

'I APPLIED TO BE AN EASTENDERS TRAINEE AND SURVIVED' – PAGE 7

Walford Gazette



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The Newspaper for EastEnders Fans

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BBC KILLS IPLAYER BEFORE US LAUNCH

It was supposed to be available in 2011, but that never happened. EastEnders fans in other countries like Canada were able to pay monthly to watch current EE episodes. See page 3 for details.



CLOSED FOR BUSINESS – Official BBC website relays the news.

BBC Global iPlayer is now closed. We would like to thank all of our subscribers for using the service. If you were a previous subscriber and have a billing issue, please note that BBC



BLAST FROM THE PAST – Martin Kemp as Steve Owen, certainly Albert Square's best-dressed gangster.

Martin Kemp Exclusive Interview: EastEnders' Best-Looking Bloke

We caught up with Martin Kemp (Steve Owen) before his New York concert with his band Spandau Ballet ("True"). He talks about playing bass again and his three-plus years on *EastEnders*. "Tamzin [Outhwaite – Melanie] and I turned into special in a short period of time." See pages 8 and 9

Matthew Robinson Looks Back:

Former Executive Director remembers how he placated June Brown (Dot), who threatened to quit over a script as Sue Tully (Michelle Fowler) was making her directing debut. "Everyone had said I was a madman to give her a chance, but who other than a madman would accept a contract to become *EastEnders'* Executive Producer in the first place." See page 4

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Around the Square

EE CLEANS UP AT BRITISH SOAP AWARDS

MANCHESTER – *EastEnders* cleaned up here at the recent British Soap Awards, taking Best British Soap, Best Storyline, and Best Episode, among the prizes.

Adam Woodyatt (Ian Beale) won Best Actor, and he won again with Laurie Brett (Jane) for Best On-Screen Partnership. Collecting his first award, Woodyatt paid tribute to the show's crew, saying: "'Live Week' (marking *EE*'s 30th anniversary) was ridiculous. It was a massive crew effort and there were 300 plus cast and crew involved."

EastEnders' Kellie Bright (Linda Carter) won for Best Dramatic Performance. *EastEnders* writer Rob Gittins won for Outstanding Achievement (Off Screen).

All five of the major soaps were recognised for their coverage of various social issue-led stories and the impact they've made on viewers. The ceremony was broadcast on ITV. Congratulations to the winners.



BEST ACTOR – Adam Woodyatt gives his acceptance speech.



SIBLING LA REUNION – Michael Greco (Beppe di Marco) and Leila Birch (Teresa di Marco) have both lived in Southern California for more than a decade. The on-air brother-sister recently unexpectedly ran into each other in a supermarket at their adopted home, reminiscing about their days on *EastEnders*. Leila provided the voice of the WABAC machine in the animated feature film *Mr Peabody and Sherman* for Dreamworks. Last year she also produced a short documentary called 'A Man of the Ways', celebrating Trevor Leggett, probably the most influential Englishman in the history of Judo. It was screened at a BAFTA event in London.

SHE GETS AROUND – In 2013 we told you about June Brown (Dot Cotton) meeting Lady Gaga on the *Graham Norton Show*. Apparently she met Boy George (centre) at some point too. June is now 88 years old, and still playing the character who made her famous.



SUPER FAN – Rachel Doyle loves John Altman (Nick Cotton) so much that she recently put together a great website for the actor at <http://www.johnaltman.info>



BBC Kills Global iPlayer Before US Launch

BY LARRY JAFFEE

LONDON – The BBC has terminated the global version of its online iPlayer – which had been available in 11 countries, but not the US.

In Britain, iPlayer users can watch on demand numerous television programmes, including *EastEnders*. The decision no doubt will expand the usage of computer VPN services – some free – that allow people in the US to access the iPlayer and pretend they're in the UK.

The iPlayer was supposed to be launched in the US in 2011 for a monthly fee of about \$8, but it never emerged after launching in Canada, Australia and various western European countries.

"We are now developing plans to launch new digital services across multiple devices," stated the BBC.

Media reports speculated that BBC America or other American networks that programmed British shows may have been the reason behind it never launching in the US.

Cassandra Power, BBC Head of Corporate & Digital Communications, tells the *Walford Gazette* that such speculation "has not been a factor" in the BBC's recent communications to announce the closure of the global iPlayer, which she termed a "trial."

FOUR YEARS LATER, WE STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHY THE IPLAYER NEVER LAUNCHED IN THE US.

The closure decision was foreshadowed by BBC Worldwide – the broadcaster's commercial arm – announcing in October 2013 it intended to "pull support" for the Global iPlayer app (i.e., not expand beyond the initial 11 markets) and instead focus on making material available via the BBC.com website. In July 2014, the BBC in its annual review repeated the decision to terminate the global iPlayer.

"Since launching the Global iPlayer trial in 2011 we have learnt a lot about how our users interact with it, what they want and a look for in such services," Power said.

"We've now taken those learnings onboard and are in the process of developing a number of new digital offerings that will be beneficial for audiences in a number of key markets," she said, adding that the BBC is looking at options to offer services on multiple platforms. The global iPlayer app never extended beyond Apple's iOS platform.

Perhaps BBC Worldwide thought it was not worth the global iPlayer's upkeep (or litigation) competing with free full episodes not only available through the aforementioned, gray-area VPN services, but also on YouTube, which the BBC supports with an official channel to

watch *EastEnders* and other shows.

The BBC also has quite a lot of programming on the OTT (over the top) online subscription service Hulu, which offers *EE* rival Coronation Street, but not *EastEnders*.

A *Walford Gazette* subscriber figured out another way through iTunes to get the British "iPlayer on my iPad and then access *EastEnders*. The following link <http://tinyurl.com/p96u5tm> has detailed instructions on how to do this. I used it and it worked perfectly."

(Another method using Google also worked for yours truly, but there were reports it left your computer susceptible to hacks and viruses, so the *Gazette* will not provide the info.)

Our subscriber continues, "I was able to watch all the live shows last week (from my iPad via my Apple TV to the television set in my living room) while they were being broadcast on the BBC (1:30 p.m., CST). So I ditched Dish Network, put up a digital antenna for local stations, am saving \$80-plus per month and paying OverPlay (a DNS provider in Florida) \$4.95 per month to watch *EastEnders* and all the BBC programs I want! Happy days are here!"

Well speaking of Dish, there was a false alarm with a *WG* subscriber/Dish customer believing the satellite carrier cancelled *EE*.

Since 2004, Dish has offered an *EastEnders* subscription package for \$9.99 monthly with four episodes a week a few behind what is seen currently in the UK.

"I was setting my DVR for next week and it was not on the PPV schedule," the subscriber wrote on June 28. "I contacted them and they said it showed no future showings."

The *Gazette* then called a different subscriber, who also gets Dish, and she reported she watched *EastEnders* the previous night.

Part of the problem is Dish Network doesn't even acknowledge on its website (www.dish.com) that it offers the *EastEnders* package, and when you call customer service they have no idea what you're talking about.

That's what happened during my 15-minute phone conversation. After waiting another 5 minutes for a manager to resolve the issue, I hung up and instead engaged in a maddening 45-minute online chat with a Dish representative, as you can read for yourself.

They're obviously only interested in selling big TV/Internet packages, and can't or won't answer a simple question: Do you offer a special *EastEnders* subscription?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Hi, my name is Jenny (ID: Q1J). How may I help you?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Thank you for choosing DISH, Home of the Hopper. Are you chatting to set up satellite TV today?

Larry Jaffee: Do you have a subscription package for the British TV show *EastEnders*?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Let me check that for you, Larry.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Just to verify, will this be your first time here at Dish?

Larry Jaffee: Yes

Jenny (ID: Q1J): That sounds great! We are running a lot of specials for new customers and I am very much excited to extend them all to you.

Larry Jaffee: I am only interested in knowing if you have that particular program.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): While checking, may I please have your complete address to check the availability of the service and promotions?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Sure. I'm checking it right now.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): If I may ask, what channel do you usually watch British TV show *EastEnders*?

Larry Jaffee: Ten year old episodes are on my local public TV station. My friend pays \$9.99 to DISH for an extra package that shows on Sunday nights 4 episodes (2 hours).

Jenny (ID: Q1J): I see. Thank you for letting me know.

Larry Jaffee: One of your colleagues on the phone 10 minutes ago didn't know what I was talking about. And there's no mention of *EastEnders* on the DISH website.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Hang on please. Let me double check.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): May I please have your zip code please so I can check?

Larry Jaffee: 11754

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Thank you.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Thank you for waiting.

CHAT TRANSCRIPT

CONTINUES BELOW...

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Upon double checking, you can watch *EastEnders* through PBS local stations.

Larry Jaffee: yes, but what I'm talking about has nothing to do with that.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): If I may ask what exact TV show are you looking for?

Larry Jaffee: I already told you: *EastEnders*

Jenny (ID: Q1J): *EastEnders* is currently airing in PBS station which is included in your local stations.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): You can get PBS at no additional cost.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Allow me to walk you through on our packages and offers.

Larry Jaffee: That is not what I asked you right from the start of this "chat." If you had been paying attention, you'll see I am talking about the current episodes that are broadcast in the UK and are replayed on DISH for \$9.99. I know *EastEnders* is on my local PBS, but those are 10-year-old episodes.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): One moment please.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): May I know where did you get these information? Can you at least tell me the name of the package that you are referring to.

Larry Jaffee: One of your subscribers who lives in a nearby town. In fact, I once watched it with her. It shows up as a PPV Sporting Event on the welcome screen, but instead *EastEnders* comes on Sunday nights at 9 pm (EST).

Jenny (ID: Q1J): I see. Thank you for letting me know.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): It shows here that yes you can watch *East Enders* through PPV for \$9.99 you just need to have a TV service.

Larry Jaffee: any kind of TV service?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Once the account is active, you can call our Customer Service Department to order that specific shows.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): I can walk you through on our package here, Larry.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): *Larry

Jenny (ID: Q1J): If I may ask, how many TVs are you looking to hook up?

Larry Jaffee: What did you mean "It shows here". Why did it take you over 25 minutes to finally figure this out?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): I apologize because I was thinking that you are referring to a channel or a package because upon checking it is a PPV.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Let's keep your order moving so you can start watching you favorite shows.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): If I may ask, how many TVs are you looking to hook up?

Larry Jaffee: What is the least expensive package, that will allow me to get the PPV *EastEnders*?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): We can get you started with our most basic package with over 55 channels, Larry.

Larry Jaffee: How much is that?

Jenny (ID: Q1J): This is our most cost effective package.

Larry Jaffee: Give me the monthly \$ rate.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): The monthly bill depends on the number of TVs, type of equipment, and programming package that you will choose.

Larry Jaffee: 1 TV

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Just to verify, is that an high definition TV?

Larry Jaffee: yes

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Since you have HD TV, I highly recommend our next package which is America's Top 120 this has over 190 channels that you can choose from.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): The reason is because Smart Pack does not carry HD programming,

Larry Jaffee: You still haven't given me any dollar amounts. Please!

Jenny (ID: Q1J): Let me do the math for you.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): For the America's Top 120 package on your 1 TV with Hopper HD DVR, your regular monthly rate will only be at \$71.99 before taxes.

Should you qualify to our best plan, you will receive a \$30.00 credit off your monthly bill for the first 12 months making it \$41.99 before taxes.

Jenny (ID: Q1J): How does that sounds?

Larry Jaffee: Thank you for the information.

Exec. Prod. Reminisces About His EE Days

BY MATTHEW ROBINSON

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

November 1998

I remember shepherding Susan Tully's first trio of episodes through the system, with her directing. Everyone had said I was mad to give her a chance, but who other than a madman would accept a contract to become *EastEnders'* Executive Producer in the first place?

Thus, to prove a point, to prove I hadn't completely lost the plot (subject reserved for a future blog), I took on the extra (pleasurable) burden of acting as Sue's producer for a month – checking her shooting notes, attending her planning meetings, sitting behind her crouched over the glowing monitors in the half-darkened control room, just as Julia Smith had crouched over me 13 years earlier.

Sue was impressive: she'd done her homework, knew her scripts backwards, worked out her angles, plotted her timelines (how long to give herself to get each scene 'in the can'), and, humbly, consulted with her grizzled producer if she felt unsure about anything.

Don't forget, I'd shepherded Sue through her first weeks, indeed months, as Michelle Fowler. I'd stood by her side in the episode when Michelle was seduced by Den Watts, after Angie had gone to bed and Den had switched off the lights ... dum dum, dum dum dum. But Sue's successful efforts as first-time director is not the point of this blog.

It was the distraction, the rum-pus, I had to deal with – in the half-darkened control room when Sue had gone outside to 'The Lot' to persuade a reluctant actor to do it this way rather than that.

The control room door swung open without ceremony. It was June Brown holding three scripts. June Brown looking like ... like Dot Cotton who hadn't had a cigarette for a month. "I'm leaving!" she announced brandishing the scripts. "Leaving to go home? Are you sick?" I asked sympathetically.

"Leaving the show! As of now!" June shot back with surpris-



MATTHEW ROBINSON – directed *EastEnders'* very first episode and dozens of others, and later became executive producer.



"I've just read these scripts. I'm leaving."
—June Brown to Matthew Robinson

ing venom. "June! I'm producing. Can't it wait?" I said as Sue pushed past the fuming actress to re-shoot the scene the way she wanted it. "No, it can't!" spat June. "I've just read these scripts. I'm leaving." "Sue? Can you cope for a couple of minutes while I sort out ..."

"It'll take more than a couple of minutes," spat June again. "Probably the rest of the day!" Sue seemed in control. Her material so far had been well up to scratch. I rose and ushered a steaming June into a nook and cranny away from the control room. "What's up, June? How can I help?"

"Have these scripts been printed with the wrong names on the characters?" June hissed, prodding at page after page. I spotted extracts from the storyline where Dot's new housemate, Lilly Mattock, came home late, Dot thought she was a burglar, sprayed her with a can of furniture polish, half blinding her, involving Lilly's hospitalization and all sorts of subsequent drama.

"No," I said stepping back half a pace to be prepared should any sort of physical assault be forthcoming from an out-of-control June. "So don't you lot know what

you're doing?" hissed June, now aware that the corridor was full of passing people. "You mean – storyliners and writers?"

"Who else? It should be the other way round! Lily should blind Dot. Can't you see it? No one cares about Lilly, She's only been here five minutes. Millions care about Dot!"

For a few seconds, I stood looking at June Brown still quivering. Selfishness, I thought to myself. Hogging the best stuff. Typical actress. Typical star.

Then – a Damascene moment.

And change it we did, and from that change came a whole series of wonderful smaller stories – 'Dot on Pot' being one that flashed across rival Red Top headlines, repeated ad nauseam for weeks afterwards. My main worry, as I made my way back to producing Sue Tully, was how to sell the change to Barbara Keogh playing 'Lilly Mattock'.

Fortunately, Barbara hadn't read the original scripts – June was al-



NO LONGER MICHELLE – Susan Tully editing one of the first three *EastEnders* episodes she directed in December 1998.

June was of course 100% correct. We, in the editorial department, had it 100% wrong.

"June!" I said. "What?" she said, still quivering.

"I've known you a long time, right?"

"Yes! Since 1985! So why don't you see it?"

"Stop! I DO see it! I'll sort it."

"What do you mean? Sort it?"

"You'll get blinded by Lilly. We'll change it."

ways quick off the mark – and, to my knowledge, never knew what had been in store for her.

"Any problem?" asked Sue as I retook my seat, crouching behind her in the gloomy control room.

"Nothing compared with making sure you finish without incurring overtime," I replied.

Sue finished at five minutes to six – with three great episodes in the can.

Matthew's memories will resume.

Inside the Mind of Phil Mitchell

BY YASMIN HEADLEY

Editor's note: The author is an accredited Integrative Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) psychotherapist in private practice in London, UK. Yasmin is also studying for a PhD in Mind-Body Medicine and Integrated Mental Health. She has followed EastEnders on and off over the years. You can reach her at yasminheadley@gmail.com and read more about her background at www.thecompletelife.com.

We are all subjects of our history. Anyone who tells you otherwise is trying to sell you something or is invested in your continuing to live as you are.

For some this is a good thing; for many this is not the way to live. Many would love the magic elixir that would get rid of every negative break with the past but it is not possible to do so with a bottle, a happy thought or magic.

In looking at a psyche of a person we would look at their history, their present life and their thoughts and behaviour. We would look at the support system and resources they have in their lives and we would look at what they do when they are stressed.

In some therapies, such as the psychodynamic and the psychoanalytic, a great deal of time is spent on the patient's past and in the unfurling of their history. In cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which is the approach I take, I spend some time there, but I also look at their feelings, thoughts and behaviours. These are key to helping an individual change.

Modern-day research shows how we are not just a subject of history and genetics but are also affected by epi-genetics. Epi-genetics is our environment, those who are around us, the food we eat and the activities we do.

Phil Mitchell

Phil is in his 50s. His mother Peggy ran the Queen Vic, which caught fire. They lost everything. He has even endured the loss of his businesses. He has a brother named Grant and a sister named Sam. He has one ex-wife and various girlfriends, has had an affair with his brother's wife and has already spent some time in jail. Phew!

Even just a few of these incidents would be enough to traumatize anyone. After what he has experienced, it is amazing that he makes it through each day!

Do you sometimes wonder where *EastEnders* would be without the Queen Vic? The Queen Vic is the centre of the universe, where



COMPLEX CHARACTER – Phil Mitchell appears to be suffering from borderline personality disorder (BPD). He often shows BPD's range of behaviours – violent streaks, mood swings, alcoholism, moments of tenderness – while hiding behind a veneer of toughness.

everyone who is anyone goes for a drink. Owning this little piece of property seems to be akin to owning Central Park in New York, or Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

And where would *EastEnders* be without Phil Mitchell? No one has ever owned Phil Mitchell. They can lock him up, they can beat him, frame him, shoot him, steal his land and possessions... but whatever happens, like a cat, he will always land on his feet.

Peggy Mitchell often reminds her children that they are Mitchells and nothing ever fazes them: "We are Mitchells, and Mitchells stay together." With this in mind, what makes Phil Mitchell tick? It seems to be family. Family is very important to a Mitchell.

Phil certainly comes across as rough, tough and hardworking. Someone who will always hold a grudge and remember the smallest of slights. He has been in prison a few times, and at other times went free due to the shenanigans of a crooked solicitor and barrister. There have been tender moments with his mother, his girlfriends and some soft moments, even with Ian Beale.

Maybe the tough exterior really has a soft underbelly. So often a tough exterior is there to hide a gentle soul. Phil comes from a world where showing your underbelly is to show weakness. It is about survival not just of the fittest but where the one who makes the most noise wins.

To grow up in the Mitchell household was also about not showing any vulnerability. Any sign of weakness was met with laughter, derision, jokes and sarcasm. He had been abused and beaten by his father as a child and was later worried he would also hit his own son. It is no wonder that he

goes around with this tough shell. To walk tough would be to walk without anything going in and out. In truth all who do stay tough are often more vulnerable than those who are more open.

In the end the tough shell does break open like an old Easter egg. It does crack, if not mentally then physically. Those who hide behind such toughness often find issues with their heart, liver and possibly their immune system being affected. There is only so much we can hide. We are not built like shellfish with a hard body.

What would a possible diagnosis be? I think it may be borderline personality disorder (BPD). The thing about BPD is that when you are with a person with BPD, you often feel like you are walking on eggshells. One slight noise, one wrong action, one wrong word, one wrong look can set the person off.

Phil has very intense emotions, which have to be expressed all the time. There seems to be no inhibition control. He is very impulsive and can also find it very hard to contain and control his anger. He finds it hard to keep and maintain stable relationships.

I sometimes wonder why he does anything outside the law because his paranoia is itself painful enough to live with in his own head without adding to the reality of being always looked over by the police.

This, though, is one of the realities of BPD. There is a high correlation between those who have BPD and those who have suffered from trauma as a child. Childhood adversity can affect us as adults. We all, at some time or another, can have a BPD behaviour. It is possible in times of stress for any one of us to have one of the BPD behaviours. I could, for example, get very stressed and then feel very

emotional and find my emotions going up and down. If it goes on for too long, and too often, then there is something going on. It is the regularity of the occurrence and the range of behaviours that make it BPD, and that is what Phil often shows.

But that makes it interesting. So many of the people with BPD that I know can be so creative and interesting. It is never ever boring. The world would be a dull place without them. There would be no soaps on TV.

No one taking risks in the world. But for people with BPD their world can be painful. It is painful to live with the thoughts and feelings they live with. They need peace but seem to automatically battle themselves and the world around them.

As an alcoholic, Phil has gone on and off "the wagon" as many times as the West Ham football team has been in and out for the Cup. He has even attended Alcoholics Anonymous but even that brought on the opportunity for an affair. But alcoholism is a lifelong issue, and it never goes away. He will always be in recovery.

One of the deep issues as an alcoholic is co-dependency, which is at the root of all addictions. The cure? Long-term therapy. Somehow though, I cannot see Phil Mitchell learning mindfulness to help him relax. It sounds like the only thing that will bring on the relaxation response within him is a pint pulled at the Old Vic.

You will always know where you are with Phil. He wears his heart on his sleeve, and this is what is so endearing about him. *EastEnders* would be far too boring without him.

N.B. Please note that these are imaginary musings and do not represent an actual clinical case study.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Simon May Composed the 'EastEnders' Theme

BY MELISSA BERRY

Simon May is a British musician and composer, best known for composing some of British television's most popular theme tunes, including *EastEnders* and *Howards' Way*.

The *EastEnders* theme is synonymous with the 'doof doofs'—the drum rolls that end each and every episode of our favourite soap.

Another *EastEnders* storyline gave May a hit in 1986. Nick Berry, who played Wicksy, topped the charts with 'Every Loser Wins,' which sold over a million copies. It won the Ivor Novello Award for best-selling single of 1986.

In 1993 the theme itself was given a 'jazzy' update that fans disliked, with many claiming it was too 'posh' for Walford. An updated version of the theme was introduced in 1994. And later, with Johnny Griggs, May wrote another set of lyrics for the theme. 'I'll Always Believe in You' featured lead vocals by Sharon Benson and was based around the extended version of the 1993 theme.

In 2009 he was asked to revamp the *EastEnders* theme again, to update the one running from 1994, making it lighter in tone and bringing back elements of the original theme missing in the previous version.

May has also written variations for character Peggy Mitchell's exit, 'Peggy's Theme,' which aired in September 2010, as well as one for Pat Butcher.

Before becoming a full-time musician he had a career as a schoolteacher, teaching languages and music at Kingston Grammar School and still teaches part time today.

I recently had the chance to ask this *EastEnders* legend a few questions regarding his career before he headed off on his summer holiday. Here's what he had to say.

Walford Gazette: When and where did you first write music?

Simon May: I often jokingly say that I started writing the first six notes of *EastEnders* when I had my first piano lesson at the age of seven in my home town Devizes in Wiltshire. My first piano teacher, Ann, taught me the simple scale of C major, and if you think about it, the notes C D E F G A are the start of the *EastEnders* melody. The best way to give you a serious answer to your question is to give you a very short extract from my autobiography: "I remember so well the very first time I performed my first meaningful improvisation. I'm not



MEMORABLE TUNE – Since February 1985 only one song has opened *EastEnders*, composed by Simon May (above).

sure exactly how old I was, but I had just bought the sheet music of 'Someday My Prince Will Come' from the Disney film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. I've never been good at reading music. (The sight-reading part of my piano examinations used to scare the life out of me.) I couldn't play what was on the sheet music, so I started to work out what the basic chords were and then move the fingers of my right hand around to create a new melody over the original chord sequence. It was a magical and exciting discovery that I could create my own tunes!"

WG: US fans are most familiar with the themes you have written for *EastEnders* and *Howard's Way*. As a matter of fact, a photo of the *EE* sheet music appeared in the very first issue of the *Walford Gazette*! Can you tell us of other pieces we might be familiar with?

SM: *Wife Swap* keeps using one of my compositions, 'Web of Deception,' as incidental music in *Wife Swap USA*, but as it is Production Music (i.e., Library Music) we don't get a screen credit. I also wrote the score for the movie *The Dawning* starring Anthony Hopkins and Hugh Grant, which was a cult hit in the UK and the US.

WG: How did you become involved with *EastEnders* initially? Were you approached to write the theme?

SM: I had written the themes to two BBC-TV drama series that Tony Holland the script editor liked a lot. When he was developing *E8* (which was the working title for *EastEnders*) he invited me

to meet him and Julia Smith and submit ideas for the new soap theme. Happily they both loved my second attempt.

WG: It must have been amazing to record the lyrics with Anita Dobson and to appear on *Top of the Pops*. Can you tell us a little bit about this experience?

SM: Here's another short extract from my book, which hopefully helps to answer your question. "Anita Dobson was one of the *EastEnders* cast who I had great fun working with when she sang the vocal version of *EastEnders* in 1986. Not only is she a consummate professional, but also a very warm and kind person. "Since the launch of the programme I had received hundreds of letters from the public saying that the tune should be turned into a song and even sometimes sending me their suggested ideas. Don Black who had just written the wonderful words for *Howards' Way* was my natural choice of lyricist. Although I consider myself a lyricist as well as a composer I felt that Don would do a far better job, which indeed he did. I am not sure how many people realize how original his lyric is – yes, it's easy to fall in love, but staying in love for a lifetime is much harder."

WG: The *EE* theme and the 'doof doofs' that appear at the end of each episode are now iconic. (I once sang the lyrics with a friend while floating down the Thames in London!) Did you know that they would be this famous 30 years on, and do you watch *EastEnders* now?

SM: I still watch *EastEnders* as

often as I can. I believe it's the best soap on UK television, and it received loads of awards this year at the Soap Awards (including best UK soap) – this does rather show that I'm not biased!

Here's another extract from my book which tells you how the 'doof doof' was created:

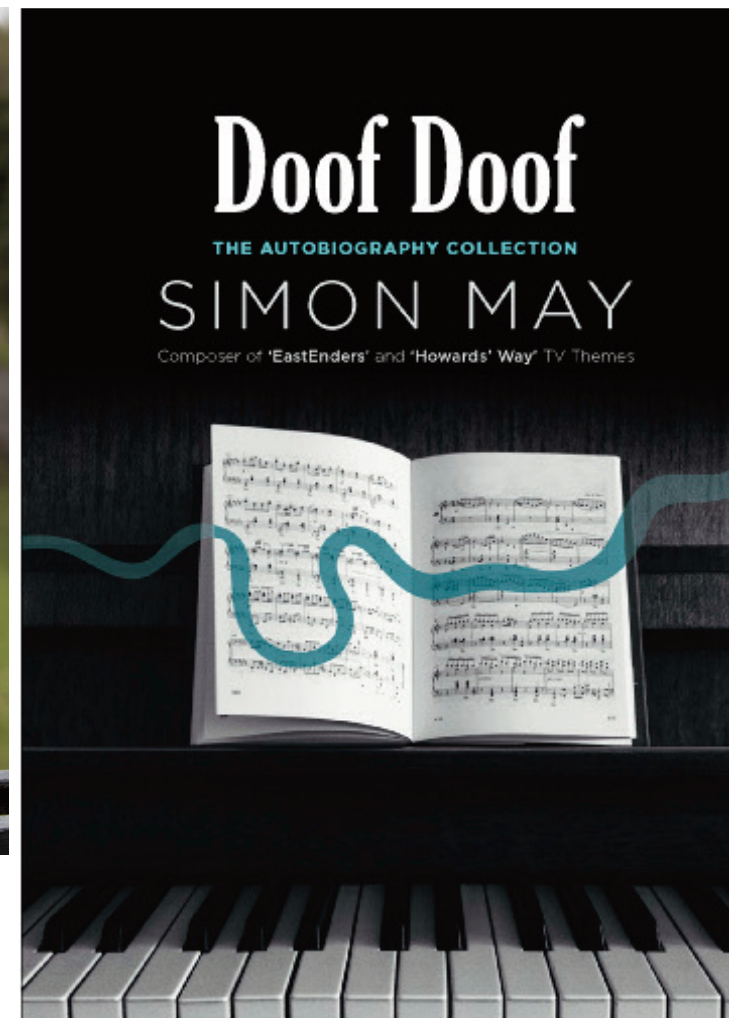
"When I compose and record an important theme tune I always create a long version, partly because it might one day be marketed as a commercial three-minute recording, and partly because it's easier to edit a short version from a long one rather than the other way round. Creating a long version also gives you the freedom to experiment and take more risks than if you are only creating a short thirty-second version.

*"So with *EastEnders*, I created a three-minute version starting with the opening statement which was to become the opening title music.*

"From that middle section, how could we get back to the more contemporary end section which had a different feel to the Cockney section? I knew that there would have to be a dramatic drum fill to create a musical distraction and bring us back to the feel of the main piece. That fill (now referred to as the 'doof doof') was a rhythmic reflection of the last triplet 'hook' in the main melody. It was therefore compatible but also unexpected and acted as a delightful bridge between the two different musical styles.

"When I was mixing the tracks, I asked the engineer Neil to solo the drum fill which was played on the electronic Simmons drum kit by the

continued on page 14



My Experience at BBC Elstree Studios

By TOM WILLETTS

Editor's note: Last issue we told you about the author above and his new website 'Walford Watch'. He recently was invited to interview for a job at EastEnders, as you'll read below.

Just over a month ago I was completing my university degree and began searching around the Internet for jobs. I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in the arts; whether working as a writer, performer or anything of that type.

I'm such a big fan of television and especially *EastEnders*, so it's always been a dream to work for the show. And after a few days of searching around and exploring various job opportunities I stumbled across the BBC careers website.

EastEnders was looking for a Trainee Junior Storyliner to join their team. Without a moment's hesitation I applied. The job specification stated they were looking for someone who was creative and passionate about *EastEnders*. In my application I emphasised my passion for the show, explaining that I had created and wrote for my own blog, Walford Watch, that I had completed a creative degree and had an interest in writing and developing stories.

After I had sent off the initial application it drifted towards the back of my mind and I focused on completing the final stages of my degree. This was until early June, when I received an email stating I had been chosen from over 650 applicants to be one of 35 invited to BBC Elstree Studios for an interview.

As you can imagine I was very, very excited at the prospect of visiting the studios and also quite proud that I had reached this stage. I then had to send a short writing sample to Alex Lamb (*EastEnders* Story Producer), which would be used to judge me as a candidate.

Along with the writing sample, the candidates had to prepare a new storyline that we would pitch to the *EastEnders* story team on the day of the interview. The pitch had to be three minutes long, so I quickly began piecing ideas together to make a fluent and concise pitch.

So with my writing sample sent off and my pitch planned and ready to deliver, all roads led to the 22nd of June and the big day of visiting the studios and possibly gaining a job.

As I live around two hours' drive from London my parents kindly travelled with me, and we stayed in a hotel close to the studios. On the morning of the interview I can honestly say I wasn't nervous at all. After a morning cup of tea and a few biscuits I made the short walk from my hotel and ar-



rived at the BBC security gate and the entrance of 'EastEnders HQ' and other television programmes.

The nerves started to kick in as I met some of the other candidates just inside the entrance, and this is where I received my BBC visitor badge. I've attached a picture of this below as unfortunately this was the only picture I could get on the day, but hopefully my words paint a picture of what it was like inside the studios.

After a short period of waiting for the final few candidates to arrive we were directed into the main offices of *EastEnders* and to a room where Alex Lamb and his story team met us. The whole day was very enjoyable and relaxed and this began with an *EastEnders* quiz in which we were split into teams. This was a fantastic way of meeting the other candidates, sharing where we had come from and also our passion for *EastEnders*.

After various cups of coffee to calm the ever-growing nerves it was time to deliver our story pitches. We delivered these to the *EastEnders* Story Producer, Series Researcher and a member of the Story department.

The whole process was much more relaxed than I initially thought it would be, which helped in terms of discussing the story pitch with confidence. As we were in small groups to deliver our pitches it was very interesting to listen to other candidates' ideas for new stories.

Then came the most exciting part of the day. We were back in the original room, and the announcement came that we were going to be treated to a tour of the Square! The excitement levels inside the room instantly rose and I couldn't wait to be on the set.

After a short walk from the office we arrived on the Square. From this moment onwards it was such a surreal experience. Everything seemed much, much smaller than it does on the television

screen, and we were allowed to walk around and explore. Standing in the street looking up at the Queen Vic was one of the most memorable moments. After seeing this shot on television for years, it was a great experience to be standing outside it myself. The attention to detail was fascinating, from the 'Walford' tax discs on the various cars to the precise detail on the market stalls.

I spent some time in the Minute Mart before carrying on down Bridge Street. The Albert was probably the most impressive part of the exterior set. It seemed very tall and stood out amongst the other buildings around it.

I made sure I got everything possible out of the time; wandering the set, taking time to step inside the garage and community centre and strolling through the park and allotments. These were much smaller than I had imagined.

It really does make you realise how impressive and clever the camera work is, as on screen it does look very large and open, but if you ever have the chance to explore Walford for yourself you'll see it's a lot smaller.

It was a brilliant experience to explore the exterior set and certainly something I will never forget. Unfortunately we didn't get the chance to tour the interior set as filming was taking

place, but the walk from the offices to the exterior set took us past the various studios where the interior of the Queen Vic and various houses stood.

After this we headed as a group to the BBC canteen for a short break for lunch before the Story team announced who would be making it through to the afternoon session. At lunch we were surrounded by various people, who included a large group of the cast from the BBC medical drama *Holby City*.

Unfortunately I didn't make it through to the afternoon session but I did receive some positive feedback from the *EastEnders* story team, which has only increased my determination to try again once future opportunities arise.

It was a wonderful day, meeting the *EastEnders* team, exploring Albert Square and seeing some talented and great people. All of the *EastEnders* team were very supportive and genuinely kind people, and the tour of the exterior set was an experience I will never forget.

I really hope you have enjoyed reading about my experience at the BBC Studios. If you would like to know anything more about my experience or myself please email me at tomwilletts@live.co.uk. I can be found on Twitter @TomWilletts12 or through my *EastEnders* site @WalfordWatch or on the web at www.walfordwatch.wordpress.com

Wanted: Story Editor, EastEnders

In addition to the trainee position that Tom Willetts wrote about above, the BBC also recently advertised for a story editor. Here are excerpts from the job description:

With over 350 hours of in-house output a year, BBC Drama Production is making some of the most original, diverse and highly acclaimed television. *EastEnders* is the multi award winning soap broadcast four times a week on BBC ONE. It currently ranks as one of the most watched TV dramas in the UK tackling many controversial and taboo issues previously unseen on television in the UK. Through great storylines and attention to detail the show manages to successfully balance gritty realism with high drama and entertainment to keep its millions of dedicated viewers coming back for more, on-screen and on-line, every week.

As our Story Editor your main aim is to deliver high quality, high profile, cost-effective drama by creating story ideas and storylines of the highest standard, consistent with *EastEnders*, and generating and contributing to the planning and commissioning document, under guidance from the Story Producer and Series Consultant. The ideal candidate needs to have extensive drama Script Editing, Story Editing, Storylining or Writing experience, preferably on a long running drama, with a thorough and demonstrable understanding of character, story and structure. We like to see lots of enthusiasm, a demonstrable interest and understanding of the genre, especially *EastEnders*, and a proven ability to persuade and influence whilst being able to take on several different opinions in a story meeting. The Story Editor will be responsible for serial continuity of storylines and character, across each story document at every stage of the development process. Two-year Fixed Term Contract.

Exclusive Martin Kemp Interview

Walford's Best-Looking Bloke Looks Back

BY LARRY JAFFEE

EastEnders fans fondly remember Martin Kemp as the actor behind the dashing, well-dressed gangster Steve Owen, last seen in 2002 (UK episodes) blown to bits in a car explosion before handing off an infant to nemesis Phil Mitchell.

Before his *EastEnders* stardom, Kemp became famous in the 1980s as bass player with the hugely popular band Spandau Ballet, which he joined as an 18-year-old.

It's 32 years since Spandau Ballet first called it a day – and six years since its initial return. The not-so-New Romantics just wrapped up a brief North American tour, finding numerous baby boomers anxious to relive the 1980s and smooch sessions to “True.”

How refreshing to find a decades-old band in reunion mode with its original lineup intact! The Spandaus also are promoting a feature-length documentary, *Soul Boys of the Western World*, which chronicles their rise, demise and reprise.

Martin graciously accepted my request for an exclusive interview at his hotel a few hours before taking to the Beacon Theatre stage in New York. He shared his thoughts about being on *EastEnders*, his cinematic success in 1990 playing Reggie Kray, and of course being on the road again with Spandau Ballet.

I started off by asking him whether *EastEnders*' Peggy Mitchell was based on Violet Kray, the real-life mum of the ruthless twin brothers from the East End who ruled over much of London with their illegal activities in the 1960s.

“Totally. It was a complete rip-off,” Kemp laughs. “I think it was Barbara [Windsor] who suggested [to the *EastEnders* producers] I play Steve Owen. I thought Barbara was fantastic. We used to talk a lot about Reggie Kray (whom Kemp played in the 1990 feature film *The Krays*).

“[Windsor] knew him really well, and she went out with [Reggie] at one point. We spoke a lot about that. I love Barbara. Among entertainers, she's one of the most beautiful women. We come from the same part of town. Whenever I meet up with her, it's like meeting up with an aunt.”

Regarding the Kemps starring in *The Krays* around the same time that the band seemed to have run its course, Martin says, “It wasn't so much that the band was coming to an end. It had reached its sell-by

date. The eighties were turning into the nineties. The nineties weren't so much about pop music as they were about DJ culture. We had been going for something like 12 years, so we ran out naturally. We never really ever split up. When we stopped playing, it was just the right time. If we had carried on another five years, I don't think we'd be here today.”

How did *The Krays* film land at the Kemps' feet?

“The two guys who had made Spandau's music videos during the eighties bought the script about the Kray twins off Roger Daltrey, and asked if [older brother and Spandau leader] Gary and I wanted to play the parts? We had been acting since we were nine years old in [Anna Scher's famous] drama school [where many *EastEnders* alumni first learned their craft as children]. It wasn't a mad idea. ‘Do you want to be in a film?’ So we took it on.”

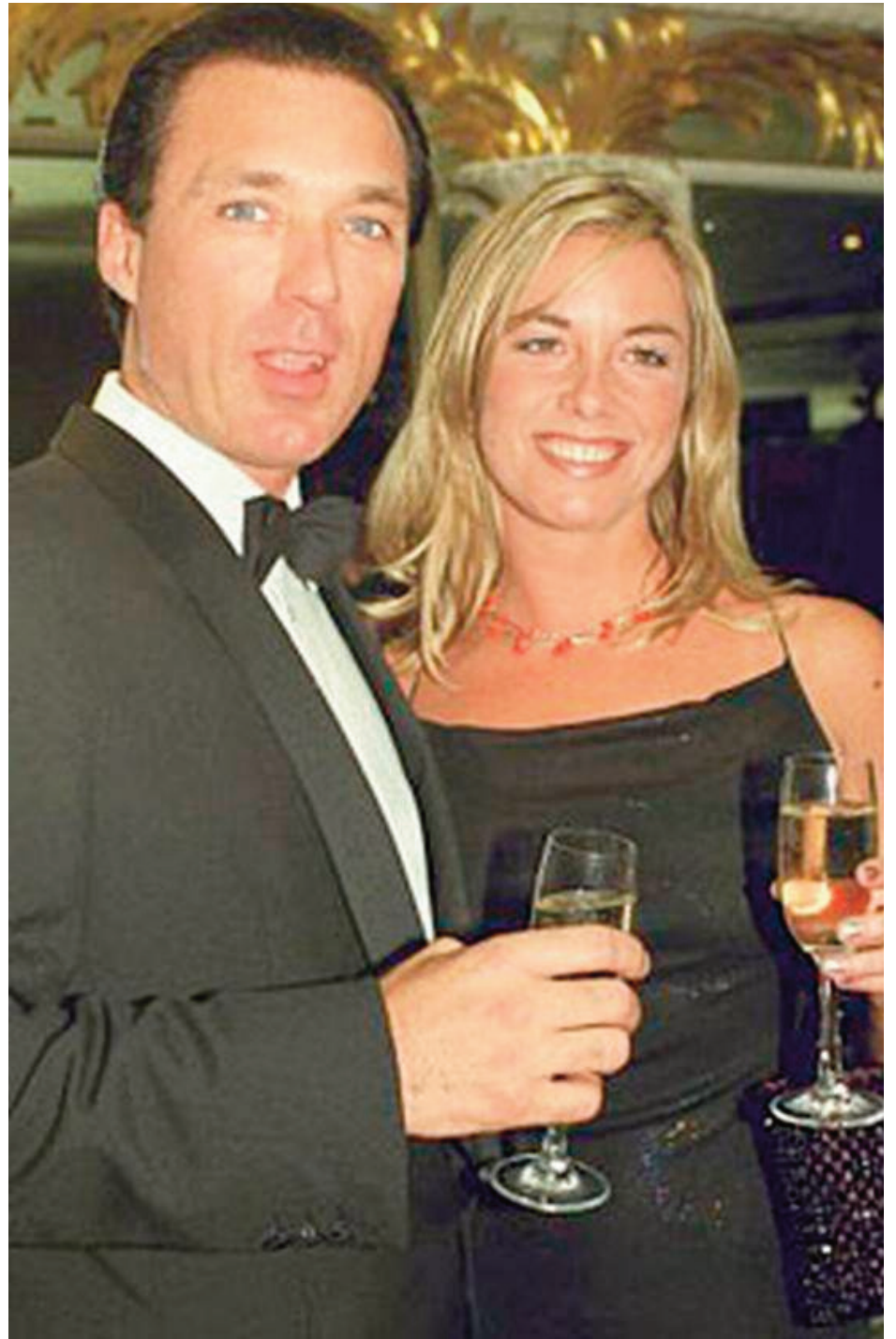
Kemp says he and his brother were offered a couple of other acting projects during the eighties. “But it was never the right time. *The Krays* was at the right time because I could feel the band was naturally reaching its end. I was looking for a springboard to the next part of my life. It was a safety net for me to kickstart where I was going next. In the end it was a great film. It's one of the things I'm most proud of.”

Earlier this year, Kemp co-starred in the UK film *Assassin* with Danny Dyer, whose Mick Carter [current Queen Vic landlord] he thinks “is probably the best character they've had in a long time. Recently the show has gone to strength to strength.”

Kemp admits he's not a regular

EastEnders viewer these days, although he watched last Christmas and got caught up in the “Who shot Lucy?” drama this past February coinciding with the show's 30th anniversary.

“I was lucky enough to be in *EastEnders* when the cast was really incredible. Myself and Tamzin [Outhwaite] – certainly Walford's best-



EASTENDERS' BEST-LOOKING COUPLE – With Tamzin Outhwaite as wife Melaine, they “turned into something special in a short period of time.”

looking couple [says the *Walford Gazette*!], we turned into something special in a short period of time.”

The *Walford Gazette* points out that Steve Owen's E20 nightclub in Albert Square was later turned into Scarlett by Johnny Allen, played

by Bill Murray, whom Kemp cast in his 2010 horror film, *Stalker*, which he directed and co-wrote.

Did Kemp and Murray ever compare notes on *EastEnders* even though they missed each other in Walford by about a decade?

“We did, but nothing I'd like to say about it. In entertainment, the jobs you have and the friendships you make are all very transient – you pass through. It's not like an ordinary person you work with every day for six years. Your new job is always right around the corner. But that's how [*EastEnders*] is made, that's how it's done. You meet people, they're your best friends, until the next bunch of best friends.”

One acting job that was not offered to Kemp even though he toiled in Hollywood B-movies in the 1990s was the American sitcom *Modern Family*, which mentioned his name in the eighth episode of the first season.

Wife Claire hopes to surprise husband Phil with an anniversary gift with a private concert of “True” by the bass player of Spandau Ballet, a cameo played by Ed

MITCHELL ARCHETYPE – Martin (left) and brother Gary in *The Krays* flank ‘mum’ Billie Whitelaw.



Does she remind you of anyone?

Norton, making a rare television appearance.

"I laughed as everybody else did," says Kemp, who was quite familiar with the *Modern Family* episode.

"What was funny about that was the incredible research they did. When Ed comes through the door, they say 'This was the bass player in between [original Spandau bassist] Richard Miller and Martin Kemp'. They made up Norton's character [Izzy LaFontaine]. Richard was the kid at school when the band first started. What a great compliment. ["True"] has been covered so many times and for so many years. Everybody loves to talk to you about it."

Even though he was already a UK household name at the time for starring in *EastEnders*, Kemp named his 2000 autobiography after "True."



MODERN FAMILY – Cameo for Hollywood actor "Ed Norton playing Spandau Ballet's "True."

"I've done a lot of different stuff in my life and I'm proud of that," says Kemp. "On the street there are a few different things that people recognise me for – that's a nice position to find yourself in."

I tell him I have my own personal memory circa 1984, making out to "True" in my car with my then girlfriend (Are you out there, Lisa?).

"When we put that track together, all of our memories were based on listening to and making out to Marvin Gaye (hence, the "Soul Boys") when we were kids," Kemp explains. "That [True] line 'Listening to Marvin all night long', that's where it came from. It was our record to make out to."

Spandau doesn't dwell on missing royalties from the countless proms and weddings that used "True" as its theme song.

"The gig last night in New Jersey was fantastic. Everybody was dancing. But when we played 'True' it was like we were kicking it into the National Anthem."

Contrary to Internet lore, Kemp explains it didn't take him three months to learn his instrument after Spandau manager Steve Dagger (who's still at the helm) decided Gary's younger brother must replace Miller because of his good looks.

"That's a bit of a fallacy, really," he points out, about joining

a band for reasons other than musicianship, à la Sid Vicious or Stu Sutcliffe. "I already had a school band that I put together," explains Kemp.

"We were punk. It was called The Defects. But I played guitar, only three or four chords, because punk opened up the world of music to everybody. For every kid that wanted to be a rock star who couldn't play guitar, it opened up. People then were listening to Yes and Emerson, Lake and Palmer. To be a musician in a band you had to be brilliant. Punk changed all that. So I learned three or four chords. "Then Gary and the boys asked me to be in [Spandau]. I picked up bass guitar. I knew how to move up and down the neck of the guitar. So I had to learn 14 songs in three weeks. There are moments in your life when the door opens, you know you have to walk through because if you don't you're going to miss out. [If you do,] it's going to change your life. It's a crossroads. It was something I knew I had to do."

Did Martin's mum urge him to join his older brother's band? "No, she urged Gary to let me in. It was



BACK IN THE DAY – Spandaus stop traffic in NY, circa '84; Martin, second from right

Steve Dagger who wanted me to be in it. Getting Gary to agree was a different thing. I'm not sure Gary wanted his younger brother (by two years) in. I think my mum talked him into it."

Kemp agrees that Spandau might have been in the right place at the right time, as MTV launched in late 1981, and the band was focused on visuals and fashion, a trend quickly dubbed "The New Romantics."

Within a few years, the entire Spandau line-up sang on the chorus of Bob Geldof's African relief charity single "Do They Know It's Christmas" (Spandau lead singer Tony Hadley had two lead vocal lines) and performing among the Live Aid headliners at Wembley.

"But we also – to a certain extent – created the right place or the right time by becoming the house band of [Steve Strange's nightclub] the Blitz. In regard to being in the right place at the right time," Kemp adds, "it wasn't so much about luck. We created our luck by being the house band of that whole movement, 'The New Romantics.'"

Soul Boys of the Western World does a great job depicting that cultural scene, and Dagger's ability to

create a media mystique through word of mouth. Before they landed a major label deal, Spandau's gigs were not advertised but they were packed due to the buzz.

In retrospect, performing at Live Aid "was a big moment – you knew how important that day was. Before that, bands never got together. And it was the first time bands made money for a cause. We changed the idea of charity. It was a massive day. Everybody – two billion people – watched it around the world that day. It was fun making history," Kemp says.

Being a rock star had another perk for Martin, who met his future wife Shirlee, a backup singer for Wham, at a London party. They married in 1988 and are still together with two kids, a status he clearly relishes.

Soul Boys of the Western World chronologically depicts the band's evolution, which hit something of a wall when Martin and Gary agree to take on the aforementioned Krays project. About a decade later, the band's three other members sued Gary – who wrote all the songs – for back royalties. (Martin abstained; apparently blood is

continued on page 10

Kemp After EastEnders

BY LARRY JAFFEE

Martin Kemp's Steve Owen was a good looking, well dressed shady character on the wrong side of the Old Bill.

Many of the actor's post-*EastEnders* characters in both TV and film fall into this same stereotype, which makes one wonder if it's by choice or that he couldn't pass up an easy paycheck.

In any case, one of his first big post-*EE* successes was starring in a 2003 ITV mini series called *Family*. Kemp's Joey Cutler looks like a contemporary version of Reggie Kray, albeit with wife and kids.

Although born into a crooked family that's still run by his sadistic dad, Joey hopes to go legit and leave behind the protection racket, after strong-arming their way into taking over a swanky restaurant.

Enter his older psychopathic brother Dave – back from America – played by Jamie Foreman, who joined *EastEnders* a few years ago for 145 episodes, as Carol's nutjob brother Derek.

Getting back to Joey, as Al Pacino once said in *Godfather III*, "just when I thought I was out, they drag me back in."

In the 2014 feature film, *Assassin*, Kemp once again gets to act with his brother Gary, with whom he's currently on tour in Spandau Ballet. The Brothers Kemp play – what else? – two feared gangsters Lee (Martin) and John (Gary), although the central character Jamie in the title role is played by the current landlord of the Queen Vic, actor Danny Dyer, who's very pop-

Spandau's Back

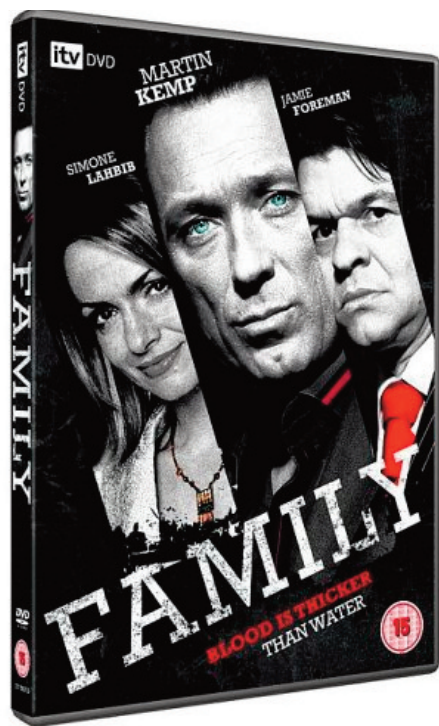
continued from page 10 thicker than water.) Gary won, and it wasn't until 2009 that they all put the differences behind them.

Martin explains that Spandau in the eighties only used Gary's songs, even though other band members, including himself, had songs to contribute, because it was "a winning formula. It was unlikely we were going to change that."

Spandau Ballet has been working on a new album with respected producer Trevor Horn, and for the first time, according to Martin, non-Gary songs will be included.

At the after-party, I snared a quick hello with Gary and asked him why Spandau never covered songs by other artists.

"We liked doing our own material. Pink Floyd didn't do covers," he explained.



ular. In any case, he stoically goes about his assassin business, not very talkative, as he attempts to protect a stripper that Lee and John want dead.

Both *Family* and *Assassin* are fairly violent fare, and were available on Region 2 DVDs purchased from Amazon.co.uk



Martin, who told me he recently gave up his film production company to concentrate on being back with Spandau Ballet, puts it all into perspective.

"We've been through a lifetime of ups and downs. When it comes down to it, we're just a very old-fashioned, five-piece rock band," sums up Martin Kemp.



SHANE RICHIE & alter-ego Sid



Demob, a short-lived television series from 1993 now on Netflix, shows us a beautiful young Amanda Redman and a handsome (yes, despite the ears) Martin Clunes!

Those two never seem to be off of British television screens for even a second. *Old Tricks*, *At Home with the Braithwaites*, *Doc Martin*, *British Men Behaving Badly*, *Reggie Perrin*, and *William and Mary*, are a fraction of their many credits

Griff Rhys Jones and his war buddy Clunes really mean more to each other than their old lives on the home front. After being demobbed, Martin doesn't even bother to go back to the family farm. Griff attempts to settle in with his loving wife, little stranger of a son, and his job as a clerk. But they both really want to have a go at being comedians!

The two pals hook up with a fan dancer whose MIA husband may or may not be alive. That fan dancer is *EastEnders*' own Veronica (about a year away from her US public TV as one of two Mitchell cousins)! Samantha Janus Womack would never be classified as a hot-blooded actress, but she is less chilly here than as Ronnie Mitchell. And she's wonderful to look at in her goofy costumes and silly dances.

The show only lasted one season, but it's worth watching for the humour, great acting (especially by Redman who plays subtle human feelings like sleepiness and the beginnings of annoyance brilliantly), the pitch perfect historical recreation of dreary Post-War Britain, and to see our Ronnie!

Movies/TV of Interest

By Holly Erickson

Flushed Away is a children's cartoon with the voices of none other than Hugh Jackman, Ian McKellan, Bill Nighy, Kate Winslet, and our own Shane Richie (Alfie) voicing Sid the Sewer Rat.

Roddy, a distinctly genteel rodent, is flushed down the toilet into an underground world he never knew existed. Slugs, frogs and rats, some utterly disgusting and some incredibly cute, share a complicated and dangerous sewer society.

Like all the best kids' movies there are jokes, (such as Kafka cockroaches), and music – from Tom Jones to Billy Idol – that will amuse and entertain the parents and grandparents while misadventures, romance, and general grossness will delight the kiddies. The heroine manages to save the hero and the old pet switcheroo is pulled off between Sid and Roddy. I wonder how that turns out. It sounds like an ill-advised *EastEnders* cock-up. A little bit of our Alfie shines through in the rough diamond Sid. Definitely watch it if you have kids and if not watch it anyway for a guilty pleasure.

Anita Dobson as Armada's Liz

BY MELISSA BERRY

This three-part docudrama aired on BBC2 in May and was presented by historian Dan Snow. It tells the events that occurred when the Spanish Armada attacked England over two weeks in 1588. The series takes information from 3,000 recently discovered handwritten letters between Spanish commanders explaining key military decisions, using computer-generated reconstructions to tell the story.

See a cameo appearance of Anita Dobson in the role of Queen Elizabeth. Yes, she's the same Anita Dobson who played Queen Vic landlady Angie Watts on *EastEnders*.

The documentary reveals how tensions between England and Spain were fueled by religion, piracy and Elizabeth's rejection of King Philip II of Spain as a suitor 30 years earlier.

Philip wanted to rid Europe of Protestantism, obsessive of both his empire and his religion. He had first met Elizabeth at Hampton Court and was wed to her older sister Mary for four years. When Mary died, there were those who believed that Elizabeth would marry Philip to ensure that both nations stayed close. However, this was not to be and a rift occurred between England and Spain. Three decades later, Philip wanted Elizabeth dead and England for himself.

EASTENDERS FANS IN THE LONE STAR STATE**'Houston, We Don't Have A Problem'****BY CLAIRE MEYERHOFF**

If you're planning a trip to Houston, Texas make sure your travel plans coincide with the second Monday of the month. That's the day a friendly group of *EastEnders* fans enjoy their monthly dinner gathering at a British-style pub/restaurant – without fail.

"It's truly a highlight of the month for all of us," said Janis Pease LaRocque, who organises these festive dinners, always held at Houston's "absolutely fantastic" Black Labrador Pub.

For nearly 10 years, come rain or Houston heat wave, "usually a dozen, but up to 20 or so" *EastEnders* fans turn up at the Black Lab to lift a pint, tuck into a steak-and-kidney pie (or Scotch beef, shepherd's pie, ploughman's lunch, sole in its coffin or some other British specialty on the menu) and enjoy the company of local *EastEnders* fans who Janis says are now "very good friends."

For most *EastEnders* fans in America, the idea of a monthly gathering of *EastEnders* friends sounds like a dream come true. In Houston, that dream is a reality, and the regular attendees always have a wonderful time.

"We talk about the latest episodes that we watch on KUHT, other British shows like *Doctor Who* and catch up on each other's lives. We've become really good friends. One of our members, Luisa Willits, keeps track of all the birthdays so we celebrate those, too," said Janis, who works for the Houston Symphony.

This group of Houston *EastEnders* friends includes a couple who bring their baby, now a year old, and Janis says it's fun to watch the baby grow up. Then there are those who drive nearly two hours each way to attend, like a pair of fans who come all the way from Freeport, Texas.

"*EastEnders* has brought us together, and our group is something that is really special about living here in Houston," said Janis, who also plays violin and viola ("but not at the same time!") for a string quartet that performs at weddings and other special events.

"My daughters live in San Diego and Denver and would love for me to move out there. But I say I can't because those local PBS stations don't carry *EastEnders* and I'd really miss my *EastEnders* friends here in Houston."

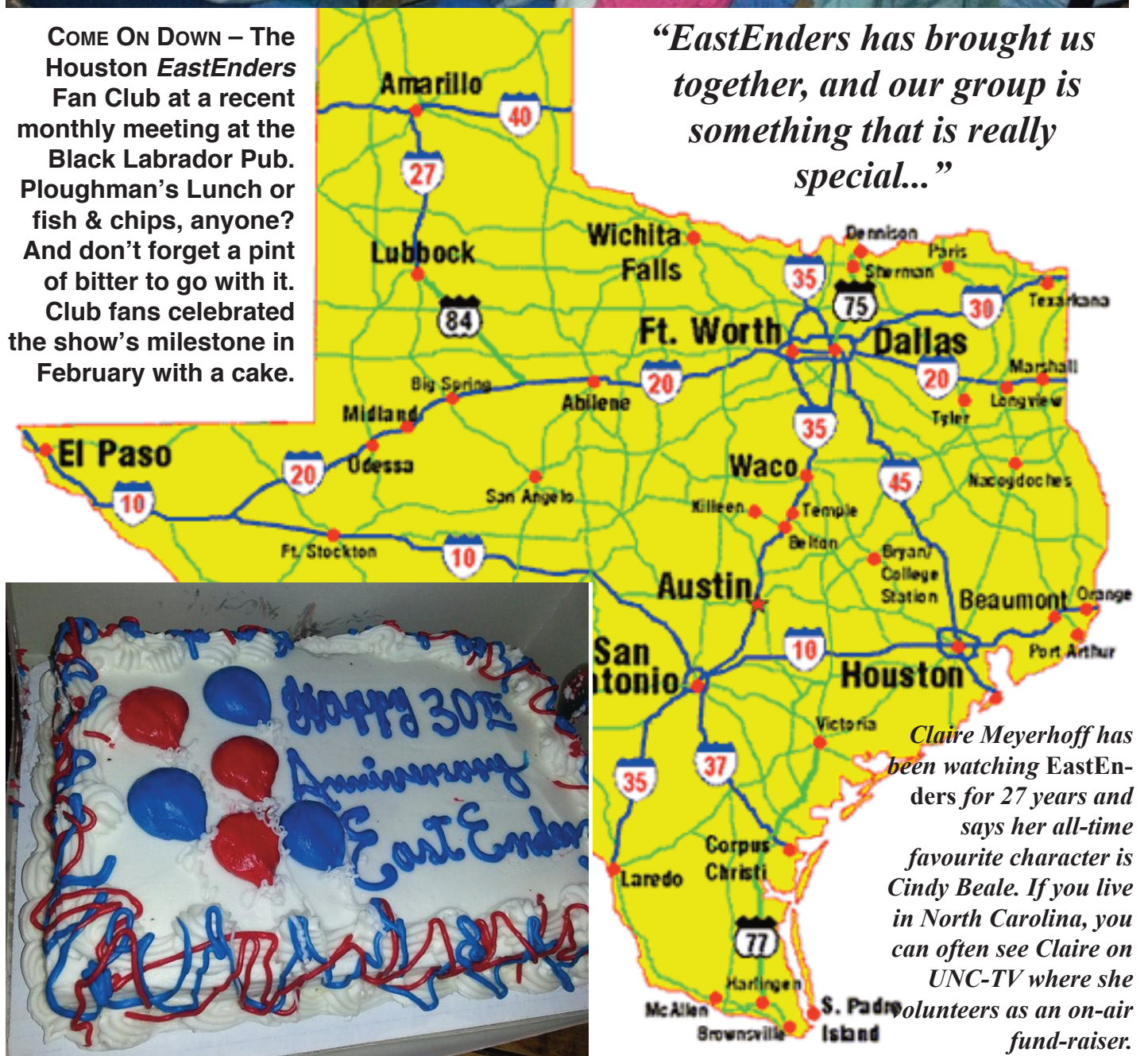
You can find out more about the Houston *EastEnders* Fan Club by joining their Yahoo or Facebook group ([facebook.com/groups/houstoneastenders](https://www.facebook.com/groups/houstoneastenders)).



COME ON DOWN – The Houston *EastEnders* Fan Club at a recent monthly meeting at the Black Labrador Pub. Ploughman's Lunch or fish & chips, anyone? And don't forget a pint of bitter to go with it. Club fans celebrated the show's milestone in February with a cake.



"EastEnders has brought us together, and our group is something that is really special..."



*Claire Meyerhoff has been watching *EastEnders* for 27 years and says her all-time favourite character is Cindy Beale. If you live in North Carolina, you can often see Claire on UNC-TV where she volunteers as an on-air fund-raiser.*

Why EE on Twitter Is All the Rage**BY MELISSA BERRY**

I joined Twitter to follow *EastEnders* celebrities and fellow fans and as a way to garner a little attention for our Charlotte, NC EE Fan club. Since I watch the current UK episodes, I wanted to see what the cast and crew were up to when they weren't in Walford.

The results have been fantastic. While I don't profess to actually be 'friends' with any of my celebrity "Tweeps", the format has been extremely useful in promoting our favourite soap on THIS side of the



pond. I have had several of the crew send *EastEnders* scripts and the recent 2015 Children In Need

calendar to me so that we could use them to raise money to keep *EE* on UNC TV (our local North Carolina PBS station). One of the photography editors of a soap magazine in England even sent me copies of his magazine this past February when *EastEnders* aired its live episodes during the 30th anniversary week.

I am very pleased with how I have been able to grow our account in just under a couple of years, and I am especially pleased that quite a few of the past and present *EastEnders* cast and crew follow my tweets.

continued on page 12

Profiles in Courage: Alfie Takes Nana to Normandy

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

Alfie's Nana, a gallant lady, has compiled a bucket list, as she faces her last days on this earth.

Perhaps seeking a distraction from putting his love life on hold, Alfie is focused on fulfilling his grandma's final wishes that could make her life complete. He knows how to put family first, even if it's without Kat.

And with brother Spencer, as well as cousins Jake and Danny being absent, it fell on Alfie, but even if they had been present, it would probably have fallen on him anyway since he's the most responsible, empathetic of the male Moons.

One by one, Alfie tries to check off each wish on Nana's list with creativity and wit, as only he can. For example, she always had inexplicably had a hankering to be arrested. Alfie figures out a way for her to become a lawbreaker – for less than a day all the same.

While she has been diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's, Nana has enough wits about her to know she's fighting the big clock. Alfie recognises this, and has made it his mission to make her as comfortable as possible as she enjoys her last days. Just maybe he could make all thoughts of her death disappear for them both.

Alfie grabs hold of the last item on the list: Nana wants to visit her husband William's grave, his final resting place, among his WWII comrades on D-Day in Normandy.

They married before he left for the war; she became pregnant and gave birth to Alfie's father. The

young bride hoped for a future with the love of her life and their son.

The telegram informing her that William had died in combat was devastating. She was alone with a child to raise and a will to not only survive, but to see it that their son was loved.

Nana never visited William's grave, but it was not for wanting; rather it was the journey across the sea. A child had to be fed, clothed and cared for, and Nana could do no more.

She had long ago decided there could never be another man in her life, and cherished William in her heart. A day didn't go by that she didn't remember all the happiness he brought her in the little time they had together. Even after he was gone, she tended to it like a secret garden.

Yes, Alfie could deliver this wish, and they boarded a ship across the North Sea to visit this hallowed ground.

Her grandson kept up appearances as only he could – with a wink, a smile. Then it fell apart when Nana refused to eat one of her favourite things, making Alfie lose his temper, the first time it ever happened when it comes to



BUCKET LIST – Nana Moon wants to see the grave of her killed-in action husband William before she dies, and it's up to Alfie to make it happen.

looking after his gran, and caused a bit of a scene in a restaurant. He accused her of being selfish, not willing to accept her imminent demise.

Alfie retreats to the beach, alone with his fears and the realisation that Nana is slipping away from him. A veteran who witnessed Alfie's temper tantrum confronts him on the beach. Alfie breaks down in tears and anguish, unburdening his heart to this stranger. Just by listening to his story, the former soldier in effect offers Alfie absolution and counsels him not be so hard on himself.

At this moment Alfie begins to come to terms with a truth – he has

done everything to avoid the fact that his grandmother is slowly dying right in front of him. He must respect her wishes, and he alone will be responsible for seeing to it that her will – not his – be done.

At the graveyard, Nana and Alfie stroll among the tombstones until they come to the name of William Moon. She puts a bouquet of fresh flowers on his grave. This last wish, the hardest of all to bear for Alfie, is his moment of grace.

Two old souls exhibiting courage, as one of them faces the end, while the other will continue his journey with the memory of a glorious day on the beach at Normandy.

How to Get Celebrities to Tweet You

continued from page 11

If tweeting with your favourite *EastEnders* celebrities is your goal, here are my tips for you.

• **Make sure you've got the right person first.** I've had many people who have questioned if I was actually tweeting with the people that I said I was. Most Twitter users usually know to look for the "Verified Account Badge" in the profile information of someone's Twitter page.

You should also make sure the badge is clickable because sneaky fakers have got clever and made the background image on their Twitter profile include that Verified Badge image but the badge isn't clickable. This happened to Danny Dyer (Mick Carter in the current UK episodes) recently, and the fake account was eventually suspended but not until after the faker had accumulated thousands of followers.

There are many actors out there however, who don't have that all important badge. I followed John

Altman (Nick Cotton) and Shaun Williamson (Barry Evans) for months before their accounts were finally verified. Kacey Ainsworth (Little Mo), and Hannah Waterman (Laura Beale) are also *EE* celebrities who aren't verified.

My advice on this is to see who else is following them, who they are following and to pay close attention to what they tweet. You will usually get a pretty good idea as to whether they are who they say they are or not.

The BBC *EastEnders* Twitter account also provides a running list of verified current cast accounts, which is a great resource.

• **Tweet celebrities who will reply.** Celebrities handle Twitter etiquette differently, and some don't send replies at all. One of my favourite Twitter users, Jessie Wallace, rarely ever replies to anyone. Though I reply to her when she tweets something interesting, I don't expect to hear back. Others,

like Shaun Williamson, usually reply via DM (Direct Message), and that's my day made!

• **Time your tweets wisely.** If you just randomly send a tweet to your favourite celebrity, the chances of getting a reply are pretty minimal given the quantity that most receive. However, if you see them tweeting, that's a great time to reply because you know they are on AT THAT MOMENT and any replies they receive are at the top of the list. One of the issues I have encountered is the time difference between here and the UK. If I Tweet at 10 p.m. my time, it's 3 a.m. in England, and unless my Twitter celeb is a party animal, he or she is probably in bed. So I take that in to consideration when I am tweeting.

• **Say something to get their attention.** For hours after Shane Richie (Alfie Moon) first tweeted me, I experienced what celebrities must get every single day: I was unin-

dated with a new yweet every few seconds. So many people just wanted me to reply to them: "Omg, how awesome, please reply back!" or "Please follow me!!!" The only ones I replied to were those who said something funny or insightful. With so many tweets for celebrities to read, you'll need to say something interesting and unique to stand out from the pool of freaked-out fans.

• **You are only as popular as your tweets.** If you want to get a celeb's attention, having your Twitter followers 'retweet' your posts is one of the best ways to get noticed and grow your account.

Another word of advice about Twitter and *EastEnders*, try to not mind the occasional spoiler. If you want to become a part of the Twittersphere, then follow me at <https://twitter.com/MelissaBerry919>

I look forward to seeing you there!

Gus & Juley: 'He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother'

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

Brothers are the glue that holds the Square together. Think: Phil and Grant Mitchell, a human wrecking crew; Beppe and Gianni di Marco, two hot-blooded Italians, to name two more.

Or the more recent Gus and Juley Smith. Gus, the younger brother, had promised their mum that he'd look out for his older, wide-boy sibling. They're classic Cain and Abel, or something out of a Sam Shepard play.

When Gus arrived in Walford, he fell hard for Sonia Jackson, who was already in love with Jamie Mitchell.

Gus made friends quickly and managed to be someone you could always count on. He found a job cleaning the market, and inherited Robbie Jackson's dog Willard when Robbie went to India. Gus has had his ups and downs, but he never lets life make him bitter.

Meanwhile, Juley is a hustler, a Jack the Lad, living only for himself. You couldn't depend on Juley to buy you a loaf of bread. The money would disappear into his pockets, only to be spent furthering his selfish 'I-me-mine' lifestyle. Juley and Mickey Miller were friends, business partners, and the kings of bling on the Bridge Street Market. After Mickey caught Juley flogging stolen jewellery on the



stall, he ended their friendship and the partnership dissolved.

Then Johnny Allen caught Juley selling drugs at Scarlett, where he worked briefly as a bouncer at the door. Of course, Johnny sacked him.

Eventually Mickey and Juley reconnected and he was invited to join Gus, Gary and Minty on a road trip to France, which proved to be a life-changing 'trip to Damascus' experience for him. Juley let the boys think that he was a mover-and-shaker in the music business.

That ended when Mickey's biological dad, living in France and a successful grafter one step ahead of the Old Bill, saw through Juley, who eventually came clean to Gus



that maybe he's embellished his recent accomplishments, but he'll go straight, promise, really.

Initially keeping his word, Juley takes up a job at Ian Beale's café, and becomes enchanted with an underage, attractive young woman,

Ruby, none other than Johnny Allen's precious virgin daughter. Apparently the feeling is mutual, as Ruby suddenly is focused on glamming herself up.

We can see where this is going, and know what Johnny is capable of (remember the late Andy Hunter?). Andy was only a business decision, whereas Juley is a threat to the apple of his eye.

Juley has a guardian angel, his brother Gus. But will Gus be able to talk some sense into him and stop Juley playing with fire?

Let's hope that brotherly love is all that Juley will need.



Pauline Lets Down Her Guard for A Boyfriend

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY

It's a typical Wednesday evening on Albert Square. Cue music, go to the backwards spiralling aerial view of the Thames over London. All of *EastEnders'* drama seems to rise from the winding river.

Pauline recently returned from a holiday, a bit nonplussed for having a good time with a man other than her long-deceased Arthur. Past romances seemed to get dashed for all sorts of reasons. Remember the Elvis wannabe Danny Taurus, or Derek, who turned out to be a good mate, but one who bats for the other team.

When Pauline harbours any notion of romantic feelings, she promptly lays a guilt trip on herself, eliminating the possibility of enjoying any pleasure. She can't even have a good time in the moment. She practically anticipates the rain on her parade, and that she should know better.

Nevertheless, this widow has caught the eye of a dance partner. She met Joe in a salsa dance class, prime breeding ground for false hopes and misrepresentations. After all, the teacher is a fake Spaniard. Maybe it's Pauline's job



at the launderette. She can suss out lies in the dirty laundry.

It appears she's ready to give this seemingly good man his walking papers, and he has the nerve to bear wine and candles in a laundry basket, at her place of work no less. He's a charmer, and doesn't give up easy. Joe shows real initiative mounting a romantic dinner, adorned with a bouquet of white roses.

Pauline is no fool and knows what she's being offered – an old-fashioned bloke, masquerading as a gentleman, who knows a good thing when he sees it.

Oh Arthur, what should she do?

NEW LOVE? – Is Joe all he seems to be? It's been so long since Pauline has thought about sharing her life with someone else, after several false starts. She certainly misses what she had with Arthur. But can Joe measure up?



Carole Garber – Original East End Style Queen

BY JASON GRANT

Carole Garber is an East End original – a one of a kind creative genius with a wit and charm matching her warm and generous personality. Whether she's marketing her magnificent range of fashion accessories at shows, overseeing personal bespoke styling for clients or engaged in the many charitable acts she is involved in, this is one energetic person.

There's a saying you can take the girl out of the East End, but you can't take the East End out of the girl. She was born in the royal surroundings of Hampton Court, as the family was evacuated from the East End. She grew up in Myrdle Court, just off the Commercial Road in the heart of Stepney Green.

Her father Samuel was a London taxi driver. Her mother Rebecca had a massive influence on her and was always encouraging for her daughter to pursue acting and fashion. She was a member of the famous Oxford and St. George's Club founded by Sir Basil Henriques, and she attended the Fairclough Street and Robert Montefiore Schools.

She has very fond memories of



MADE IN ENGLAND – She started out as a West End shop girl and brought her fashion sense to Montreal and New York.

growing up in the East End.

"Everyone knew each other and helped each other out, life was hard but in such a close-knit community we just got on with life and in our house laughter was the greatest sound."

Her grandparents ran Jacob's, one of the most beloved Jewish restaurants in the area, at 148 Commercial Road, which was a hub for so many people and a must-go place for not only local residents

but also American GIs during the war.

Carole had an active youth performing in plays and musicals and attending films at the Paliseum cinema. At 15, she was selected by the prominent House of Worth, Haute Couturiers, to join their ranks as an apprentice, one of the very first from a working class background to do so, in a world unknown to most.

Every day, she travelled by the No. 23 London bus to the West End and worked

under the tutelage of Madame Berry. She learned the business and eventually became a vendeuse (female shop assistant) working with exclusive clientele, including royalty, aristocrats and many show business personalities.

After a number of years, she was hired by a leading exclusive retailer called Susan in New Bond Street, where she made a name for herself amongst leading style gurus of the

day. "London in the '60s was an amazing place to be where fashion and pop culture was exploding and we were at the heart of it," she remembers.

She later moved to Montreal where she ran her own fashion business and then later moved to New York City, where she currently resides. She is recognised as a leading fashion mentor and stylist and her designs including hats, bags, belts, fur and accessories have been sold exclusively in such retail meccas as Bendel.

Carole is immediately noticeable by her unique chic illuminous daffodil yellow color hair and always immaculately attired she looks as if she has just stepped out of *Vogue* magazine. Her brand is "Yellow Garb." She is happily married to Stanley Jay Friedman, one of the World's top modern furniture designers.

She says her favourite *EastEnders* actress is Barbara Windsor, who she had the pleasure of meeting in person in New York. Carole always returns to the East End on visits to her family in London and says it always brings back wonderful memories, and is very proud to be an East Ender.

Composer of the EastEnders Theme

continued from page 6

very talented drummer Graham Broad. When I offered it to Julia and Tony as the dramatic start of the end titles they loved it. (It was only years later that the drum fill was added to the opening titles.)

"That short drum fill has been the subject of much curiosity and comment over the years. Every actor who receives his new script apparently goes to the last page first to see whether he or she has got the final 'doof doof' line. Shane Richie once told me that he was one of the privileged few to be given the last spoken line in his first episode on the show."

WG: Do you have a favourite EastEnders character?

SM: Mmm... so many. Dot, Ian Beale, and I do miss Ben Hardy as Peter Beale.

WG: Do you find inspiration from other composers? Who might they be?

SM: Mozart, anyone who wrote a Michael Jackson song, Dolly Parton and loads of other new young singer songwriters like Ed Sheeran.

WG: Which non-musical influences are important to your music?

SM: My wife Rosie and our four children.

WG: What do you do to relax

and recharge your batteries?

SM: Go to the ocean, watch political programmes and listen to BBC Radio 4 (Classical).

WG: What do you personally consider to be incisive moments in your work and/or career?

SM: When I get goosebumps as I compose!

MB: Of all the projects you have worked on so far, which is your favourite and why?

SM: Three favourites really: *EastEnders*, because of its huge success; *Howards' Way*, because it's my late mother's favourite piece of music and my musical, *Smike*, because thousands of young people have enjoyed performing it since I wrote it at the start of my career.

WG: Do you think about the listener when you are composing?

SM: Definitely. I have faith that if I love what I'm writing, this enjoyment will be shared by my listeners.

WG: What's your musical guilty pleasure?

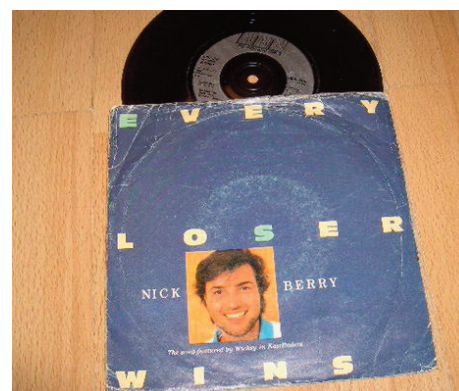
SM: Abba and *The Sound of Music!*

WG: We are very much looking forward to your autobiography which is soon to be released. Can you tell us when it will be available and where fans can purchase it here in the US?

SM: Anyone can go to my website at www.simonmay.co.uk to see details about *Doof Doof*. The boxed set collection with abridged mini-autobiography and the unabridged full book will be released separately in the first week of September but can it be pre-ordered. Our third eldest daughter, Daisy, read the book recently and told me it made her laugh and cry. I couldn't wish for a nicer comment. Initially, I honestly didn't write it to make money, I just wanted to share my life and music with anyone who enjoys *EastEnders*.

WG: What are you currently working on? What's next for Simon May?

SM: At the moment I am focusing on promoting the two formats of *Doof Doof* and then plan to write for a new musical project towards the end of this year.



WICKSY'S HIT – Simon May also co-wrote the Nick Berry (Simon Wicks) EE tie-in song; spent 3 weeks at No. 1 in '86.



SWINGIN' LONDON – Market circa 1968 in the East End Late '60s East End on YouTube

The *Gazette's* authentic East Ender Jason Grant, who now resides on Manhattan's Upper West Side, recently stumbled upon a documentary that shows what life was like where he grew up in Stepney. Entitled *One Pair of Eyes: Who Are the Cockneys Now?*, the TV film ran on the BBC in 1968 and can be found at <https://youtu.be/-7uW7koB7pw> It's narrated by singer/actress Georgia Brown, an East End gal who died in 1992. Writes Grant: "I was born in 1968. That's exactly what I remember it was like through the '70s and '80s – bombed out buildings, garment factories, and old Jewish stores, lots of winos and bums, with huge Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrant populations. You could buy houses for a few hundred quid. Rent on a store was £5 to 10 a week. Now it's a bloody fortune there."

Dear Walford Gazette...

EE Periodic Table

Dear Larry,
THANKS FOR 30TH ANNIVERSARY issue of the Gazette! As always, I enjoyed it. Your Periodic Table of EastEnders was fun. I took a stab at filling in the missing numbers.

A lot are rather obscure, and beware, there are a few spoilers for PBS viewers.

Thanks for all you do on behalf of EE!

Cheers,
Linda Bickel,
Wake Forest, NC

Editor's note: Linda won a free year subscription for sending in the best response to what was missing on the Gazette's Periodic Table (above right).

- 7. N - Neelam Kapoor - Sanjay's mother; ran First 'til Last
- 17. Cl - Carla Mitchell - Grant's Brazilian wife who cheats on him
- 18. Ar - Annie Grey - consultant at Walford General who advises Billy and Honey about baby Janet
- 21. Sc - Sandra di Marco - Beppe's wife and Little Joe's mother
- 24. Cr - Vanessa Carlton - con woman who stung Barry
- 29. Cu - Oliver Cousins - Walford doctor who dates Little Mo
- 36. Kr - Kapoors (Sanjay and Gita) - ran a market clothing stall

- 40. Zr - MG Zr - car that Steve Owen crashed in
- 41. Nb - Nobby Stuart - tramp who helps Alfie
- 48. Cd - Carrie Dunlop - worked at care home that Jay Brown stays in
- 50. Sn - Sue Osman - ran cafe' with husband Ali; lost first son Hassan
- 54. Xe - Xerox...can't be done; EE is an original!
- 65. Tb - Tony Webster - police officer who interviews Ben Mitchell about abuse
- 72. Hf - Hazel Foster - her grandson Joe Wicks had schizophrenia
- 77. Ir - Diane Irving - social worker who finds home for Chloe with the Millers
- 80. Hg - Dr. Harold Legg - beloved doctor in the square
- 81. Tl - Tina Teague - her gang leader son harassed Dot
- 85. At - Alistair Matthews - pious character who catches Sarah Hills shoplifting
- 86. Rn - Rose Chapman - girlfriend of Pete Beale with a gangster husband
- 88. Ra - Rachel Branning - Bradley's mother and ex-wife of Max
- 93. Np - Natasha Powell- social worker who collects abandoned baby from Dot and Jim
- 96. Cm - Charlie Mason - chief inspector who investigated Ian's shooting

WG Good Reading

Larry,
I AM AN OLD ENGLISHMAN WHO has lived in Kent, London and Birmingham, and living in America for the past 38 years, so the Walford Gazette makes for good reading. I am also lucky able to watch EastEnders on our local PBS station.
Cheers Mate!
Keep up the good work.
Ray Payne,
Minoa, NY

Working-Class Kinship

Hello Larry,
I FIRST HEARD OF THE WALFORD Gazette during a channel 21 fundraiser years ago. I came across it again recently while searching for EastEnders info online. I have been watching the show since 1994.

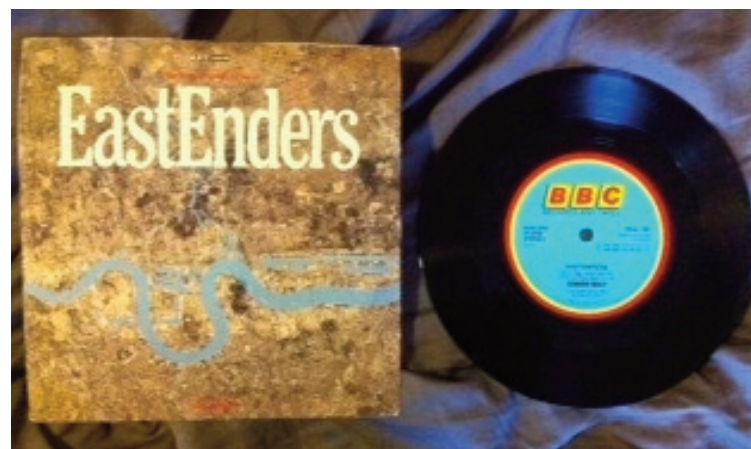
I come from a blue-collar background and I enjoy seeing the working class from an English perspective. I look forward to my first issue.
Cheers!
George End,
South Huntington, NY

It's A Small World

Hi Larry,
MY EX-HUSBAND CO-FOUNDED AND runs Record Store Day (RSD) so I'll let him know about your shout out/email blast about the 45 single. Alas, he never watched EastEnders...that was a solo activity.

I used to get the Gazette but I don't follow EastEnders that closely anymore. That reminds me, I need to mail my payment to UNC-TV, so I'll write a note that I'd like to receive the Walford Gazette and hopefully they'll know what I'm talking about.

Cheers,
Sheila Valentine,
Cary, NC
Editor's reply: It's a small world. Her ex and I had become friends prior to hearing from her.



WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF THE BBC REISSUED THE EASTENDERS THEME SONG ON 45 RPM FOR THE BLACK FRIDAY RSD 2015 FOR THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY?

The Periodic Table of EastEnders

Although it originates in chemistry, a periodic table lends itself to EastEnders when you consider the definition: periodic table n. "A tabular arrangement of the elements according to their atomic numbers so that elements with similar chemical properties are in the same column." Think of all the explosive plots, etc.

Send us suggestions of the numbers we missed. Our prize gets a free subscription to the Gazette.

How Many EastEnders Fans?

Larry,
I JUST FINISHED READING THE LATEST issue, and it's a thoroughly enjoyable read, as always.
Alan Shaw says in his article about you, "Larry is one of millions of EastEnders fans in America..." Maybe you know more about viewership stats than I do, but "millions of viewers" sounds like Downton Abbey's viewership, not that of EastEnders.

There may be more, I don't know, but I'd be very surprised if there were even 100,000 EastEnders fans in the US - no way would there be "millions." He also struggles to see why EastEnders seems so "bizarrely popular across the pond."

Considering that more than 99% of the population has never even heard of EastEnders (unlike Downton Abbey), that doesn't seem "bizarrely popular" to me, but rather "very small cult."

I wish it was as incredibly popular as Shaw thinks, but it is what it is. If you know or think that I'm mistaken about any of this, please let me know and correct me; I'm always open to learning new things!

Also, I pay a lot of attention to the writers of EastEnders episodes, as telly is a writer-driven medium, as opposed to film, which is director-driven. I'm loving the UK 2014 and 2015 episodes, but what a shame that Simon Ashdown has moved on to other projects for the Beeb.

The only writer now who is coming up with Ashdown-type artistry for the most climactic episodes is James Payne, who hasn't been writing for EastEnders for

While he may write an occasional episode, I haven't seen a Tony Jordan one since Simon left. I also wish they'd bring back Tony McHale, who was one of the Big Writers in the 1980s and possibly '90s. At least the folks watching on PBS have dozens of amazing Simon Ashdown episodes to look forward to!

All the best, and keep up the great work!!!

Larry Schorr,
San Francisco

Editor's reply: You make a lot of good points. Firstly, not sure why Alan assumed there are millions of EE fans. I did mention my estimate of 100,000, and I wish there was some better way to quantify.

We do know 10 public TV stations still broadcast the show in major markets including New York; Philadelphia (although not the city's flagship PBS affiliate but a suburban station); Washington, DC; Houston; Miami; Minneapolis; and Raleigh, NC.

Some of the stations are distributed statewide via cable, such as Prairie Public Television in Fargo, ND. What all these stations seem to have in common is that only a single digit percent of viewers supposedly support these stations during fundraising, which is a real shame and a testament to the remaining stations that stick by it.

Dresses As 'Pat B.'

Larry,
I TALKED TO YOU SEVERAL MONTHS ago and said the check to you would be in the mail. Well, I did write a check, then mislaid it, forgot it and wondered where the hell is my Gazette?!?!

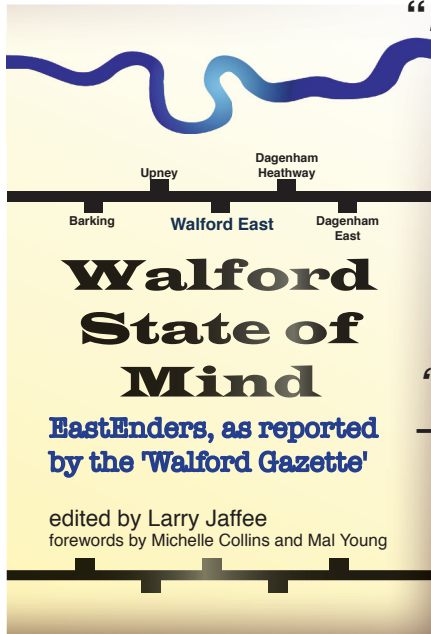
I am thankful that I found (by accident) the missing check before I called and accused you of neglecting one of your biggest fans. Thank you for all you do to educate and entertain EastEnders fans.
Maryanne Anderson,
Raleigh, NC
Third-place winner, dress-alike contest (as Pat) at EE Marathon at UNC-TV.

THE BRIDGE STREET MARKET

The Best of the Walford Gazette's First 18 Years and 72 Issues

Forewords by Michelle Collins (Cindy Beale) & Mal Young (former BBC Head of Drama)

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30 rare photos



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