



Rehab

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Rehab, a powerful drama for BBC Two from acclaimed director Antonia Bird (*Care, Priest, Safe*) takes a hard-hitting look at one of the most pressing social issues of our times – the rehabilitation of drug users.

Co-produced by Ruth Caleb and Antonia Bird – who last worked together on the multi-award-winning *Care* – *Rehab* stars Caroline Patterson (*EastEnders*), Gary Lewis (*Billy Elliott*) Kate Hardie (*Croupier*), Daniel Mays (*All Or Nothing*), Katy Cavanagh (*Cops*) and Andrew Tiernan (*The Pianist*).

Rehab is a moving story of people struggling to get clean. But first they must come to terms with the demons in their past and keep each other, and themselves, from giving up on the fight to get through the toughest time of their lives.

Jane Tranter, BBC Controller of Drama Commissioning, says: “Antonia has a history of making stylish, entertaining and accessible films about uncomfortable issues which impact on many people. *Rehab* is an ambitious drama which

addresses a difficult subject with verve, humour and imagination.”

Rehab was created during a series of improvisation workshops. The cast worked with Antonia Bird and writer Rona Munro (*Ladybird, Ladybird* and *Bumping The Odds*), who spent time living in a rehabilitation centre in preparation for the project, over a five-week period to shape the final script.

Other cast members include Freddie Cunliffe (*War Zone*), Paul Popplewell (*24 Hour Party People*), Marcel McCalla (*101 Dalmations*) and Richard Harrington (*Care*).

Producer/Director Antonia Bird said: “I’ve always been struck by the complexity of a world where drugs kill and cure. Where no-one is immune. Learning to face reality, refusing refuge in clichés and lies; fighting to find a way out: that’s what *Rehab* is about. As one of the characters says, ‘These are some of the strongest people you’ll ever meet. This is the hardest thing they’ve ever done.’ We can all learn from them.”

Ruth Caleb's recent credits include *Out Of Control* (winner of the Michael Powell Award for Best British Feature Film at the Edinburgh Festival), *Tomorrow La Scala!* and *Last Resort* (also for BBC Films). Caleb and Bird worked together on *Care*, which won the Prix Italia for Best Drama (singles) as well as the BAFTA Award for Best Single Drama. At the same awards, Caleb received the Alan Clarke Award for Creative Contribution to Television.

Rehab is a BBC production in association with 4Way Films. The executive producer is Laura Mackie, BBC Head of Drama Serials. Written by Rona Munro, *Rehab* is produced by Antonia Bird and Ruth Caleb and directed by Antonia Bird. Dance music outfit Alabama 3 have written the track *REHAB* as the title music for *Rehab*, which features on their recent album *Power In The Blood*.

Rehab is the first production from 4Way Pictures, a new company formed by Antonia Bird, Robert Carlyle, Mark Cousins and recently joined by Irvine Welsh. They are developing an extensive slate of feature films and TV projects, including Antonia and Irvine's film *Hotel California* (with BBC Films) and a co-production with the legendary American indie director John Sayles, starring Robert Carlyle as *Jamie Macgillivray*.

Production notes

One of the most pressing social issues of our time – the rehabilitation of drug users – is the latest subject to attract the attention of acclaimed director Antonia Bird, renowned for her hard-hitting dramas such as *Care*, *Safe* and *Priest*.

“The way the media generally portray people caught up in a cycle of drug abuse too often seems totally unrelated to the real people I know or have met,” says Bird. “I wanted to show these are real, feeling, thinking human beings struggling with their problems. They need support – and, given respect and the right circumstances, they can help themselves.”

Her sentiments are echoed by respected producer Ruth Caleb whose recent credits include *Out Of Control*, *Tomorrow La Scala!* and *Last Resort*. “So many young people are prey to drug abuse. *Rehab* deals with the problems unflinchingly, but also offers hope. It has quite a simple message – it’s hard to get off drugs but it’s possible.”

The result is a powerful, moving film which pulls no punches in its portrayal of a group of people struggling to come to terms with the demons in their past and keep each other, and themselves, from giving up on the fight to get through one of the toughest times of their lives.

Starring Gary Lewis (*Gangs Of New York*, *Billy Elliott*), Caroline Patterson (*EastEnders*), Daniel Mays (*All Or Nothing*), Richard Harrington (*Care*), Katy Cavanagh (*Cops*), Andrew Tiernan (*The Pianist*) and Kate Hardie (*Croupier*), *Rehab* plunged the actors into the



Gary Lewis is Tommy

world of rehabilitation in an effort to give a truthful portrayal of the people and processes.

It was important to both Caleb and Bird that the film was honest, as the truthfulness of their films is what allows their work to demand attention. They previously worked together on the award-winning *Care* which was hailed as one of the most thought-provoking and attention-grabbing dramas of 2000 for its depiction of sexual abuse in children’s homes. *The Sunday Times* described *Care* as: “An emotive, shocking and campaigning film... A brilliant example of how, at its best, television can serve as a provocative reminder.”

Caleb says of Bird: “She is attracted to these strong, issue-led pieces which say something about society. Her work has a visceral power.” The broadcast of *Care* on BBC One led to a deluge of viewer calls to the programme helpline and a copy of Caleb’s recent film about young offenders – *Out Of Control* – has been requested by Tony Blair’s office.

Both Bird and Caleb were delighted when Rona Munro agreed to collaborate on the film as she is also no stranger to tackling strong subjects head on. From Ken Loach’s *Ladybird*, *Ladybird* through to her latest play, *Iron*, about the relationship between a jailbird mother and her daughter which was the success of the last year’s Edinburgh Fringe festival, she manages to engage with political issues in an accessible way.

The script was improvised during several weeks of workshops during which the actors were given a free hand to invent their own characters and work with Antonia Bird and Rona Munro on the script. Bird contacted the Ley Community in Oxford who invited Munro to come and stay for a few days.

Munro describes the offer to join the community as “more research help than I’d bargained for,” but found the experience eye-opening. “People were really open in what they were prepared to talk about, be it their past experiences, prison or life on the street. But the biggest shock was the rigid structure.

“There are rules about everything in rehabilitation.

If you try and describe it, it can sound like a boot camp. But the rules are imposed and accepted by the residents themselves. You realise they have a function. They make the rehabilitation centre a safe place for people to deal with the kind of vulnerability they are prone to – which they couldn't get through otherwise without drugs. They replace extreme chaos – life on the streets – with extreme order.

“I went in thinking I would be this glaringly obvious outsider with the words ‘television researcher’ tattooed on my forehead,” continues Munro. “In fact, residents were far too busy dealing with their own lives to pay me much attention at all. I was just the latest visitor and I was absorbed into the community as a brief resident. This chiefly meant people very kindly explaining the 17 different rules I was breaking every time I turned round or opened my mouth.

“What’s amazing is how fast you do adapt to the structure of the place and how safe it makes you feel. But it is a bit of the shock to the system, I’ve never done so much cleaning in my life. On my second day there I was helping make Yorkshire pudding for 30 people. Almost all the conversations I had were conducted while polishing windows with newspaper or peeling potatoes.”

The Ley Community also put Bird in touch with Spencer Hudson, himself a former crack and heroin user who went through rehab at The Ley Community. Here he met his business partner, Paul McCabe, with whom he now runs a successful drugs education business.

As an example of how drug users can recover and get their lives back on track, Spencer and Paul are real success stories. Their business, Energy And Vision, has won two Prince’s Youth Business Trust Awards and they now run drugs education days in schools as well as giving advice to office and prison workers.

Hudson was quick to become involved in *Rehab*. Bird brought him into the workshops, where he spent time showing the actors how to run the groups and general meetings. He also talked about his personal experiences as a drug user, taught them the language of the centre and showed them

how to handle the drugs paraphernalia properly. He says: “The message I wanted to give to the actors was that not everyone who gets into drugs is a complete waste of time and they are not going to be junkies for the rest of their lives. But I also wanted to show that some people don’t make it and the reasons why. All sorts of things go on in rehab and I think this film reflects the scene pretty accurately.”

Many of the cast say that the experience changed the way they view drug users and their treatment.

Gary Lewis, who plays Tommy, one of the staff members who has been through rehab himself, says of the people he met at the Ley Community: “Some of them had been through hell and I marvelled at them. They were incredibly generous with sharing their stories.” Coming from Glasgow, Lewis has seen first hand the misery caused by drug addiction, but found the experience of making the film enlightening. “If people see this film they’ll



Daniel Mays is Adam

understand what it takes to get off drugs.” Daniel Mays plays the lead, Adam. He has appeared in two movies since he left drama school two years ago: *Pearl Harbour* – “you have to prop your eyes open with matchsticks to see it” he laughs – and Mike Leigh’s *All Or Nothing*. Mays based his character on someone he knew, but some way through filming he had to wrestle with his conscience. “Although he knew I was basing my character on him, I still felt like I was using him, letting him down and exploiting him. This person never got that bad, but to me that is what he would have been like if he’d got into taking heroin. There was an incident in the film where Adam gets stabbed and that really happened to this person so

it was hard to go through it when we filmed it. “The thing that made the biggest impression on me was Spencer saying ‘Rehab is the end of the line, if you’re not in rehab you’re in prison, if you’re not in prison you’re on the street and you’re going to end up dead.’ For these people the stakes are very high.

“When Adam first goes into rehab it’s like a prison dodge and he’s not really banking on how hard it is. The characters in *Rehab* don’t want to face their past, don’t want to face up to the reasons why they started taking drugs in the first place. All of a sudden they are forced to talk about it and try to come to terms with things.”



Caroline Patterson is Rosemary

Caroline Patterson, best known for her role as Ruth in *EastEnders*, plays Rosemary. She drew inspiration from people she had seen in her home town of Glasgow. “I based it on the time when Thatcher was in power, when everybody was on the social and heroin was a big problem, especially in Glasgow,” says Patterson. “Rosemary is one of the long-term addicts who has been on benefit all her life. She’s gone in there to try and get clean so she can get back her kid who was taken away from her by social services. She soon realises there’s a lot of things she has to sort out before she can think about looking after a kid.”

When Spencer came to the workshops she found the whole experience unnerving. “It was scary because he knows how to do these groups and the atmosphere is amazingly confrontational, but it’s all very carefully structured. After they confront you they always probe you to find out why you’ve been doing something and then they patch you up. It’s

about making you face up to things but providing a support network at the same time.”

Bird first came into contact with a rehabilitation centre similar to the one in the film when she was making her award-winning film *Safe* for the BBC a few years ago. “I had the distinct impression that the provision of treatment was under-funded, under-resourced and a bit of a lottery depending on where you live,” she says.

“I don’t see any current policies which seriously address the fundamental problems of poverty, alienation and despair – though in immediate terms, drug treatment professionals have told me that there are moves towards more joined-up thinking in current policy. The best I can hope is that *Rehab* raises the profile of a sensible and humane approach to the issues.”

For herself, Caleb feels: “We often underestimate people because they’re drug addicts, somehow flotsam and jetsam of society, but what this film shows is that these are human beings with huge reserves of compassion for each other. If we can provoke a debate and if that debate can end in more money going into these places, then I think we will have done something.”