

Tell Me Everything Press Pack





Press Pack Contents

All information included within this pack is strictly embargoed until 00:01am, 1st November 2022

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Introducing *Tell Me Everything*

Tell Me Everything is a drama about growing up in small-town Britain in the 2020s. It's about those teenage years when the world is opening up to you in all its messy, drunken, dangerous, brilliant glory. That brief window when you might not yet be a fully paid-up adult, but you're definitely not a kid any more. You don't really know who or what you are - but pretty much anything seems possible.

Everyone's adolescence is tumultuous (isn't it?) and mine was no exception. I had all the universal never-to-be-repeated first kisses, loves, hangovers, heartbreaks, comedowns. I also experienced loss, grief, a fractured family, addiction, and the beginnings of a tricky life-long relationship with my own mental health struggles. Out of this came the starting point for *Tell Me Everything*.

Despite having tried to escape it my entire adult life, I decided to go back to my hometown, Welwyn Garden City, as the setting for this story. Welwyn's an oddly dream-like place, sort of suburbia and sort of Centerparcs... and it's where Jonny Murphy lives.



Introducing *Tell Me Everything* continued...

Jonny is very, very loosely based on teenage me, and he and his friends battle with some of the challenges I went through when I was growing up... plus those uniquely contemporary problems my own teenage children and their generation face. (If people my age think we had it tough in the pre-internet world, we should think again.) My kids and their friends have been informal consultants since I started writing *Tell Me Everything*, and I hope they feel like their lives are reflected honestly and accurately in it (they've definitely learned not to say anything too catchy around me – some of my favourite lines have come from them).

Creating and writing *Tell Me Everything*, my first drama, has been an exhilarating, exhausting rollercoaster. To be accurate, it's a drama with comedy, as I've always found it impossible in life not to search for the humour in the darkest, saddest moments. I've cried, laughed, and cringed whilst writing (and filming in some of the actual places where I spent my teenage years – that's quite a weird experience). I think we've made the show I'd have wanted to watch in my bedroom at home in 90s Welwyn Garden City.

If 90s teenage Mark was watching, I hope he'd realise he wasn't alone, however much he felt like he was. And I hope he'd see that most things get better, some things don't last, and it's fine to not know who or what you are - you've got the rest of your life to figure that out. All that matters now is where you're heading, who's going to be there, what you're wearing, and what 'firsts' tonight will bring...

Mark O'Sullivan

Character Biographies



Character Biographies

Jonny Murphy

Jonny Murphy is the life and soul of the party, confident, daring, funny. He lives with his family above a pub in Welwyn Garden City, an idealised mix of town and country that looks perfect on the outside. Jonny can relate to that because beneath his surface, he's got secrets of his own. Jonny struggles with his mental health and doesn't feel like he can even confide the truth to his best friends, Neve and Louis. Instead, Jonny has turned to online forums to express his darkest feelings, where the responses range from very supportive to toxically negative. Having suffered an undiagnosed bout of depression over the summer holidays, the series starts as Jonny embarks on his first term at sixth form college, determined to enjoy life. However, when his dad (the one person Jonny was able to be entirely honest with in real life) dies suddenly, Jonny feels left to face his demons alone. That is, until he meets Mei, a troubled new girl in town. She's also lost a parent and they quickly bond over their hell-raising attitude to life. But Mei's got secrets of her own and as Jonny's depression and anxiety grows, he slowly comes to see what everyone around him has been trying to tell him – that Mei might not be good for him. It's hard to let go of someone you love though, no matter whether they're right or wrong for you. Will Jonny work out in time who and what is best for him, be able to open up to his friends and family about his mental health struggles, and get the help he needs?



Character Biographies

Neve

Neve, Jonny and Louis have been partners in crime since they were small, and she has always had their backs. In return, they've always treated her like one of the boys, and she loves them for that. As a result, Neve's never really felt the need for girl friends but starting out at sixth form college, she bonds with Regan and starts to see the value in female friendship. A naturally gifted student, despite her high academic achievements, Neve (or 'Nifemi' to her Anglo-Nigerian family) has lived in the shadow of her prodigious older sister, Timmi, the golden child, and they don't get on. Neve's quiet rebelliousness is her way of forging her own identity but it also sets her on a collision course with her strict parents and, indirectly, her sister. When Mei arrives on the scene, Neve immediately senses she's not good news, but Jonny refuses to see it, and once he and Mei start a romantic relationship, Neve has to bite her tongue. But her protective instincts towards Jonny become confusing – and Neve eventually has to admit to herself that she likes Jonny more than just as a friend. In the meantime, Neve is confronted by the fact that as a young black woman, her route through life will have some specific roadblocks to navigate. Rebelling against her family's, Jonny's and society's expectations of her leads Neve on a journey of self-discovery to work out who she really wants to be, not for all of them, but for herself.



Character Biographies

Louis

From the outside, Louis looks like he has everything going for him. He's smart, good looking, comes from a wealthy family, doesn't really have to worry about anything. But appearances are deceptive. Louis has social anxiety. He may be sixteen going on seventeen, but sometimes he wishes he was still twelve. Life was simpler then. His parents were still together, he got to spend all his spare time alone with his best friends, Jonny and Neve, and nobody cared about drink or drugs or sex. When his mum ran off to 'find herself', Louis was left living alone with his alpha male father, Gareth, who doesn't understand his son, so is no help at all to Louis. Now they're older, Louis sometimes feels left behind by Jonny and Neve – he doesn't want to drink or take drugs, and the idea of losing his virginity fills him with dread. Because romantically, Louis is hopeless. He just doesn't understand the rules of the game. He is besotted with Zia from the moment he sets eyes on her but isn't confident about how to behave around her, how to woo her, or how to enter into a sexual relationship with her. In the absence of helpful advice at home, he turns to the internet, with unintended consequences. And when he reconnects with Kyle, an old friend who takes a romantic interest in him, Louis becomes even more confused about his own feelings. How do you navigate the blurred lines between love, romance, sexuality and sex at seventeen and work out what you want without being selfish? That's what Louis is desperate to learn before he ends up hurting the people he loves the most in the world.



Character Biographies

Mei

When Mei arrives in Welwyn Garden City, she gives herself a makeover, emerging with a rebellious new identity, a virtual suit of armour. When she first meets Jonny, Mei tells him she has also lost her father and can relate to the pain he's feeling – they're 'the not-okays'. Their connection pulls Jonny back from the brink of another depressive episode. But Mei's only telling him a half-truth. The dad she grew up with isn't dead – he's just not her biological father. That discovery is what's led Mei to angrily lash out at her parents, at the world. Her response is to break all the rules and lead others astray, particularly Jonny, who sees in her a kindred spirit. As they become intoxicated by each other, and their behaviour becomes more extreme, her relationship with Neve, Louis, Zia and Regan is tested – they don't like her, they don't trust her with him, and she's left ostracised by the group. The tragedy being that beneath the dangerous, confident exterior Mei presents to the world remains a smart, funny, romantic teenager, desperately seeking love. Tracking down her biological father online, Mei hopes to achieve a happy ending. But when Jonny learns that she's lied to him, he is left devastated that he can't trust her. That discovery sends them spiralling out of control. Having started out looking like they'd save each other, will they actually drag each other under?



Character Biographies

Zia

Zia is that girl at college who everybody either wants to be best friends with or go out with. She's blonde, beautiful, and a social-media star after a video of her dancing in her bedroom went viral. On top of which, she also happens to be the nicest person in the world. Some people have all the luck. Except, as a result of her looks and easy-going nature, people constantly project their impression of Zia on to her. Whether it's love interest Louis presuming she's more sexually experienced than she is, best friend Regan assuming Zia's love life is easier than hers, or an unscrupulous employer exploiting her because she judges her to be a dizzy blonde, people often fail to see Zia for who and what she really is. Because like any teenager, Zia has her insecurities, she's just taught herself to present a confident mask to the world. Which Zia does very well because it's easy to present a perfect version of yourself on social media. When she uses her go-getter attitude to put on a mindfulness day at college, it's wrongly assumed Zia's done so because she wants the glory. What nobody knows is that she has suffered with crippling anxiety herself and helping others to get through it, like she did, is important to her. So Zia's issue is - how do you get seen in a world that can't see past you?



Character Biographies

Regan

Regan is best friends with Zia and appears to be fun and free-spirited when she's out with her friends, but like all of them, there's more to her life than first meets the eye. Regan lives with her elderly, incapacitated grandmother and in the absence of any other family, has become her day-to-day carer. Shouldering the weight of that responsibility has forced Regan to be more mature and less carefree than her peers. While they worry about romances and parties and school grades, she's stressing about whether her grandmother's eaten or taken the right pills. The flip side is that Regan's become a bit of a control freak and struggles to truly let go. To add to her worries, Regan was brave enough to be honest about her sexuality from a young age, but being gay in a small suburban town makes her options for romance limited. When the time comes for her grandmother to get a full-time carer, Regan struggles to hand her routines and systems over to someone else's control. A situation exacerbated by the fact that the new carer, Jaz, is apparently chaotic and messy and more concerned with having a laugh at work than ticking off spreadsheets. But the breath of fresh air that Jaz breathes into Regan's home allows her the opportunity to enjoy her own life more – and Jaz even reveals herself to be a romantic possibility for Regan. But has Regan been using her grandmother as an excuse to avoid dealing with the harder realities of teenage life?



Cast Interviews



EDEN H DAVIES IS JONNY

This is your first TV role. What training had you done before *Tell Me Everything*?

I was at the National Youth Theatre from the age of 14 which is actually how I heard about this role. On top of that I've just tried to learn as much as I can wherever I can. The best place for me I've found is the Manchester School of Acting, under Mark Hudson, which has helped hugely. Loveday Ingram, who is a brilliant director, has also mentored and helped me find my agent so I owe a lot to her. I had just started looking properly for jobs when this perfect opportunity came along. It was fate and because I've been training for a while, I felt I was ready to take this.

What scenes did you do for your self-tape?

It was Jonny describing Welwyn Garden City - what it was like, a bit about the people. This was one of the first scripts that I was really blown away by. It was so eloquently written and perfectly summed up so much.

How does it feel to be part of a brand-new ITV drama?

Surreal. I can't even let myself think about that. It's just about creating a piece that I'm proud of and I am very proud to be a part of this. Everyone is so talented and hardworking, and the environment was brilliant.



What did you first respond to about Jonny as a character?

Jonny's story reminded me a lot of me in certain ways. As an actor you are always desperately trying to find bits of yourself in a character. I really clicked with him instantly. It's like a fusion of me and Mark O'Sullivan. Jonny has this laddish-ness on the surface and then a vulnerability right under that. It's great that we see both sides. In real life you sometimes only see one dimension of certain people, especially young men who learn to mask their feelings very well.

Where is Jonny in his life when we first meet him? He talks about being seen as "the boy with the dead dad."

Jonny spirals throughout the show. Does he spiral because of the death of his dad? Or was it always inevitable? I think it's impossible to know whether the death of his dad was a catalyst. Jonny is troubled and he finds it difficult to speak to people because he feels no one wants to listen. This means he ends up pushing a lot of people away.

When Jonny talks more openly to his family later in the series isn't there a sense that in some ways losing his dad allowed him to idealise him?

Definitely. He creates the perfect image of his dad. He's always looked up to him and that's probably the person he wants to be. So, it's difficult to lose that person in your life in your developmental years. You are going to spend your whole life trying to be this idea of who they are. His dad was always the perfect role model to him.

Jonny has undiagnosed depression. How did you research that?

It was a combination of a lot of things; Mark the writers experience, research through charities like Mind, but also trying to be introspective of myself and how I've struggled. What I think Mark captures beautifully is how most people, but more typically young men, do it alone. It was important for him and I that the situation wasn't romanticised or glamorised. That it was real. I think we just want to know that other people see us, and that they can somehow guess how we feel, because to us it's unmissable. Except most of the time they can't just see it, because even though to us it's like we're bleeding through our shirts, to other people we're just like we are every other day. That's something Jonny goes through in the show, and something I really connected with. I think so many people don't speak up because they hope someone will just guess, but most people just don't realise. That's why I think it's so important to tell someone, and it doesn't have to be some long speech, it can be a text, a conversation, or outright saying it, but trust that people care, because they do.

How does Jonny feel about Neve and Louis?

They are his absolute best mates in the whole world. When he spirals, he is looking for someone to lash out at. Some teenagers often lay into their parents, but I don't think Jonny really has that relationship with his mum and obviously he has just lost his dad. So, he's looking for someone to lash out at that will take it and still be there for him. That's difficult to put on a teenage kid who is a friend of yours, but they are the people he chooses. Louis and Neve have got their own problems, but they are the kind of friends that are going to understand whatever you might be going through.

What do you think initially attracts Jonny to Mei? Is it something you and Callina have discussed at length?

I think Jonny is looking for that buoy to keep him afloat. When Mei comes in and provides that, he idolises her and perhaps makes her into something that she isn't necessarily. Before he even gets to know the person that she is he takes that leap. It was always a real discussion with Callina. We constantly had ideas and when we would discuss them it was a revelation every time, which was brilliant.

How was Jonny and Mei's big scene on the church tower to film?

It was a difficult scene for me to film but a rewarding one so hopefully that comes across because it is the absolute height of Jonny's mania in episode one. It is such a pinnacle moment. He is completely lost. He doesn't know what his purpose is in life, and he finds that in Mei, for better or for worse. It was a great thing to film with Callina.



Do you use anything like music to prepare for emotional scenes to get yourself in the right headspace?

I love to spend time being social on set but when I have those important moments, I have to be introspective and a bit quiet and get myself in that zone. I think Matthew McConaughey said, 'Be ready to receive' and that's an important thing.

How does Welwyn Garden City compare to Wrexham where you live?

I don't think there's anywhere like Welwyn Garden City. Wrexham is very different. Welwyn Garden City is a polished version. That's what's brilliant about it. It is the most polished place on this earth but underneath are these problems for these people. I really love Wrexham. It's simpler in the North. People say what they mean.

Jonny has a complicated relationship with his older brother Andrew. How would you describe it?

Andrew is a difficult guy. Some people think he's one thing and others think he is something completely different. That's the beauty of certain characters that divide the audience. You don't want everyone thinking the same thing. You want people to take something different from it. Me as Eden, I don't think Andrew is too bad. I think he's alright, just a bit of a goof, but Jonny hates him.

There are some interesting family scenes later in the story where you get to understand more where both brothers are coming from.

Mark has done a great job with that. Andrew is just a guy trying to fill the shoes of a man he didn't really know. It says in the script that Andrew is a mummy's boy and Jonny is a daddy's boy. That's always the way it's been. So, for Jonny his dad is his absolute hero, and no one will fill his shoes. Andrew has got this idea in his head that his dad is gone, and he has now got to try to be the man of the house. That's always going to cause conflict.

Who do you turn to if life gets difficult?

My mum. She's my biggest supporter. I'm very lucky to have her in my life. She's the reason that I have this drive. My dad is also great as he's always able to be calm and logical which allows me to rationalise and put everything into perspective. I'm also very blessed to have a diverse friend group and family network where I can speak to different people about different things

What do you think the family will make of the show?

I'm excited for them to see what I was doing all this time! Hopefully they're proud, and hopefully they skip the sex scenes. They've always been very supportive and it's great to be able to show them that it was worth it. They just know what I've told them about the show, that and a few pictures, so I'm looking forward to seeing their reactions, and I hope there's something in it they can all get behind!

What have been the most fun scenes? Jonny, Neve and Louis have their own version of Ferris Bueller's Day Off...

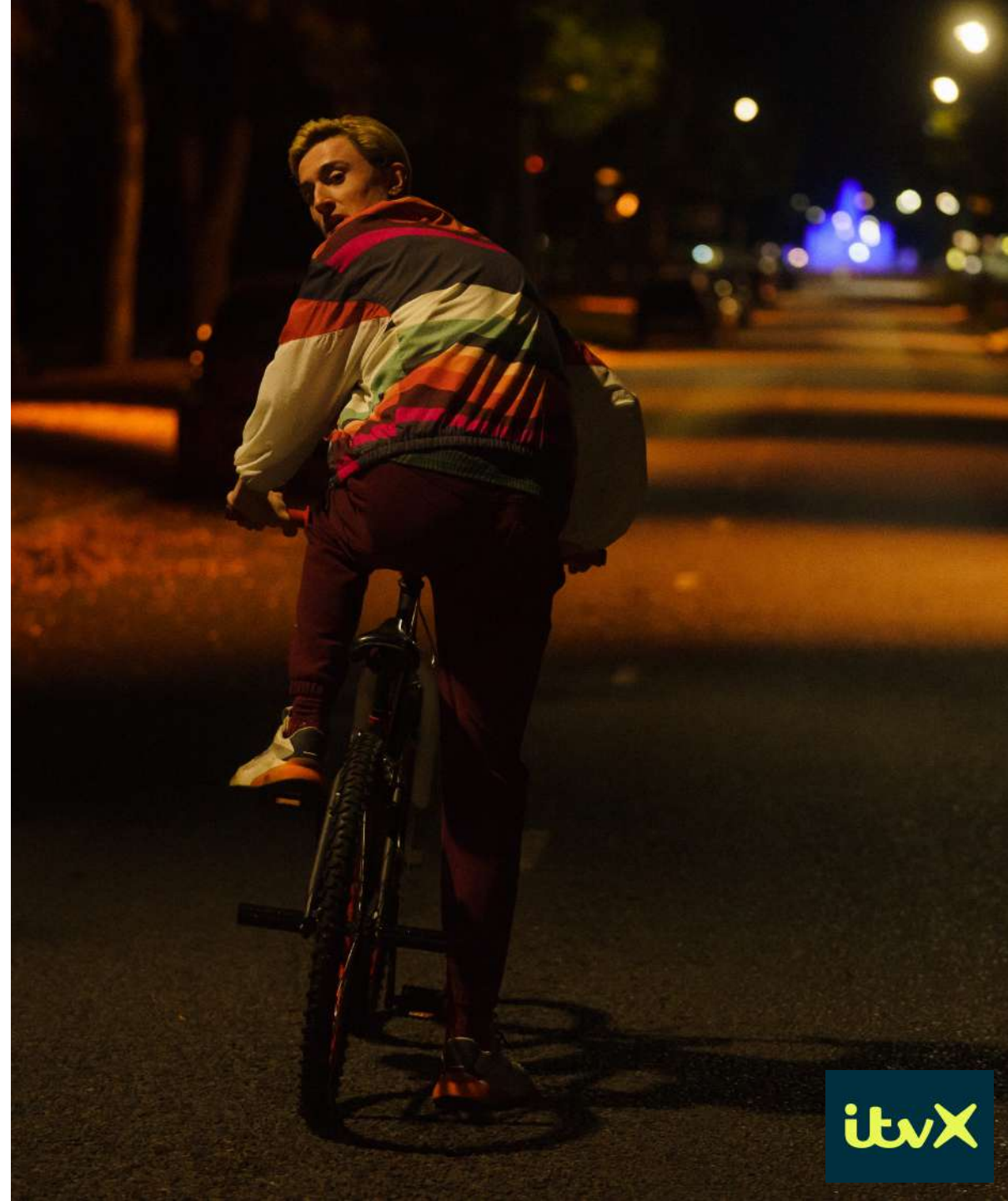
That's the funniest bit by far. They went into this Polish grocery store, and we were told that we could improv it. Director Marley (Morrison) is great at capturing those moments. Spike and Lauryn are great improvisers, and I had a lot of fun doing it. There are also bike scenes, which were really fun in different ways. You're just riding a bike but it's pretty big because they shut down the road and you've got these little cars driving in front and behind you. It's amazing. So, I think just me riding a bike is my favourite bit!

How did you celebrate your 18th on set?

I got a lovely ring from the crew. It's beautiful. It was very, very considerate. They got me a little card. It was really nice to be around people like that and celebrate my birthday and then go home and celebrate it with my friends and family. You've got to milk it haven't you?

Why do you think *Tell Me Everything* is an important show for now?

I think that portraying mental health accurately and responsibly and in a real-world situation is very important. Sometimes it can be told in these big, fanciful ways or glamourised and it's not that. What *Tell Me Everything* does so well – and I think it helps because it's British – is we really portray everyday life honestly. That's what makes it more powerful. It's so important for people who are going through similar situations to understand that other people are too and that it will get better. It's also important for people who aren't going through it to know that others are and to have a better understanding of the process and what to look out for.



CALLINA LIANG IS MEI

How has Mei ended up in Welwyn Garden City?

She was originally from there and then when her mother and her biological father were still together they were in Canada. She was in Canada for boarding school. But now that they have broken up and things haven't gone well with the financial side she has had to go back to Welwyn Garden City.

And you're also Canadian?

Yes, I was born in Vancouver but I grew up in China, Beijing.

Who from the cast did you get to know first?

Eden. We were rehearsing the church tower scene and afterwards he was like, 'Do you have anything to do for the rest of the day?' and I didn't because I had just arrived in London a few days before, and we decided to hang out playing video games and chatting, so we got to know each other quickly.

You've also become best mates with Lauryn Ajufo, haven't you?

Yes, Lauryn has become one of my closest friends in the UK. The first time I was so nervous meeting her because in the script we are supposed to be enemies. I was like, 'I hope this girl doesn't hate me because I'm not a mean person!' We had dinner and talked and we started going out together every week and hanging out. Every weekend we were seeing each other. On set we were always talking. I would buy Starbucks for her before she came in. She would always be there for me when I needed someone.



Did it feel important to you to show Mei's home life?

I think that showing her at home and what she's going through helps the viewers understand a lot more why she acts out in the ways that she does. I'm not necessarily saying that because you have gone through bad things in life that justifies all of your bad actions, but you can clearly see that this is a teenager who is discovering herself and trying to find place in the world. She is so lost in all of her trauma and pain that she doesn't really know how to act around people socially. Because she's never had friends, she's never fit in. This is another challenge for her. She's moved to a new place. She probably thinks, 'Oh, here we go again. I don't trust anyone.' So I think she was lost and lonely, and decided to pick someone (Jonny) to latch onto.

Is that why she is attracted to Jonny?

Initially at the funfair she is obviously attracted to him physically but also when she meets him again at school with one of the teachers, Mr Horrocks, and she finds out that his dad had died. She sees him as someone who perhaps can share her pain and talk with. Then she starts weaving herself into his life but I think as that develops she starts catching real feelings for him. I think they do develop something that is real for both of them.

What have been your favourite scenes to play with Eden?

Oh definitely the church tower. I was so excited because I was like, 'I am going to do all the stunts myself' and I did.

They actually built this mock-up of the church tower in the studios. There were two sides and two platforms. One side is where I fall off. When they shot from the other side they had crash mats about two metres below me. I free-fell backwards onto those crash mats so many times. It was so fun. Then when they were shooting from the other side and you can see Mei dangling, I had to be rigged with a harness. That was really fun. When I'm trying to climb up back into the church tower building oh my god I had no strength. Me and Eden were genuinely struggling to pull each other up. At one part they actually had to get one of the runners to lift my foot up because I didn't have the strength. That wasn't acting, that was really real!

What does Mei think of the rest of the gang?

In the beginning because she sets her eyes on Jonny she doesn't really care about any of them. She just treats them as vessels to get to Jonny. She will do whatever it takes. But she does long for a connection especially with what happens with Jonny. Because she is always watching them from a distance she wishes she could be a part of the gang but because she is scared of being rejected she would rather be the bad guy and be in control of that rather than letting herself be vulnerable and open herself up to the group and for them to be like, 'I don't like her.' In the end, she genuinely wants to be a part of that gang not only for Jonny but also for herself. They look like a cool group of friends. I would want to be friends with them!

Are there aspects of Mei's character that you admire?

She's so strong and for a young girl going through everything that she is going through I actually respect her so much. She doesn't take anything from anyone. She's so feisty. She doesn't care what people think. These are things that I struggled with when I was growing up. I was always so conscious of what people thought about me. I had a really great support system. I had my friends whereas Mei doesn't have anyone. I can't even begin to imagine how she does it. So I have a lot of respect for her. She's so strong. And smart.

Executive producers Robert and Camilla say that you bring a real fire to Mei. What brings out that fire in you?

When people are mean to my friends. 100%. My friends are like my family. I will do anything to protect them at all costs. I think having grown up by myself, as a girl too, I've had to learn to stand up for myself. With some things I've gone through in the past, you really have to learn how to fight. I also did martial arts for three years so I guess you could say that there is that part to me as well.

Was this your first time working with an intimacy coordinator?

[Assistant Intimacy Coordinator] Abi Kessel has been great. She really made me feel comfortable on set. Obviously I have a few sex scenes to do but it was all really straight forward. I think it really helped that me and Eden are friends in real life so we were laughing about it. Everything was done in a very safe way. I always felt like I was protected.



What have been the most challenging days filming?

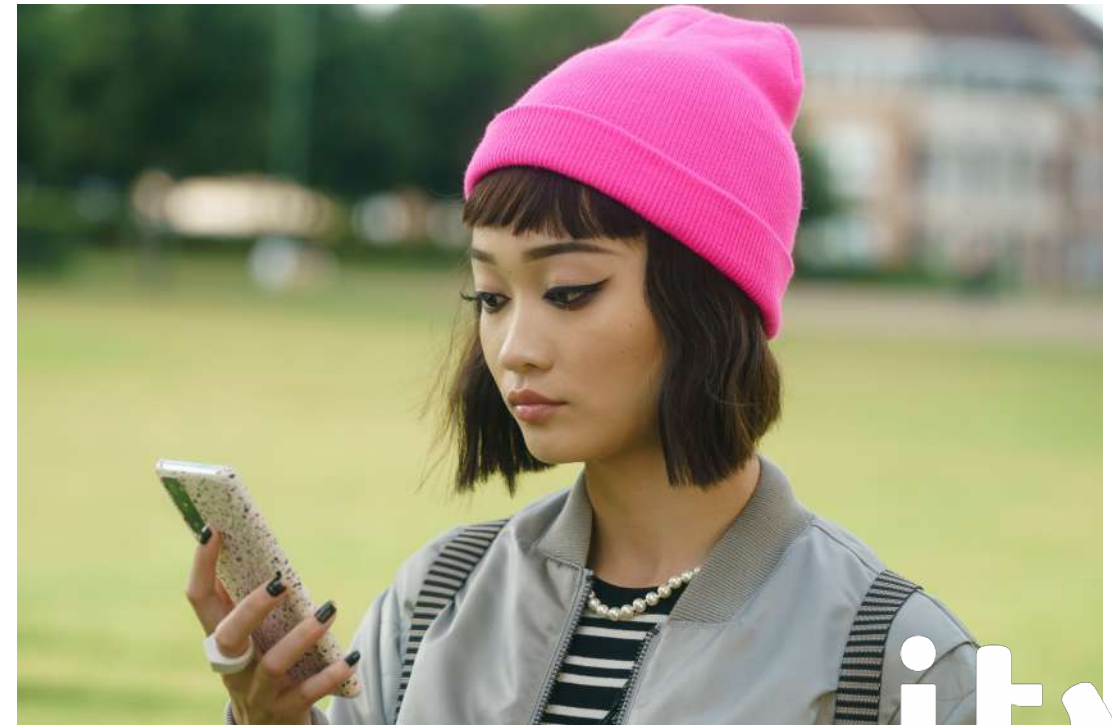
Ok, this is going to surprise you but I think the most challenging scene for me to ever have done in my acting career was that scene at the club when everyone disappears and I have to dance seductively towards Jonny and dance on him in a very sexy way. I said to Rich the director, 'I can't dance. I don't know how to dance.' He said, 'You can do it. Just bring it out.' My make-up artist Guy was doing touch-ups on my face and I was holding his hand going, 'Please don't let go! I'm not ready for this!' It was so scary. The whole club was filled with 60/70 extras. We were all dancing and then all of a sudden 'boom' all the extras run away. They all run to the side and guess who they are all looking at? I'm just standing there by myself. I was trying to be sexy and walk towards them. I was dying inside but apparently I did a good job, thankfully!

The show deals with a lot of different aspects of teenagers' lives. What resonated most with you?

Jonny's undiagnosed anxiety really does resonate with me. I have been diagnosed with anxiety disorder and panic disorder. I still struggle with them to this day. That's something that is really important to be talked about because when I was young and experiencing those symptoms I didn't know what it was. I kind of just thought it was normal. I think the more people push that away the worse it gets. So Jonny going through that really did resonate with me. I think it's really interesting for parents to watch that as well. If your child is acting this way let them know they are not insane. There are reasons to be feeling like this. It is very normal.

Why do you think TME is an important drama for now?

It's a very real depiction of teenagers growing up in the 2020s. I think it is going to be a very fun show to watch. And for parents it is a case of this is what they are going through. How to protect their children? Maybe for younger kids watching the show they can realise that they are not the only ones feeling this way. They are not the only ones feeling lonely. They are not the only ones going through mental health issues, loss of a parent. All the different problems this show tackles – practiced sexuality as well. They are very real issues that we all went through. I hope that it will be a show that is very relatable for them.



LAURYN AJUFO IS NEVE

When you first read Neve what was it about the character that intrigued you?

She's rebellious. That intrigued me the most. She's a black teenage girl from an African household who has a slight 'I really don't care' attitude. She's a party animal and it's very rare you get all that onscreen or that you even hear about that in person unless you are really good friends with them, especially being Nigerian from an African household. She's a lot of fun. I like her.

Could it help parents to understand their teenagers better?

I think it's an eye opener for them. It may daunt some parents and families, but I think it's so important to understand that life is very different to how it was. We're exposed to so much more now with the internet and social media. I think it should also open a space for families to speak to their kids rather than rebuking them or constantly feeling like they have to put up barriers to protect them.

When we first meet Neve she is funny, she's bright, she's got the highest grades in WGC, but there are other pressures bubbling under, aren't there?

She has a load of pressures. It's funny because despite her having good grades I've noticed that it's not something that she says out loud. It's not something that is an achievement for her. I think it comes from the sense that she just likes being known as the party girl who's a bit of fun. School is neither here nor there for Neve despite her being really smart. When people cheer her on for her good grades she goes into her shell, like she's embarrassed. I think with the expectations at home because her sister is such a huge role model who has moved to London and is successful it's like Neve has all those pressures to live up to.



How does Neve fit into the friendship group with Jonny, Louis, Zia and Regan?

Out of the six, she is like the mother hen despite her constantly being the one who is up for a drink or a party. She keeps everybody in check. It just comes from a place of love and care. You genuinely do see that through the episodes, especially with Jonny and Louis. She mothers them and they are like her little brothers. She loves to help and support her friends or anybody that she can, which I think is quite nice.

Neve and Jonny have a dance routine to their favourite 2014 song. How was that to film?

Yeah, that was a lot of fun. We actually rehearsed that in the first week of knowing each other. It was a real icebreaker! When we shot it, it was like watching a live show for the whole crew, because no one else had seen it before. That whole scene wasn't acting. It was just raw emotion.

How would you say yours and Neve's life experiences are similar?

Like Neve, I went through an identity crisis where I yearned to be accepted in society and the only way I thought that was possible was if I had long, straight hair. I'll never forget when Willow Smith came out with *Whip My Hair*. I remember sitting crying because I felt as though my hair didn't whip like it did in the music video. I was really, really upset about that. So, I could relate to Neve's identity crisis because of my own experiences.

What's Neve's reaction to Mei when she first appears on the scene?

I think she's a bit on edge about Mei. Being the only girl in the friendship group, in terms of the trio with Jonny and Louis, to have someone else come in and literally make you be disregarded by your best friend it's a bit like, 'Um, I'm not sure who you are but I don't know if I like you' kind of vibe. So, I think Neve immediately has her guard up. Mei has come in very confident, that's what Neve does, so for Mei to do that, she is stepping on toes.

Callina says the pair of you really bonded. What brought you together?

Yeah, the irony of it all is we hate each other on screen apparently but in person we are the best of friends. We've only known each other for a few months but we have so much in common, from our favourite hobby being just to go out and eat in restaurants to having the same music taste. We are always together. There are scenes we have done where we have had to be absolutely horrible to each other and people are like, 'Are you ok? Do we need to have a check in?' And we're like, 'We're good.' She is like my bestie.

Mei steals Neve's phone at one point. How long could you cope without yours?

Not long. It's quite sad to say that because there was a life before phones. I unfortunately was born into the era where phones are a thing so to be without it is quite daunting. When Neve loses her phone, I can understand her manic state. You just feel like you're missing out. It's that FOMO effect.

In episode four we learn more about Neve's family life. Did you get to collaborate with writer Yemi Oyefuwa on that?

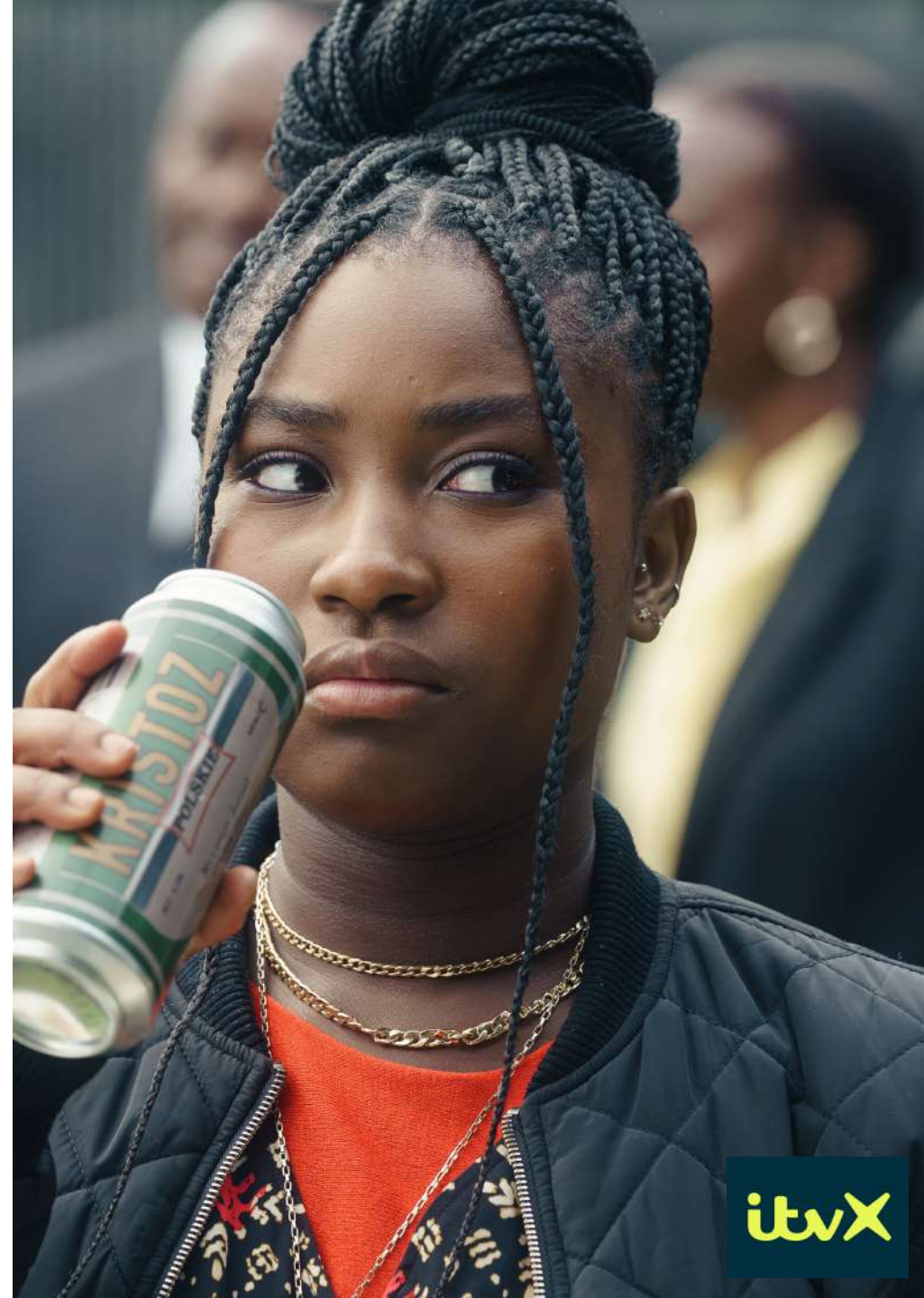
We had loads of discussions about little things like hair situations. Originally, I was meant to have my natural hair throughout the entire episode and then they developed this whole episode where Neve's not really in love with her hair. She just wears braids. Then towards the end she finds herself and wants to embrace herself, which is really nice. With Yemi coming from an African background as well we definitely clicked and bonded so when I read episode four with all the little jokes and innuendos, I genuinely got a little spooked because this is my life. It's basically what I grew up on.

How would you describe Neve and her sister Timmi's relationship?

It's a bit neither here nor there when you first meet them. Their interactions are like Neve saying, 'I don't need a babysitter. Why is she here?', but I think that when their parents go away (to Lagos) for a while it makes them bond. I think that was important because Timmi wasn't just an older sister, she became a role model that Neve genuinely wanted to look up to because she wasn't living behind a lie. She was being truthful, and it was real. You tell your parents what they want to hear but with your sibling you tell them the truth. I feel that's what happens between them.

How did you get into acting?

I studied musical theatre at Brit School for sixth form, which was a lot of fun. On top of that I was part of the Youth Theatre at Stratford East, and they hosted this event called Monologue Slam at the time. I remember I was like I don't want to do this, performing a monologue in front of industry professionals. It was daunting to me, but I think it was a blessing in disguise because my mentor at the time convinced me to do it. I did it and I got my agent. It's been a beautiful rollercoaster ever since.



Have you enjoyed working with costume designer Cecile?

Oh yeah. 100%. When we first met, we had a mood board and we discussed everything that Neve did. So, it's nice to see it all pieced together and how they've taken the narrative of *Tell Me Everything* and tried to incorporate it with previous shows and what the trends are today. I feel like that's going to play a massive role when this comes out. Everyone is going to be like, 'Oh my god, hair and make-up and costumes!'

What have you learned about yourself playing Neve?

One thing I have definitely learned about myself is that I've matured. A lot. I'm really happy to say that. I was a Neve, or I was falling down the road of becoming a Neve. Some of the things in the script I'm like, 'that's a very dumb decision, Neve. That's not great.' But it's not me so that's fine!

What have been the most emotionally challenging scenes to film?

I think when Timmi has to come and pick up Neve after the rave. It was a beautiful scene, but it took a lot. I think it was just an eye opener, especially for myself how skin colour can affect so much despite the situation you're in. I remember on set it was like this is a really big scene. I can't wait for everyone to see it because I think it played out really well.

What are you most proud of with TME?

The rawness of it. The stories we are telling with identity crisis and sexuality and mental health. I think all of that is so important. When this comes out there is a story for everyone, which isn't always the case. But with this show I think that is what we've done.



SPIKE FEARN IS LOUIS

How did you get into acting?

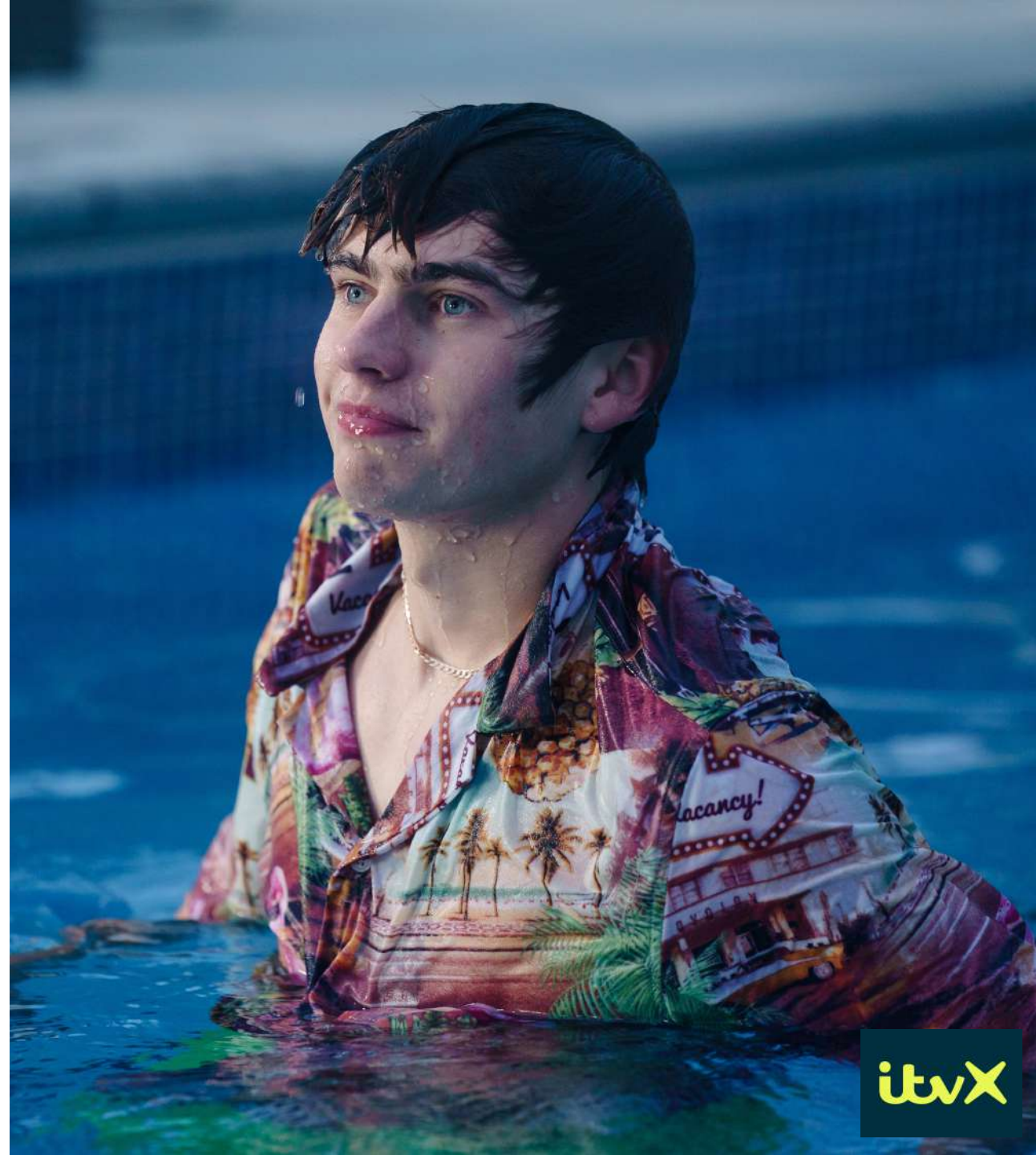
I left school when I was 16 being a bit confused with where I wanted to go with life and what I was going to do. Mum was like, 'Well, why don't you try acting?' At the same time I was watching *Skins* and I was really into Cook who was played by Jack O'Connell. I knew he was from the Midlands and I'm from Leicestershire. So I was like how did he get into it? I looked into that and found the Television Workshop in Nottingham and went there for a few years. The Nottingham Television Workshop is a great place. If anyone from around that area wants to get into acting that's definitely the place to go.

Didn't you then work with TME director Marley Morrison on a feature film?

Yeah, Marley actually messaged me on Instagram saying, 'Hey, have you ever acted before?' I explained my situation that I was in and she asked me to come and audition to be in my first film (*Sweetheart*). I went and met her and we got on really well. I got an agent from that and started auditioning and now I'm in *Tell Me Everything*. I got really lucky.

You first went up for the part of Jonny. What were your thoughts when the producers then suggested Louis?

I taped for both Louis and Jonny. I was quite set on Jonny because he had all this emotional stuff that quite appealed. I thought that Louis was just this funny sort of character and I'm not that good at that. But when I started looking more into Louis I noticed that he wasn't just funny. He had a lot more about him. As I was reading more and more I found him more challenging, which was even more appealing. So I'm glad they asked me to come back for Louis. I enjoy playing him, it's like he's got his own little coming of age story.



There's a description of Louis on the dodgems at the funfair where he is sticking to the one-way system, maintaining a steady course. Is that where he is in life when we first meet him?

Yeah, definitely. Everyone is growing around him and I don't think he is ready to start growing yet. He is like, 'This is a new point in my life. We are all going to start college.' But he also doesn't want his friends to change and he doesn't want to either. He wants to stay on this steady path. He doesn't want to venture out of his comfort zone at all.

What does he think of Jonny and Neve?

How I see it is Louis is not from the same area as them. He's moved down here. He's got these two friends now and I don't think he had many friends before. Jonny and Neve are his best friends. Maybe he doesn't agree with some of the stuff they do but he lets them do it and he just doesn't get involved. He doesn't want to have to go and make new friends. He's too scared to do that.

What does it tell us about Louis' relationship with his dad that he calls him Gareth?

That it's not really that father/son relationship that everyone wishes for. His dad is never around. Maybe Louis blames his dad for his mum leaving and ruining that side of the family. He can't cope with it. So it's his way of saying, 'I'm grown up now. I'm just going to call you Gareth.'

Has it been helpful working with an intimacy coordinator?

Yeah definitely. They are great. It amazes me how people used to do it without intimacy coordinators. They make you feel so comfortable in the scene. You're not pressured into doing anything you don't want to do. You can just say yes or no. You feel like you are in a nice environment to do something that can make you quite nervous. You want to be fully in the character for that part and you want to feel comfortable doing stuff that your character feels comfortable doing.

Cold lakes aside, what has been the most challenging day for you?

We started on night shoots and the second day they put us on the waltzers. I'm not a fan of the waltzers. I didn't feel great anyway and we had to keep going on them. That was just a nightmare for me, going round and round and getting dizzier and feeling more and more ill. But Louis in that scene is supposed to be feeling dizzy and ill and scared so I think it will work.

Louis is desperate to take his driving test so he has more independence. How were your on-camera driving skills?

I may or may not have hit a light...

What wardrobe choices did you make for Louis?

There's a gold chain that Louis wears in an early scene and I spoke to the costume team about maybe adding it later on when Louis gets a bit more grown up. So he puts the chain back on. Also Louis gets a pair of Clark Wallabees. I'm a big fan of them. I was happy with them. They might be coming home with me if I get to wear them on the last day of filming.

How does Louis' look change when he becomes Louis 2.0?

It changes a lot. When you see Louis at the start he's just quite young, like his mum maybe sends him clothes or gives him some money. Then when 2.0 comes along he's trying to act a bit older. I think he gets it a bit wrong by going too old and looking a bit like an old man. I like the style though. I definitely prefer 2.0 and where it goes after that rather than at the very start.

What does Louis think of Kyle when he first meets him?

I think the way that he feels about Kyle is that Louis has never really been made to feel special and happy and I think Kyle brings this side out of him that makes Louis feel good about himself.

Why do you think people should watch *Tell Me Everything*?

It's raw. It's very real. It tells what life really is like growing up and going to college. The whole social media thing is great as well. As well as being funny it's got drama in there. It makes you feel happy. It makes you feel sad. It's everything a series should have. It's great TV.



CARLA WOODCOCK IS ZIA

Having played Marina in Ackley Bridge, what intrigued you about Zia in *Tell Me Everything*?

I think on the surface you could say that both characters are quite similar in that they are both popular girls. But when you get to know them you see that they are very different people. They go about their popularity in very different ways. What intrigued me about Zia was she could be seen as the 'popular girl' and 'cool girl' but she doesn't have that catty energy that is so often done in those types of roles, especially with teen dramas. Zia is very emotionally mature. She doesn't lash out with her insecurities or try to put anyone down. She's a girl's girl, supporting people and uplifting people, which is really nice to play.

What do you think you've learned about yourself by playing Zia?

I've learned the importance of female friendships. Friendships in this show are written so wonderfully. Again it's not two girls who are pitted against each other, which is often seen so much in the media. Being able to act alongside Tess (Lucille) has been so lovely and to play around with our friendship and have little improv moments is so nice to play on screen.

Did Mark O'Sullivan give you all helpful notes when he visited set?

This is his baby really. So whenever he was on set he did give us really helpful notes. He's so good at writing honestly and truthfully. The dialogue always feels natural and flows like it would in a normal conversation. That was the first thing I noticed when I read the scripts. It just feels like real life. It felt like how I was when I was a teenager and when I was growing up.



What were your anxieties at that age?

Friendships, people falling out, people making up. Getting in relationships for the first time and all the drama that can come along with that! Then you had the stress of school and your exams and what you wanted to do after school. It all feels so magnified at the time and then I look back on it and think it really wasn't that big of a deal that you fell out with your friend this day because you were always going to make up with them the next. I wish I allowed myself to let it all go and enjoy it more.

Were you able to hang out with Tessa and the rest of the cast before filming began?

We had a week before we started which included rehearsals over three days solidly. Doing that really helped us to get to know each other so when we did start on set there was no awkwardness between any of us. The first couple of weeks we had scenes where we were basically all together, which was really nice because we got to bond like a normal friendship group would. It doesn't feel like you are with your work colleagues. It does just feel like you are with your group of friends. With Tessa, from the first day we had on set together we were joking around and giggling with each other. It felt like we'd been friends for years.

What makes Zia and Regan such good friends?

As far as I know I don't think either of them have siblings. When they were growing up together, they were each other's sisters. Ever since then it's always just been those two. They know each other probably better than they know themselves. There is never any judgement because they have been in each other's lives for so long.

What does Zia think of Louis' fairly obvious crush on her?

I think she's quite perplexed by him. He says weird things. He's a bit nervous. But she is also quite amused by him. She finds him quite intriguing. I actually think that Louis and Zia are more similar than you initially think. Zia is a bit awkward and nervous and shy at times but she never really shows that. She just keeps it all on the inside. When she's around Louis she can actually just be herself because he likes her for who she is. I don't think she's ever had that before with relationships that she's been in. She likes that Louis is different from other boys. He's like a breath of fresh air in her life.

They go on a disastrous date, which is damaged by Louis' use of pornography after some terrible advice from Jonny. Did you do any research on the effect that it is having on teenagers?

It's no secret the issues with pornography, especially with young people. It does give an unrealistic idea of what sex is. There is no consent. It's very much focused around the male gaze. You don't really see what it is like as a woman within an intimate context, which is a shame because I do think it is important for younger people to be able to explore intimacy in a safe and representative manner. It is such a normal part of life. I don't think there should be any stigma around doing that. I just wish there were better outlets for people to do it with than pornography.

Teachers and parents can feel a bit awkward talking about it because it is a bit of a sensitive topic. Teenagers don't really have anywhere else to go if they want to learn about it other than just watching pornography and hearing what their mates have said. I wish there were proper sex education classes where you could learn about safe and consensual sex. I don't think there is enough of that at the moment.

Is Zia's relationship with social media that she needs other people's approval?

I don't think Zia ever really expected to become famous online. It was something that happened so suddenly. She herself doesn't really know how to navigate it or what to do with her following. I think probably part of it does come down to wanting to be liked and to get approval from people online. Also towards the end of the series you learn that Zia has her own mental health struggles so maybe when she didn't want to leave the house she found an outlet online and that's how she got into setting up her social media pages. She posted a TikTok and got two million likes and 30,000 followers. I guess that's what social media is like. One day you've got 10 followers and then the next day you've got 30,000. It's crazy.

If you weren't an actor do you think you would be good at being an influencer?

I don't think I would be able to do it. I do have a lot of respect for influencers because I do think it is a lot harder than it looks. You're revealing a lot of yourself and so much of your life that you don't get to have a lot of privacy. There might be parts of being an influencer that I would perhaps struggle with. I think some influencer trends have created quite a toxic culture online posting a highlight reel of free clothes and free holidays and flash cars and a nice house. It's just not what real life is. If you are a young person looking at this you are bound to feel you are not doing enough. Then you have Photoshop and Facetune and it's created beauty standards that no one can keep up with because it is literally not real.



TME is not a show that says that the Internet is bad. How has it been a help to you through Covid?

I don't think anyone could have got through the pandemic without social media and the Internet and Zoom. It was the main way to be able to connect with loved ones and friends. TME doesn't say the Internet is bad because it is not but I think it is important to know that it does have risks and it can be dangerous.

Have you had a favourite day's filming?

The pool party was definitely really fun. That was one of the first days that we all had together on set. We had this scene where we were playing Truth or Dare altogether. That was the point where the crew, the director, Mark and all of us were like, 'Oh, there is actual chemistry here. This is going to be really good.' It was really exciting.

What has been the most challenging day of filming?

There was a day where we had to run into the fountain. That was fun until we got into the fountain. I didn't realise quite how cold the fountain was going to be. It was freezing! That was not the most fun. Luckily we only needed a few takes.

Both Zia and Regan get involved with Mindfulness Day at college. Have you explored that?

That's something else I took more time looking into during the pandemic. Things like meditation and exercise really help me if I'm going through a tough time. Journaling as well, writing stuff down. I think it is really important to look after yourself and look after your brain.

What wardrobe choices did you make for Zia with costume designer Cecile?

Cecile makes the decisions at the end of the day but she was always open to our input and our feedback. I loved getting involved and styling outfits with her. Zia also has a little 'Zia' necklace. I'd like to keep that just for the memories.

Why do you think TME is an important show for now?

Being a young person can be hard. When you become an adult you have to get a job, pay bills and deal with all the boring adult stuff so you forget how hard being a teenager actually was. It's really important to have shows like TME to honestly show what teenage life is like and what we all go through when we're growing up. It's important to see yourself represented onscreen and know we aren't alone with what we go through. I think it's important for adults to watch the show as well, especially parents to see what their child could be going through and how they can help.



TESSA LUCILLE IS REGAN

What stood out for you about the scripts?

I was very excited by it. As soon as I read these scripts I was like, 'This is great.' I read it and it made me laugh out loud.

Did you feel that you knew Regan?

Yeah, I did quite instantly connect with the character. Regan is great. I love her. I can understand her point of view and the way she goes about her life.

Where is Regan in her life when we first meet her? She's got a girlfriend Lizzie but we don't really know how that's going...

When we first meet her she is quite scattered, I suppose. She does have this girlfriend Lizzie. We don't see much of their relationship but I know that things aren't going too well with them. So she's now having relationship struggles. She's got college. She's got her home life, which we find out about later on. She's everywhere.

It seems telling that we don't really see Lizzie with Regan and Zia. The friendship with Zia seems stronger.

Yeah, I think it is very telling. Regan is obviously a lot more invested in her friendship. That's one of the things I do really like about the character anyway. I love that she is a very strong friend. Once she knows you she will very much be there for you.

Did you and Carla work out a backstory for Regan and Zia's friendship?

For me, they became friends at the beginning of secondary school. They are literally that annoying pair. No one at secondary school is still friends with the people that they were at the beginning but in my head Regan and Zia are the two annoying friends who never spoke to anyone else. One needs the other. That's their dynamic.



How does Welwyn Garden City compare to Bristol? Are there any similar hang out spots?

They are quite different but they are similar in a way. Welwyn Garden City is very green and it's beautiful. Bristol does have some lovely parks but talking to Mark O'Sullivan he was like, 'Well, it seems pretty but there is nothing to do', which is the opposite in Bristol. There is always something happening in Bristol. There is something constantly going on.

What do Regan and Zia make of the rest of the TME gang?

We're the cool ones. The very first interaction we get of that group is such a funny scene. I think Regan and Zia just think they are a bit uncool. 'Who are these losers? Why are they talking to us?' (laughs) Especially when Regan and Jonny supposedly work together and Regan does not recognise him. She's like, 'I'm sorry, I don't know who you are.'

How does Regan feel when Jonny invites her to his dad's funeral?

She does not want to go. It's one of those things. She wasn't interested in talking to him in the first place and suddenly she's been told they are friends and that means she has to go and be a supportive friend. She's like, 'I did not sign up for that.' I don't think she's necessarily looking to make friends. I think she thinks it's a bit too much hassle probably.

It's a while before we discover Regan's home story. Did you have any personal experiences with home caring to draw on?

I watched a couple of documentaries. I have a couple of friends who are young carers so I spoke to them about it. I already knew a certain amount about it because one of the other non-acting jobs I've done was as a fundraiser doing door-to-door fundraising for Barnado's. We were doing a campaign about young carers. So it was helpful to know quite a lot of information. I wanted to get it right because it is quite a heavy storyline.

Talking to people for your research, what sort of details were helpful to you?

It was largely about routine and their feelings about it. One of them is one of my best friends so I didn't really need to ask her too much because I already knew. It's just the amount of work. You never really switch off. There is always something to be thinking about. That was a big thing in terms of character to bear in mind. It's all written very well in the script.

What is Regan's relationship like with her nan who she is caring for?

They're very close. Regan and her nan are all the other one has. She can't rely on her parents at all. It's a very strong bond. It's not one-sided because they are both there for each other but Regan does feel that she has to be the one that is the grown-up and also somehow be the kid. There are some lovely moments in the script where her nan and (day carer) Jaz speak to Regan about, 'You can relax. You can let go. This relationship isn't the only thing you have.' It's a lovely relationship but it's also a relationship with a lot of pressure on it.

How does Regan feel when daily home carer Jaz first bonds with her nan?

I guess she feels a little bit put out. She knows that it's not fair to want her nan not to bond with anyone else but they've been let down so many times. So she's very hesitant to let any relationship go forward when she knows that at any point they could be dropped. What if this carer moves on? I think Regan bases a lot of her own worth off of the fact that she is able to be there and provide for her nan. So having someone else come along and also be able to do it takes her back a little bit.

Jaz says to Regan, "You can't control everything." Has that been Regan's way of coping?

I think she has learned to cope with everything that's going on by just knowing exactly what's going on. By always being the one that can sort it out I think Regan is an incredibly independent person, which I do relate to a little bit. One of my friends once described me as 'independent to a fault.' (laughs) I definitely feel that is reflected in Regan. She needs to be the one who can take control and will take control.

Regan gets involved with Zia on Mindfulness Day. Is that something you've explored?

Yeah I have delved a lot into mindfulness. I'm a trained yoga teacher. I don't teach but I could if I chose to. So I've learned a lot of those sorts of practices. I've read an awful lot of self-help books. I love all that kind of stuff.



What wardrobe choices did you make with costume designer Cecile?

Regan is very laid back. One of the things I really love about the character is that she flips between getting some really great feminine outfits and some more tomboy-ish outfits. It's one thing I spoke to Cecile [the costume designer] about at the beginning. I love the idea that she would be very tomboy-ish but I also think that it's really important – especially for lesbian characters in shows and shows that are aimed at young people – to see that not every lesbian ever is just masculine or super-feminine. A lot of people like to explore their sexuality through their clothes and I think that's one thing that we get quite nicely in the show.

What do you hope viewers take away from *Tell Me Everything*?

I hope that people take away from it the value of good friendships. There's a lot of really lovely friendships in the show and it's important to know that even though you can be going through your own stuff you can have good friends and they will be there for you and support you through it. You get that proven to you constantly in the show. It's ok to just chat to your friends.

What other aspects of Regan's life would you like to explore more in the future?

I'd love to see more of her home life. We get a lot of scenes with Jaz present but I would love some more with just Regan and her nan and seeing that dynamic at home. Also just seeing her journey. She's obviously very comfortable in her sexuality. One of the themes that we spoke about way at the beginning when I was given the character brief was not that Welwyn Garden City is a homophobic county at all but it's not got a thriving queer community. So I'd love to see her explore more of what it means to be a lesbian and a queer person and find that identity a little bit more



What excited you about *Tell Me Everything* and writer/creator Mark O’Sullivan’s initial pitch?

Camilla: We’d wanted to work with Mark for a while. We really enjoyed Lee and Dean. We were really excited by Mark’s tone and his ability to be funny about really dark, personal tragedy. And he had the authority to do that because he had been through it. We felt that tone was perfect for a British show, which we hadn’t seen before with that subject matter so foregrounded in this way.

Robert: Mark’s personal story was that he lost his dad as a fairly young teenager and that triggered a mental health crisis for him. In the series, we explore the individual anxieties of this entire group of teens. There’s been a huge increase in mental health and anxiety issues in recent years, in unison with the explosion of tech and social media, and that feels like the big story for this generation.

What teen shows made an impact on you when you were 16/17?

Robert: It’s a genre I love, both as a viewer and a programme maker. Part of the excitement for us in making this show was that when Camilla and I started working together at Channel 4, E4 had recently been set up, which was specifically aimed at a younger audience, and we were able to commission shows like *Skins*, *Misfits*, and *My Mad Fat Diary*, that really spoke to a young British audience. Part of the joy of *Tell Me Everything* is it is set in Welwyn Garden City, as an ‘everyplace’ that represents the quirky oddness of this nation. With its slightly suburban landscape it felt like a truthful representation of what it feels like to be a teenager in this country. Where fun is just over the horizon, so instead you’ve got to make your own.

***Tell Me Everything* is set to launch on ITV’s brand new, free streaming service ITVX first, before transferring to ITV2 later. What made ITV the perfect home for *Tell Me Everything*?**

Robert: ITV has a huge reputation for emotionally engaging, character-driven British drama, so it felt like the natural home for *Tell Me Everything*. We’re thrilled the show will be launching on ITVX, since streaming feels like the way younger audiences are increasingly watching TV shows. Drama is a form of escapism and there are so few shows for this audience out there. We felt it would be a shame not to give this generation a show that reflects their lives back at them, exploring all the issues and stresses of teenage life, whilst also celebrating the joys too.

How would you describe that tone?

Robert: Teenage life can be messy and chaotic and dramatic but for many people they are also the most fun years of your life. We wanted to make a show that reflects that. For instance, it felt very truthful that Mark could say that you could be at your father’s funeral and still be thinking about having sex with someone because you’re a horny teenager. It was that contrast in tone that really sold the scripts to us and that everyone first fell in love with. It’s such a rare thing and Mark can write that exact detail because that really is the truth of what happened to him as a teenager at his dad’s funeral.

Camilla: It’s a very difficult tone to pull off. I think you do need the authority of truth and I think the black humour of this feels like something new and different about this show.



CAMILLA CAMPBELL AND ROBERT WULFF-COCHRANE – EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

There is a significant shift in episode four when we learn more about Neve’s family. Was it important to get a diverse mix of writers to work on various episodes?

Camilla: We were very determined that this show should have a mix of voices that could only enrich and lend more veracity to the characters and the stories we are telling. We were really excited to have Yemi Oyefuwa, Kat Sadler, Cameron Loxdale and Rob Fraser on board who all bring something very different. That was a non-negotiable part of this process for us.

Robert: As a mixed-race gay man, diversity is central to everything I work on. And if you are going to look at British teenage life now, these teens are growing up in a much more diverse world than the generation before them. We wanted to be sure that it felt reflective of a broader British society. Again the BFI and ITV were very keen that we made sure it had sexual, gender and racial diversity in its bones.

Can you tell us about the open casting process of that led you to Eden to play Jonny?

Camilla: It was all on Zoom because of Covid, and Cat [Catherine Willis], the show’s brilliant casting director, was able to sift through hundreds of self-tapes. Some of our cast have more experience than others but Eden has no screen experience. He’s done theatre and he’s really young. He’s our youngest cast member. We were just really taken with him.

Robert: Cat put messages out across social media so we got all these teens who are so used to filming themselves on their phones. It was like trying to find a needle in a haystack but we got down to a point where it was very clear there was the best actor for the role. Eden has this extraordinary talent. He has to hold up so much of this show and do incredible emotional turns within scenes. We were watching scenes in the edit and there’s a moment where Jonny is talking to the college counsellor soon after his father has died, and he’s presenting that everything is ok. The camera is on his face and you watch the tears come to his eyes and then he pulls them back in again and says, ‘No, I’m fine.’ You think, ‘Wow, you’re 17.’ That would be hard to do with 20 years of experience and he’s having to do that three or four times on a set with 100 people around him. We’ve been blown away by his ability to hold your attention and to give Jonny this depth of character. But they are all amazing. I’m sure every producer says this but we feel so lucky with our cast. They are a really exciting bunch of future stars and a really lovely gang. They have had so much fun working together.

What do you feel the other young actors have brought to Mei, Louis, Neve, Zia and Regan?

Robert: Callina Liang who plays Mei is someone else who has done very little screen work. Mei is a very enigmatic character. She has hugely hidden depths. The whole point of her story throughout the series is that she’s got this secret, which she is keeping from Jonny.



Robert continued: They are bonded by a secret that turns out to be more complicated than it first appears. So we needed that enigmatic quality from an actor but we also needed a particular strength that Mei has, in that she's suffered her own traumas but that hasn't weakened her. It's actually given her fire and Callina brings that fire to the character. She has this toughness but then below that this real vulnerability, which is also very hard to balance. Callina finds that balance within scenes. We've loved watching her.

Neve is a great character, isn't she? She's smart and funny but with loads of layers...

Robert: Lauryn Ajufu who plays Neve is another superstar in the making. Neve is struggling with her identity and trying to work out who she is away from all the things that her parents, the world and her friends project onto her. Lauryn brings this instant likeability to the role of Neve and almost in the reverse to Mei's character, Neve starts out by looking like she's very sweet and innocent and quite fun then actually finds a strength in herself later in the series to stand up to the people around her. Lauryn brings this wild energy but also this very gentle love for Jonny, which also underpins the series. Jonny and Neve have been friends since childhood. There is an element to their friendship – is it a friendship? Is it romantic?

Camilla: Lauryn has such a mature, naturalistic way of acting. She brings so much more to the lines and has got such energy; she has innate comic timing, and she can also show real pain but in a way that is not mannered. Lauryn is really impressive and we're hugely excited to have her in the show.

Spike Fearn says he initially went up for the part of Jonny. Did you immediately see something of Louis in him?

Camilla: Spike has a face that is vulnerable and very strong at the same time. We felt that that vulnerability worked really well for Louis. Spike also has a humour that comes with that, which we loved. What's interesting is that Louis was written as being a bit more neurotic than Spike portrayed him, but we felt that Spike brought something completely different to the character that we found delightful. We wrote Louis to suit Spike more after that.

Robert: Louis has a lack of guile to him and it's fun. Spike brings an openness to Louis and that feeling of teenage boyhood where life just seems quite bewildering. Louis has got a lovely home and good friends but he has so much to work out about who he is and what he is. There was this wide-eyed innocence to Spike that we thought really contrasted well with the angst and the darkness of Jonny.

Is Carla Woodcock the most experienced actor of the gang?

Camilla: Yes and I think that lent something to the character of Zia because Zia is clued up and confident and knows what she's doing. She knows how to use social media in a positive way. We don't want to make a show that says, 'The internet is bad.' Social media is extraordinarily painful and challenging and mentally really scary for this generation. But of course it can also be really positive. It brought teenagers together in Covid and can be joyful. I think Zia's character knows how to use it in a joyful way. Carla brings an authority to that role.



Regan is a great character. What does Tessa Lucille bring to the role?

Camilla: Dry humour. She is so dry without being mean. She's sweet natured. She's got hidden depths, which we discover during the series. We reveal a whole domestic story for her that you wouldn't have guessed.

Robert: It was funny with quite a lot of our actors that we cast them without knowing anything about them. It was interesting as we got into the process of filming to learn how many similarities they each shared with their characters. Tess shares a lot of similarities with Regan. There was some fortuitousness there and obviously something about that which shone through in the casting.

Will there be online support running after episodes?

Robert: Yes, we've been speaking to mental health charities through the process of this. There's a huge responsibility that comes with telling these sorts of stories to this audience. So ITV will be really careful to make sure that there is support afterwards.

Have you also felt a responsibility of duty of care to your predominantly teenage cast ?

Robert: Very much so. We have been very aware through this process that these are young actors that we are asking to tackle difficult issues that they themselves might be experiencing and living through. So yes we have given them a lot of support. We had an intimacy coordinator who dealt with any intimate scenes on set. We gave the actors the chance to talk to people afterwards if they felt concerned about anything. On occasion the actors have queried certain things and we have changed the scripts to make sure they feel comfortable with whatever they are doing.



Episode Summaries



EPISODE SUMMARIES

Episode 1

It's the last weekend of the summer holidays and Jonny is ready for a big night out with his two best friends, Neve and Louis. Jonny and Neve, partners in crime, are over-excited and go hard on the rides (and the drugs), while sober Louis nervously worries about how their night will turn out. They try to befriend Regan and Zia but end up embarrassing themselves and being brushed off. On the walk home, as they approach Jonny's family pub they see his dad being stretchered into an ambulance.

Unbeknown to Neve and Louis, Jonny has a secret that only his dad really ever understood. So when his dad - the one person he could talk to honestly - suddenly dies, Jonny's struggles intensify. He has a chance encounter with new girl, Mei, who tells him she understands because her dad also recently died.

After an outburst from Jonny at his dad's funeral, and some sexually-charged, awkward encounters at the wake (who knew grief could also make you feel so horny?), Neve and Louis are concerned about him. This intensifies when they start to doubt if he told them the truth about where he was over the summer...

As everything gets on top of Jonny, he climbs the church tower by his house, where Mei finds him distressed. But it's not immediately clear whether she's going to be a force for good in his life, or a catalyst who makes things to go from bad to worse?

Episode 2

Mei's recently moved back to Welwyn from Canada after her parents' marriage broke down. She knows there's something her mum, Jing, isn't telling her about her dad but when she finds out, Mei takes teenage rebellion to the next level.

Meanwhile Jonny's insomnia has got worse since his dad died, plus he's now anxious he was too honest about his inner struggles with Mei.

Neve's phone goes missing, and someone starts messaging her drug dealer, Pineapples, pretending to be her. Who is messing with her? Someone has it in for Neve and she doesn't know why.

Louis' dad is away for the weekend, so Jonny and Neve persuade him to have a party and to invite Zia. Unfortunately, the party is a bit of a flop but Mei salvages the night by driving the gang to a local club.

At the club, Jonny is increasingly intoxicated by Mei's dangerous side, and realises he can trust her with his secrets. Louis thinks his chances with Zia are screwed because he doesn't drink or do drugs, and worries he isn't "cool" enough for her.

Having learned the truth about her dad, Mei decides to take matters into her own hands, but the consequences are far worse than she could have ever imagined. Jonny can't help his growing feelings for Mei, can't stop thinking about her. He's hooked, but will Mei finally come clean to him about her lies...?



EPIISODE SUMMARIES

Episode 3

Louis wants to be treated like a grown up by his friends and his dad, Gareth. With his 17th birthday approaching, he is also desperate to lose his virginity before the big day. Neve persuades him to ask Zia out, and Zia says yes, leaving Louis simultaneously thrilled and terrified. Jonny gives Louis some unconventional advice about sex, as does Gareth. But when the moment comes with Zia, will the pressure get too much or will he manage to lose his virginity before turning 17?

Jonny and Mei are loved up, he's happy and feeling better than he has in a long time. His mum, Ann, is concerned he's spending too much time with Mei, and his brother Andrew is frustrated by their loud sex. To get away from them, Mei books her and Jonny into a hotel, but when she reveals how she paid for it, Jonny's moral compass is tested.

Mei encourages Jonny to have a lock-in at the pub for Louis while his family are away. As the night starts, Jonny feels like he's taken on his dad's role as pub landlord. But after Jonny makes a speech for Louis' birthday that compromises their friendship, and as the lock-in gets more and more out of control, even Jonny is forced to question the influence Mei is having on him.

Regan and Neve hang out together, and Regan tries setting Neve up with her friend Saj. But when Neve is disinterested in him, Regan works out Neve might have romantic feelings for someone else.

After the carnage of the lock-in, Jonny's family don't want him to see Mei any more. Jonny promises he won't, but will temptation get the better of him?

Episode 4

When Neve's strict parents go on holiday to Nigeria, Neve is delighted at the prospect of being home alone. Until her sister Timmi shows up, sent by their parents to babysit her. Neve is sick of living in Timmi's shadow – Timmi is hugely successful and their parents have her on a pedestal. Even Neve's teacher hopes Neve will be the face of the college open day – just like Timmi was. So Neve is delighted to discover Timmi might not be as perfect as everyone thinks.

Jonny, in shock after finding the truth out about Mei, numbs his pain by smoking weed. He avoids Mei and tells his friends they've broken up. Neve is secretly pleased with this news. Since things went horribly wrong with Zia, Louis wants to be a more adventurous version of himself, and agrees to bunk off college with Neve and Jonny. They get high in a supermarket where Louis meets Sarah. But when he wakes up in her flat the next morning, with no recollection of what happened and the worst hangover of his life, Louis worries about how to resolve the situation.

The gang go to an illegal rave; Neve loves having Jonny's sole attention, but when Mei confronts him about what's really going on, Neve realises Jonny hasn't been being honest with her. Jonny, more confused than ever, puts Neve in a difficult situation with dangerous consequences for her. Having seen Jonny in a new light, Neve is forced to question just how good a friend he is to her, but is the damage already done?

Jonny's mental state deteriorates and he finds himself wandering about town in the middle of the night. As dark feelings overwhelm him, his mind plays tricks on him – will he be able to pull himself back from the brink?



EPISODE SUMMARIES

Episode 5

Regan has to be very organised as her gran's carer. But her gran now needs a professional, which is how the chaotic Jaz arrives in their lives. Regan is unsure of Jaz and resents how much her gran is enjoying her company. The gang have to attend a careers fair. Neve signs up to a volunteering programme and meets Marcus, who patronises her, but who she can't help liking. Zia impresses PR-hotshot Sasha and bags herself a trial internship.

Meanwhile, Louis starts a part-time job at a local gym where he meets Kyle, and much to his surprise, they have an instant connection. Having ended up in hospital, Jonny reassures the doctor he will take better care of himself, and this time he means it. He decides he wants to take over the family pub, but a shock revelation from his brother turns Jonny's plans on their head. Shattered hopes for the future send Jonny down a dark road online. But will anyone see, before it's too late?

Reeling from Jonny's rejection, Mei is intrigued when she's asked out by Brett. But is Brett really the nice guy he seems to be? Regan enjoys Jaz's company more than she expected and lets her guard down. Jaz encourages Regan to have some fun by throwing a small party for her friends, which is also an opportunity for Regan and Jaz to get to know each other better. But as the party hots up, things don't go as planned for either of them. Neve is thrilled when Marcus shows up, but Marcus sees a side of Neve he doesn't like.

Meanwhile, Louis' relationship with Kyle takes an unexpected turn. At the party, an explosive argument between Mei and Jonny reveals some shocking truths about them both to the group. Jonny is left in a worse place than ever before.

Episode 6

After hitting rock bottom, Jonny finds himself in therapy and seems to be on track to getting better. However he's frustrated his family still can't talk honestly about their emotions.

Mei isn't honest with her mum about what happened with Brett, and declares she wants to move back to Canada. A cruel meme of Mei is going round college and Jonny is forced to either keep quiet or use this as his opportunity to finally stand up for her.

Jonny finds out a family secret, which causes him to question if he'll ever be able to improve his mental health, and when Mei tells him she's going back to Canada, Jonny is faced with a decision: to stay and face his problems head on, or run away with the one person who seems to really understand him.

At the local bonfire night, Louis finds himself torn between his longstanding feelings for Zia and new entanglement with Kyle. Neve gives Marcus an ultimatum that forces him to see her in a new light. Mei finally faces her demons but is unaware that Brett's obsession with her has only got worse. And Jonny finally realises the truth of his feelings – only this time it's too late.

PRODUCTION CREDITS.... EPISODE 1

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER.....ROBERT WULFF-COCHRANE, CAMILLA CAMPBELL & MARK O’SULLIVAN
WRITERS.....MARK O’SULLIVAN, YEMI OYEFUWA, ROB FRASER, KAT SADLER, CAMERON LOXDALE
DIRECTORS.....RICHARD SENIOR (EPS 1-3), MARLEY MORRISON (EPS 4-6)
PRODUCER.....SCOTT JAMES BASSETT
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY.....AADEL NODEH-FARAHANI (EPS1-3), KORSSHAN SCHLAUER
LINE PRODUCER.....SAMANTHA FRITH
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR.....HANNAH KENNEALLY-MUIR (EPS 1-6), INÉS ALT SERRANO
CASTING DIRECTOR.....CATHERINE WILLIS
COSTUME DESIGNER.....CÉCILE VAN DIJK
MAKE UP & HAIR DESIGNER.....JAINAB JAYE
EDITORS.....DAVID STARK (EPS 1 &3),
KARENJIT SAHOTA (EPS 2 & 4),
KEELAN GUMBLEY (EP 5),
JOSH MALLALIEU (EP 6)
MUSIC.....TOYDRUM
PRODUCTION DESIGNER.....MATTHEW BUTTON & DANIELA
PROPS MASTER.....PABLO PENAHERRERA
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.....CHARLIE ELLIOT (1-3), AMBER TORDOFF GIBSON (4-6)
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR.....CHLOE BROWN
ASSISTANT PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR.....MUNGO PEARCE



About Noho Film and Television



Noho Film and TV is an independent television drama and film production company set up in 2012 by Robert Wulff-Cochrane and Camilla Campbell who are joint Managing Directors.

Recent productions include The Windsors for Channel 4, Zomboat! for ITV2 and Prime Suspect 1973 for ITV.

Until 2011 they headed up the drama department at Channel 4 where they commissioned, among others, Misfits, Any Human Heart, Fresh Meat, Top Boy, Cast Offs, Skins and This Is England 86 and 88.