




MAMMOTH
SCREEN

N E X T O F K I N



Contents

Press release	3
Foreword by creators Paul Rutman and Natasha Narayan	5
Character synopses	7
Interview with Archie Panjabi	9
Interview with Jack Davenport	15
Interview with Shabana Azmi	19
Interview with Viveik Kalra	24
Interview with Claire Skinner	27
Episode Synopses	29
Cast Credits	30
Production Credits	31



ARCHIE PANJABI AND JACK DAVENPORT STAR IN NEW ITV DRAMA, NEXT OF KIN

Emmy Award winner and Golden Globe nominee, Archie Panjabi (*The Good Wife*, *The Fall*), and renowned actor, Jack Davenport (*Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Smash*), star in Mammoth Screen's fast-paced family thriller, *Next Of Kin*.

The contemporary drama follows whip-smart doctor Mona Harcourt (Panjabi) who lives in London with political lobbyist husband Guy (Davenport). When a bomb goes off in London on the same day that her brother, Kareem, is abducted and murdered in Pakistan, Mona's charmed life is shaken to its core.

The situation escalates when Mona realises that her brother's son Danish – known as Danny – has vanished from university and is being linked to both the bombing and the murder of his father. With the family facing accusations and becoming embroiled in a tangled web of betrayal and conspiracy, Mona finds herself confronted with the ultimate dilemma: how far would you go to keep your family safe?

Created by BAFTA-nominated Paul Rutman (*Indian Summers*, *Vera*) in his first collaboration with author and wife, Natasha Narayan, the series is directed by Emmy Award and BAFTA Award-nominated Justin Chadwick (*Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom*, *Bleak House*).

Next Of Kin was commissioned by ITV's Head of Drama Polly Hill, who says: "The series tells an incredibly important and pertinent story for our time, promising to grip audiences and explores one mother's dilemma to protect her loved ones."

The series is produced by one of the UK's leading drama indies, Mammoth Screen, known for shows including *Victoria*, *Endeavour* and *Fearless* for ITV, *Poldark* and *The Witness For The Prosecution* for BBC1 and *NW* and *The City And The City* for BBC Two.

Next Of Kin is produced by Rebecca Ferguson (*Cold Feet*) and executive produced by Mammoth Screen's Preethi Mavahalli (*NW*) and Managing Director, Damien Timmer (*Victoria*).

Preethi Mavahalli said: "With a brilliant cast led by Archie Panjabi and Jack Davenport, *Next Of Kin* is set to be a powerful and tense family drama that will spark debate in homes across the UK."

The series will be distributed by ITV Studios Global Entertainment.



Paul Rutman & Natasha Narayan, Creators

Next of Kin is a show about an ordinary family under extraordinary pressure. Mona's family are a large, extended clan – close despite geographical distances. The London members of the family tend to live in each other's pockets. Yet when things go wrong, the silences and misunderstandings in their lives threaten to tear them apart.

This story is set against a sadly familiar backdrop. A bombing, the death of innocents, grief and outrage, moments of silence, words of resilience and anger from politicians. Like everyone else we've watched the news, appalled. It was after one such atrocity that we wondered, what would it be like to slip behind the headlines? What would it be like to experience an act of terror from the inside? To be a family unwittingly caught up on the wrong side?

There have been shows which have covered terrorism from the perspective of the security services. We felt the experience of a family – at the centre of such an investigation – was something we hadn't seen.

Our heroine Mona is a doctor, whose parents emigrated to Britain from Pakistan when she was two. Her older brother Kareem is also a doctor, though one who chooses to spend much of his time

running a charitable clinic back in Pakistan. Mona is married to Guy Harcourt, a lobbyist, with connections to the world of Westminster.

This is a modern British family: messy and complicated, with its share of secrets and failed marriages. Some of its members – like Mona’s mother Mrs Shirani – are devout Muslims. Others – like her younger siblings Ani and Omar – don’t give much of a thought to the mosque.

The world of Kalashnikovs and Jihad, of Anasheed videos and apostasy, has as much to do with this family as the Salem Witch Trials have to with a modern Anglican. So when this world collides with their own, their reactions quickly turn from grief to denial: this can’t be happening, *it can’t be happening to us*.

Across the West and beyond, large minority Muslim populations find themselves caught in this crossfire. They may deny that there is a problem, they may proclaim not in my name. Still they’re in danger – and not just to the resurgent far right – of being viewed as a threat. This seems to us a story with universal overtones. Like the Japanese in America when Pearl Harbour was bombed, Muslims can come to be seen as the enemy within.

Next of Kin is set within this territory, but it is firmly a show with family at its heart. It tracks the living, breathing experience of people who find themselves caught up in a maelstrom. As the story progress, it opens up to wider territory, but always retains the perspective of an ordinary family trying to do the right thing by themselves, each other, and their country.

During the extensive research for this show we’ve talked to many experts in the field. We’ve been particularly helped by two courageous women who’ve devoted much of their lives to combatting radicalisation among young people: Sara Khan of Inspire and the Muslim Chaplain, Kalsoom Bashir. We’re also hugely indebted to Commander Richard Walton, formerly director of Counter Terrorism Command. His detailed and painstaking advice has been incredibly helpful.

Finally our thanks to the team at Mammoth and ITV commissioner Polly Hill – who offered us unwavering support in this effort to tell an uncomfortable story.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

Archie Panjabi plays Mona Harcourt

Smart and sociable doctor, Mona, lives in West London with her husband Guy, son Sammi and mother, Mrs Shirani. Highly ambitious and fiercely loyal, she has a happy home life and a close relationship with her extended family.

The second of four siblings, she was born in Pakistan but moved to London with her family when she was young. As the oldest female sibling, she is prone to adopting the mother figure role and she is the one who rallies the family when Kareem dies and who they look to for guidance.

Though she's not Danny's mother, Mona's incredibly maternal towards him and is faced with an unimaginable dilemma of how far she will go to protect and defend him.

Jack Davenport plays Guy Harcourt

Guy is a lobbyist working in Westminster and married to Mona with whom he has a son, Sammi.

He comes from a middle class family, with a mother who encouraged him to appreciate the finer things in life, but he isn't overly interested in that lifestyle. He is very laid back and avoids confrontation at all costs, but is very good at his job and highly successful.

Life is not a complete breeze though, and he and Mona have to battle to live the lives they aspire to live. Guy's professional life is about constantly struggling to stay afloat, fighting for work, contacts and influence.

Shabana Azmi plays Mrs Shirani

Mrs Shirani is Mona's mother who lives with her and Guy in West London.

She appears to be a simple, traditional soul but there's more to her because she's fiercely proud of her children and not above a little scheming. Like Mona, she's witty and smart, but often underestimated by her family and understands more than her children often give her credit for.

Physically, she's a little frail but certainly not to be dismissed as she is a proud and opinionated woman who knows her mind.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES (cont'd)

Viveik Kalra plays Danny Shirani

Danny is a typical, 19-year-old athletic teenager currently at University pursuing a sporting career.

He is Kareem's son from a previous marriage but his mother has since passed away. He is part of the Shirani family unit, but he feels slightly separate to everyone else. However, Mona has a strong relationship with Danny and has taken on a mother figure role in his life.

ARCHIE PANJABI PLAYS MONA HARCOURT

What attracted you to Next Of Kin?

"I was filming in New York at the time when I read the first script for Next Of Kin. My first reaction was, 'I want to read episode two. I'm totally gripped by this script.' It's very intelligently written, timely and I was totally captivated by the character of Mona and the journey she encounters."

Who is Mona?

"Mona is a very good GP and works well with her patients. That's a lot to do with the person she is. She's very sociable and definitely a people person. She is also very supportive of her husband Guy and his work."

"She's a second generation immigrant who considers herself to be very English but also holds quite traditional values. Mona has lived in West London with her family for most of her life, and for her, family is the be all and the end all. She feels very protective, loyal and responsible for them."

"It's a value she inherited from her parents, in particular her father. His was a classic story of them arriving here in the 1970s and him having to work in unskilled jobs because of being unable to get a job that he was properly qualified for back home. He encourages his children to assimilate into British society and to work hard; to make sure you look after the family."

"I don't think there is a distinction for Mona in terms of the nuclear and the extended family. They are one big family and she has to look after them."

What is Next Of Kin about?

"For me, the centre of the drama is about this very close-knit modern day British family. They're very happy, living a normal life and content with it. Then the news turns each one of their lives upside down and one of the youngest members of the family, Danny, is suspected of being radicalised."



“The story follows Mona’s fight to prove her nephew’s innocence, whilst at the same time trying to keep the family unit intact because those relationships come under immense strain. It’s probably the most emotionally challenging moment of Mona’s life having to deal with it all.”

“One of the great themes of the story is family, love and loyalty. It asks the question, ‘How far would you go to protect the ones you love?’ People watching will ask themselves, ‘What would I do in that situation? What decisions would you make?’ The dilemma Mona is faced with involves heartbreakingly difficult decisions along the way. Each of those choices and decisions she makes has an impact on a member of her family, including her relationship with her husband Guy.

How would you describe Mona’s relationship with her husband Guy?

“Mona is very tactile but not good at expressing herself verbally or discussing problems. Something Guy is very good at. Guy is very hard-working, family-oriented, caring, loyal, supportive. He is her rock.

“When you first meet Mona and Guy you might think maybe culturally they are quite different, but they have more in common than not. Her mother would have probably wanted to marry her off to a local businessman in the community, and I’m sure his mother would have liked to have seen him

married to somebody from Berkshire. But both of them have come to realise there is a very solid relationship there. Over the course of the series we get to see whether that relationship is strong enough to sustain the strain of the events that affect the family.”

Mona has an elder brother called Kareem. Are they close?

“Mona definitely has a stronger relationship with the men in her family. She is very close to Kareem. They both witnessed their parents’ struggle so were a lot more motivated to work harder and study and they both became doctors.

“There is a lot of love between them. They were very supportive of each other growing up. Including the culture clash issues in terms of their parents being quite eastern and then having to assimilate into a western society. They helped each other out and were there for each other.

“Out of all the siblings she’s definitely closest to Kareem because of the age similarity. And his eldest son Danish, known as Danny, would have been the first born, something very precious in that household. So she’s had a very strong relationship with Danny from the moment he was born, and he is still a young kid.”

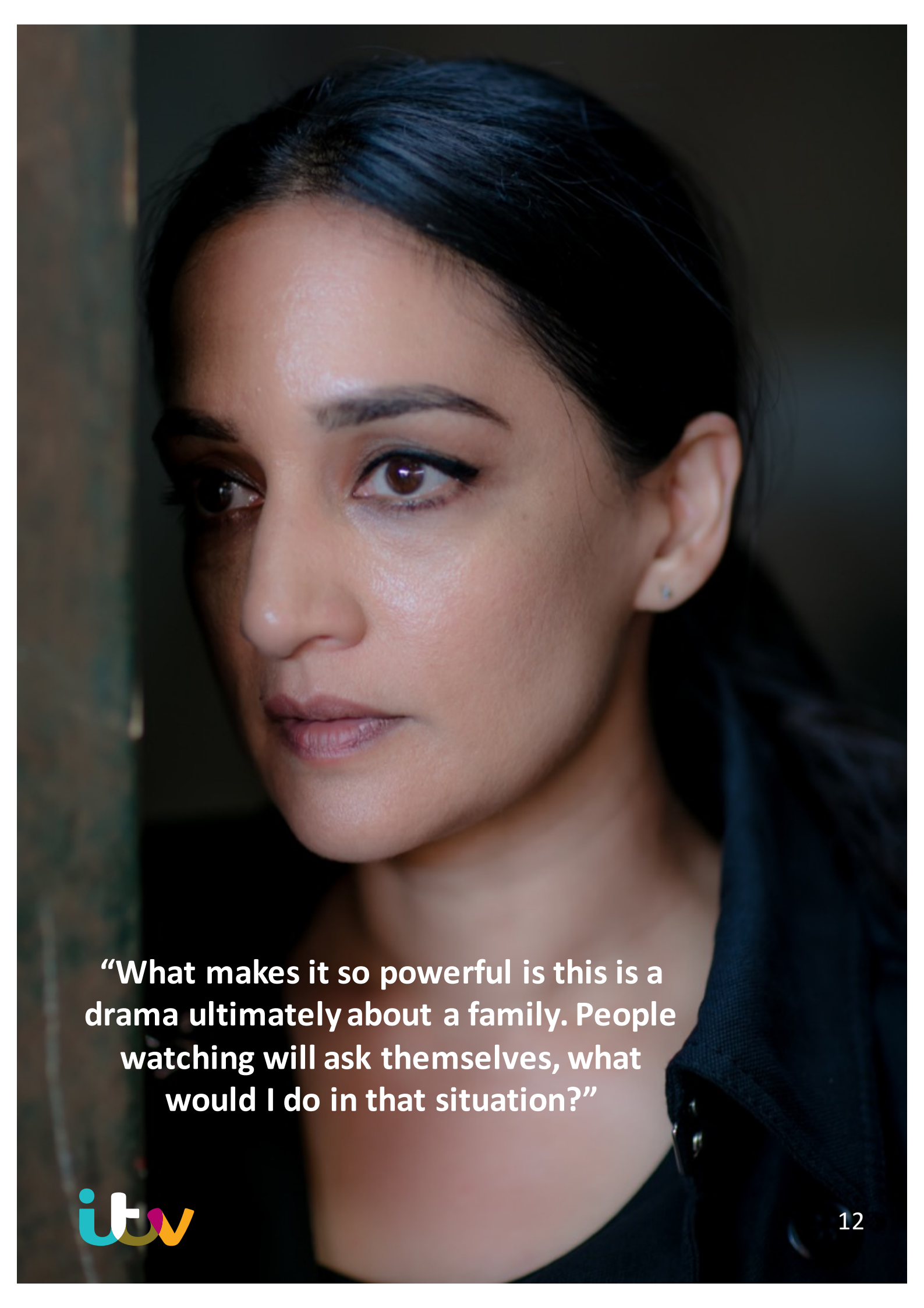
How does Danny’s disappearance impact on the family?

“Danny is suspected of being radicalised and there is this big investigation that intensifies over the course of the series. It’s interesting to see how it impacts each one of their lives for different reasons. We don’t even know whether he’s radicalised or not, but the mere fact he is suspected affects each one of their lives. Mona carries the weight of that most because she’s the one fighting tooth and nail for him. And that does have consequences for her.”

What can you tell us about Mona’s mother Mrs Shirani? Coming from an older generation, how does she react to present day events?

“That’s one of the things I liked about the script. The family represents the different generations. So you have Mona’s mother, as well as Guy’s mother, being quite traditional. They’re obviously from different cultural backgrounds but still quite traditional.

“I don’t think they necessarily approved of the mixed marriage when Mona and Guy got together. And then you’ve got Mona and Guy’s generation where the cultural gap between them is a lot smaller than, say, it would have been in the seventies or eighties. He’s grown up being exposed to a wider culture and Mona has lived most of her life in England.



“What makes it so powerful is this is a drama ultimately about a family. People watching will ask themselves, what would I do in that situation?”

“Mona and her mother are not very good at talking about problems or issues, almost seeing it as a weakness. They don’t open up about things, and I think that’s a really common quality of first generation Asians and possible even second generation. If you talk about a problem you’re accepting there is a problem, so it’s better to just get up, dust the dirt off your shoulder and move on. But that doesn’t really help.”

How important is it to you that people of all race, religions and backgrounds are represented in TV and film?

“When I read Next Of Kin, I never really thought of it as being a Muslim family. Guy is English, her son is English, Mona even calls herself English. Her mother is quite traditional, the younger kids are a lot more outspoken and modern. It just feels like a modern day family, as opposed to a modern day British Muslim family.

“It’s a family that is fun, loving, warm and accessible. Their ethnicity, for me, doesn’t really come into it all, which I think is the way forward. We’re not denying what their religious background may be, but we’re not necessarily honing in on that. They’re just a family living in England, affected by events.”

As a doctor Mona walks towards danger while others are running away from it. What would you say about doctors, nurses, paramedics, police, fire crew and others who do that in real life?

“One of the things I’ve always struggled with in this industry is to answer why celebrities are looked upon as heroes. Because really it’s people like that who are the ultimate heroes, as we saw in recent events. They are the real heroes of our society.

“Somebody asked me the other day, ‘What would you do if you weren’t doing this?’ And I said maybe something like being a paramedic. The fact you have the ability to save life, that’s like the most precious gift in the world. Whenever I hear about those jobs or see people do them, I’m always in awe of them because it is such an incredible skill they have.”

Although Next Of Kin deals with a serious subject, there are lighter moments. Why is that important?

“There are so many things going on in the world right now and this is a serious drama, but people need to have an element of humour. It’s also very true to life. In bad situations in life there is always humour, particularly for the British. I think it’s a coping mechanism. Being ironic or sarcastic is a way of dealing with life. Those moments are important to have.”

How do you reflect back on the making of Next Of Kin?

“It’s been a very exciting, educational and challenging experience for me. Playing a lead in a drama with

such a sensitive subject matter, but also a character that goes through a really big emotional journey. It's what any actor would look for in a leading role. I've really enjoyed it and been involved in a much bigger way than I would be on other projects.

"I've also learned a lot about being on the other side of the camera, which is ultimately what I want to do. So it's been an education from the day I was sent the script to the final cut. That's been exciting. It's given me an insight into how much work goes into making something.

"Next Of Kin is fictitious and touches upon a subject which is very timely, but it never pretends or attempts to explain it or understand it. It's a strong aspect of the narrative but it never really zooms in trying to show that it understands it or wants to explain it.

"It's about the impact it has on the family, and I think that will provoke discussion. It's reflecting the world we live in today and it has to be talked about. It is very difficult to understand and comprehend. But we have to talk about it."

JACK DAVENPORT PLAYS GUY HARCOURT

What first attracted you to Next Of Kin?

“Whether we like it or not, this is a subject that isn’t going away. It makes people uncomfortable and reactive, and is difficult to comprehend. Yet, unless we find a way to come at it from an angle that allows us to even begin to do that, the repercussions of these incidents will get more and more pronounced.

“I was very struck from the beginning that writers Paul Rutman and Natasha Narayan have found a way to look at this subject by thinking about the wider humanity of families who become involved simply because they are related to someone who may have made certain decisions. That struck me as a very intelligent and interesting way to approach the unapproachable.

“Next Of Kin is a family drama first with a psychologically intense concept placed upon it. That’s what we focus on. There is no other way to try and be not sympathetic but empathetic. They are very different things. Hopefully that’s what people will take away from it.”

Who is Guy Harcourt?

“Guy is a Westminster political lobbyist who works for one of those lobbying firms with fingers in all sorts of pies. In our story you see him working as the liaison between the British government and various forms of outside foreign investment into big infrastructure programmes.”

Guy is married to Mona and appears to be very much part of her bigger family?

“I thought it was rather thrilling that when we were shooting scenes at the family home, I was the only non-Asian character, which I thought was great, because this is what some of Britain looks like.”

“Being the slightly stiff, public school, somewhat emotionally constipated type of person he could be, what Guy gets is this extended very non-Home Counties family. It’s something so outside probably any of his experiences growing up, in many ways it’s like the making of him. It opens up parts of himself to himself that I’m not sure he even knew were there.



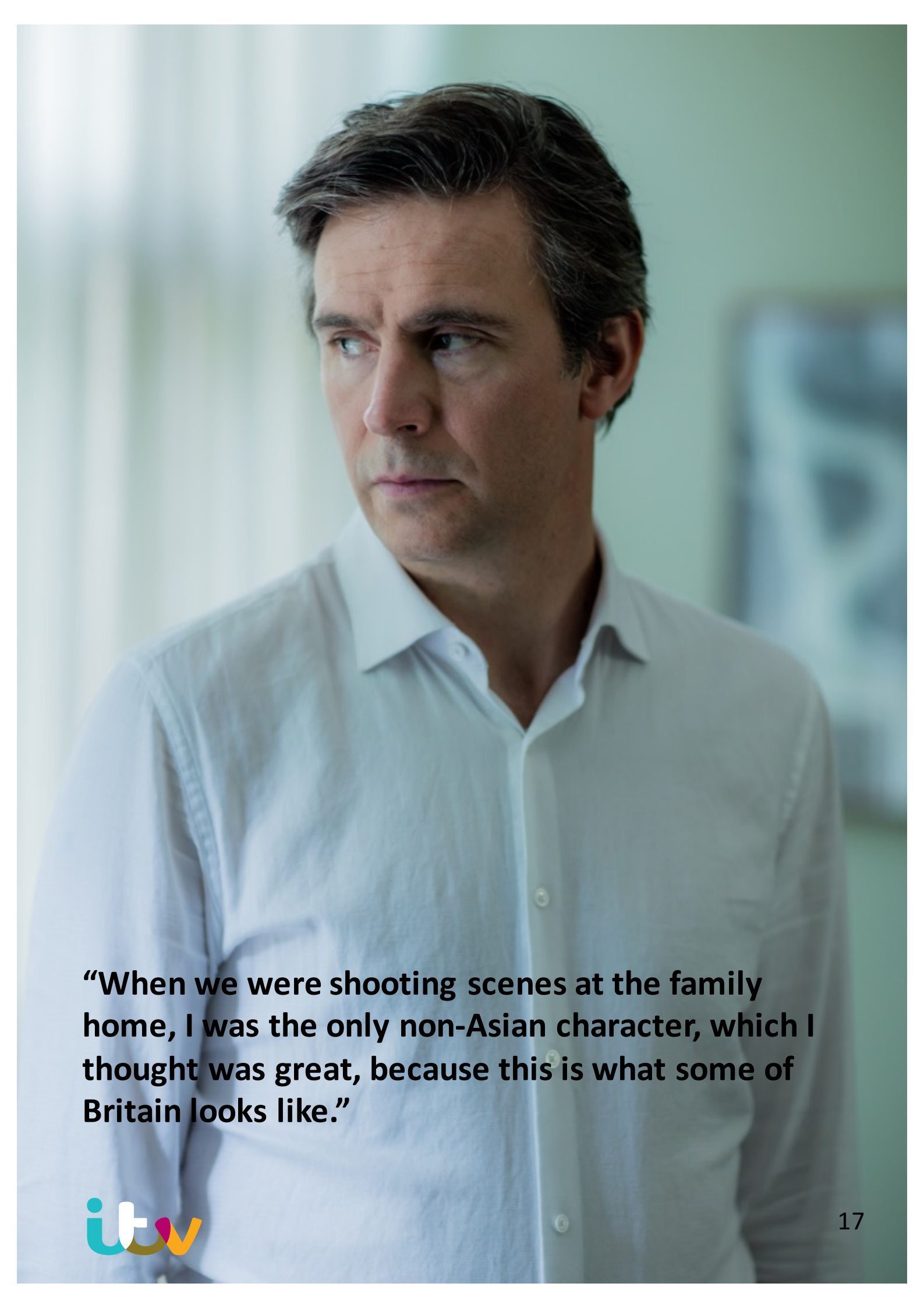
“Obviously when the situation starts to go bad, Guy and the family find themselves in a living nightmare. The writers were very smart about showing the way Guy almost unconsciously reacts. And where does his wife Mona’s loyalties lie? They have a child who is innocent in all of this. It’s a very interesting tension to explore.”

Next of Kin is very topical and close to some recent real life events. How did the cast feel about that?

“We responded with no more or less dismay and alarm than anybody else. Then after a certain amount of time, like everyone else in the country, you say ‘We have to continue as before. Get on with life as usual.’ Otherwise the terrorists have succeeded on some level.

“Sometimes mass communication, in the form of a fictional television drama, is a good way of reaching a large number of people in a short space of time to present a really complicated idea in a way that speaks to people’s hearts.

“So it just made me think, ‘I hope we do this as well as the writing makes me think we could.’ Other than that the reaction to recent events is the same. There’s no difference between a bus driver in Widnes or an actor in south London.”

A man with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is looking off to the left with a thoughtful expression. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with light-colored walls and a framed picture on the wall to the right.

“When we were shooting scenes at the family home, I was the only non-Asian character, which I thought was great, because this is what some of Britain looks like.”

Even though the subject matter in Next Of Kin is very serious, there are lighter moments of humour. Why are they important?

“Certainly at the start, we did our best to show this family as being warm and sometimes quite silly with each other. That’s what, in part, a normal family looks like. Until things outside of its control happen.

“That was, in many ways, to give context to what gets damaged when certain members of a family possibly make the decisions they do. Hopefully there will be an echo in the audience’s mind of how the family used to be: a noisy, playful group of people just getting on with their lives.”

What was it like working with Archie Panjabi?

“I’ve known of Archie for years and always thought she was amazing. I knew from the start she was playing this role and thought, ‘That’s a lot to ask of any actor.’ It’s quite a journey she has to go on. It’s hard enough for an actor to be in 95 per cent of the scenes, but it makes everyone’s life much more enjoyable when they are also joyfully and lightly the captain of the ship in that regard. She set the tone.

“There’s also this whole group of amazing young British Asian actors. Because I haven’t lived in the UK for a long time they were all children when I left. So I hadn’t been aware of them before, and I was like, ‘These guys are good.’ It’s been fun to be around a lot of young actors I’d never met before.

“Then Shabana Azmi, who plays my mother-in-law Mrs Shirani, there aren’t that many actors in the world if you look at their IMDb page, she’s been in something like 175 films. She is a legend. It’s always kind of cool to be around someone who has just done everything in a film world you don’t know that much about.”

Did Next Of Kin reveal more about this issue to you than you knew before?

“I definitely had an awareness that the victims in these situations tend to be a wider pool of people than you might initially think. But having been part of making a drama, thankfully, and not involved in a real way, I do feel I have a deeper understanding.

“I abhor reactionary politics, but I suppose I now feel better equipped to argue against the reactionary position that situations like this can, understandably, provoke in people.”

SHABANA AZMI PLAYS MRS. SHIRANI

How did the role come about?

“I just happened to be in London at the time when my agent told me about the part. I met the director Justin Chadwick and before I knew it, I was part of the production. I took an immediate liking to Justin so, knowing what the drama was about, it was a pretty easy decision for me to make.”

You are known for Indian films among many other things. Have you also worked in the UK before?

“I’ve worked on a lot of films in Britain. The first time I worked in the UK was as far back as 1988 opposite Shirley MacLaine in a film called Madame Sousatzka directed by John Schlesinger. I’ve also done films for BBC, including Capital, and Channel 4 plus theatre.”

What attracted you to Next of Kin?

“I thought it was a very important story and I liked my part. Mrs Shirani is a very feisty woman and yet quite gentle. I initially read the first three episodes very quickly. I found it a very interesting story.

“It was a very pleasurable experience because I got on very well with the director Justin. He, himself, was an actor and he is very respectful to actors and works very closely with them. He took his time and waited until he got exactly what he wanted. He was very encouraging.

“I also got along extremely well with Archie Panjabi, Jack Davenport and the rest of the cast. It very quickly became like a real family.

“The whole experience was also different because I was living on my own in London. When I’m in India working I have a huge staff that follows me around everywhere. I have my own hairdresser, make-up person, my manager, my driver all travel with me. But I was literally on my own in London. That experience was very precious.



Who is Mrs Shirani?

“What is nice about Mrs Shirani is that on one level you would think she is the stereotypical Asian mother, but you, in fact, discover she is not so. She has a personality which is very much her own and is a very important figure in the house.

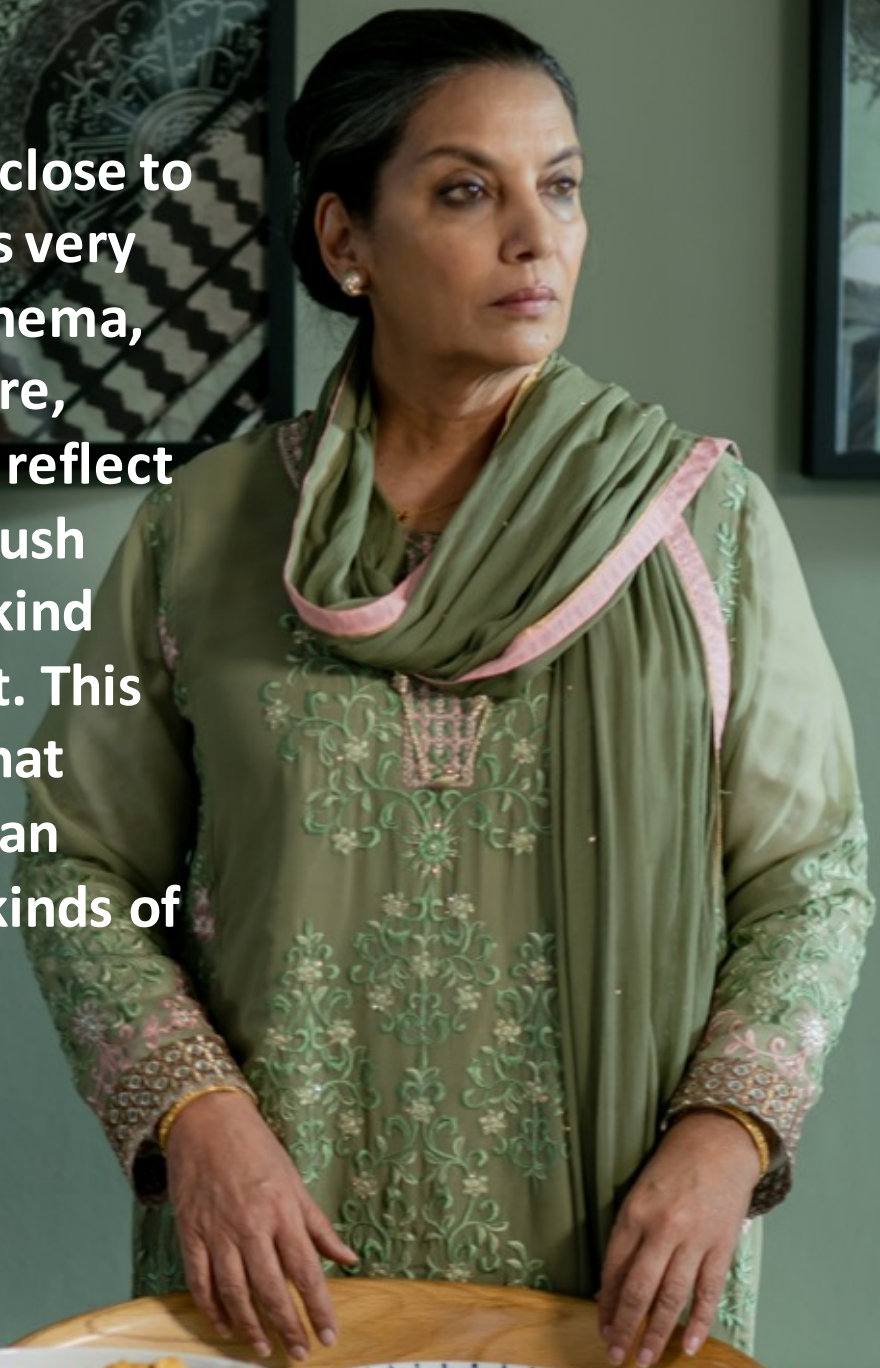
“The first time we see her is a million dollar scene. The lift door opens and she is sat on the floor of the elevator. Which is an amazing visual to begin with. I’ve never been trapped in a lift for real, but if I am ever now it will not be such a terrifying experience.

“She grumbles, disapproves and has her family favourites, but she really is the person who pulls the family together. She is a believer. She says her prayers. And yet she is far removed from this crazy world of fundamentalism.”

Why is this an important story to tell?

“This story is so close to home. I think it’s very important for cinema, television, theatre, literature, art to reflect that. You can’t push conflicts of this kind under the carpet. This drama shows what happens to human beings in these kinds of situations.

“This story is so close to home. I think it’s very important for cinema, television, theatre, literature, art to reflect that. You can’t push conflicts of this kind under the carpet. This drama shows what happens to human beings in these kinds of situations.”



Does this drama look beyond the headlines?

“We see the human side of how the perception of radicalisation touches a family; tortures a family when they are in no way responsible for it. And then you see the larger picture through the smaller picture. That humanises it. It’s not done in a didactic, propagandist way. It is done through relationships and emotional connections which are completely universal.

“Islamophobia is spreading so widely in the world. You need to give it a human face and try to understand what are the forces that are working and how it impacts on people. Art must reflect that.

“I’m very proud of ITV for producing this drama. The time has come when we need to work to understand cultures within their own paradigms rather than yardsticks of the West imposed on the East. That’s very important, because as the world shrinks and becomes a global village, it’s very important to understand each other’s cultures.

“There is still a lot that needs to be done in terms of the various communities being represented in the media, and demonstrating how similar human beings are. Embracing of multi-culturalism and an attempt to understand cultures within their own paradigms. Look at the warmth, all the quirks, the stupidities. Look at them as real people. That is important and that is why I congratulate ITV for this.”

What are your own views on religious extremism?

“What is very important is we need to understand these schisms are not schisms of religion as they are projected. They are schisms of ideology. So it is the tolerant liberal on one side against the intolerant radicalised of the other.

“It’s not Christians versus Muslims. It’s not Hindu versus Muslims. It is about Hindus, Muslims, Christians on the same side against the Hindu, Muslim, Christian fundamentalists of the other.

“It is one of ideology and of world view of tolerance and intolerance. It’s very important to see that. Otherwise we always fall into saying it is a civilisational war.”

Are political leaders in the west and east being honest about what needs to be done?

“No, of course not. It’s not in the nature of electoral politics to be completely honest about it. But art must do more than that. Art should be able to provide a more complex, more human and sensitive version of it.

“In 2001 after the 9/11 attacks the Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy wrote an essay in which she said, ‘Box-cutters, penknives, and cold anger are the weapons with which the wars of the new

century will be waged. Anger is the lock pick. It slips through customs unnoticed. Doesn't show up in baggage checks.' I think that is such an amazing, stunning line."

"Surely we have to find different ways of dealing with terror? Because whatever the systems by which we are combatting it today don't appear to be working. We have to find ways to deal with it. I'm not saying I have the answers. It's not easy. But I don't think dialogue should ever stop."

Do you think people of all races, religions and backgrounds are fairly represented in Western TV and film?

"A lot more needs to be done. We really are a global village today and we are living in a multicultural world. Pluralism is the call of the day. Actors have been saying for a long time that we need to have colour blind casting, but look at the battle that it has taken. In Hollywood, for instance, black people have only just started becoming widely visible. The fact is that Asians should be more strongly represented because they are a very strong part of the community.

Why should we watch Next of Kin?

"Watch it because it's a human story and it's interesting. For no other reason. It is a story about a family which has universal resonance. I think Next of Kin is an extremely important series."

VIVEIK KALRA PLAYS DANNY SHIRANI



How did the role come about?

"I'm a student at the Royal Welsh College of Drama and hadn't done any film or TV before Next of Kin. So this is my first TV job. I sent in a tape and was then invited to audition. Then I auditioned again and got the part. Which was amazing. Madly exciting."

Who is Danny?

"He's an athletic young man at university pursuing sports. The son of Kareem Shirani from Kareem's previous marriage. His mother has died, so he's part of the extended family but there is a feeling of separation from that family."

What is Next of Kin about?

"Danny is a young man who may, or may not, have been radicalised. The subject matter is important and needs to be talked about. You have to approach it with a great deal of sensitivity. The writers Paul Rutman and Natasha Narayan have dealt with that really beautifully. The scripts are so well written."

Did you gain an insight into how young people can find themselves in this situation?

"The very first thing I did was sit down with the director Justin Chadwick, Archie Panjabi, who plays Mona Harcourt, and a cultural advisor. We had a discussion for two hours about how things like this can come about in young people's lives."

"Whether Danny is radicalised or not is revealed in the series. But, for me, it was an important issue to tackle. He is very young but not by any means stupid or unintelligent. In general terms, it's scary the things people can be drawn to."



What impact does Danny’s disappearance have on his family?

“The drama shows the impact something like this can have on a family. On the news you see a headline but you don’t see the impact on a family. At the heart of this story is an ordinary, normal, modern British-Pakistani family thrust into this whirlwind of almost insanity. And we see how ordinary people deal with extraordinary circumstances.

“Our story is fiction. But I like to refer to it as a fictionalised reality, because, as we all know, these things are happening in the real world. It’s an important and relevant thing that needs to be aired and discussed.”

Whatever decision a young person makes, can they end up trapped?

“A young person can make one decision and then find themselves knee-deep in something they never imagined or thought about being a part of.

“I could totally understand how people can find themselves in that position. It’s a scary situation, both for Danny and the whole family. They have to bear the weight of the things that happen.”

Did you feel the need to do any of your own research?

“Aside from the scripts, I did do my own research for this character because I wanted to convey as accurately as I could what he is like – he is a real human being. As a result, I was able to be more specific about how Danny would think and act.”

Were you surprised about the way technology can be used to follow an individual across the globe?

“I was aware of how technology can be used to track people wherever they are, but the extent of it is quite scary. Even the things you can find online now. Just by investigating social media you can find out a huge amount of information about people.”

There are lighter moments in Next of Kin. Why are they important?

“The lighter moments give more depth and texture to the serious, weightier scenes. It’s necessary because you need that light and shade. Some of the events in this world are beyond the wildest imaginations of most normal individuals. So you need those lighter touches.”

How do you reflect on your first TV role?

“It was great fun. When I got there I just thought, ‘Wow, this is an incredible opportunity.’ To work with such a talented cast, including Archie Panjabi and Jack Davenport. The entire drama has been cast so perfectly and they were just a pleasure to work with. At no point did I feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable.

“The director Justin Chadwick was also amazing. He was very thoughtful and was once an actor himself. You really felt he understood your character. He felt the struggle of what Danny was going through.

“Working with Archie was also amazing. She was a real mentor. Obviously super experienced. It’s odd to watch someone on TV who is so good and then the next thing you are working with them.”

What was it like going back to drama school after filming?

“I’ve got just over a year of my course to go. It was weird going back at first. The first day felt a bit odd but I’m very glad to be back.

“I learned so much on Next of Kin and made really good friends. It’s a privilege to be involved in something that is, I think, so important. There’s something really special about this drama.”

CLAIRE SKINNER PLAYS DCI VIVIEN BARNES

What attracted you to Next of Kin?

“It was the character. It’s always nice to play a woman in charge and in a powerful role. She’s not a hugely outwardly sympathetic type of character. I veer between playing very expressive people and implacable people. I do seem to play one or the other. After doing comedy, it’s quite nice to play someone that’s holding a lot of strategy in her head. I enjoyed that.”

Did you do any of your own research?

“I looked at the research available to me within the production. They had their own police and anti-terror advisors. So I used those resources.”

What challenges does Vivien Barnes face in leading the police counter terror operation?

“She has so many things to balance. I cannot imagine having to be so internal with your thought processes. There also must be a lot of distrust. Especially when it comes to politicians, strategic leaks and leaks made by mistake. There is so much to consider. It must be exhausting. Vivien has to take calculated risks and doesn’t always get everything right.”

We only hear about some of the terror attacks stopped by our police and security services. What are your thoughts about that?

“The figures on the number of attacks the police and security services stop are sobering. But we are only told about a few of those. And, of course, as we know they can’t stop everything.”

“It’s difficult to imagine how someone like Vivien deals with the huge responsibilities involved. Having to make life and death decisions. You see a more human side to her as things unfold.”

The drama feels very topical. Do you agree?

“The script was very prescient in terms of current events. The drama does not comment on anything but it does reflect the atmosphere we’re living in today.

“As Londoners, you learn how to live with it. I remember during the days of the IRA threat when they changed the bins on the London Underground to see through bags. You think you’re hardened to it but perhaps not.”

Next of Kin shines a light on a family. Why is this an important story to tell in a TV drama?

“The domestic angle of this story allows us to see the consequences for a single family. It’s a very useful way into the wider issues. That domestic prism involves us thinking about mothers, brothers, daughters. I think that’s when people start to understand things.”

How would you describe Vivien’s relationship with Guy Harcourt, played by Jack Davenport?

“She has a personal relationship with Guy which she has to manage.

“She tries to help him as much as she can, but then she can be quite tough when she knows she has to be. She has to step outside her official box sometimes with him.”

Does there have to be an element of ruthlessness, as well as secrecy, in the job she does?

“I would imagine you have no choice but to be tough. You would have to be ruthless at times. And how would you live an outside life? I’m sure people in these jobs do, but it’s not as if you can go home and talk about what happened in your day.

“I couldn’t bear that. I would need everyone to know all the fabulous things I’ve been doing. But that’s why I’m an actor, I guess!”

Do you think people are fully aware of just how closely they are monitored today?

“It’s such a weird paradox. People are aware of how much they are monitored, but they just don’t seem to value their privacy at all.

“We are tracked by CCTV cameras almost everywhere we go. That’s extraordinary. We just accept that. The same with all of the details we hand over for online shopping. It’s like a trade off. It’s for expedience. We just want something now, straight away and will give all of our details to get it.”

What’s next?

“I’m playing Mrs Sedley, Amelia’s mother, in the new ITV adaptation of Vanity Fair, which has another amazing cast.”



EPISODE SYNOPSES

Episode One

On the same day that a terrorist attack brings London to a standstill, GP Mona Harcourt receives the devastating news that her brother Kareem has been kidnapped on his way home to the UK from his charity clinic in Lahore.

Mona and her family's horror is aggravated by the attentions of the police counter terrorism unit and their interest in Kareem's teenage son Danny. Danny has not been seen at university for six weeks, and Mona is determined to find him before the police do.

CAST CREDITS

Mona Harcourt	ARCHIE PANJABI
Guy Harcourt	JACK DAVENPORT
Mrs Shirani	SHABANA AZMI
Danny Shirani	VIVEIK KALRA
Kareem Shirani	NAVIN CHOWDRY
Sammi Shirani	DANTE PATEL
Rahana Shirani	FARZANA DUA ELAHE
Ani Shirani	KIRAN SONIA SAWAR
Omar Shirani	MAWAAN RIZWAN
Elspeth Harcourt	JAN FRANCIS
ACC Vivien Barnes	CLAIRE SKINNER
Detective Townsend	ENZO CILENTI
Saira Shirani	SHANTI DEEN-ELLIS
Tak Tak Shirani	RITI KHARIWAL
DS Stanley Hart	SOPE DIRISU
Shania	SHALISHA JAMES-DAVIS
Craig Kowalski	HAL FOWLER
Imogen Kowalski	HANNAH BOURNE
Richard Payne	DOMINIC TIGHE
Hamoud	ELLIE HADDAD
Sheikh Almasi	MUNIR KHAIRDIN
Khan	WAHEB SHEIKH
Mr Khalid	NASSER MEMARZIA
Carla	LOLA PETTICREW
Simon	CHRIS LARKIN
Preacher	WASIM ZAKIR
Sarah	KYLIE HUTCHINSON
Annabel Ghillies	DOROTHY ATKINSON
Abu Maaz	JOE BLAKEMORE
Mr Pearson	SIMON TREVES
Fatima	MYRIAM ARCHARKI

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Creator, Writer & Executive Producer	PAUL RUTMAN
Creator, Writer & Executive Producer	NATASHA NARAYAN
MD of Mammoth Screen / Executive Producer	DAMIEN TIMMER
Executive Producer	PREETHI MAVAHALLI
Director (Block 1) & Executive Producer	JUSTIN CHADWICK
Producer	REBECCA FERGUSON
Director (Block 2)	JAMIE CHILDS
Director of Photography	PAUL DONACHIE
Production Designer	DICK LUNN
Art Director (UK)	ANDREA MATHESON
Art Director (India)	SAM HARLEY
Costumer Designer	EMMA FRYER
Make Up Designer	JENNA WRAGE
Location Manager (Block 1)	GRANT CUMMINGS
Location Manager (Block 2)	TONY HOOD
Sound Recordist	WILLIAM WHALE
Casting Director	SAM JONES
Editor	HAZEL BAILLIE
Script Editor	PAUL TESTAR

