscoring the "special relationship" and connection between the markets.

But Americanised versions do not always have as much success as their British originals, instanced by *Coupling* (2003, NBC) and *Skins* (2011,



MTV) as two relative failures.

Technology is changing our viewing habits, and access is exploding across multiple platforms. We now see poor-quality cellphone video on the national news, and a man chasing and screaming at a dog in Richmond Park near London will gain more traffic than some evening broadcast fare.

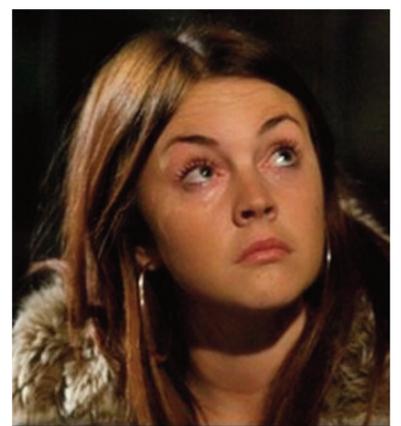
Standard definition channels suffer when high definition is available, and most TVs sold today are connected to the Internet and known as smart TVs.

Viewing trends are growing, and British production houses will have to step up their game and accept as much risk as early explorers once did, to match the global opportunity and demand.

*Budd Margolis is an American who has lived in London for 28 years and has not lost his accent. He won an Emmy for a documentary he directed in France and what was then East Germany and later became head of factual programming for Scandinavia's first commercial TV channel. In London, Margolis worked for TWI, Sky TV, Eurosport, QVC UK and British Telecom.*

## Next time in the Walford Gazette....

### The psychoanalysis of STACEY SLATER



**SUBJECT BRIEF:** She arrived on Charlie's doorstep as a troubled teenager with no place else to go. Precocious like any pretty 16-year-old, but obviously running away from something. She's lately showing signs of maturity but still secretive.

**The Walford Gazette's London-based therapist Yasmin Headley delves into what makes Stacey tick, following her profile analyses of Dot Cotton, Ian Beale and Phil Mitchell.**

## Remembering British Entertainer Cilla Black, Confidant of the Beatles

BY JASON GRANT

MARBELLA, SPAIN – Cilla Black, one of Britain's most beloved entertainers, passed away aged 72 in August at her home near here. In a career spanning five decades, she warmed the hearts of millions, first with a highly successful music career, then as a television presenter.

She was born Priscilla White in Liverpool on May 27 1943. Her father worked in the docks and her mother ran a market stall. They lived in a council flat in Scotland Road. She attended St Anthony's Catholic school and Anfield Commercial College. At 16 she started working as a filing clerk at a cable manufacturing company.

Cilla also worked at the Cavern Club, where she befriended and then sang with local bands such as Rory Storm and the Hurricanes, which featured Richard Starkey on



CILLA BLACK WITH PAUL MCCARTNEY

drums before he joined the Beatles, which also played the nightclub. She met John Lennon and the other Beatles, and was introduced to their manager Brian Epstein. Initially unimpressed, he eventually

signed her in 1963. She made her first professional appearance with the Beatles at the Odeon, Southport on August 30, 1963.

Her first single, "Love of the Loved," written by Paul McCartney, reached No. 35 on the charts. In Feb-

ruary 1964 Black had her first No. 1 hit with Burt Bacharach's "Anyone Who Had a Heart," which sold over a million copies. In May she recorded and released "You're My World," becoming the first English

female singer to have two successive No 1 hits. Other notable hits were "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" and "Step Inside Love."

After the death of Epstein, she was managed by Bobby Willis, whom she married in 1969. They had three sons. Willis died of cancer in 1999.

Black started her television career in 1968 with a show called *Cilla*, which ran until the mid-1970s. In the 1980s, she hosted the hugely popular, long-running shows, *Blind Date* and *Surprise Surprise*. Watched by millions across Britain, this endeared her to a whole new generation of fans.

Black was named "ITV Personality of the Year" in 1987, "Variety Club Show Business Personality" of 1991, awarded a BAFTA in 1995 and an OBE from the Queen in 1997.

### DVD REVIEW:

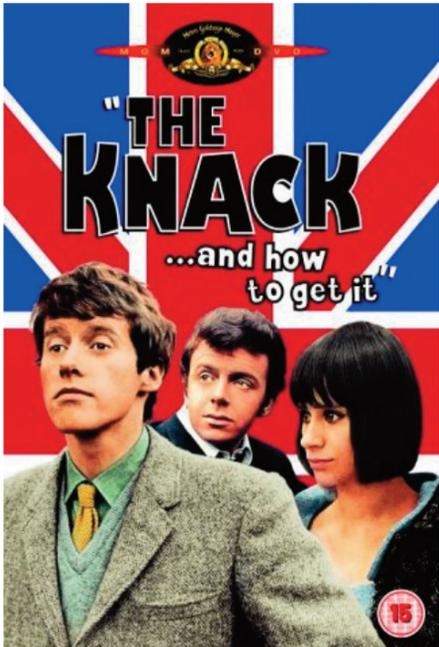
## 'The Knack...and How to Get It'

BY HOLLY ERICKSON

Who knew? Pauline's bloke Joe Macer was a real lady-killer!

In 1965, actor Ray Brooks, played a vain, dandyish, self-proclaimed heartthrob in *The Knack...and How to Get It*, a classic British film based on a play by Anne Jellicoe. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Richard Lester, whose credits include the Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, as well as *How I Won the War*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *Petulia*, it's a 1960s classic. Handsome, and manipulative, Brooks' character is phony as a three quid bill, but offers to give advice on how to pull the birds to Donal Donnelly and Michael Crawford (later of *Phantom of the Opera* fame). The film is in turns funny, corny, witty, slapstick, sexist, and dated, with enough double-entendres to make your head spin. Gently anti-establishment, the black and white movie is worth seeing, especially for the always-charming Rita Tushingham and to see swinging but so shabby) London. As popular as the movie was, Brooks seemed to prefer television. He has appeared in many popular TV comedies and soaps. I'm sure he feels at home on *EE* having spent many years up North on *Coronation Street*.

*Editor's comment: It's a great movie, and I did not know about the East Enders connection. Ironically, The Knack just played in New York in August at a Richard Lester retrospective.*



ALL APPEARS QUIET ON THE SQUARE – One wonders what drama might emerge tomorrow morning...

## 8 Things You Might Have Missed From the Last Walford Gazette

- 1) June Brown (Dot Cotton) threatened to quit over an *EastEnders* script that Sue Tully (Michelle Fowler) was about to direct if it wasn't changed.
- 2) The BBC killed the global iPlayer before it ever launched in the U.S. and is promising a new way to see *EastEnders* instead of Dish Network PPV.
- 3) Michael Greco (Beppe di Marco) and his television sister Leila Birch (Teresa di Marco) recently met up unexpectedly in a Whole Foods in Los Angeles.
- 4) *EastEnders* cleaned up at the British Soap Awards, taking five major awards, including Best Soap, Storyline, Episode, Actor, and Couple.
- 5) Phil Mitchell appears to be suffering from borderline personality disorder (BPD), says a real-life London psychotherapist/*Gazette* columnist.
- 6) *EastEnders* theme song composer based the tune on the very first piano lesson he took when he was 7 years old when he learned those six notes.
- 7) Martin Kemp (Steve Owen) thinks Barbara Windsor (Peggy Mitchell) was responsible for him being cast, and they used to chat about Reggie Kray.
- 8) The *Walford Gazette's* social media maven Melissa Berry reveals the best way to engage *EastEnders* actors on Twitter.

## We're Not Done With Shakespeare...

From the archives we found the following *Walford Gazette* titbit circa 1997, courtesy of **Tim Wilson**:

LONDON – Is *EastEnders* the stuff that dreams are made of? When the London-based Young Vic Theatre Company's production of Shakespeare's *King Lear* raised its curtain, the audience first saw an old woman in an old people's home settling down to watch *EastEnders*.

The sound of Pauline shouting at the latest launderette offender reached a crescendo as the old woman shut her eyes for a nap.

(Funny, it has the opposite effect on me.)

The play properly began with the old woman, played by Kathryn Hunter, becoming *King Lear*.

The *EastEnders* bit had critics scratching their heads in

wonderment about what director Helena Kouts-Lawrence was possibly using the down-market cockney soap to signify.

And from a 2007 edition, the *theatre enthusiast Eileen Weiss* filed the following report:

LONDON – There's a Shakespeare-meets-Tarantino theatre production currently touring the UK, *Kill Bill Shakespeare: Macbeth*, directed by Malachi Bogdanov. Mike Rogers, playing Duncan and Macduff, is BRILLIANT.

A titbit garnered from the programme: *Walford Gazette* readers might want to know that Rogers appeared on *EastEnders* as "Mr Clark" in the spring of 2004, and also made appearances in rival soaps *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*.

# Dear Walford Gazette...

## DISH Network's EE Cancellation Leaves Fans Pissed Off

*Editor's note: As one would imagine, most of our reader correspondence since the last issue dealt with the disappearance of EastEnders PPV from DISH Network.*

*Read the latest info on the crisis on page 3 of this issue and at 'Walford State of Mind' on Facebook.*

Dear Larry,

**I'M GETTING NOWHERE WITH BBC** America, and have been trying daily to reach someone there by telephone. Here's the number: 212-705-9300. Either I get a recorded message or nothing at all. My last attempt was Wednesday, August 26.

I tried Dish again. This time I spoke to a young woman in their call center, who was in the Philippines. She told me that there has been a lot of feedback (four pages' worth) that had been sent to "upper management. I hope they pay attention. to all our feedback.

The people I spoke to at Dish all told me about *EastEnders* being available on Channel 21, my local PBS station, and I clarified to them that I want to watch the current *EastEnders* episodes they see in the US, as was the case on DISH, not the 10-year-old ones on WLIW.

**Alice Schleifer,  
Stony Brook, NY**

Larry,

**ANY FURTHER NEWS ON OPTIONS** to view *EastEnders*? There are so many loyal viewers that DISH has dismissed.

**Nancy Ortowski via Facebook**

Larry,

**I MISS IT SO MUCH. IF THERE IS A** new way to see it, I sure wish someone would inform faithful fans in the USA who subscribed to DISH. Sundays are no longer the same without our PPV EE!!!!

**Milo Johansen via Facebook**

Larry,

**I COMMENTED ON YOUR ARTICLE** in the Huffington Post, but I'm not sure it worked... therefore I am pasting it below. Cheers.

**Bill A. via email**

Larry,

*The BBC after 30 years stopped broadcasting in the UK an "Omnibus" edition on Sunday afternoons of all the EastEnders episodes of the previous week strung together at the end of April 2015.*

*The Omnibus edition is what DISH Network had broadcast until the end of June, but its Omnibus was 11 weeks behind what the BBC aired.*

*Hence, they would have run out of Omnibus programmes after the third week of July. (I was aware of this and was anxiously waiting to see what would happen).*

*I have faith that they will come to some agreement – as you see, it really would involve a new distribution model.*

*In any event, this should have been taken care of before the existing deal expired.*

*I only subscribe to DISH Network because of EastEnders. If EastEnders goes, so does DISH at my house. I think I may start watching the episodes on YouTube. Anyway mate, fingers crossed!!!*



**YOU NEVER KNOW WHO MIGHT BE AN EASTENDERS FAN – That's Nicko McBrain, drummer of the heavy metal rock band Iron Maiden, writes Walford Gazette reader Tim Clair. It appears that Nicko is wearing an unauthorised t-shirt that uses the EastEnders logo, but shows the Kray twins, the notorious gangsters who ruled over East London in the 1960s. Meanwhile, Tim owns a vinyl record store called Record Reserve (www.recordreserve.com) in Kings Park, NY, and he's convinced he had "Dot Cotton in the shop recently," or at least a dead ringer for June Brown. You never know....**

Larry,

**INTERESTING ABOUT THE DISH**

Network thing. We know the Beeb is in deep trouble financially, so I can see where they would want every dollar. How much more could they possibly get than our current \$9.95 a month?

One of the top legal guys from DISH is on the board of trustees of the nonprofit organisation where I work.

I asked him about what is going on a week ago, but he didn't answer me.

For now, I'm watching what I can on YouTube.

**Vicki Capek,  
Arvada, Colo.**

*Editor's note: DISH Network is headquartered in Colorado.*

Larry,

**I'M SO SAD ABOUT THE DISH**

Network situation.

I also wish we had the support of our station like other *EastEnders* fan groups. We are always worried that KUHT will cancel at any moment.

We just have to keep thanking them and telling them how much we love the show.

**Janis LaRocque  
Houston, TX**

*Editor's response: Re:KUHT, that's a good strategy.*

*Send your letters to WG, P.O. Box 271, Kings Park, NY 11754 or walfordgazette@gmail.com*

## He Beat DISH to It

Larry,

**I DON'T THINK I EVER FOLLOWED** up with you about my attempt to get the BBC iPlayer on my iPad and then access *EastEnders*.

I was able to watch all the live shows last week (from my iPad via my Apple TV to the tv set in my living room) while they were being broadcast on the BBC (1:30 pm Central time).

So I ditched DISH Network (before they cancelled *EE*), put up a digital antenna for local stations, am now saving \$80-plus per month and paying OverPlay (a DNS provider in Florida) \$4.95 per month to watch *EastEnders* and all the BBC programmes I want!

Happy days are here!

**Dale Libby**

**Lake Jackson, TX**

Dear Larry,

Hello. I am enclosing my renewal cheque for my subscription. I look forward to every issue. All of them are so interesting and well written about my favourite TV show.

We in Houston are years behind the current UK episodes, but that doesn't lessen our enthusiasm for an gratitude to our public TV station for continuing to carry *EastEnders*. As a fan club we will continue to support the *Walford Gazette*. Cheers,

**Irma Evans,  
Tomball, TX**



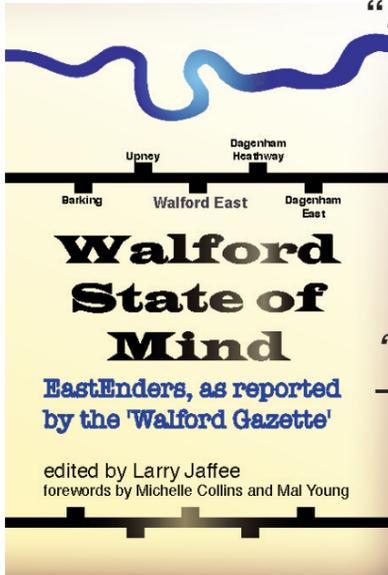
**MELISSA BERRY, Walford Gazette contributor and Charlotte, NC Fan Club co-president, writes she's chuffed the EastEnders production team used her suggestions for which characters should be recognised in a memorial garden at the allotments. We have to agree with the first round of choices.**

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