

PASSENGER

PRESS PACK

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*****PRESS PACK QUOTES STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 14th MARCH 00:01*****

SERIES OVERVIEW

Welcome to Chadder Vale, a close-knit town where nothing seems to perforate the mundane. D.I. Riya Ajunwa is bored of solving petty crimes by day and looking after her batty mother-in-law by night. So, when Katie Wells goes missing one night in the forest, Riya thinks this could be the case that changes everything. The only problem is, Katie Wells shows up at home, safe and sound, 24 hours after she disappeared.

But Riya's not convinced. Something doesn't add up. Where did Katie go, and why won't she tell Riya what happened in the forest? What about the reports of other young people who are disappearing - all seemingly with a connection to the fracking site and the old tree on the town's outskirts? And then there's the dead stag on the forest road, which has been obliterated into a thousand pieces by someone. Or something.

Does it all have something to do with Katie's dad Eddie Wells, who has just been released from prison? One drunken night 5 years ago he committed a monstrous crime, and Riya was the one who locked him up. Or does her nouveau-riche mate Derek - who runs the local bread factory - have something to do with it? He and his anxious brother are certainly hiding something.

Interview with Writer and Creator Andrew Buchan

So, can you just tease what *Passenger* is about in a few sentences for us?

Passenger is about someone going missing in a small Lancashire village, the ripple effect of that on the community and how the town folds in on itself as a result. It's set in a town called Chadder Vale, a tiny little pinprick of a village on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border nestled in this valley, it's full of people just going about their business, full of small businesses, a place of safety, security, people who've lived there all their lives.

You're an actor, well known for your roles in shows like *Broadchurch*, *The Honourable Woman*, *The Crown*, what made you want to go behind the camera and write your own drama?

People might not know, but I grew up in Bolton and obviously there's a rich vein of humour running through a lot of northern towns and having grown up in and amongst that and the way that people react specifically to extremes with humour has always interested and fascinated me. I thought if I could write something about a small, tight-knit community and kind of use some kind of extreme event to detonate that humour, then that might be interesting. That northern dialogue that I've heard and loved all my life, and the way people approach and react to huge events in a northern way has always made me laugh and interested me in equal measure. I just wanted to get it down on paper and hopefully create characters that feel real and true, that people can relate to and use that to explore these bigger things.

Was it nice to be creative in a different way to being in front of the camera?

Yes, definitely. I mean, acting's where my heart is, but I would say writing is a close second and something that I've kind of always done in little fragments throughout the years, be it writing on the back of bus receipts or in coffee shops, asking the waitress for a pad and a pen so I could quickly jot down an idea. But I don't think it's just me. I think it's loads of actors, actresses who reach a point maybe in their mid-forties, which is where I am, and they think, well, I've been on the receiving end of scripts now for about 20 years now and I feel like I should start the seed of an idea or I should, try and create something and put myself in the arena. I've spoken to loads of actor mates who've all said similar things, I'm certainly not out on my own here. There are loads of actors who do it but there's always been a pining to do it and it has been brilliant and flattering as well. Having actors audition and learn their lines. It's such a small thing, but I feel so thrilled that they've taken the time over a weekend to learn lines that I've written and given it their all in an audition, and then going into production and seeing it all blossom. I'm in awe of them that the whole cast has just been magnificent and what they've given to it is second to none. And I feel very proud.

Has your knowledge as an actor helped the writing process in terms of dialogue writing? Or what transferable skills are there between those two roles?

I think all actors have the capacity to create dialogue, to understand dialogue and write their own stuff because all actors invariably have the capacity to improv a scene. I wouldn't say it's easy, I think with most actors, maybe the thing that they find difficult is structure and that's certainly the thing that I've had help with throughout this process.

Was the process harder than you thought it might be?

There are demands, definitely! Not just deadlines for when the scripts are needed, but within the production whirlwind things fall through or you can't get a certain location or an actor is no longer available or they're poorly, so you have to rewrite stuff. There are definitely moments where you realise "Oh, okay, that scene has now become that scene", but I think we've such a great team so you've got a lot of people around you going, "Well, hold on, don't panic about that. What if we made it this?" It's been a real collaboration. I've had a very supportive team, which has been great and I'm grateful for. When someone's asking you to write a few scenes on a character that you've come up with in your head, it's like, "Oh, this isn't daunting. This isn't climbing Kilimanjaro. I can do this." So, I've tried to not let myself be scared by it or daunted by it and just be like, "No, this is fun". People are doing some very hard jobs on the planet, like doctors, nurses, firemen, but you know, this is fun. I'm in a privileged position. Our directors Lee and Nicole, our DOP Brian, the execs Lucy Dyke. Simon Maloney and Jane Featherstone that fostered this with me, our script editor Theo Schofield, I couldn't have done this without them.

Do you think you want to write more after this? Have you got the bug?

Without question. Let's say the seed of something hasn't yet arrived and I don't want to kind of force that or anything, but we'll see if another idea drops in. I think you've got to have the fire in your belly to want to write six or eight eps of something, but there are some little ideas rattling around. Watch this space. Let's see.

Has it given you a different perspective on the production process?

I mean, I always knew that there was a lot going on behind the scenes that we're not necessarily party to as actors but now I've seen behind the curtain, as it were. There are thousands of extraordinary people doing extraordinary things day and night. Editors working round the clock and just people giving their time at weekends . People helping you with your idea and believing in it, like wholeheartedly believing in it is such a magical thing. You know, I could never have done this on my own, I mean, obviously.

Another writer who shall remain nameless, said, uh, "don't be surprised if it turns out nothing like you imagined it, don't be upset by that." But I would say it's bettered my expectations in a way that I would never have thought possible or imaginable. I mean, from when I saw the first scene that they shot, I was like, "Oh, wow. I had no idea you

could do that.” in terms of the photography. The whole cast has been exceptional; they’ve really kind of come together and gone for it. And so, it’s gone through the ceiling as far as expectations. The whole behind the curtain of production, it’s definitely interesting and fascinating and all the people whose jobs you never really knew about have been an amazing bunch of people.

Can you talk a bit more about the cast, where you involved in the casting process?

Yeah, I got to see all of the casting tapes, and some extraordinary people who, again, I feel very grateful they took the time to learn the lines and went up for it. The cast that we’ve assembled has been extraordinary. I wrote the role for Wunmi, she was two years below me at drama school and we hung out a little bit. She’s a Manc and I’m from Bolton, so there was that kind of connection, but i’ve always thought she was an extraordinary actress. Randomly a few years back, I’d agreed to present the best supporting actress BAFTA and Wunmi was on that list, obviously, I had no idea who was going to win it and I opened the envelope, and she won it. That was just a glorious moment of me presenting the award to a mate. The thing about her character Riya is that I wrote a person. I didn’t write a police officer. I just tried to write a person who happened to be a police officer. I don’t have the intelligence to write a Line of Duty-type thing! That’s for people who are far more adept at writing than I am. But I could write a human and that’s what Riya is. She’s just this restless force, this hurricane trapped in this sleepy village who’s wanting to push against the limits, push against the walls and wake people up from their apathy and I just thought, Wunmi would thrive in that part, knowing what I did of her. She’s an extraordinary actress and has pushed Riya to the limit and it’s wonderful to watch.

Could you tell us a little about David’s character, Jim?

So, the character of Jim, who’s played by David Threlfall, is a fascinating character, I hope. One of the themes running through the show is outsiders and our definition of that, and what is an outsider? Is it someone who’s come from 10 minutes away? Sometimes in the north that’s true because everyone has a different accent and they wear their accent like they do a tracksuit and it’s part of your identity, people are frowned upon because they’re not actually from that village. They’re from 15 minutes down the lane, and that’s not a good thing. So, Jim is your typical outsider. Posh accent, if you will, and frowned upon by the village people. People butt up against him, don’t like his vibe at all. And he’s kind of wrecking the landscape with his job and so he’s this real kind of a force to be reckoned with. What David has brought to that has been so exciting to watch, he is a man of so many ideas. He sends you these little emails late at night going, “well, I thought about this and this and this and this.” And I’m like, “yeah, go!” It’s very flattering when an actor does that because it shows that they’ve not just taken the role for such and such a reason. They’re properly wanting to invest in it and bring your idea to life, there’s nothing better than that. He’s just been phenomenal, and we feel very lucky to have him on board.

What about some of the younger cast?

I'd say the younger cast have blown me away, like, completely blown me away. We've got folk who are just out of drama school, people who are kind of semi-known. There are various double acts throughout the show such as the characters Katie and Lilly played by Rowan and Matilda or Nish and Ali played by Arian and Ella and both of those teams play off each other wonderfully well.

There's a kind of rhythm to it, I guess which I can hear very clearly in my head and one of the opening scenes in the pub, with Katie and her sister, when I first watched that wide shot of those two, I was just, like, "That's how I heard it in my head." They bring so much energy to it and so much... there's a lot of dazzle to it.

Nish and Ali did the same they kind of play off each other beautifully. So, yeah, it's been brilliant to watch.

Why do you think somewhere like Lancashire is the perfect place to match the scale of this series?

Obviously there is the clichéd thing of 'write what you know'. One of the things that I wrote when I pitched the series, I guess, was how, a lot of people in small towns, and I think particularly northern towns or working-class towns and villages tend to get on the hamster wheel as soon as they're born. They're born and then there's that kind of pressure to become their dad and then become their granddad. And then it repeats and repeats and repeats. So, for anyone to suddenly break free from that and say, 'I might go live in Paris', rarely happens. I think it was important for us to reflect that in the landscape we found and choose a village that was kind of tucked away and kind of nestled in the hills with it rising either side. The place our brilliant location manager found has that, you're in this little cosy bubble and you feel like no one would want to stray from that. It's another character in the show.

Can you talk about some of the themes that run through the show?

I'd say one of the big themes isn't just about being an outsider, it's fear. I've grown up with it. I've seen it in lads and lasses that I've been to school with. Fear of change, fear of being different, fear of daring to do something that they're good at.

You know in life, particularly if you're a guy from a certain environment you act in the way that you're meant to act, and there's a pressure on you to act and speak in a certain way and be tough. And that's your lot. So it's about fear, the fear of change, growth, failure.

You wouldn't expect the events that occur in this series to happen in a place like Chadder Vale. Why did you want to make that juxtaposition?

Yeah, I think the thing about the plot is I did want to juxtapose the epic and the traditional. I thought that would be fascinating. I thought if I could make something extreme happen to that village, just kind of out there in the background enough for them to go, 'Wow, actually, what is that? What is going on there? But tonally I wanted to take that to the extreme. I wanted to be bold. I think sometimes you will watch a

show that will dare to do something different and sometimes they fail, or there'll be other times you will watch them succeed . And so, I wanted to take that risk.

CAST INTERVIEWS

Interview with WUNMI MOSAKU who plays D.I. Riya Ajunwa

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Passenger is about a small Northern town called Chadder Vale, and its residents trying to figure out how to come to terms with its darkest secrets. It's about people confronting their greatest fears.

What can you tell us about Riya? Who is she and where do we meet her at the start of the series?

We meet Riya at a turning point in life. She's turning 40 and is a police officer, who feels like a big fish in a small pond. She's from Manchester but lived in London, working in the Met and now she's in this small, quiet community.

She originally came to Chadder Vale to be with her husband's mother, Sue, who's not very well. She's now been separated from her husband for four years and she's still there. He went off with his mum's carer...nice guy! She's stuck looking after her Sue, but the question is *why*? Why did she stay?

I think her motivating force is family. She's not really had one, so she's kind of committed to Sue, and then across the series she becomes committed to opening the eyes of the village, to seeing the big picture and confronting it. She's constantly asking questions and she's just got this feeling that something's not right, but no one's listening to her!

You mentioned she's at a bit of a turning point in her life and she's a bit underwhelmed with the circumstances that she's found herself in. We see her celebrate her 40th birthday at the start of the series. Do you think she is where she thought she would be at this age?

I think when we meet Riya, she absolutely is not where she thought she would be at 40. She left her townhouse in Wandsworth Common with a high-flying job to come to this small town and a tiny force.

The truth is, she's not taken seriously at work. She's got this boss who is always trying to make cuts. Every case that she deems exciting keeps going to Manchester Met or the biggest thing she has to deal with is a cat with a cough, or a missing ladder. But she knows there's more to life, there's more to this and she's not able to fully fulfil any of it.

She's not been able to have kids, she doesn't have the marriage. She doesn't have the family that she's forfeited her London life for, she doesn't have the career and

she's not the bigwig. I always think of her as Masha in *Three Sisters*...in mourning for her whole life.

What are the key storylines that Riya finds herself involved with during the series?

At the beginning of the series, Riya gets some huge news that Eddie Wells (played by Barry Sloane) is coming out of prison. Eddie is the baddie she put in prison five years ago for attacking a character called Jim (played by David Threlfall) and that was her big case. She put him behind bars, but he's coming out early, almost five years too early. The whole town is now on edge; she's on edge and Jim's on edge because this guy is going to come out and probably have issues with what happened because of her actions. So, she's trying to keep the town under control, but other things keep happening.

Then Eddie Wells' daughter Katie (played by Rowan Robinson) goes missing the same day that he's coming out of prison and Riya thinks that's strange. There's something weird that happens with Katie's car and a series of other events, nothing seems to make sense and everything's just off.

Later in the series, there's also a little bit of romance in Riya's life or would you not describe it as romantic? How would you describe the dynamic between Riya and Jakub?

I think because they aren't from Chadder and they're outsiders that don't have family from the village, Jakub and Riya have a friendship and a bond as a result. They're both very honest and can be very much themselves. However, Riya is still always guarded because, you know, life. They have a relationship that blossomed, where they can be completely themselves and I think that really scares Riya. She isn't as receptive or as forthcoming with her feelings and she hides them behind bravado and a little bit of coldness. Riya talks to Jakub in a way that she doesn't with anyone else.

I think trust is something that Riya really struggles with, especially after her past relationships. Someone can just up and leave, so she's not someone who's willing to take that risk again by jumping headfirst into something.

You mentioned that she is quite guarded. As a performer, how do you pull out that emotional depth from a character that gives so little away and is so shut down? How do you find the core of that character?

I think as an actor, it's all in the script. Andy's written a really brilliant script and it's nuanced and it's clever and it's funny and it's fast and it's deep. Her reaction to Jakub's love is to pull away. I don't have to find it; it's all written there.

There is a real Northern authenticity that Andy has brought to the scripts, would you agree?

Yeah. The script is very, very Northern- it's very uniquely Northern. I'm not from a small town, I'm from Manchester, but everything feels kind of familiar and unfamiliar because I'm (laughing) not from a small town. Those small towns where everyone knows everything, everyone, and everything about everyone. That's very foreign to me.

But the pace, the language, the terms of endearment, all the criticisms, the disses, it just all feels very specifically from The North.

What was it like filming back up in The North, did that also bring an authenticity to it?

You really feel like you're in Chadder. The way that the hills kind of cocoon the town, we filmed in Cornholme and it has its own weather system! It will be really sunny and then it'll snow and then it'll rain and then it'll be sunny again. That feels very individual and isolated. It feels far from Manchester, even though it's not far at all. Then we've got the scenes with the forest and the snow. It feels like walking into Narnia. It's really beautiful and our DOPs have made it look magical. There's this kind of otherworldly element to it. It feels like that small little town, just elevated in a way. The terraced houses, the smaller two up two down...I love it!

How would you describe the type of people who live in Chadder Vale?

Riya describes them as all the same. *'We talk the same, we dress the same, we play the same basic game'*. That's one of her lines. There is something really unified and kind of homogenous about them. Riya really feels like she's not a part of that, Jim also feels like that, Jakub feels like that and in a way, Katie feels like that. A need not to perpetuate the "Chadderness" of it all. I think that's a really unifying thing between them because those are the people Riya has the most honest conversations with, Jim, Jakub, Katie. We're here, but we're not of here.

How would you describe Riya's relationship with Jim?

I think all of Riya's relationships are pretty honest because that's just who she is. I think Jim is someone who she respects but doesn't fully understand. I think they both feel quite isolated, and they connect on that level. I think she wants to protect him. She wants to have a maternal kind of energy towards him, but like her, he's defensive and doesn't really let people in. However, they have a friendship, I think a genuine friendship and respect for each other. I don't think she understands why he has to keep going with the fracking, but she respects him.

One theme that unites every character's journey in this- is the need to escape. Everyone's escaping from something in their own little way. Would you agree that Riya is also trying to escape something in her life?

Yeah, I definitely think Riya is trying to escape something. I think the fact that she doesn't feel she belongs there, doesn't feel fully appreciated or able to explore all corners of her brilliant mind. I wonder why she does stay, and I think a part of it is the fear of leaving something that she knows and understands. I think going back to

Manchester or going back to London without ticking all the boxes that she thinks she should have ticked, like having a family all the accolades and achievements she wants; I think that would have been harder for her. It's easier to stay there unfulfilled without fully having to look her life in the eyes. She can hide from herself a little bit in Chadder.

It's an amazing ensemble cast. Can you talk a bit about working with your co-stars?

It's been so lovely. We've all gotten on so well. It is ensemble-y and it feels like you're in every day, but you don't see everyone all the time. But when we do get our little scenes like me and Rowan, who plays Katie, in the pub, that I really loved and just bonding. Barry, who plays Eddie, he's actually scared me on set a few times. Like I actually jumped out of my skin with him messing about, but also laughed loads with him too. David is just sweet and fun and caring.

Everyone really loves to play. I felt like every time we did a scene, we were always playing and experimenting and seeing where it goes. Always being on set with Ella and Arian, who play Ali and Nish, has just been brilliant. My little dream team. It's been really, really fun. We've had such a lovely cast, Dan Ryan, Nico Mirallegro. I mean everyone, we've all gotten on really well. It's been lovely.

Can you remember thinking that *Passenger* a special idea that you wanted to be a part of?

Yeah, I remember reading the script and thinking, this is brilliant. I'm not a big reader. Reading is very hard for me as I'm dyslexic. But I remember reading it really, really quickly. It reads very fast and it's just so much energy. It doesn't feel like work.

I read the first draft in 2017 or 2018 and I said to Andy, I'm in. Then I didn't read the newer drafts until 2022. One thing I love about the script is that every single person has a journey, whether it's Riya, whether it's the Kid on the Wall, whether it's the bins. You think the bins are nothing, but then that becomes something. No matter how small it feels in the world or even to Riya, everything actually has a bigger meaning, a bigger place in the story. That is something that I really love about the 'Who knew when they saw something' in episode three that it was actually going to be a thing? I just thought it was brilliant.

Interview with David Threlfall who plays Jim Bracknell

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

It's about small communities that you never get out of, which you're sort of trapped by in some ways. There are different levels to that in *Passenger*.

You play Jim, what can you tell us about him? Who is he and where do we meet him at the start of the series?

Andy Buchan, the writer, was very generous in letting us build a backstory for our characters. Jim Bracknell was about two when he left Chadder Vale and was brought

up in London after his mother and father split up, but has since returned to the area. He learned from former business acquaintances down south that fracking is a good thing to get into. Jim goes back to Chadder Vale and inhabits his father's house, who's not there anymore, he then raises it to the ground and builds a fracking site where he now lives in a caravan.

He looks like he's let himself go and a somewhat emotional, but certainly a physical wreck who is addicted to his painkillers. He's very vulnerable. Five years ago, he was attacked, and that man who attacked him, Eddie played by Barry Sloane, is about to be released from prison early.

He's a man struggling with a lot of external and internal things. What do you think it is about Chadder Vale that keeps him there?

A certain habit, a certain allegiance to Riya, our main character who is back in Chadder Vale too. You've got people moving back into the area and you've got young people who want to move out of the area to the bright lights of Manchester.

Interview with Daniel Ryan who plays Derek Jackson

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Passenger is not like any other show I've ever worked on. It's neither fish nor flesh. It's a cross between many different genres. They're all characters who you feel you would know but are all from a kind of slightly deranged world. It's a show that essentially, you could say was a cop show, but it's not. You could say it was science fiction, but it's not. You could say it was a creepy dark comedy, but it's not that either!!

What can you tell us about Derek? Who is he and where do we meet him at the start of the series?

Derek Jackson is really the main employer in Chadder Vale. He has the bread factory at which a lot of the other characters work and he's a seemingly affable, nice boss. He's got aspirations. He probably thinks he's a bit better than everybody else, but he's just living his life and trying to get back with his wife, Terri played by Debbie Rush. They've split up and he's pretty keen to get back with her, although it doesn't seem like that's very likely. He's just living his life, but with a big secret.

Can you tell us any more about that big secret?

I think Derek is sitting on a very big story. He's very much in charge of what's going on in the town, the odd things that are happening. The more he gets involved with whatever this thing is that he's involved with, the more he is starting to lose his perception of reality. He is certainly getting angrier and angrier and more frightened and deeper and deeper into the mess that he has chosen to get himself involved with.

Can you talk a bit about his relationship with Kane, who are they to each other and what's their dynamic? And how was it working with Nico Mirallegro who plays him?

So, Derek has a brother called Kane, played by Nico Mirallegro. Well, half-brother. There's a big age difference. They share the same dad, but not the same mum. I think there's been a lot of tension between them as brothers throughout their life. Derek's pretty much a bully. I think he's probably bullied Kane since he was really young and that has carried on.

Kane is now working at the bread factory. He's a burden, but he is also someone who Derek cannot live without and that kind of antagonism between them is getting worse and worse. Nico and I hit it off straight away. I think we both came at the characters from the same angle.

One theme that unites characters in this is the need to escape. Would you agree that Derek is also trying to escape something in his life?

I think there is a theme of escape, getting out of Chadder and getting out of the situation that you've got yourself into. Everybody's on a journey of change in a certain way. But also, there's this tradition within Chadder Vale of trying to keep everything the same.

There's a push and pull between all the characters that are trying to get somewhere, whether that's physically or mentally, but they're all trying to get out. Derek is certainly trying to get out of the situation that he's got himself in, but he's so enmeshed in this problem from an opportunity that was given to him. He can't get out of it, but he's certainly trying to.

Can you remember what your first reaction was to reading Andrew's script? What was going through your head when you were reading it?

The script read like nothing I felt like I'd seen before, the dialogue was incredible, which I think is probably indicative of him being an actor. I think he certainly said all these lines out loud. The scripts flow really, really well and the dialogue was very naturalistic. But there's just all these oddities in the town, quirks of the characters, dysfunctional relationships, and gigantic secrets. So, it was really like nothing I felt that I'd read before. It was a no-brainer wanting to do it.

There is a distinct Northern sensibility to the series and its dialogue. Would you agree?

Yeah. As a Lancastrian, born and bred, there's an attraction of dialogue that rings true. Words that you don't often hear written but are part of the vernacular in the Northwest, Andy's brought those into the script. Certainly, some of my favourite lines in the whole show were in the diner.

The woman serving the food says, 'Can we stop arguing? People are trying to eat their eggs!' There's something about that which is so Northern, that is so of the world of Victoria Wood and that kind of dialogue. There are just some brilliant turns of phrase in it that Andy's brought because of him being a born and bred Northerner himself.

Why do you think Lancashire is the kind of perfect backdrop for this type of story?

I think there's a lot of untapped Lancashire on the telly, you know. We see a lot of cobbles, a lot of rows of terraced houses and all the rest of it. In the Lancashire countryside, there may be terraced houses and may be cobbled streets, but then there are these vistas and extraordinary landscape, Chaddar Vale is in one of these valleys. The sunlight may not get to them all day because of the hill on this side and the hill on that side. It creates a different dynamic and a scale where something that's bubbling under can really flourish, because that kind of oddity you can get from an extraordinary landscape is all part and parcel of the world of *Passenger*.

Which have been some of your favourite locations to shoot in?

When you go to some of these locations, and you don't know whether it's the design of the show or whether they've just found this extraordinary location. I love my bread factory, which is a surprising location. It's an old department store. But the work that they've done to make it completely and utterly believable is fantastic. We were all breathing in flour for two weeks while we were there. I mean, you wouldn't ever question that it wasn't a real bread factory. A lot of my locations have been indoors, but within beautiful, beautiful surroundings.

How would you describe the type of people who live in Chadder Vale?

Chadder Vale is one of those close-knit communities that everybody lives in. You know, a lot of people live in big cities now and you don't get to know your neighbours. But, when you grow up somewhere like Chadder Vale, you know everybody. The people who are working for you are people you were at school with or the parents of people you grew up with. All their lives are woven together.

They are close-knit, but each family in this town seems to have a problem - a distinctive problem. Something is wrong in each of their seemingly normal lives and that's what's great about the show. They're almost like one big family, but a really disconnected one. They believe in the town they live in, but they don't necessarily like their next-door neighbours.

It's an amazing ensemble cast. Can you talk a bit about working with your co-stars?

One of the great things about a job is when you get the nice list of little photographs of everyone who's in the show before you go to the read through. Each one was either an actor who I admire or an actor who I wanted to work with. It's been a wonderful, wonderful time but we sort of missed each other because a lot of our stories happen individually, in the little family groups.

It's been brilliant working with Nico, but also the entire cast is brilliant. We're all telling our stories whenever we get together. We have this wonderful moment of, 'How's your story going? How's your bit working out?' Everyone's got these little secret stories that are going on, that we've obviously read in the script, but I'm absolutely

fascinated to see it all come together on screen because you could not wish for a better group of actors to be with.

You have these established actors and then you also have actors who are fresh out of drama school. Did you enjoy that dynamic?

It's a great thing when they say it's an ensemble show. You have actors like David Threlfall, who I've never worked with, but we've met before as we did a film together, but never met on the film.

Then it's been wonderful working with Rowan, who plays Katie Wells, who is a recent drama school graduate. Different energy, bringing in all kinds of different stuff to the show. The wonderful thing about an ensemble is when you are all pushing to tell a great story. Your bit of the story is as vital as their bit of the story, and you want their bit to be good because then the whole thing is going to be brilliant, and the script deserves it. The work that both directors have put in and the hard work that Andy has put in to get this TV show made, I'm really, really excited to see it.

Interview with Jo Hartley who plays Chief Constable Linda Markel

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Passenger is about a close-knit, small town with some very, very big secrets. It's wild and wonderful, full of suspense and intrigue. It's so gripping, I'm very excited about it.

What can you tell us about your character Chief Constable Linda Markel? Who is she and where do we meet her at the start of the series?

I really do love Linda and it was great to be offered this role because I found that she's not like any other character that I've played before. She's a little bit like the mayor in *Jaws*, telling the town there's no sharks and to open the beach. Linda's very proud and protective of Chadder Vale, she's smart and unpredictable and knows everything that's going on.

She's a bit of a loner, but I think that she's pretty well-liked in the community and she's obsessed with Chadder being the 'Best Kept Village'. Ultimately, I think she's got good motives and she's hardy. She doesn't take messing and she doesn't miss a trick. I've never got to play a copper before, especially not one as bizarre as Linda!

Linda's first scene has her going head-to-head with Wunmi's character Riya about what the Chadder Vale police should be focusing their attention on. Do you think Linda's purely a stickler for the rules or is she intentionally oblivious to something darker going on in Chadder?

Linda doesn't take kindly to Riya coming in and disobeying her orders. She's come in from the Met and Linda thinks she has an ego coming from a 'better' place, so it's her job to put Riya in her place and we start off at loggerheads. Linda doesn't like her attitude and sees her as the big shot detective. I really love how straight-talking she is

with Riya, I wanted to keep her dry and sarcastic, a bit unpredictable. She's a little bit of an oddball. I think Linda does that to intentionally wind Riya up.

There's a battle of egos going on really. She'd like to think she knows exactly what's going on, but she's mostly unaware of Riya's investigating Nina and Katie's cases. She's resentful to Riya because she's not playing ball like that and in her mind, Riya is messing up her town, so she's an obstacle to Riya's success. We pretty much stuck to the script, it was so well written we only really said what was on the page, but Lee the director wasn't very precious about it so we could make it our own and I love working like that. I loved working with Wunmi, she's really incredible and such a star.

***Passenger* has this deeper mystery bubbling away in the background, but then also it's like a kitchen sink family drama. Do you think there's an appeal there and why do you think that juxtaposition works so well on screen?**

There's that unnatural and mysterious element to it, but there's also those grounded themes of dishonesty, love, relationships and coming of age from Barry's character returning from prison and Rowan's character wanting to escape. She's incredible! I couldn't take my eyes off her, I was really wowed, she's an amazing actress.

You've got jealousy in Mehmet's story, escapism in Katie's story, Katie's mum dealing with the breakup, Eddie coming back, the fracking and current affairs like that. It's packed! It's like six shows in one. All these characters and the stories that Andy Buchan's put in there, I genuinely think that anyone could watch it and love it.

There's an authenticity to the script in both its comedy and portrayal of Northern sensibilities, how did it feel when you first read Andrew Buchan's scripts?

I love it! It's dry and a bit off-the-cuff with great one-liners and the most random little nuances. When I was learning the script, I remembered it really easily which is always a sign of great writing. I read the first three and immediately knew I wanted to be a part of it.

I loved the banter and the camaraderie and the authenticity of the characters. There are a lot of Northern-isms in there and so much realness, I loved that gritty and down-to-earth vibe from the scripts. It's also really filmic with such great production value and a Northern authenticity to it which I loved. That added so much complexity to it because Chadder Vale is a fictional place, but it could be set anywhere and anytime. They talk about Manchester as if it's miles away, when it's probably just forty minutes away.

Do you think that Andrew Buchan having a background in acting had an impact on Linda's dialogue or how she reads on the page overall?

I do. I've written a couple of shows and I'm very good at creating characters and writing their dialogue. I think that's natural to actors, the plot and the story is where it becomes more difficult, unless you've got a co-writer or a script supervisor. But with

Andy, he had this incredibly complex and big story which you're really engaged with. He nailed the dialogue and the juxtaposition of those small-town people faced with the most bizarre happenings. He's done that as an intuitive performer and creator, being able to tap into that acting side of him. I think he's created a lot of good characters and understood them quite well. It's really quite refreshing.

The locations in *Passenger* really do make you feel like you're in a lived-in, close-knit northern town. Do you have a favourite at all and how authentic were those sets?

I loved the police station and the office, which is kind of stuck in a time warp itself with that little mini Metro police car outside. The quarry was beautiful and that was quite magical to film in. I loved the snow and the forest, even though I never got to go into the forest. But I think the carvery and the police station were where I spent most of my time. They were just lovely and the way they've been located, and shot has been great. The cinematography's incredible.

I also love the factory. I used to work at British Aerospace when I was sixteen or seventeen, I did a youth training scheme there and those offices in the middle of the room without a roof...oh my god, I got nostalgic! It reminded me of being young, I was Katie! (played by Rowan Robinson). After that, I went to Amsterdam and I lived in Japan for five years, so I did what Katie wants to do, I left Oldham. I identified with her need to leave this small town. I really am blown away by everything, especially the way it looks.

Everyone's escaping from something in their own little way in *Passenger*. Would you agree that Linda is also trying to escape something in her life?

I think that in her personal life, she's very guarded. She's been on her own a long time and she's a workaholic, a lot of her self-esteem and positivity comes purely from her job. I'd like to explore that further. I think she's innately good, but I think she's likely had some issues with people in Chadder Vale. She's maybe hiding something in her past, like her family or something to do with her sexuality. I did play her like she was hiding something.

How would you describe the type of people who live in Chadder Vale?

Completely nuts! Close-knit, a little jaded, very nosy, extremely loyal, protective, very hardy, maybe unaware of what's going on in the outside world after living in what feels like a time warp. I think they're probably a little bit lost, but there's a strength and a camaraderie there. Costume and production did something really brilliant where people are using iPhones, but they're dressed like it's the 80s.

It's been 18 years since *This Is England* and you're working alongside a similar ensemble of amazing up and coming actors in *Passenger*. What's it like being part of such a great ensemble cast again?

It was so fun to play because all these actors are wonderful! Wunmi is great and I worked with her a long time ago on a film called *Stolen* with Damian Lewis, but it was

just a small role, so it was lovely to reconnect with her and work together again. You've got such a lovely ensemble of newcomers with established actors like David, Wunmi, me and Daniel Ryan. Gosh, it's so good and the casting is so interesting. I was mostly in scenes with Ella, Arian and Wunmi apart from my big speech at the carvery with everyone. I just had so much fun with Ella and Arian, especially the scenes in the police station, they were like Laurel and Hardy.

I met Rowan once and she was so lovely. She said she was excited to work with me and we never got any scenes together, but I was watching her scenes and was just wowed by her. I took this job because I really wanted to be a part of this amazing cast and this story, I really think it's quality. The production company SISTER are incredible and I really wanted to work with them, but it hadn't worked out on other jobs, so I was really excited to be offered this role. A couple of people on set told me they went out for my role and didn't get it...I was like "Yes! I'm a police officer...I'm not a mum! And I'm the boss!" I'm always the mum. It was really hard as well because Wunmi's such a strong actor and Riya's such a strong character, I had to almost domineer her when I'm actually quite a squishy and lovable person. But it was great to put a different head on and play that role, to kick a bit of ass. I like the directness of Linda, she's quite rude and sarcastic, which is very Northern. I really like that in *Happy Valley* with Sarah Lancashire, that straight no-bullshit approach.

Genre wise, *Passenger* is difficult to pin down. Who do you feel like this is a series for?

I genuinely do think it's for everyone. Initially, you might think it's for a young crowd and they'd go for *Stranger Things*, but a bit of *Fargo* too. There's that magical, mystery element and younger characters, but you've got the heavier parts with prison, relationships, fracking, what Jim's been through. God, David Threlfall's incredible in it, it's like a different person. I think everyone will get something from it.

What do you want people to know going into *Passenger*?

Know that you know nothing! Know that you're in for some surprises. Know that nothing is ever as it seems. Just buckle up and get ready...small town, big problems.

Interview with Rowan Robinson who plays Katie Wells

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Northern humour mixed with mystery, mixed with... I guess it's got a bit of everything!

What can you tell us about Katie?

Katie is a part of the Wells family clan. She is an accountant at the bread factory, and at the start of the series we meet her in the pub having fun with her sister Lily, her best friend, Mehmet (played by Shervin Alenabi) and her boyfriend, John (played by Jack James Ryan) who are her close circle.

However, Katie is in a lot of distress throughout the whole series. She has a whole ordeal with her boyfriend where she thinks he's cheated on her – or has he? She has

her best friend, Mehmet but then something happens to him. She also has a very complicated situation with her dad, Eddie Wells played by Barry Sloane who is entering back into their life.

She has a lot of aspirations with her career at the same time as this, so she's in a lot of disarray and there's a whole lot going on.

Can you talk a bit more about her relationship with her boyfriend John played by Jack James Ryan? Do you think it's true love or do you think they're kind of brought together because it's a small town and there's no other option?

We don't see them first getting together, but they've been together for a really, really long time. I imagine that it was a bit of 'there's not really many other options and this guy likes me so sure, I'll go for it.' But now they've been together for so long and I think that she does love him. She really cares about him, and she asks him to come to Manchester with her multiple times.

Their relationship is really, really complicated, very rocky. And I think she explores that in the series – am I in love with him or do I just love him?

The Wells family are caught up in all kinds of drama. What is Lily and Katie's relationship like with their dad upon his return? Do you think they'll ever be able to be a happy family or are they always meant to be this dysfunctional?

I don't think that the Wells' were ever a happy family. I think that they're all very big characters, big personalities, loud people. I don't think that it was this picture-perfect life. Eddie went to prison for an awful thing and there is a question as to whether that makes him an evil person.

It's also weird for him because he comes back into such a feminine energy at the house where three northern ginger women are like, "Oh, you think you can rock up here?!"

Do you think deep down they want that father figure back or are they perfectly happy with just the three of them?

The Wells' reputation has been tarnished by Eddie's crime and they've really had to build that back up again. I do think that she wants him back, but it's whether they can accept that after what he's done.

You obviously got on very well with Matilda who plays your sister Lily. Was it nice working with people who you're mates with?

I'm an only child, so it's nice having a little sis. The whole cast, the whole crew. Everyone is so lovely. Dream team.

One theme that unites every character's journey in this- is the need to escape. Everyone's escaping from something in their own little way. Would you agree that Katie is also trying to escape something in her life?

Katie is trying to leave. She wants to get out of there. She wants to sort of escape everything and leave everything and leave Chadder to do the big move to Manchester. So, I think she definitely wants to escape.

Can you remember what your first reaction was to reading Andrew's scripts? What was going through your head when you were reading it?

I first read the sides that were the scenes for my audition, and it was just three scenes. I was like, 'Oh, yeah, nice Northern drama. Great.' Then when I got the whole episode I thought, 'What is going on? This is so unexpected!' I thought it was really cool. You never read anything that's like a Northern drama mixed with this kind of dialogue and mysterious stuff going on at the same time. I knew that it was a really cool thing that I would love to be a part of.

Do you think there is a real northern authenticity to it?

One hundred percent. I think Andy's written it in such a way that these really serious topics are dealt with such humour that you can just recognize in your own life. There are some lines that I think my mum or my auntie would say. It's just so funny. I think he has such a way of melding the Northern humour into such serious high-stake situations.

The locations must have helped to bring authenticity to it too. Can you talk a bit about those?

I mean if you look at the background of all the shots, we filmed most of it in Cornholme, this little village town that had massive hills, mountains and trees surrounding it. In the background of every single shot, there's this looming mountain behind us. I think that it just helps as an actor because you don't really have to use your imagination. I'm looking out onto the whole of Yorkshire and Lancashire. It's like...oh my God yeah, we're here, we're in Chadder Vale.

Do you think audiences are going to enjoy investigating along with Riya and the characters?

One hundred percent. This is like, such my sort of show, like I would love to watch this for the first time and have no idea what's going on. There are so many mysteries.

Genre wise, *Passenger* is difficult to pin down. Who do you feel like this is a series for? Do you think there's something for everyone in it?

Honestly, yeah, I think this is definitely a series for everyone. I would watch this; my whole family would watch this. All my friends would watch this. I think that it has a little bit of something for everyone and there's so many different themes that it explores and so many people that it will hit.

Interview with Barry Sloane who plays Eddie Wells

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Passenger is about a small village with secrets, some of which the inhabitants of the village are aware of and some of which will be made clear to them in a number of strange and mysterious ways.

What can you tell us about Eddie? Who is he and where do we meet him at the start of the series?

When we meet Eddie at the beginning of the series, he's just been released from prison after serving five years for assaulting Jim Bracknell played by David Threlfall. He's ostracised from the village. He's the village bad boy if you will or better known as 'The Village Monster'. So, he comes back into town with a lot of baggage and a lot of perception around him.

That's where we pick up the story. The energy of Eddie coming back is felt right through the village. You can feel that this is not a good thing at all. What kind of havoc will he wreak? What is he capable of? Who is he? There's a lot of mystery surrounding that as well.

He's trying to pick up where he left off with his wife, and his daughters, but ultimately, he's trying to fit back into Chadder and seeing, where he can be after five years away.

What is the story about for Eddie?

It's about how much one person can take and keep walking forward? What are the effects of that? And also, in a small community like this, if you're painted as being a particular thing, how difficult is it to not be that thing, not play up to it, not become the monster that everybody says you are?

There's a lot of unresolved pain both internally and externally with him and, as an advocate for male mental health and mental health in general, I didn't take it lightly. To be dealing with a storyline of such power, of someone dealing with not thinking they can go on and whether they can they be saved when they're feeling the weight of the world on their shoulders.

For men like Eddie, up and down the country and across the world, they just can't vocalise what it is they're feeling. They just know that there's something there, but they can't verbalise that pain and so they inflict it on others, or have it inflicted on them and that's certainly what happens to Eddie across the course of this series.

Toxic masculinity plays into that as well, a kind of toxic masculinity that we hear about in small, struggling towns, would you agree?

I was born in the 1980s, so growing up in the eighties and nineties, the definition of what a man has constantly shifted. This isn't a new thing I don't think. It's shifted every generation. We just experience it in the now, so it feels new. But certainly, there is a culture of "man up, deal with it!" You can't go and speak to your friends.

It's tough for these men to deal with what's on their plate. I'll only speak from a male point of view cause that's all I have, but as a society we need to be there for each

other and check in on each other and let each other know; “You know what, mate? If you need to talk. I’m here for you.”

Eddie has a bit of a reputation. He's a bit of a bad boy. As an actor, is that quite fun to play and to tackle?

Yeah, it's always fun to play bad boys or naughty boys or the rough diamond kind of character. We root for these people if we sense in their core there's a humanity that we recognize in ourselves, elements of them that we see, then we fight for them. Eddie is trying to walk forward and there's a valour in that and there's a bravery in that that I think will resonate with people and then they'll come on the journey with him. Also, look, I got to wear very cool leather jackets and have lovely wavy hair and be a bit of a bad boy. So, yeah, very happy with that! (laughs)

Can you talk a bit about his relationship with his wife and daughters? Do you think he has a sense of guilt dragging them into this? And why do you think he stays in a village like Chadder where everyone knows his story?

I think that's a lot of small village life right the way through. I think in small villages like this your identity is key. You are relevant to society in general. If you live in a small place and you're valuable like Eddie was, the mechanic in a small village, you have a purpose and you get up in the morning, people need something doing and they come and see you. It gives you a drive in life.

If you move out of there, you're just a mechanic, one of so many then it's difficult. I think there's a safety in small villages like this that people are drawn to.

As for his relationship with his wife and girls, I'll start with something I made very clear when I was prepping the character. You'll see throughout the show that he's got a ton of tattoos. The key tattoos that I wanted him to have early on were on his left arm. There he has Joanne and he has his two daughters names. I don't think a man who's truly evil or dark and dastardly has his wife and his daughters name tattooed on his arms. That was a key point for me.

He's very much in love with his wife although it's not reciprocated. Understandably. You can understand Joanne's position on it. She's been left to pick up the pieces and rebuild a life in a small town with such stigma and although I don't think she firmly believes he was totally capable of it, she was faced with unquestionable evidence.

Do you think that's part of the appeal of the series. There is this mystery bubbling under, but then also at its core it's like a kitchen sink family drama?

Absolutely. I read the scripts quickly, which is always key when you get a lot of scripts through. I was blasting through it and I was onto my agent straight away like, “I want in, I want in on this in a big way.” And fortunately, they wanted me too, so that was very nice.

I thought it was a truly unique script and I think sometimes when you have an element of something off kilter, it's very hard for people to resonate with that but you can all resonate with the core stories within this.

If you can feel akin to what these families and these people in this village are going through, then we can take you anywhere we want to take you and we will.

And his relationship with Riya, what is the history there?

Well, she was responsible for the evidence that put him away. There's always going to be conflict when they see each other again. And when they first see each other after five years, there's a pretty tense encounter at the carvery. I think she fears him. I think she fears what he might be, and I think she fears an element of him that reflects something that she's familiar with. To him, she's an authority figure, which he doesn't deal particularly well with having just been incarcerated.

There's been some amazing locations as well, which I think have really added to the kind of authenticity. Have you had any favourites?

I loved spending time in Cornholme. It's so imposing, just with that backdrop of this huge looming beast of the forest and the mountain there just overlooking it is huge and overbearing.

It was perfect and I loved that location. I love the garage set that I shot in. The set design on the show is just amazing. I still don't know what decade we were actually in because it felt like we're in the nineties or the two thousands. It felt very familiar to me. Very, very much like my teenage years into my early twenties.

Everyone's escaping from something in their own little way in Passenger. Would you agree that Eddie is also trying to escape something in his life?

It's interesting because he's just escaped from a cage, so there's a freedom in him. One of the major themes in this piece is obviously fear. There was something about the acceptance of where he was, which was quite interesting to play.

How would you describe the type of people who live in Chadder Vale?

I grew up in Liverpool in a place called Garston. It wasn't as small as Chadder, but you certainly knew most of the people who lived in the immediate, two or three block radius around the house. So, for me it felt very familiar.

We don't have to live in Chadder to understand what it is. I think it's going to resonate with a lot of us. Whether you've grown up in the countryside, whether you've grown up in a big city. I think you're going to feel that it's part of your world, you know. You're going to go, "Okay, I get this. I know what this is. I know the local pub. I know I know the garage." It's going to feel like home. I think there's going to be a familiarity that's going to draw people to it. Even though it's definitely a place on its own, it's definitely stuck in time. I kind of love that because the world moves so fast now that I think it's quite nice to have something that feels like it's not going anywhere. For now anyway.

Chadder Vale is caught up in this very kind of unfamiliar mystery. Why do you think that juxtaposition works so well on screen?

I remember Quentin Tarantino talking about one of my favourite films ever, *Reservoir Dogs*, and he's talking about the fact that there's a very famous scene in that for anyone who hasn't seen it where a police officer gets his ear cut off. He said what he did beforehand, is have Michael Madsen do this cute little dance and he charms your pants off and you love it Then by the time he grabs this cop and chops his ear off, you're not allowed to take your eye off it because you watch the dance, and you've liked it.

I think what Andy's done so brilliantly with his writing is that you fall in love with the people in this town, in this village and then when we take them to this place that is unexpected, and we can't look away. We've got to go with them. We've got to be as brave as they are. And maybe being brave in this show is the only thing that's going to save your life.

It's an amazing ensemble cast. Can you talk a bit about working with your co-stars?

It's always great when you read a really good script, you find that you're going to be part of it and then it's enhanced by it being stacked with incredible actors. Some at the beginning of their career, some in the middle of it, some who've been in it for a long, long time all bringing beautifully well-rounded, well-thought-out characters to life.

Working with Wunmi is just a joy. She's a powerhouse. She had more days than anyone on this show and she carries it without any stress or hardship. She's taking this show on her shoulders and powering through walls for us. She's brilliant, her work speaks for herself, her awards speak for themselves.

David Threlfall is just a legend who I look up to. His work, not only on screen, but on stage as well, is just tremendous. Natalie Gavin plays my wife is, top, top level. So real, so earthed, so grounded.

Rowan is just tremendous as well and Matilda. All of these are the people who I've worked closest with.

Genre wise, *Passenger* is difficult to pin down. Who do you feel like this is a series for? Do you think there's something for everyone in it?

I think it's a show that anyone can watch. Any age and tastes across the board, because we are kind of giving you a little bit of everything. I think this is in its own genre perhaps, but other shows that are doing a similar kind of thing, they bring everyone to the table. I think we'll all be able to sit together and watch this because it's a universal story.

Interview with Natalie Gavin who plays Joanne Wells

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Passenger is a beautifully shot series, set in a picturesque rural town in the North. There are so many levels and none of the characters are one-dimensional. These are characters you can love to love and love to hate, very relatable and grounded.

What can you tell us about Joanne? Who is she and where do we meet her at the start of the series?

When you meet Joanne, you see her as a single mum. She's married, but unfortunately her husband is not there. Eddie's (played by Barry Sloane) in prison and has been there for a number of years. You see Joanne working, sweating, grafting, and covering three jobs to keep her daughters above water. They don't have much, but she aspires to have better things for them. Her daughters are her world.

She works at the factory with her glamorous pink hairnet, she works at the carvery, and she also does some stitching and ironing on the side, so she's a very busy woman. She seems stressed a lot of the time and she doesn't get much time to herself, but she is cheeky and she's quite funny. She's blunt, but she's got a good heart.

What are the key storylines that Joanne finds herself involved with during the series?

At the start, you see Joanne struggling with the balance between friendship and motherhood with her first daughter Katie. She lets her borrow her most prized possession, which is her Punto, worth £3,000, as she says multiple times. Then one day she can't find the car or Katie. She's disappeared. The police get in touch and that's the first freak out for Joanne. The idea of not having her daughter or her car.

Then Eddie comes out of prison, and it really tips everything upside down for her. She has to readjust her life to having him there, after spending five years on her own, grafting on her own, providing on her own and that really does mix things up for her. She still loves Eddie, she never took her wedding ring off, but she also doesn't want to be faced with judgement and criticism from the rest of the Chadder Vale. That's a really big thing for Joanne. She just wants to keep her head down and get on with it. A lot of people judge her and not in the best light.

The Wells family seem to be the centre of a lot of drama. How do you think Joanne feels about this?

I feel that Joanne feels helpless because she's been plunged into this situation. She's been forced into it. She didn't make Eddie do what he was supposed to have done, but she is living with the repercussions of it all. It's affected her as a person and it's affected her kids.

The way that she's been criticised by her friends and her family, it's not fair. I think that's what's really upsetting about people dealing with a loved one that's been incarcerated, you get tarnished. I think that is a really good theme and a really good point to get across, it's not the family's fault.

What do you think keeps her in Chadder Vale when she could easily move somewhere else and start afresh, without the reputation that seems to proceed her?

I've struggled with this because I felt that I was very similar to her. I'm from a village myself, I've always lived in a small community, and I've always wanted to explore and see the other side. The locations that we've been filming in are quite extraordinary. I remember the first day of getting out of the car and the hills are alive. They are literally like a hundred foot tall, so high over the houses. It traps you and makes you want to see the other side.

Can you remember what your first reaction was to reading the script? What was going through your head?

My first reaction to reading the script was, wow the audience is going to be in for a treat. I remember gasping, there are so many twists and turns to this show. Just when you feel that you've got a grip, you haven't stuck a slippery pig. I mean, who doesn't want to watch that? It's really cleverly put together.

Andrew being an actor is also a treat for us actors. It's really grounded and rooted in reality. I feel that you can understand the characters, but you'll definitely get caught off guard. And it's joyous! So, get ready for a journey.

Which scenes have you most enjoyed filming?

I've always wanted to play with prosthetics. I have the opportunity to be a 90-year-old woman! 90-year-old Joanne Wells. Katie hallucinates and sees her mother as an old lady. And WOW, am I an old lady! Contacts and everything...

That was insanely freaky, but really, really enjoyable. And I also get to play an 18-year-old Joanne, an 18-year-old pregnant year Joanne, that was quite something. I mean what opportunities do you have where you can play a 90-year-old character and an 18-year-old character and then go back to day dot. It's been one of the best journeys, the art department and production design have really gone for it.

Everyone's escaping from something in their own little way. Would you agree that Joanne is also trying to escape something in her life?

Yeah, I do feel that Joanne is trying to escape from something. Not necessarily Chadder Vale, because that's her home. But the judgment and criticism of her falling back in love. She really tries hard not to do that because of what people will think of her, which feels really real. I feel like there's definitely decisions in my life where I've wondered what people would think about it. I think that's at the forefront of Joanne's story and that affects the decisions that she makes to a certain point.

Genre wise, *Passenger* is difficult to pin down. Who do you feel like this is a series for? Do you think there's something for everyone in it?

Yeah, I do. I feel things have definitely changed over the past few years. There are similarities to *Stranger Things*, I feel the similarities to *Fargo*. You would believe those

were catered for two very different audiences, but actually because of series like *Stranger Things*, we can watch young adult stories now. It's not unheard of.

I feel that this could reach out to a really quite extensive age range. I feel like it could be for teens, but it could also be for the older generation as well and everybody in between for sure. I don't feel that there's a cut-off point.

Interview with Hubert Hanowicz as Jakub

Please tell us about who you play in *Passenger*.

I play Jakub Makowski. Who is the mechanic in charge of Chadder Vale Garage and he's been in Chadder for around five years. He left his town Gdańsk, which is in Northern Poland and now he's here and he's trying to find his place.

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

There is this small town somewhere in northern England which looks like a quiet, peaceful town where people go about their lives, and they have their jobs, and it looks quite calm. If you're a tourist and you're passing through the village, it would look quite idyllic.

Everyone has their own relationship with the local doctor, with the local mechanic, local lawyer and they know that it's not as picturesque as it looks to the tourists. That's what *Passenger* is.

This sleepy English village seems so familiar, and yet there is this strange, unfamiliar secret that's bubbling underneath, would you agree?

You feel that from the very start. You're introduced to everyone, and you can tell that there's something in the air, something's going on. But some people, by choice, they choose not to see it. They know what's happening. But they choose not to see it.

But there is Riya, who does feel it. She has this gut feeling that something's wrong, but everybody tells her she's exaggerating, even Jakub. He sees a companion in Riya, but while he just wants to finish his job and go to the pub for a pint, she wants to know what's going on. What really is going on.

And what would you say his relationship is like with Riya's ex Nick? Is there a rivalry between those two?

He thinks he's an idiot. Nick left her, he left his mum and Riya has to take care of her now. How could you leave a woman like this? How could you leave her after she moved for him to Chadder Vale?

Jakub is quite a traditional guy, he's all about family. Maybe he never had the chance to build his own family. Maybe it's too late for him now. So maybe right now, just to have someone close to him would be amazing.

Everyone's escaping from something in their own little way. Would you agree that Jakub is also trying to escape something in his life?

There are quite a few characters that constantly think they're not in the right place, that they should move somewhere else, that Chadder is only temporary. When you live in a place like this, many always dream of a bigger city, a better place and you keep planning and planning and planning. Nothing ever happens because there's something that stops you. You get attached to these places, while Jakub has already left a place. He already left his home.

He's in his mid-forties, so now this is his home. That's where he wants to stay. But there are characters, especially the younger ones, that feel like they're suffocating.

Myself, I left Poland when I was 21. I didn't even think twice. I packed my bags. I wasn't even deliberating over it.

Can you remember what your first reaction was to reading Andrew's script?

I could not believe that he wrote such a part for Jakub. It is the first time I read a script and I looked at it and I thought, wow...this is it. I mean, he's got some really nice scenes. He's a well-rounded character. He's a mechanic, but he's not just a mechanic. He had different goals and he had other plans for his life when he was younger.

I remember when we had the first read through and I was very stressed, so I was just sitting there not talking to anyone. Then at some point, Andy came over to me and he said, 'Hello'. I gave him a hug and thanked him for this script and for this part because it's an amazing part and it's a great script.

What has your experience been like working with Wunmi, who plays Riya?

Thank God it was her and not someone else! When we started, it was winter, and I was so stressed. But Wunmi is the most relaxed and chilled person I have ever worked with. When we have scenes together, she makes me feel like I just feel very safe.

Sometimes you stress about the scene, but then you have it with her, and she makes you feel very comfortable. She plays a strong independent police officer, and she is like that, but then at the same time jokes and she laughs. Even when we have more difficult scenes, it doesn't feel that difficult. Wunmi and the script and the character that I'm playing...it really is amazing and it's the best part I've had so far. I've never played a juicier, multi-level part like this one. You have this amazing script and then you have Wunmi, who is like the driving force of this project. When you get a few scenes with her, my God, I'm going to be grateful to Andy forever for the rest of my life.

Can you describe *Passenger* in three words?

Mysterious. Funny. Unpredictable.

Interview with Arian Nik as Nish Chowdry

Tell us about *Passenger* in a few words.

Passenger, I feel like it's a show that I've never seen before. It's kind of like *Happy Valley* meets *Stranger Things*, in a fictional northern town called Chadder Vale, where nothing really ever goes wrong, or so we think. All these strange occurrences start creeping up and it makes the whole village shake in their boots because they're not used to navigating things that aren't prim and proper.

What can you tell us about Nish? Who is he and where do we meet him at the start of the series?

Nish Chowdry is 27 years old. He's kind of coasting through life, without needing to care too much about his job or about anything other than gaming. He's been working in Chadder Vale for about two years and he's pretty happy coming into work, dealing with minor issues like missing bins and then going home to game. He lacks a lot of inspiration, and it feels like he hasn't really been trusted with much in his life. That all starts to shift when he experiences Riya's passion and determination for something that's really going wrong.

Nish is an outsider. He's a brown boy in a town that's predominantly white, a town that probably voted leave and a town that has one takeaway that isn't fish and chips. He's always felt like an outsider, and I think he sees a lot of himself in Riya, played by Wunmi. As she starts accelerating her investigation into what's going on in Chadder, I think it really inspires Nish to do the same and become a better version of himself and a better officer.

Can you remember what your first reaction was to reading Andrew's script? What was going through your head when you were reading it?

I was so excited reading Andy's script for the first time because it was so funny. Nish jumped off the page. For me, it's a character that I've never played before. His energy is so fizzy and excitable, and it rubbed off onto me the moment I read it. I felt just as excited as Nish is for like 90% of this show. I really, really wanted it. I love shows that create an ensemble world, especially one that feels slightly off kilter and slightly different to what we recognize as our normality. Tonally it was just [*chef's kiss*].

Why do you think Nish got into the police force in the first place? Do you think he wanted to make a change within the village?

I would love for it to be a really political reason, like he wanted to see change, but actually, I think that his family were just encouraging him to find a job that's rooted in stability as opposed to just messing around all the time.

A community support officer would feel very outward facing. It feels like something that his family could be really proud of. So, he's not there because he wants to be. It's just convenient, as many things are, which is just life. It all just kind of works out. I would love for it to have been him wanting to be the change.

Let's talk about locations, do you have any favourites?

My favourite location so far has been the forest which was one of the first scenes that I shot on this production. I remember stepping on it at 10 o'clock at night after being driven to a very remote area. I'm from Leeds, so I feel like I'm comfortable in remote areas of valleys and stuff.

I had no idea where we were, but when the car drove up, we were in just the most beautiful forest. The trees were the tallest I think I've seen or at least had the opportunity to work in, and everything was just powdered with snow with glimpses of red everywhere.

I knew then that this series is kind of mega. This is really, really exciting and it felt like you'd just stepped into a completely different world visually and tonally. I think that's probably my favourite location that we've shot in.

You mentioned you're from Leeds. The show has a real northern grit and realness to it. Why do you think Lancashire is the perfect backdrop for this story?

Shooting this show in Lancashire is a total no-brainer. The visuals of Lancashire and the people, they marry really well with the world that Andy's created. It's like a highlights reel of the north. That's kind of what shooting up here has felt like.

You get the visuals of the valleys and then you get these pockets of society that we're so familiar with, but we've got so much still to learn about. It captures that working class grit and that salt of the earth feel really, really well I feel.

Interview with Executive Producer Lucy Dyke

Can you tease *Passenger* in a few sentences for us?

Passenger is a brand-new show for ITV. It's a mystery thriller set in a small town just to the north of Manchester. And it's about that small town's community, a police officer and strange things happening in the forest.

Can you remember what your first reaction was to reading Andrew's script?

Andrew Buchan brought the script to us at *SISTER*, having worked with Jane Featherstone for many years on *Broadchurch* and it was the first thing that he'd ever written. The thing that struck us about it was that not only was it tonally brilliant and odd and mysterious and thrilling, but what really stood out to us is that Andy writes incredible characters and incredible dialogue, which for me is the Holy Grail. It's the hardest thing for a writer to do, particularly a first-time writer. He just brought these characters to life with such warmth and such wit that it was kind of irresistible.

Tell us a little bit more about the wider team involved in creating *Passenger*. What were those initial conversations like?

We went through a really long process of development on *Passenger* with Andrew being a first-time writer. He'd created this incredible world of brilliant characters, a really brilliant world, which was about a community. I think it's a really hard thing to

do and to get right. He wanted to write about the town where he was from and about a town that was fearful and fearful of change. Fearful of facing the things that they don't want to see. There is a world where that could be really cynical, but he writes them with such affection. It's never, ever cynical. It's always warm and it's never laughing at them. It's observing them in a beautiful way.

So, we started to build the team out. Sumrah Mohammed had been working with me on *The Split* and she came on board as producer. Simon Maloney joined us at Northern Sister to come and co-exec with me alongside Jane Featherstone as well. Then we started to look for the rest of our team.

Andrew always wanted to write this for Wunmi Mosaku, so Wunmi was always in our heads as Ria which gave us a real anchor as we were going through the scripting process to have her in our heads. Then we needed to find a really exceptional director because this show is really difficult tonally. It's not like anything else. For ITV to take the risk on us was really, really brave of them and we're incredibly grateful for it. I think it's something that will really stand out for that channel. It's something that we had to remember to keep appealing to the traditional ITV audience. But also, I think the idea with ITVX is to bring in a younger streaming audience and hopefully this show spans all.

It's got a young cast and a young element that will appeal to younger viewers, but then it has a more 'traditional' story running through it. A man gets out of prison. He committed a crime five years ago. He's been let out early from his ten years' imprisonment and he comes back to the town. The cold case running through *Passenger* is about what happened to Eddie Wells, what happened to Jim, what was the truth of that, and did they get it right? So, we've got this traditional crime story running through it, which allowed us to play with both the strangeness and the weirdness that was going on in the forest and the other things that are happening in the town grounding it.

I guess one of the most important things is that you represent the authenticity of this northern town. The only way to really do that is to film it in the north of England. Why was that important to the crew?

It was such an important thing for us that this show was made in the place that Andy wrote about. He's from Bolton originally, and he writes about these characters with such affection because they're people he knows. Not "knows" in a literal sense, but there is a sense of people that he knows and the people that he grew up with. We found our town of Chadder Vale just to the north of Manchester, near a place called Todmorden, which is allegedly the place where the most UFOs have ever been seen in the UK. Cornholme has this eerie quality to it, it's a really sweet little village, but it doesn't get sunlight for four months of the year. Between November and February, the sun never rises above the hills which gives it this kind of slightly 'other' quality, which is really important to us for Chadder Vale. The idea of the show was that it should feel really grounded and should feel real. The characters in it feel real and people you could meet. But there is a sense of it being something 'other'. It's lifted

slightly off the ground, one step to the left, so it feels like a real place but there's something that's not quite right about it. That was really important to us to maintain throughout the filming of the show. It was really important for us to film this in the north of England, to bring in local crews and to support the workforce here.

Passenger has an incredible northern cast too; can you tell us about that?

It was really important to us that we cast this show out of the North West as well. Sonia Allam, who is our casting director did an absolutely brilliant job of pulling together a mostly northern cast. We have the incredible Wunmi Mosaku who this piece was written for. We have David Threlfall playing Jim, and David is from Manchester, but in *Passenger* he's playing an outsider, so he's played it with a more Southern accent. We've got the brilliant Nat Gavin and Barry Sloane playing Jo and Eddie Wells. And we've got the incredible Jo Hartley.

We have an incredible cast of younger actors on this show too and it was really important to find new local talent just coming up through the ranks. We have the brilliant Jack James Ryan, who's been in *Coronation Street*, playing John Trowbridge. We have Rowan who plays Katie Wells. She's amazing and fresh out of drama school and she's a real talent to watch. Arian Nik and Ella Bruccoleri play Nish and Ali, who are the trainee cops in Chadder Vale. They are just brilliant together and have such great energy, playing a real double-act and bringing a lot of comedy, but by the end they bring a lot of emotion. Again, I think they're two actors who are just superb and two to really watch.

This is a totally original show, but what kind of references and inspirations were the team pulling from?

This show isn't really like anything else and that's its real strength. I think tonally it's quite hard to pin down. It has elements of horror, it has elements of comedy, I suppose it sits somewhere in a mystery-thriller space, but it's about something a bit more than just your run-of-the-mill thriller.

Andy really wanted to write about fear. I think what's at the heart of this show, a community that is fearful of change. It's fearful to look at the things that are happening right in front of its nose. It's about acceptance and whether that town can really accept outsiders. As Ria finds, she's not very welcome in that town. She came to Chadder five years ago and the first thing she did was put away Eddie Wells for attacking Jim. She has felt the repercussions of that ever since. I think what this show explores are the different types of outsiders that never face acceptance.

Could you talk through some of the key locations? Set pieces like the Carvery, for example, really speak to the northern sensibilities of this town.

It was really important for us to create a town that felt real and grounded. Chadder is supposed to feel like a regular town with regular people, but there's something just slightly off about it. That's the mystery and that's the thrill of the show. It's supposed

to feel just one step to the left that something's going on that we can't quite put our fingers on.

It's not supernatural, it's not surreal. It should feel really, really, really grounded. I think we tried to explore that in some of the locations that we found. The Carvery, for example, is a real location. It's absolutely brilliant. It feels like that the thing that brings it alive is the community inside of it. I think that's the thing about Chadder Vale, as Linda says in one of the episodes, "We love this place, it's ours". I think the Carvery really helps us to understand what kind of a place this is.

The town also has a bread factory where most of the town work. It's where their income comes from and it's supposed to feel like a town in the north of England that does deal with poverty, which does deal with socio-economic crisis, but still has enormous community spirit. I think the bread factory really helps us exemplify that. It's a place where everybody goes to work, everybody comes together, and everybody makes their living out of. I love that it comes back to something so visceral as bread.

On the flip side, you've got these beautiful sweeping landscapes of northern England that really add something cinematic. Would you agree that the natural setting also add something?

The show has real cinematic quality, which was really important to us. We wanted to elevate what's perceived as 'Northern drama' and particularly under the direction of Lee Haven-Jones for the first block of this, we really achieved that. The sweeping landscapes that we lean into, the amazing vistas, the moors, the forest...which is a really key location for us. Not just because it adds the eerie mystery thriller sense to the show, but because it is so beautiful. We were able to cover it in snow for the first episode, which gives it this stunning cinematic quality and elevates it into a place that feels completely real and completely grounded and yet just feels ever so slightly strange and ever so slightly mysterious.

Passenger has such a unique, yet cinematic, feel and look to it, can you talk a bit about creating that?"

One of our key hires on this show was Lee Haven-Jones who had previously directed *The Bay* for ITV and he recently made a horror film called *The Feast* in the Welsh language. It was really that part of his work that made us want him so badly for this show. Lee has an incredible eye. He used to be an actor and that means that he can get the best out of actors that we had on set. Lee had such a cinematic vision for this show, and alongside DoP Bryan Gavigan, they worked really hard to create the kind of atmosphere that we needed.

Visually, we were able to lean into the mystery and the thriller of the show via Lee and Bryan with the way that they lit the forest, the way that they added slight amounts of atmosphere with the lenses that they used and the choice of shots that they used.

Who do you think this series will appeal to? It covers, as you mentioned, a broad range of genres. You could say there's something for everyone.

I think this is a really brave commission for ITV. It doesn't necessarily feel like a traditional ITV show. But having said that, it was really important to us that we also appealed to a traditional ITV audience. I think it has something for everyone, it has this brand-new young cast who I hope will appeal to the streamer audience, and the younger generation. There's also a much more grounded story running through it as well, which I hope will appeal to a typical ITV 1 audience. For me, I hope that this show is something that you could sit down with your family and watch. I hope that my stepdaughters will watch it. I hope that my granny will watch it. I hope that it brings something for everyone.