

# ITV1 commissions *Fash*, a brand-new drama series from BAFTA-nominated writer, Kwame Kwei-Armah

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## [Drama](#)

ITV1 COMMISSIONS *FASH*, A BRAND-NEW DRAMA SERIES FROM BAFTA-NOMINATED WRITER, KWAME KWEI-ARMAH

*\*\*Fash is the poignant, compelling and heart-breaking story of two complex and conflicted brothers, Justin and John Fashanu, and a fearlessly uncompromising exploration of the institutional prejudices which tore them apart\*\**

*"There's only you and me in this world brother. I'll always be here to protect you."*

ITV's Head of Drama Polly Hill has commissioned *Fash*, an unflinching, vital and deeply thought-provoking drama series from playwright, writer and director Kwame Kwei-Armah (*Elmina's Kitchen*, *Breaking*) for airing on ITV1 and ITVM.

John Fashanu is closely involved in the drama, serving as consultant on the series alongside Peter Tatchell and a number of other contributors. The series will be produced by Happy Prince (part of ITV Studios). ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill, will oversee the commission of *Fash* on behalf of the channel. *Fash* will premiere on ITV1 and will be available as a boxset on ITVX once the first episode has aired.

In 1981, at 20 years old, Justin Fashanu signs to Nottingham Forest, becoming the first black British footballer to be sold for £1 million, becoming one of the most celebrated men in British sport. In 1990, he is the first professional footballer to publicly come out as gay. In 1998, with his football career in tatters and ostracised by his family, Justin commits suicide.

In 1981, Justin's younger brother John signs to Norwich City, the same club at which his brother made his name. Over the next few years, as his younger brother's star fades and life becomes mired by pitch-side rumour and front-page tabloid exposés, John supersedes Justin as the famous Fashanu. In 1998, when Justin dies, the two are wholly estranged.

*Fash* is the unvarnished, unflinchingly honest and heart-breaking story of two young men each trapped in their own damaging and dangerous notions of masculinity that traverses back and forth across their eventful lives, from a childhood spent in Dr Barnado's care homes in the care of a white foster family, when they had nobody to rely on but each other amid an overwhelmingly white community which always saw them as "other", to their tragic and irreconcilable estrangement that played out across the national media.

But *Fash* is more than simply a modern Cain and Abel tale. In this series Kwei-Armah skilfully, powerfully and resolutely exposes the toxic prejudices that ran to the heart of Britain at the time - both socially and institutionally - which catalysed the breakdown of these two brothers' relationship, from the entrenched racism and homophobia ingrained in sport, and in football in particular, to the dangerously intrusive and relentless tabloid media which stoked such hate. In *Fash*, Kwei-Armah has crafted a potent and arresting drama that reveals not just a shameful moment in our national history where to be yourself was to condemn yourself, but also lays bare the continued pain, damage and torment that those self-same prejudices inflict on individuals in the sport to this day.

John Fashanu says:

"I'm so pleased to be working with Kwame and Happy Prince on this project. Much has been said and written about the relationship Justin and I shared over the

years, but drama of this type has an ability to delve right to the beating heart and truth of events in a way other media can't. I feel privileged to play a part in bringing it to the screen."

Kwame Kwei-Armah says:

"I grew up watching the Fashanu brothers. I was fascinated by them. Inspired by them. As an adult, my heart breaks for them. 'The past is a foreign land', the saying goes, 'they do things differently there'. In *Fash*, I wanted to dive into that past, particularly one that has so many resonances with today."

Peter Tatchell adds:

"This is a powerful, moving life story that needs to be told. I am very honoured to act as a consultant to the production team, based on my friendship with Justin Fashanu in the 1980s."

Commented Polly Hill:

"Kwame's scripts are brilliant and tell a story that is heart-breaking and sadly still relevant today. It is always a huge responsibility telling a true story, and Kwame and the team at Happy Prince tell Justin and John's story with all the truth, passion and sensitivity it deserves. I'm delighted it's found a home on ITV."

Alexander Lamb, Executive Producer at Happy Prince, adds:

"*Fash* is a truly important story that myself, Dominic and the Happy Prince team are desperate to tell; and its significance and timeliness rings even truer as football and sexuality currently dominate the news. It's an honour to work with the brilliant Kwame Kwei-Armah as he brings Justin and John's incredibly tough, beautifully moving, and often heart-breaking tragedy alive."

The Executive Producers are Dominic Treadwell-Collins (*A Very English Scandal*, *Holdings*, *EastEnders*) and Alexander Lamb (*We Hunt Together*, *The Bay*, *Ackley Bridge*). The series is produced by Happy Prince. International distribution for Happy Prince is handled by ITV Studios.

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## **About Happy Prince**

Happy Prince, part of ITV Studios, is a new drama label launched in 2020 by award-winning producer Dominic Treadwell-Collins. Placing the viewer squarely at the centre of all that they do, and proudly populist in their approach to each and

every project, the label's ambition is to tell quality authentic, intelligent and heartfelt stories that emotionally resonate with a broad audience. Its current slate includes; the adaption of Jilly Cooper's classic *Rivals* for Disney+, *You & Me* for ITVX, a fresh, original and quintessentially modern love story shot through with the twists, turns and surprises of a gripping thriller;  *Holding* for ITV, the critically acclaimed adaptation of Graham Norton's bestselling novel of the same name; and a series adaptation of Jim Cartwright's award-winning play *The Rise & Fall of Little Voice* with Miramax TV.

Prior to Happy Prince, Treadwell-Collins was Head of Television at Blueprint Pictures, where he was Executive Producer for the Golden Globe, Emmy, Critics Choice, Rose D'Or, RTS and BAFTA-winning series *A Very English Scandal*, starring Hugh Grant and Ben Whishaw, written by Russell T Davies and directed by Stephen Frears. Before this he was Executive Producer of *EastEnders*, bringing Danny Dyer and his family into the Queen Vic and creating the show's iconic 'Who Killed Lucy?' storyline with Alexander Lamb, which climaxed after a year with a week of live episodes, reaching over 20 million viewers and winning BAFTA, RTS, NTA, MIND, British Soap and Attitude awards.

Alexander Lamb joined Happy Prince in 2021 and works as Executive Producer across the slate, working closely with Treadwell-Collins. In 2019 Lamb produced the second series of ITV ratings smash *The Bay* for Tall Story Pictures before joining BBC Studios as Creative Executive where he oversaw a number of developments, and was Executive Producer on Alibi's *We Hunt Together*. Before this he produced 2 series of celebrated Channel 4 drama *Ackley Bridge* for The Forge, and was Story Producer for *EastEnders*, overseeing the BAFTA-winning "Who Killed Lucy" plots as well as creating some of *EastEnders*' most enduring and award-winning characters and storylines with Dominic over a period of fifteen years. He has also worked on *Emmerdale*, *Waterloo Road* and *T4*.

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