

SERIES OVERVIEW

Sam's (Youssef Kerkour) waiting to die, after swallowing a cabinet full of pills, when he's interrupted by his neighbour, Anna (Katherine Parkinson) - she's having a heart attack and needs to wait with him until help arrives. From this ill-fated first encounter, these two lonely neighbours, who have lost all faith in love, embark on a hilarious, obstacle filled relationship, and on the way discover that even when life seems to have passed them by, there are still surprises to be had...

CAST

Anna	Katherine Parkinson
Sam	Youssef Kerkour
Shelley	Kelle Bryan
Ray	Mark Heap
Damien	Ben Bailey Smith
Gina	Sue Vincent
Johnny	Shaun Williamson
Cathy	Olivia Poulet
Paul	Will Ash

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

KATHERINE PARKINSON

Katherine Parkinson is an English actress who appeared in Channel 4's *The IT Crowd* comedy series as Jen Barber, for which she received a British Comedy Best TV Actress Award in 2009 and 2014 and was nominated twice for the BAFTA Television Award for Best Female Comedy Performance, winning in 2014. Katherine has appeared on stage in the plays *The Seagull* (2007), *Cock* (2009) and *Home, I'm Darling* (2018), for which she was nominated for the Olivier Award for Best Actress in a Play.

Katherine co-starred in all three series of *Humans*, a science-fiction drama on AMC/Channel 4, which aired from 2015 until 2018 as well as BBC One comedy series *The Kennedys*. Other recent TV credits include *Here We Go* (BBC One), *Hitmen* (Sky Comedy) and *Defending the Guilty* (BBC Two). She has also appeared in the films *The Boat That Rocked* (2009) and *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2018). Katherine will co-star in *Rivals*, a new series based on the celebrated novel by Jilly Cooper, coming soon to Disney +

YOUSSEF KERKOUR

BAFTA nominated actor and veteran stage performer, Youssef was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company for 5 years and has worked prolifically on both sides of the Atlantic and across three continents. Named a BAFTA BREAKTHROUGH honouree for 2020, he is most well-known for portraying Sami in the Channel 4 series “HOME” for which he received a Royal Television Society award for Best Actor in a Comedy as well as numerous nominations, including a BAFTA nomination for Best Actor in a Comedy, a second RTS nomination and many others. Various on-screen credits include the leading role of Sam in “Significant Other” for ITVX and Quay Street Productions. Alfonso Cuarón’s “Augustus”, Megalodon in “Man Like Mo’Nique 4”, Karl in Channel 4’s “Baghdad Central”. “Dracula” for Netflix/BBC , “Gavin and Stacey” Xmas Special. “Criminal UK”, “Cursed” and “Stay Close”, all for Netflix. Film credits include Reggie Yates’ “Pirates”, Ridley Scott’s “House of Gucci”, and his upcoming “Napoleon”, “A Bit of Light” for Stephen Moyer and “The Actor” for Duke Johnson.

Originally from Morocco he is a graduate of Bard College in upstate New York and of LAMDA in London.

KELLE BRYAN

Kelle Bryan was sure of her future in entertainment from an early age – winning a junior Miss World competition at only two years old. She is well known for being a part of Eternal – Britain’s most successful R&B group ever. 2005 saw Kelle return to her acting roots, when she completed work on her first film ‘*The Virus*’ by Luti Media. After spending the Summer of 2006 gracing our screens on ITV’s ‘*Love Island*’, where she finished in second place, Kelle returned to her first love: theatre. Kelle’s theatrical West end debut came in 2017, treading the boards in the critically acclaimed play ‘*Wings*’ with Juliet Stevenson. Kelle completed filming series regular roles in 2 BBC productions in the Summer of 2012, the BBC1 sitcom ‘*Me & Mrs Jones*’ with Neil Morrissey and Sarah Alexander and the CBBC drama ‘*Rocket’s Island*’.

Kelle became a series regular in Channel 4’s ‘*Hollyoaks*’ playing ‘Martine Deveraux’ in 2018, winning the RTS Award for Best Storyline 2022 and she was nominated for Best Actress at the Soap Awards the same year. Kelle is a resident panellist for ITV’s ‘*Loose Women*’ which was the winner of the RTS Award for Best Daytime Show in 2021 and she was part of the line up for the first all-black panel.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

ANNA – KATHERINE PARKINSON

Anna is in her mid-40s, with a hinterland of romantic disappointments, heartbreaks and family tragedies that have left her, now, a solitary figure living and working in her tastefully decorated flat. Shy, honest (hilariously so), kind, authentic, an indie music lover who goes to gigs on her own, she’s found peace in her own company. Her mother died a few years ago, but Anna sometimes still speaks to her, asks her advice – though her mother never quite gives the counsel she seeks. Anna finds and sees the humour and surreal nature of life in most things. She’s got an in-built bullshit detector; she’s witty, dry, original – a truth teller, but without being obnoxious about it. Her friends from Uni are all married or divorced with kids, but she never felt the need for any. By this point, Anna has retreated within herself, and is comfortable with silence and her own company. This is her life now and she can see the remainder of it unfolding in much the same fashion. Until Sam crashes into her life...

SAM – YOUSSEF KERKOUR

When we meet Sam, also in his mid-40s, he's spiralling out of control after his marriage to a shrewd, successful career woman has exploded. He comes from a big, boisterous family centred round the family business. Unlike Anna, he feels inescapably bonded to (and responsible for) his billowing family; the ex-wife, two adolescent children, and an equally flawed father (who he works for as a salesman at a bathroom store). Sam is very much not from the same cultural milieu as Anna, in fact he has never particularly found culture of any sort particularly engaging (just contrast his sparse, undecorated flat to hers). He's a victim to his sex drive, and now that he's out of his marriage he is unapologetic about avoiding monogamy and romantic commitment in his future. He's childlike – some would say infantile (!) – and neurotic, but he wears his heart on his sleeve which makes him funny and engaging... and an id-like foil to Anna, who is often paralysed by choice.

SHELLEY – KELLY BRYAN

Shelley met Sam in a club in Ibiza fourteen years ago, and immediately fell for his charm, confidence and infectious humour. After a whirlwind romance, he swept her off her feet - but it all went downhill pretty quickly from there. With little in common, the cracks between them grew over the years, in part fuelled by Sam's lack of purpose and drive, which ultimately jarred with Shelley's strong ambition and desire to have the best things in life. Despite their clear mis-match, Shelley fought for her marriage, to keep her family together, but when Sam walked out on her and the kids she decided to finally put herself first. And when Sam eventually came crawling back, begging for another chance, she wasn't having any of it - this is her time now, and she's not suffering any more fools.

EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE 1

An ill-fated first encounter brings Anna and Sam, two lonely neighbours who have each hit rock bottom, together in the most unexpected of ways, changing their lives forever.

EPISODE 2

Anna decides to grab life by the horns after a stark wake-up call from her doctor, while Sam strives to win back his wife. But when their worlds collide once again, will the spark between these two neighbours be reignited?

EPISODE 3

Anna is prepared to forgive and forget after their last uncomfortable encounter, but when she's inadvertently humiliated by Sam once again, she decides to step out of her comfort zone and embrace the world of online dating - with disastrous results.

EPISODE 4

When Anna reunites with a blast from her past, what begins as a fun reunion soon turns into a painful trip down memory lane. And having clearly lost his mojo, Sam is urged to try again with Shelley - but his return to the family home ends in chaos.

EPISODE 5

Shelley's unexpected visit sends Sam into a frenzy, and he turns to Anna for help. She's reluctant at first, but is left to pick up the pieces when Shelley delivers a devastating blow. And as the dust settles, events take a surprising turn.

EPISODE 6

Despite all the obstacles they've faced, Anna and Sam appear to be in a good place, but a surprise phone call changes everything. As they finally confront what they really mean to each other, they find the answers in unexpected places.

CAST & CREATIVE INTERVIEWS

KATHERINE PARKINSON – ANNA

What is *Significant Other*? Give us a quick summary of the premise and story, it's tone and main characters.

Significant Other is a comedy-drama. It's based on an Israeli show and it's essentially about two very lonely people who have had quite fractured and difficult love lives. They live in separate flats in the same block, and they are thrown together by unusual circumstances. It's essentially a 'will they, won't they?' But it's quite bleakly funny and it feels to me like a very original show, it feels very truthful.

In the read-through, the laughs we got felt they were laughs of recognising truths and being surprised at how truthful it was. The original setup at the beginning is that Sam (Youssef Kerkour) is in a bad place, takes lots of paracetamol and lies down to die. Then there's a knock at the door and it's his neighbour and she's having a heart attack and has been told by the ambulance services that she can't be on her own. It's not exactly Richard Curtis, but I find it very thrilling because it just feels as romantic and moving as those traditional romantic comedies with much more attractive and nubile people in it. But it feels like it's telling the truth of mid-life and when you've been bashed around a bit but find something in another person that makes you feel like a better person yourself.

Who do you play? Tell us about Anna and how she fits into the story?

Anna lives in a flat that she's made quite beautiful. She's got eclectic tastes and likes art deco lamps, much like me. Her job is writing the subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, she works at home and lives quite a solitary life. She's been involved with a married man for about five years. Then three years ago she ended it and walked away.

She lost both parents quite young, so she's somebody who has found herself a bit adrift and more alone than perhaps she expected to be in life. But she's got a lot going for her - she likes her job, and she likes her own company.

What made you want to be a part of the series?

It feels very modern. It's set in Manchester, but we were encouraged to use our own accents, which I think is great because often, in cities like Manchester, London and Liverpool, there are loads of people from all different sorts of places. Often, if you've gone to university there - which I think in Anna's case is what's happened - you stay. Also, Manchester looks beautiful in some of the shots that I've seen and very modern with its cool graffiti. We filmed around the Northern Quarter. I also wanted to be a part of the show because of the casting. They have cast people from different backgrounds without having a conversation about it and making it part of the story - which I think is great.

Tell us about your co-stars and what they are like to work with...

I love working with Youssef. You don't always know whether you are going to have the required chemistry - you get cast and you just hope for the best. But I knew as soon as I met him that this was going to work. We didn't get tested together. I think it was just the producers and David Sant's great instinct.

I had seen Youssef in *Home*, which I loved. And then we met for lunch, and I thought, "this is, going to be easy." Youssef and I share a love of coffee, food, and he's interesting on all subjects. Sometimes there's a bit of sitting around when you're filming, but he is so interesting that time goes by quickly when you're talking to him. He's very generous - I can tell he is looking out for other people, checking that they've got what they need. I'm not like that at all, but I admire it in others!

What can audiences look forward to from *Significant Other*?

This feels like an original love story. Everybody loves a love story, but this feels like one that hasn't been told. It's also very good to see older love. Obviously, I'm not that old... but people who are in their mid-forties, often come with damage. But there's a different type of love that can happen at that age and one that's very interesting and more interesting than the young stuff.

YOUSSEF KERKOUR – SAM

What is *Significant Other*? Give us a summary of the premise and story, it's tone and main characters.

Significant Other is about two characters, Sam and Anna. A very unlikely pair, who come together at a point in their lives where they are each in a sort of extreme place. All the obstacles in their life blind them to the fact that maybe the right person for them is living right next door.

The script is based on an Israeli show of the same name. It is a love story, but between the thorns of the rose and not the flower of the rose. Which is a bit of a twee way of saying it's two people that have issues and whose lives have taken a turn for the worse who then come together in extreme circumstances.

Who do you play? Tell us a bit about the character and how he fits into the story...

We see my character, Sam, wanting to kill himself in the beginning. There's a knock at the door and his neighbour's having a heart attack and bang! That's the introduction that they both have to each other. From that, blossoms a friendship, a romance... will they, won't they? The ambiguity is what's very exciting about it. It's a lovely place to live and be in, but it's very gritty. The urban setting is important. The city is a third character in many ways. And the loneliness that one feels when living in a big city is very much a part of the story, where you can live next door to somebody for a long time who may actually be compatible with you in some way, and you wouldn't actually know. You'd probably never meet them despite them being your neighbour.

Why did you want to be a part of the show?

It's a very interesting take on relationships and who we are. Are we an individual or are we the other people? Do we need other people to feel like ourselves? Sam is somebody who on the surface would appear to be having a midlife crisis, but it's a bit more complex than that. He's somebody who wants to reclaim his lost youth, but who doesn't have the strength of character or generosity to stop at the age that he's aiming for. So, he continues to regress to an age that is a lot more juvenile and needy than he thinks. He wants to go and recapture his twenties, but he carries on going and becomes a 13-year-old. He's left his wife and children because he wants to shake things up and he wants to feel that feeling that he remembers. But he's walking away from something very great, and he regrets it and wants it back. Now he can't have it back, and that's where we meet him in the story.

Tell us about your co-stars and what they are like to work with...

My co-star is the fantastic Katherine Parkinson, who plays Anna, the neighbour that Sam embarks on this journey with. Katherine is somebody I've always wanted to work with. I think she is the most well-rounded performer I've ever met. She can do everything; comedy, drama, everything - she has a beautiful way of blending it all together. She's also one of the nicest people you'll ever work with. It's made for an amazing set and an incredible work experience. Shelley, Sam's ex-wife is played by Kelle Bryan and she's the woman he's trying to get back with, who is fantastic and a barrel of laughs.

Tell us about the director/creative team and what they bring to the show...

It's been produced by Nicola Shindler, who I did *Stay Close* with and who I was just desperate to work with again. It's just a wonderful team. And of course, our director, David Sant, who directed me in both series of *Home*, who I've had a long working relationship with, I know very well. We have a real shorthand and a sort of telepathy going on while we work, which is just the most amazing feeling. It has been the most enjoyable experience, and I think audiences will definitely pick up on it. It was a very happy set, and it does come from the top. Happy crew, happy cast, and enjoyable working experience.

Can you tell us a little about Sam and Shelley's relationship?

Sam and Shelley on the surface are opposites. The compatibility in what makes for a partner is much more complex than what you think it is and it's very easy when you're in a compatible relationship to start to focus on the wrong things, which is what Sam has done. You start to focus on the surface level things where you know very well that you could be married to somebody for 50 years, but you like different movies. You like different foods - they like coffee, you like tea. Shelley is very much like that. She is from a different sort of class than Sam is, but they were compatible. They had a life, they had a wonderful routine, a family, two beautiful children. Sam had everything and he reaches this point in his life where he stops focusing and understanding the fundamentals. He starts to look at the surface and wants more and wants difference. He then sees the difference between himself and Shelley.

As a result, he creates his own wedge between him and something really great. He goes out, tries to live the single life, and of course he's a bit of a loser and he's self-centred, selfish and needs too much. Therefore, he does not have the exciting life that he's set out for, so he tries to backtrack.

Talk to us about how ethnicity is handled in the show and how it avoids the tired stereotypes that we often see...

I trusted Nicola Shindler so much to be able to inject that into the production. I think ITV are one of the networks that have been really trying to push things in the right direction. As an Arab Muslim, the day

I'm cast as a Brit drinking beer and eating bacon sandwiches and no one even mentions my ethnicity, is the day I will start to see some progress. That's very much what I was keen to do here. I'm playing a guy who has his cultural origins, but you don't need to mention it. We are a mixed-race family, and it doesn't have to be the cultural family, it can just be a regular middle class family that doesn't have to exist in some extreme place. It's been very wonderful to get to live in that for a bit. It feels like freedom, whereas in the past I have felt a bit more boxed in. I think what's wonderful about my relationship with Kelle's character Shelley, is that we are a mixed-race family, but the diversity which is important in this is not even mentioned.

What can audiences expect from *Significant Other*?

I think the reason why people would want to see the show and what they would get out of it is what I've always said: that the richest experience when you are viewing art of any kind is to be able to laugh at the comedy and cry at the truth. I think that's what this script has managed to capture so beautifully. It's got some very funny moments - and it's always good to laugh - and it's got some very deep truthful moments, and it's always good to feel that too. I think people will enjoy it.

KELLE BRYAN – SHELLEY

What is *Significant Other*?

I play Shelley and she is a very interesting lass. When I think about her and what we've created in terms of the character, the writers have done a sterling job. It was a no brainer for me when I read the script because where it sits in comedy is fresh and new. You've got the left side of things which is more of the satirical, and then you've got the right-side comedy which is more niche. *Significant Other* arrives somewhere in the middle and provides this palette of comedy that is interesting, diverse, and different.

Why did you want to be a part of the show?

It's a very interesting story. The comedy finds its way in terms of the situations we've all been in. I must give credit to Youssef - he is such a talent. It's rare that you find an actor who is so gifted dramatically but can just have that instinct of comedy. I had a conversation with him and I was saying, "you know what? You are just such a funny comedian." In response, he said it's the reverse and that he's a dramatic actor that just happens to be able to be funny.

Our characters have been married 14 years so there are those things that just drive you mad. But then there are scenes where I'm literally struggling not to laugh because I'm supposed to be crying and Youssef is being so funny. He's a very rare talent and I don't think he knows how good he is.

Tell us a bit about their character and how they fit into the story?

Shelley is convoluted in so many ways because she's got all these different elements to her life, as most women can relate to. She was doing incredibly well within her business life and having a great career. She was the breadwinner in the family, climbing the corporate ladder and then they wanted to have children. She wanted to have children, but it meant that she had to make a career change and she had to make that decision.

It's a very difficult place that she finds herself in. But as most women are, she's very resilient. They find that selfless part of them, which puts the children first. There's the feeling that you're going to have to

deal with your meltdown late, be strong, get the children through the breakup. She's got all of these nuances that are going on within her and all of these decisions to make. Plus, this 40-something year old child of a husband to now navigate through a divorce. It's a very weighted situation that she's dealing with, but in Shelley's stoic way, she's like, "I'll focus, I'll get on with it" and she rises to every challenge.

Why do think Sam wanted to break up with Shelley?

Sam is a great lump of an oaf. He's going through a midlife crisis. He thinks he can go back to his youth where he can live in a bachelor pad that he doesn't have the ability to even decorate. She was the organiser and got everything done, but he was the fun one. If there was ever going to be a rainy day, he'd always bring the sunshine. Their family dynamic was very lovely.

What can audiences look forward to from *Significant Other*?

It's very gripping. The writers have been clever in how they've set it up, the first episode really sets the premise for the whole series. It's quite shocking, but it's also truthful, which is what I loved about the script. Sometimes comedy can be satire, or it can be a bit tongue in cheek and that's where we find the comedy. But the essence of *Significant Other* is that it's based on truth. That's what's funny - it's those truthful situations that make you laugh rather than the setup. So yes, the first episode is shocking and thought-provoking, but it's a situation that's real and does happen to a lot of men. Midlife crises can go in many different directions. It can be that you go and get a younger woman and think that you've made it, or it can be that you have mental health problems. It can evoke lots of different emotions within men.

What people can expect is laughter in your living room. Those, "oh my goodness, that's so me" moments. It will make you think differently and think about the broader effects of a breakup of a marriage. There's also the cultural diversity and how that works and how it can be naturalised and normalised. It has a fantastic cast and it's been a joy getting to reunite with some of my previous *Hollyoaks* cast.

Tell us about your director, David Sant, and what he brings to the show?

David is a unique character. I think being Spanish also brings a certain flare and style of direction, which you wouldn't have otherwise. He really understands comedy, but also respects the drama. One doesn't outweigh the other. He's very conscious of keeping the truth of that story and then overarches it with the comedy, but he never lets one interrupt the other. He has a real gift for doing that. If you wanted to say something about how you felt about a particular scene for whatever reason - in terms of maybe a cultural difference or cultural sensitivity - he's very open and willing to listen to that and then builds those nuances into the performance.

DAVID SANT – DIRECTOR

What is *Significant Other*? Give us a summary of the premise and story, it's tone and main characters.

It's kind of an anti-romantic comedy, in which, we go back to the old romantic comedies of the seventies, eighties, but with a nice modern twist and where the characters are not necessarily your classic romantic leads. They are in a period of their lives where love is probably feeling like it's a long-gone choice and things develop for them in a way that they don't expect. We don't necessarily lead to a romantic ending—we don't know yet, but there's something there.

Tell us about your cast, what they bring and what they're like to work with...

Our actors are very truthful to the moment. They always ask the questions. They don't just go, where's the joke? We have endless conversations about where a character should be, why it should be there, why

are they feeling like that? And then when we say action, they always come up with extra. They are brilliant, both of our leads. We have a lot of other guest characters as well, but our leads are made for each other in terms of performing together and conveying these two parts. And in terms of finding the subtleties, they're very subtle.

What can audiences look forward to from *Significant Other*?

I love treading the line between drama and comedy and I love treading the line between beauty and ugliness and this show has both. Straight comedies, which I've done are a much simpler thing. I wanted to do something beautiful with it. The moment I saw it I said to my agent, "I don't want to hear about any other meetings, this is what I want to do". At that point I was just hoping that they would ask me, and they did, which is great.