

Casualty series XVIII

Cast list	3
New cast members	
Maxwell Caulfield plays Jim Brodie	4
Suzanne Packer plays Tess Bateman	6
James Redmond plays Abs	8
Leanne Wilson plays Claire Guildford	10
Matthew Wait plays Luke Warren	12
Sarah Manners plays Bex Reynolds	14
Holly Davidson plays Tally Harper	16
Regular cast members	
Simon MacCorkindale plays Consultant Harry Harper	18
Christine Stephen-Daly plays Lara Stone	19
Kwame Kwei-Armah plays Finlay Newton	20
Martina Laird plays Comfort Jones	21
Kelly Harrison plays Nikki Marshall	22
Ian Bleasdale plays Josh Griffiths	24
Christopher Colquhoun plays Simon Kaminski	25
Derek Thompson plays Charlie Fairhead	26
Loo Brealey plays Roxanne Bird	27
Zita Sattar plays Anna Paul	28
Episode synopses (1-5)	30

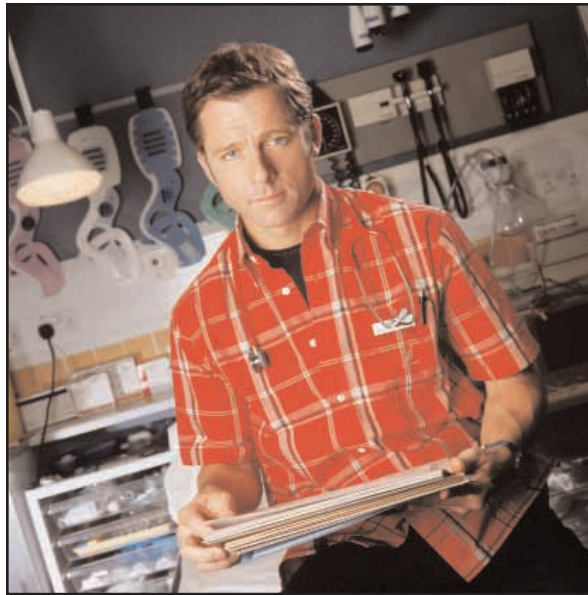
Casualty series XVIII cast list

Artist	Character
Simon MacCorkindale	Harry Harper – Consultant and Clinical Director
Derek Thompson	Charlie Fairhead – Clinical Nurse Specialist
Ian Bleasdale	Josh Griffiths – Paramedic Operational Duty Officer
Christine Stephen-Daly	Lara Stone – Acting Registrar
Maxwell Caulfield	Jim Brodie – Consultant Paediatrician
Christopher Colquhoun	Simon Kaminski – Registrar
Suzanne Packer	Tess Bateman – Emergency Nurse Practitioner
Loo Brealey	Roxanne Bird – Staff Nurse
James Redmond	John “Abs” Denham – Mental Health Nurse
Leanne Wilson	Claire Guildford – Staff Nurse
Kwame Kwei Armah	Finlay Newton – Paramedic
Martina Laird	Comfort Jones – Paramedic
Kelly Harrison	Nikki Marshall – Paramedic Technician
Matthew Wait	Luke Warren – Paramedic
Sarah Manners	Bex Reynolds – Receptionist
Holly Davidson	Tally Harper – Admin Assistant
Zita Sattar	Anna Paul – Staff Nurse

Production team

Mal Young	Executive Producer
Mervyn Watson	Executive Producer
Foz Allan	Series Producer

**Maxwell Caulfield
plays Jim Brodie
Consultant Paediatrician**



Maxwell Caulfield, who is 43, is delighted to be back in “old England”. So often associated with high-gloss American soaps is he that one forgets that his roots are in the Midlands and that he has Scottish ancestry. He was very much a Londoner for most of his youth, a dedicated fan of Chelsea FC and a boy scout in west London, before moving to the heart of Soho.

“I had a very strong sense of myself when I was in my late teens and early twenties, albeit culled from the American rebel hero characters that I admired,” he explains. He figures that is why he was tossed out of The Drama Centre, where he studied. “After suggesting I see the school psychologist, they showed me the door quite quickly because they thought I was a somewhat disruptive influence. They thought I wasn’t mature enough for the kind of schooling they had in mind. I was too busy being a slouching punk!”

Maxwell decided to take a shortcut to getting his Equity card and enrolled as a go-go dancer at the Raymond Revue Bar, living, at the time, above a

topless bar in Great Windmill Street. “I didn’t fancy carrying a spear and making cups of tea in rep theatre for nine months, which is what you had to do to get an Equity card back then.” He lasted 10 weeks as a high stepper, dancing to Pink Floyd for the delight of German and Japanese tourists, before getting embroiled in a brawl on stage. “All of a sudden I could afford a Suzuki motorcycle. It was great fun while it lasted but I was glad as hell when it was over,” he says.

After feeling stifled, Maxwell jetted off to “La La Land”, where he has spent much of his adult life. Maxwell claims he never aspired to being on American television; “I went to Hollywood sooner than I’d meant to. The move from being discovered on Broadway and being thrust into a three-picture deal with a major Hollywood studio all happened very quickly.”

Maxwell then met his wife, Juliet Mills – “the great steadying influence on my life” – at the age of 21 (she was 39) when they appeared together in *The*

Elephant Man. He moved back with her to LA, where they still live with their daughter Melissa who is, he says, “very much a Mills girl – she’s got the fabulous eyes and she’s a natural comedienne”. Maxwell is not discouraging her from becoming an actress – “she’s seen what a great lifestyle it can afford you: the travel, the variety and the opportunity to meet people” – but he is keen that she head to New York, “where she’ll have more control over her own destiny”.

As a young actor, Maxwell was selected from thousands to appear as Michael Carrington in *Grease 2* (1982), the sequel to one of the most successful musical films of all time. Both he and his co-star, a fresh-faced newcomer called Michelle Pfeiffer, were hailed as “overnight sensations” and he was promised the movie was going to make him a star. But the film did not live up to its billing. “We opened opposite *ET* and we got creamed. The studio yanked it and I came down to earth with a bump,” he laments. Maxwell is pleased that the film has found a life through television and video in the ensuing years. “It shows up regularly and it has a cult-like status, which I’m proud of.”

Then came *Dynasty* and *The Colbys*, which epitomised the Eighties. Maxwell was cast as bad boy Miles Colby in the saga of a wealthy Denver family in the oil business. After a decade, these cultural landmarks in television came to an end and Maxwell Caulfield went on to win rave reviews for his roles on Broadway, including *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and *An Inspector Calls*. Those performances led to him winning the prize role of Bob in *The Real Blonde* opposite such luminaries as Matthew Modine, Kathleen Turner and Darryl Hannah.

Now that he’s back in the UK, Maxwell is staying at the home of his father-in-law, Sir John Mills. Luckily, they get on well. “Sir John is the genuine article – a living legend and deservedly so. At 95 years of age, with failing eyesight and the inevitable physical challenges that being a nonagenarian brings, he really is a study of bravery. And he’s always happy when I’m picking up a regular pay cheque!

“Coming back here has reignited my love of acting and put me back in touch with my essence,” says an enthusiastic Maxwell. “I’m really delighted with the character they’ve fashioned for me. He’s a bit of a

live wire and a bit of a romantic, it would appear. What’s more, I get to interact with a lot of little shrunken actors – and it’s certainly never dull working with children!” Maxwell has generally played privileged characters – well-heeled and self-interested – but, he says, “I like playing a doctor, one of those archetypal figures that society admires. It is nice to play a somewhat selfless character and it’s making me recall the first-aid training that I received as a boy scout.”

Being credited with the intellect of a doctor was very gratifying for someone who never made it past “O” levels,” he jokes. Maxwell has been reading up on the human anatomy and is amazed at what he is learning about the female endocrine system. “I’m now totally in awe of women for having to contend with those hormonal surges. So that’s why they claim to be the tougher of the two sexes!”

Maxwell brings a certain Yankee sensibility to the part of paediatrician Jim Brodie, who has a teenage son (Andy) and daughter (Kelly) by Elizabeth, his ex-wife to be played by Gwyneth Strong (*Only Fools And Horses*). He’s a transatlantic character whose roots are in England but who has been through the American system and has some impulses that do not necessarily fall in with the way in which Harry Harper likes to run his operation. Jim also quickly lavishes his attentions on Nikki and it amuses Maxwell to be playing the older man in a relationship, given his own circumstances.

While Maxwell is falling in love with Bristol, his wife Juliet is looking after his Jaguar in Tinsel Town. “She’s visited a couple of times and we’ve just done a lovely tour of the West Country but she’s back in LA in an NBC daytime drama called *Passions*, playing an eccentric New England witch,” he explains.

Maxwell is philosophical about the distance. “Juliet has been very supportive and believes in what I’m doing – *Casualty* being a stalwart of British television. We never relish the prospect of long-term separation but we recognise that it is part and parcel of the business and it is nice for once that we’re both making money at the same time. Usually one of us is and one of us isn’t. That insecurity comes with the profession. There’s always a price to pay and, in this case, it’s the distance.”

Suzanne Packer plays Tess Bateman Emergency Nurse Practitioner



Suzanne knew what she was letting herself in for when she assumed the role of Tess Bateman in *Casualty*, having appeared in the drama as a guest in 1995. “My character was a patient who had swallowed some drugs and was trying to leave the country. The guy who set me up tried to kill me and I ended up being dragged out of a river.” The role of nurse practitioner Tess Bateman seems to be a little closer to the actor’s heart. Tess is a traditionalist and is keen to maintain the standards she was taught at nursing college. “She is a stickler for the rules and I think it pays off because she gets results with few mistakes. It is not that she is out to make people’s lives a misery, more that her experience proves it is the best way.”

It is Tess’s job to keep the numbers down and her appointment at Holby reflects the real-life move towards recruiting more nurse practitioners in NHS hospitals. She gets on well with Harry Harper and with Charlie, but is likely to clash with Dr Kaminski, who doesn’t always tow the line. She also

struggles with Abs’s unconventional and laidback work ethic but, Suzanne claims, “He brings out the mummy in her. There is a lost little boy in there somewhere, so I don’t think she could ever be really tough with him.” If Tess had the choice to be a doctor, she would still rather be a nurse because there is a part of her that’s “maternal,” she says.

Welsh-born Suzanne can relate to the maternal instinct, having just had a little boy named Paris (after Greek mythology rather than the city). When at work, Suzanne’s parents look after her six-month-old baby in Cardiff and she’s looking forward to settling there herself when her husband, American actor Jesse Newman, follows her to England after their two-year stint in New York.

Suzanne first met Jesse on tour in Europe. They planned to stay in Britain but thought they’d test the waters in the US for “another experience and another opportunity”, and New York felt comfortable. Of her experience in the States, she

recalls, “It was an adventure. The competition is much harder over there, because the standards are very high. The audition process is a lot less “touchy feely” and you really have to be hard-nosed. There’s no time for a warm up! That was a big shock, and I wasn’t ready.” Jesse is still in the States but Suzanne is not worried: “New York is only five hours away. And when we’re apart we communicate a lot.”

Suzanne Packer is better known as Josie, the estranged wife of poor Mick in Liverpool soap *Brookside*. She is delighted to be reunited with her co-star, Louis Emerick, who joins *Casualty* for four episodes, once again playing her on-screen husband – fireman Mike. “It was a really lovely surprise when I found out. I always enjoyed working with Louis.” Mal Young, BBC Controller of Drama Series and ex-producer of *Brookside*, said, “It’s like unfinished business, just in a different incarnation.”

“We go back further than *Brookside*,” explains Suzanne. “My second-ever job was with Louis in *Playboy Of The West Indies* at the Manchester Contact Theatre in 1985, so we didn’t need to worry about the ‘getting to know you’ bit. We dived straight in.” Suzanne hasn’t watched *Brookside* recently; she asked to be written out because she felt the longer she stayed, the harder it would be to let go and she might not have had the chance to play other parts.

Suzanne admits to being a bit of a stickler for the rules in real life, which suits her newest character quite well. Suzanne trained as a teacher at Goldsmiths in 1996 and, when she’s not acting, she teaches drama. She has worked as a supply teacher in London, Brooklyn and New York at inner-city schools. “It is very challenging – doubly so as a supply teacher because the kids think that means holiday!”

She is frustrated that there are so many drama teachers without work because so few schools value it these days. “It just doesn’t make sense. In drama you learn so much, especially about life and working as a team. It teaches kids to be different and see themselves as individuals.”

Suzanne managed to combine her love of music, children and acting when she filmed an educational programme for the BBC called

Music Makers six years ago. “It is teaching music and rhythm to under-fives. It is a really clever little programme with a futuristic setting. It keeps getting repeated and repeated. Kwame is in it too!

“I find the more I teach, the more I feel that it is probably the best job in the world,” she says, though acting is definitely her first love. “Teaching is even bigger than being a doctor in a way because you literally shape these young minds. How I treat a child could make a difference for the rest of his or her life, and I’ve suddenly realised that it is a pretty responsible role.

“I loved school myself. I had a great time and nearly all my teachers had a big influence on my life. Part of the reason why I did drama was that my music teachers were very good. The highlight back then would have been the school musical.”

Suzanne confesses that she never used to watch *Casualty* for the simple reason that her mother was a nurse. “If you were a teacher, you wouldn’t watch programmes about teaching,” she says. Her mother and father hail from Jamaica and they moved to Great Britain where they met in the Fifties and had Suzanne and her kid brother, champion Olympic hurdler Colin Jackson. Her mother was also in a position of authority in her hospital in Wales. “She was in charge of her theatre. I do call her about certain things in the script and ask: ‘Would this happen? Would that happen?’. And even though medical jargon has moved on since her day, she has been of tremendous help.”

James Redmond plays Abs Mental Health Nurse



“I was misunderstood as a kid,” reveals James Redmond. “I probably had ADD – attention deficit disorder – which meant I was hyperactive and never paid attention. I was disruptive and got kicked out of a few schools, so I was constantly being assessed.”

But James did well in his exams, infuriating his teachers who, he says, must have been thinking: “He was outside the door for most of my lesson!” Despite his academic achievements, he was always getting into fights and claims, “I felt like an outcast in my teenage years, with no one to talk to.”

James has been able to draw on considerable personal experience for his role as Abs, a psychiatric link nurse, in *Casualty*. He sees himself, he says, in some of the individuals his character has to treat at Holby.

Abs has a certain charm but is a bit of an oddball. The breakdown in hierarchy at NHS hospitals means that he is able to diagnose and treat certain

patients, despite not having medical training. Like James, he was a bit of a tearaway as a kid and was arrested for joyriding. On one occasion, he took his younger brother with him without his parents’ knowledge and crashed. His brother was paralysed and Abs has not spoken to his parents since.

“Abs is now fascinated by anybody who has mental problems or issues,” says James. He is keen to champion mental health and is constantly frustrated when it is hidden away and ignored.

James feels the same. “I saw child psychologists when I was at school (or should I say ‘not at school’). The people I got on with were not just asking the obvious questions – they just chatted away and often they had had problems themselves. But, to some, therapy is a dirty word ... people are scared.

“I believe every single one of us needs therapy. It’s when we don’t have the strength to admit it that psychoses and all sorts of problems set in. Abs is a

bit of a loner and sees himself alone in his battle but he doesn't care. He's driven and passionate about his work but doesn't suffer fools gladly. He'll bark at anyone who gives him any grief, even if it's Harry, his boss, and he doesn't sugar-coat anything. What's more, he knows that they can't afford to lose him because he's the only one who can do the job."

When he left school, James decided to go travelling. "I couldn't find a job that I could keep for more than three months," he says. "I did monotonous factory jobs and worked in nightclubs but got bored easily."

He spent two years in Greece, where he was scouted by a model agency and ended up on the catwalk for the next four-and-a-half years. "It was 1994 and Blur and Oasis were top of the UK charts and, because I looked like an Indie band kinda guy, my face fit," he explains.

James lapped up the glitzy lifestyle. "The travelling was great, I was working with beautiful girls and the money was good – I had a flat in Milan, a flat in New York and one in London all at the same time."

The 6ft 3in actor oozes sexy confidence when he adds: "And I didn't really have to try too hard!" He did, however, have to watch his belly. "I've always been quite sporty, which helps. I play football and love tennis. Obviously, I'd like to have a physique like Brad Pitt but I'm a skinny bloke with a bit of a belly – more Mick Jagger after a heavy drinking session."

Fashion icons such as Calvin Klein and Paul Smith didn't appear to mind but it soon dawned on James that he was "26 and trying on clothes for a living. What the hell am I doing?"

James gave up modelling and decided to pursue a career on the small screen. Following a string of TV ads, he signed up for acting lessons and, almost immediately, was offered a part in Channel 4's *Hollyoaks*.

"The first day on set was a nightmare," says James, recalling his panic. "I even had a stutter at the time." But a course of speech therapy and dedication to the cause meant that legions of female fans now remember James for his part as

Fin, the loveable rogue with a penchant for older women.

A stint of presenting on ITV's *SM:TV* was followed by a role in Sky's steamy drama, *Mile High*, filmed in Majorca and centred on the lives of six young air stewards, one of whom was played by James's fellow *Casualty* actor Sarah Manners.

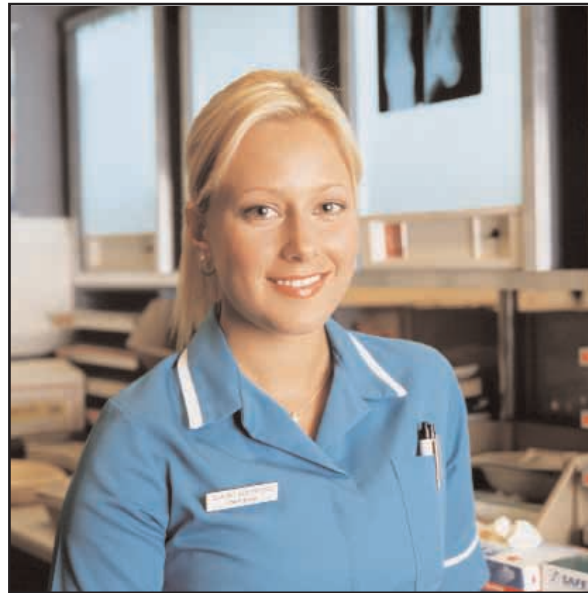
James is thrilled to have landed the role of Abs in *Casualty*, which is produced in Bristol. "Just when I'm getting married and wanting to settle down and start a family, I'm offered a job near my parents, in my home town. Perfect!" he says.

James isn't so sure about living back at home, though. "You're always 12 years old to your mum! My alarm went off on my first morning back and she was very excited. When she heard the beeps, she left it five seconds before calling upstairs: 'Son, are you getting up now?' I had to say, 'Mum, I'm 31 years old and have been getting myself up for the last 15 years!'"

James plans to marry Yvette, his make-up artist girlfriend of almost two years, in Bristol this year. And, with his feet firmly on the ground, he no longer feels he is at odds with the world.

"I talk to other actors who say, 'So what's your ambition, then?' And I say: 'To be a daddy and be happy'."

Leanne Wilson plays Claire Guildford Staff Nurse



Leanne Wilson exudes a gentle, happy glow as dependable and down-to-earth staff nurse Claire Guildford. This is a world away from her tantalising performance as Jess, a scantily-clad English pole-dancing barmaid in the big budget sci-fi series *Tracker*, which was made in Canada and transmitted throughout the States last year.

“It was an amazing experience,” enthuses Hertfordshire-born Leanne “*Chicago* was filming on one side of us and *Phonebooth* on the other. We were sandwiched in the middle and it was so exciting. I met some amazing people including Catherine Zeta-Jones and Renee Zellweger.” *Tracker* was Leanne’s first stab at a long-running series and, fortunately, it has taken off and is repeated on various channels in the States – keeping her image fresh in the minds of the Hollywood producers she intends to wow in due course. “I really want to do film. Whilst it wasn’t LA, I learnt so much about the North American film industry while in Toronto. I do visit some great friends I’ve made and I’d love to work there again.”

Her roles on the British small screen have been slightly more “girl next door”, save for a Müller Rice commercial in which she had to pad along a beach and whip her top off in 2001. She starred in BBC’s daytime soap, *Doctors*, as Candy, the receptionist who took over from Sarah Manners’s character. She then appeared in ITV’s *Night And Day* before hot-footing it to the States. She is also friendly with Will Mellor, with whom she starred in the movie version of *Is Harry On The Boat* in 2000.

Leanne has never been swayed from her childhood ambition to be an actress, having danced from the age of three. “My mum knew I was going to be an actress the day I came home from school crying because I hadn’t got the lead in the school play,” recalls Leanne, who went on to study at Sylvia Young’s Theatre School. “When everyone was out partying, I was fitting in as many productions as I could and in half-term I’d even do the filing in Sylvia’s office because I wanted to be there so much.” Such was her dedication that at the tender age of seven, she would catch the 97 Green Line to

Saturday school in London on her own. “From a very young age I was in an adult world; I was ahead of my years in that respect.”

She describes her current character, Claire, as “independent, honest, confident and good at her job. She’s determined, outgoing and not only does she say what she thinks, but she also stands by what she believes in. What’s more, she loves getting up in the morning for work.” Leanne is straight in at the deep end with a big storyline involving Keith, Claire’s boyfriend of six years, with whom she breaks up. “She’s realised she needs more in her life than he can offer. Their life together has got predictable as he wants to settle down. She’s not ready so it’s become one-sided,” explains Leanne. Keith wants her back more than anything, “which is really unattractive,” Leanne interjects. “He gets more and more serious in his pursuit to the point of being scary. He just won’t take no for an answer.” To complicate matters, Keith’s mum, Joan – played by ex-*Bad Girls* actress Helen Fraser – puts the pressure on since she doesn’t want to lose the daughter she’d always wanted, but never had. It is tough for Claire because she is kissing goodbye to the whole package.

Leanne can relate to Claire’s dilemma, having been in serious relationships herself that didn’t work out. “I was with a guy for a few years and I had to break it off. You feel really, really guilty and it is hard, having been really close friends with someone, to have to do that but when two people don’t feel the same way, it’s never going to be easy.” Ultimately, she asserts, it was the right decision and she discloses that she has been on the receiving end, too. She recalls: “I over-analysed things and just saw what I wanted to see.” At 22, Leanne feels Claire has a lot to learn. She’s never been hurt in love before and needs to see a bit more of life. Leanne, who isn’t currently in a serious relationship, is enjoying the freedom to do just that.

It is hard to believe the pretty blonde has an ounce of aggression in her body but Leanne is a fan of kick-boxing in her spare time. She enjoys releasing all the pent-up frustration of the week, but her big love is dancing. Street dancing is her bag and, when time allows, she trains at Pineapple Studios in London. Referring to her tight schedule, she laughs: “I have to dance round my sitting room to keep in there!”

Leanne lives with a mate in Hitchin but, when working, has a base in Bristol where she is enjoying making new friends with the cast. “We all play softball on a Monday – it’s fantastic fun and makes all the difference to our working relationships.”

Leanne has made her folks proud with her latest role. “I used to go babysitting with my mum and she used to knit while we watched *Casualty* together. She and my gran are avid watchers and I love the fact that they will soon see me in it.” Like Claire, Leanne is very close to her siblings. She has a younger brother, (21), who recently walked out of university and straight into a job at Sky as a trainee camera operator, and a tall brunette of a 16-year-old sister who has her sights set on being a model. “I’m the eldest at 22. They say bossy – I say protective!” says Leanne, the ultimate big sis.

Matthew Wait
plays Luke Warren
Paramedic



“I was a pure sensation seeker when I was younger,” reveals Matthew Wait. “If I could get to the top of it, if it was dangerous, then I’d be there! I’d give anything a go. Socially, too, I’d kick around with the most dangerous idiot going.”

Perhaps it’s fitting, then, that Matthew has joined the cast of *Casualty* as paramedic and adrenaline junkie Luke Warren. The 37-year-old actor admits that, when he first got into the business, he too sought attention and a buzz but reckons that he has long since grown out of that.

“I see myself in some of these young actors who get carried away,” says the actor, who has two children with his partner, Jo, a homeopath. “I don’t regret it – I had a great time – but I don’t think I’m so much like that anymore. I’m now a very different person and I’m happy with who I am. I don’t need all that sensation.”

It seems, however, that Luke does. Luke was once a successful footballer, married to Bex and really

going places. But one fateful tackle and it all went pear-shaped. Bex, who was only with him for the glamour, upped and left with everything he owned. But after a chance meeting with a paramedic, Luke’s life changed. He retrained and landed a job at Holby.

Matthew says: “He’s a difficult one to get on with. He’s not a pushover. He’s feisty, opinionated and happy to argue if it’s called for.”

Luke also likes the ladies. “People stop me on the street when I’m on location in my paramedic uniform and they scream at me: ‘Oi! Leave that Lara alone! We like her!’ and then drive off,” Matthew laughs.

Though he has made appearances in TV series including *The Bill*, *Peak Practice* and *The Inspector Lynley Mysteries*, *Casualty* is Matthew’s first long-term foray into prime-time popular drama. It is a whole new way of working for the actor who is better known for his roles on the stage, having performed with the cream of British directors and writers. He has worked extensively with director

Max Stafford-Clark, most notably as Bob in *Rita, Sue And Bob Too*, which toured in 2001, and as Paul in the its companion piece, *A State Affair*. Set two decades apart, the plays built a vivid and chilling picture of life on a Bradford estate and won Matthew much critical acclaim.

Never one to shy away from controversial roles, Matthew played a patient in a mental hospital in *Birdy* in the West End in 1996, and starred as a “camp, go-go dancing rentnik with attitude” in Mark Ravenhill’s *Some Explicit Polaroids* in 1999. So why *Casualty*?

“I needed to shake things up a bit,” says Matthew. “I wanted to change my profile a bit and I needed something that would set me up for a little while. This came up and I liked it because the characters are three-dimensional, there is a lot of location work and it looks like it will be loads of fun.”

What is new for Matthew is being recognised in the street. “I get a job on *Casualty* and all of a sudden, people are like ‘Wow!’ But they just point at me – two inches from my face – and don’t even say hello. It’s bizarre ...”

Matthew juggles his time between Bristol and Brighton, where he lives with Jo and their two boys, George (six) and Jack (nine). “I’ve been touring the world for the last five or six years, so we’re used to it as a family. When I’m at home, I have quality time with my kids. We go to the beach, make rafts and try to sail them. We go fishing or scrambling on the BMX track.”

Matthew can spot some of his own personality traits in his eldest son, Jack. “He’s a sensation seeker – big time. He’s an animal! I dread to think what he’ll get himself into,” he grimaces.

Fortunately for Jack, unlike Luke Warren, Matthew is incredibly practical in an emergency. “He once came off a tree swing, 25ft off the ground. Everyone else was screaming but I calmly picked him up and got him seen to,” he says. “Matt Wait is far more together than Luke is!”

On set, however, the actor admits to being “a complete fumbling twit”. He says: “Everything seems clear when the paramedic advisor, Dave, explains a

procedure. The rehearsal is fine but, when we go for a take, I’m a complete mess. There’s not time to count in my head, think of my lines and organise the props. The shot has completely changed and I realise the patient is already dead. Shit, I’ve killed them!”

But Matthew hopes it will all get easier. “Maybe it’s a bloke thing. If I’m talking when someone hands me a scalpel, I’ll faint. I can’t do two things at once!”

Sarah Manners plays Bex Reynolds Receptionist



Sarah Manners wasted no time in making her presence known as Bex, the new, feisty receptionist at Holby General. With the longest legs and shortest skirts, it is hard to believe this lad's rag centrefold was once a gawky grammar school teenager who used to be called "Uggers Manners"! A growth spurt and a brace later, the Birmingham-born actress landed five adverts in just one year and has since become one of *FHM*'s Hot 100 Sexiest Women.

Now 27, Sarah brings to *Casualty* a legacy of racy, flirty roles. She first caused a stir in *Doctors*, BBC One's daytime soap, in which her character, Joanne, helped her dying grandmother commit suicide with drugs stolen from the surgery. Then she played sex-toy salesgirl Sam Marsden in *Moving On* and starred with *Casualty* co-star James Redmond as gold-digging air hostess KC in Sky's raunchy airline drama, *Mile High*. But her most challenging role to date was as Tracey Andrews in the TV docudrama *Real Crimes*. Andrews stabbed fiancé Lee Harvey during a row in 1996, then told police he had been

killed in a road rage attack. "Roles that push you as an actress are fantastic," says Sarah.

With a headmistress mother, Sarah was encouraged to do well at school. She was educated at Bluecoat School in Harborne and later left the renowned King Edward's Grammar School with 10 GCSEs and four A-Levels. Sarah knew early on that she wanted to act, however, and won a place at London's Central School of Speech and Drama.

Bitchy Bex is a dream role for Sarah. "She is a footballer's ex-wife who thinks she is better than the job and would rather be doing something a lot more glamorous," she explains.

Bex is impertinent, tactless and highly amusing – but Sarah doesn't think she her character would last a day in a real hospital.

"Even with authority figures, she'll say what she thinks and, if they don't like it, they can lump it," says Sarah, who claims to have put a lot of her own

cheekiness into the role. “I think a lot of the bitchiness with Tally is simply because there is another pretty girl on her patch behind reception.”

But viewers are soon to see a different side of Bex, when she is directly affected by the “Holby disaster” that opens the new series and, in a later storyline, is diagnosed with diabetes – something which reveals her more vulnerable side.

Sarah had to appear in a sexy “morning after scene” with Dan Rymer, who plays Dillon, in the last series. “We were in the shower together and, oh my goodness me, he was wearing nothing at all,” screeches Sarah, who wore a skin-coloured strapless bikini for the shoot. “He did have a special thong but it looked ridiculous, so in bed he used the telephone to cover his modesty”.

Off-screen, Sarah has been with her boyfriend, Ben, for over four years, and is more than content with her lot. She insists that she wouldn’t enjoy the “footballer’s wife” lifestyle.

“Ben shies away from the limelight – he doesn’t like it. We’d never be a Posh and Becks!” she laughs, revealing that she takes the girls to all the celebrity parties while IT salesman Ben stays at home.

Sarah and Ben met four years ago on April Fool’s Day at a pub in Hendon, though he first spotted her on screen. “I was in an advert, dressed up as a bride. He’s since told me that he’d thought, ‘Cor, I’d love to marry someone that looked like that’.

Ben’s wish has come true; Sarah accepted his proposal on Palace Pier in Brighton earlier this year. Plans are afoot for a starry wedding in late July, to which the cast of *Casualty* are invited, followed by a honeymoon in Mauritius.

“I am excited about the wedding but there are lots of bits and bobs yet to sort out. I’ve just handed a load of stuff over to my mum because I have to ask Ben five times before he’ll do anything.”

When she’s not choosing flowers or zipping down the M4 to see her fiancé, Sarah is trying to secure the purchase of a Grade II listed building in Bristol. “The family home will still be North London but

this will be somewhere to stay while I’m working,” she says.

She’s also enjoying life with the *Casualty* gang. “We have great parties, especially at Martina’s [Laird] house. She’s an amazing cook and I’m addicted to her famous special bread and chicken. We have trips away which are usually hilarious – pure carnage.”

Holly Davidson plays Tally Harper Admin Assistant



“I’ve had a few punches in the face but I still go back for more – I love it,” says the stunning Holly Davidson with an air of defiance and conviction. Thankfully, she is referring to her passion for kick-boxing rather than any masochistic tendencies. Holly is about to get her blue belt after a couple of years of learning self-defence. “I find it great for keeping fit and getting rid of aggression. It’s really quite scary but my confidence has grown over the years.” That is apparent from her screen presence at the tender age of 22. Sadie Frost’s younger sister is set to melt viewers’ hearts as consultant Harry Harper’s troublesome teenage daughter, Tally.

Holly describes her alter-ego: “I play the eldest daughter. She’s looking after her brothers and sisters, trying to hold down a job and still trying to grieve as her mother just died. She’s going through a tough time and resents her father for not dealing with the situation well. She’s feisty and independent – I like that in a woman.” Like her character, Holly is headstrong and determined and, while she can’t imagine a trauma such as losing a parent, her parents are divorced so she is able to draw on certain elements of her own life; “Everyone says I’m

so mature for my age. I guess that comes from having older sisters, moving to London so young and having to grow up.” Holly, who left school at 16 and immediately started working with a part in *Pigeon Summer*, an education programme for C4, can relate to 18-year-old Tally’s rites of passage: “The innocence, the experimenting, going out, learning to flirt, learning how to play men and how to deal with the attention she gets.”

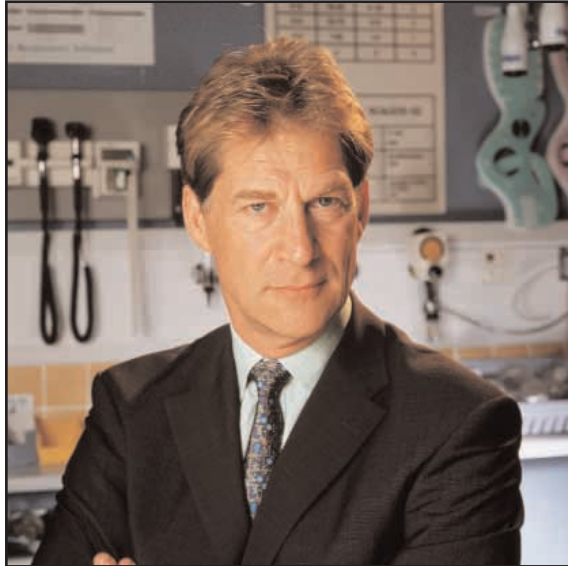
Viewers see Tally enjoying the attention of an older man in this series of *Casualty*; desperate for affection, she naïvely turns to ladies’ man Simon Kaminski, who makes her feel special. “Tally truly believes he loves her and wants to be with her and, when it begins to affect her relationship with her father, she rebels further. She’s 18 and won’t be told. She’s old enough to make her own choices and he can’t treat her like a little child anymore,” asserts Holly. Luckily, Holly enjoys an open relationship with her parents. “I didn’t push the boundaries because they trusted me. I’d come home and tell my mum if I’d snogged a guy because I didn’t have anything to hide. It was a give-and-take upbringing but if my dad said no, I knew to let it go, he was the strict one!”

Tipped to become one of the hottest babes on the box, Holly is coy about her scenes of passion with Christopher Colquhoun. "To begin with it was embarrassing, but it wasn't too bad. There were a few brief bra moments but nothing too raunchy." Luckily, Holly's boyfriend understands the business she's in. Ben Jackson is personal assistant to Jude Law and used to be a model, so they've got a great understanding. The distance, however, is tough. "He visits and when I get a chance I go to see him but he's in LA for a couple of months, which is hell." Holly, who has been dating Ben for nearly four years, smiles. "I'm very happy and very much in love. I feel very maternal and see myself having babies but, for now, I'm getting my fix with my nieces and nephews."

Rather than while away the hours pining, Holly gets down to the gym. "I'm very sporty," she says. She also loves the theatre, cinema and going to gigs when she's not babysitting. Holly was brought up in Ludlow, Shropshire. "I'm so grateful to my parents for taking me there. I loved growing up in the countryside in a little black-and-white cottage with a couple of acres, a stream and a waterfall." She's staying in a flat in Bristol, although home now is London, but when she's there she hates the fact that her mobile doesn't stop ringing and she feels "grotty". "I drive to my parents and am soon in lush countryside. I take a deep breath and everything slows down."

Life isn't going to slow down just yet for striking brunette Holly, who is best known for her role as PC Roz Clarke in *The Bill* and for performing alongside Richard E Grant and Joe McGann in *Food Of Love*, directed by Steven Poliakoff. This rising star is already lined up for a new movie which shoots in September. She's cast as a young girl from up North – again, very naïve – who comes to live in Soho. "Her friends work in a strip-club. She's overwhelmed by this whole new world and the film shows her growing up and finding love," Holly explains with a knowing smile having conquered London, grown up AND found love.

Simon MacCorkindale plays Harry Harper, Consultant



• **Simon describes Harry in five words:**

The Master Of Everyone's Destiny!

• **How has Harry developed over series XVII?**

“As well as having to deal with an NHS consultant's hours, Harry has had to come to terms with the loss of his wife while looking after his five children. He finds it a very difficult juggling act and he can't just walk away from them. He is haunted with the guilt of not being where he should have been at the time of the fateful car accident.”

• **What has Harry got in store for series XVIII?**

At the beginning of series XVIII, Harry tries to come off the anti-depressants on which he has been dependent since his wife died, but finds the withdrawal too much to cope with. Rather than go back to his GP, Harry starts to self-prescribe the pills, using another patient's notes and forging Lara's signature in episode four. His daughter, Tally, discovers what Harry has been doing. In desperation, she asks Simon Kaminski for advice, and unwittingly gives him the power he needs to gain the upper hand over his boss in episode nine. With this evidence, Simon begins to blackmail

Harry in episode 10. Lara confronts Harry about it and he confesses. He and Lara still have a very strong relationship and she will help him get his life back on track.

• **What have been your professional highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

“Professionally speaking, I can't really think of any lows. *Casualty* is a strong show with a great ensemble cast and I like being amongst them a great deal. I love the community spirit. Everyone is so mutually supportive. It is easy to be negative about the challenge of making episodic TV. It's not easy turning shows out at this speed. We in the cast certainly earn our money. But I love flying on the hoof. The low, if anything, is that the constant demand on everyone's time and concentration is tiring. I, for one, have been in every episode since I started, ie, 56 shows in a row – the drawback being that I can't plan my real life much in advance. But I enjoy playing a leading man and my character is multi-faceted and interesting to explore.”

• **What have been your personal highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

“Watching our stud farm near Exmoor evolve has been a personal high of late. I look after a lot of the administration of the farm and get involved in the building and dirty work, too. The horse business is really riding high at the moment and we are doing really well, with 57 horses. It is our biggest year of breeding yet and so we're at a crunch time. The low is perhaps that I don't ride as much as I'd like to because time is tight. I do try to get home most days when I don't have too early a start or too late a finish. I certainly like to be home for supper.

“My wife and I are also enjoying personal success with our production company, Anglo Films International. We are still working on a series of original films for UK television based on the Dick Francis canon of novels. We've also got a movie in the pipeline and a TV series made out of South Africa. As I barely get more than three days off in a row, I haven't managed to get out there but it's all very exciting.

“Other than that, I don't have much time to relax or be by myself. Every now and again I spend the night

in my apartment in Bristol but bedtime reading normally consists of scripts for the next day. My one-and-a-half hour drive to Exmoor is time to listen to the radio if I can turn my mind to it. And Susan and I love to go to shows when we can.”

Simon MacCorkindale’s vital statistics:

Age: 51

Married: to actress Susan George for 18 years

Born: Cambridgeshire

Lives: near Exmoor

Joined *Casualty* for the start of series XVII in 2002

Christine Stephen-Daly
plays Lara Stone, Acting Registrar



• Christine describes Lara in five words:

Resourceful, Adventurous, Challenging, Sensitive, Direct

• How has Lara developed over series XVII?

“Following her stint in prison, Lara learnt to become more measured and thoughtful in her actions. She’s more tentative about her personal choices and has a fear of intimacy since Patrick’s death. She hides herself behind her medical brilliance and is relying on just that to satisfy her needs. Harry and Dillon manage to boost her self-esteem and give her a sense of security again. Her relationship with Harry’s daughter, Tally, has restored her ability to help others while bringing out a nurturing side to her personality, which was only ever present in her work.”

• What has Lara got in store for series XVIII?

Lara, an adrenalin junkie who thrives on damage control, is heroic at the Holby Disaster and delivers a baby from the dead mother’s womb amidst the train crash. Harry and Lara’s bond strengthens as she offers him support with his continued bereavement of Beth; she is shocked and appalled when he eventually reveals he’s been self-prescribing, because Simon has begun to blackmail him.

Christine says: “Lara’s mainly focusing on her career this series, working at the best she can be and making herself invaluable to the department. The Rapid Response team work brings an excitement to her job reminiscent of her days working for Medicins Sans Frontieres during the civil war in Sierra Leone. However, there will come a time when that is not enough and she’ll be looking for ways in which to enrich her personal life as well. Whether or not that’s to be in the shape of a romance, we will have to wait and see.”

• What have been your highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?

“A personal high this year has been the purchase of my first property. I’ve bought a flat in a converted Georgian house in Cotham, Bristol. I’ve just had the bathroom done and my favourite way to relax is to take a bath in my big tub. A personal low is spending time away from my partner, Simon, who lives and works in London. On a professional level, a high is certainly that I am enjoying the growth and popularity of my character, Lara. And the low is

Regular cast members

saying goodbyes to friends in the cast who have left, like Zita and Adjoa.”

• **What is occupying Christine’s time and mind at the moment?**

“My exercise regime. I’m really into getting fit at the moment. I’ve got a professional teaching me the mental and physical aspects of effective exercise. It’s a bit like cross-training.”

Christine Stephen-Daly’s vital statistics:

Age: 30

Born: Melbourne, Australia (*Casualty* is screened on UK Gold Down Under so Christine’s family have been watching for a year now. However, as they’re nine months behind, she’s still in prison over there!)

Studied: National Institute for Dramatic Art in Sydney

Lives: Cotham, Bristol

Joined *Casualty* in 2001

Kwame Kwei-Armah plays Finlay Newton, Paramedic



• **Kwame describes Fin in five words:**

Fun, Energetic, Rebellious, Sexy, Professional

• **How has Fin developed over series XVII?**

We’ve seen a vulnerable side to Fin over recent months as he and Comfort have formed a special bond. His passion for his job of saving lives is reflected in his impatience with the bureaucratic paper-pushers who he feels don’t support him, and his temper has certainly worn thin on occasions. Although Fin is somewhat opinionated and moody, his humour increasingly shines through and he is the source of much joviality. He has been a particularly loyal friend to Josh during his break-up from Colette.

• **What has Fin got in store for series XVIII?**

Very much in love, Fin reveals his intention to propose to Comfort on their way back from holiday, but the couple are involved in the train crash. “They’d gone to the toilets for a last bit of nookie,” Kwame points out. They are the first out to see the carnage. Later, Fin is desperate to reach Comfort, who is trapped in one of the carriages, with a group of children. Eventually, he clears his way through the rubble to get to them and helps them out. Then he has to deal with Comfort as she starts to break down. She pulls away and doesn’t communicate. Fin doesn’t understand why the woman he loves cannot share this with him. Fin defends Comfort’s ability to work as Luke and Josh think otherwise (by episode four). He has his own doubts about Comfort coming back to work, in episode seven, because her behaviour is uncharacteristic and reckless. He speaks to Josh about his concerns. “He can see her rejecting her religion and he finds this difficult. He perseveres and sticks by her because he loves her,” says Kwame.

• **Highs and lows since starting in *Casualty***

“Right now, I’m on a high because of the success of my play, *Elmina’s Kitchen*, which opened at the Royal National Theatre last month.” Kwame’s play was the critics’ choice in *Time Out*, *Metro*, *The Evening Standard* and *The Guardian*. Now *The Standard* and *The Guardian* want him to write for them and he’s

Regular cast members

got a West End musical in the pipeline as well as a couple of TV scripts.

Kwame's play opened hot on the heels of his runaway success in Comic Relief's *Celebrity Fame Academy*, in which he won the nation's heart with his sweet soul singing. He was neck and neck with his *Casualty* co-star, Will Mellor, and bowed out gracefully when Will won the final vote. He has since signed a recording contract and is currently working on an album to include songs he's written, amongst other soul numbers.

Kwame also managed to squeeze in a trip to Senegal, straight after the opening of *Elmina's Kitchen*. He visited the country as a goodwill ambassador for Christian Aid in the week prior to a national event for Trade Justice in the UK. He went to investigate the effects of trade subsidies on farmers. "We met onion farmers who were working twice as hard for half the reward because Dutch onions were cheaper," says Kwame.

So, there have been quite a lot of highs in this last year. The low is the fact that Kwame is putting 1,000 miles on his speedometer every week, travelling to and from meetings about his various projects.

• What is occupying Kwame's time and mind at the moment?

"My kid's are occupying my mind. I don't see very much of them at the moment and, when I do, it's no good telling them I'm tired because they need to play and catch up." Kwame is now planning the next phase of his life: "I've got to work out what I'm going to do and how I'm going to do it. *Elmina's* going to the Hackney Empire and then on to Bath. I've also got my graduation coming up for my screenwriting masters degree, from the London College of Printing, in July, which I'm very excited about." When asked in which direction Kwame feels he is leaning, he insists: "Ideally I will continue to write *and* act, because if I just write, I'd be in all the time but, with acting, I'm out in the buzz and soaking everything up, and I need to keep using that side of my brain!"

Kwame Kwei-Armah's vital statistics:

Age: 36

Born: Tottenham, London

Lives: In London with girlfriend, Michelle
Kwame has three children by his previous marriage (Kwame junior, 11, and seven-year-old twins Kofi and Oni)

Joined *Casualty* in 1998

Martina Laird plays Comfort Jones, Paramedic



• **Martina describes Comfort in five words:**
Passionate, Independent, Caring, Uncompromising, Outspoken.

• How has Comfort developed over series XVII?

"Comfort has become even more independent over series XVII. Having left her husband, she has

faced life on her own for the first time. She moved into her own little flat and consolidated her friendships, for instance, she was able to be there for Colette when her own marriage broke up. Her relationship with Fin was tested by the realities of life, and they were able to survive and develop a strong, comfortable and loving bond with each other.”

• What has Comfort got in store for series XVIII?

In episode one, viewers see just how serious Fin and Comfort’s relationship has become as Fin prepares to ask Comfort to marry him. But before he has the chance, their world is turned upside down by a train crash. Usually calm and controlled, Comfort finds the crash too much to cope with when she becomes trapped in a carriage with a party of injured schoolchildren and their dead teacher. She panics when she can do nothing to save Rick (one of the children on the train), and the whole incident hits her hard. All the foundations of her life are rocked by the effects and she is haunted by visions of the crash. She finally admits that she’s not coping and lets Josh sign her off work, in episode four. She turns to Father Frank for help and answers, but finds nothing. Viewers see her losing her faith by episode five. On Comfort’s return to work, her behaviour worries Fin.

• What have been your highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?

“Professional highs and lows on *Casualty* can both be summed up in the same experience. The storyline at the start of series XVIII was very exciting to work on, with a great script with lots of action and drama. It is like working on a film. Comfort lives through all of life’s experiences on one night. What starts off as a fun and romantic trip ends in a disaster that tests her character and sees her rise to the occasion as well as be defeated by it. It was a great challenge to play and therefore very rewarding. Unfortunately, because the two episodes took a month to shoot, I didn’t recognise the personal cost of living every day in such a dark place. Not only literally, but being surrounded by ideas of death and grief. Though it’s not real, we forget that it can have a real effect on your spirit. I was glad when I had a chance to laugh again.”

• What is occupying Martina’s time and mind at the moment?

“I have been reflecting a lot on life and family and how patterns can repeat themselves throughout family lines, hence the importance of knowing your own history. I have made my home in the land of my father’s birth but I realise how little I know of my other lineage. I have recently been using the internet to start finding ways of getting hold of information about so much of the personal history that has been lost through the Caribbean experience.

“I’m writing a play in my spare time at the moment. It’s a great learning experience for me and I am really enjoying myself. I have written and produced a play of mine before. I don’t know what I’ll do with this one, though, but, right now, it’s just a way for me to have fun. The cast on *Casualty* are great and very supportive, even helping out with an improvised workshop the other day, which was a great laugh.”

Martina Laird’s vital statistics:

Age: 33
Born: Port of Spain, Trinidad
Studied: French at Kent University and then drama at Webber Douglas
Lives: In Bristol

Joined *Casualty* in 2001

**Kelly Harrison plays
 Nikki Marshall, Paramedic Technician**

• Kelly describes Nikki in five words:
 Fun, Emotionally scarred, Vibrant, Happy

• How has Nikki developed over series XVII?

“Nikki developed massively in series XVII. She is exploring new boundaries and discovering things about herself that she thought she never could. Jack



dying has left permanent scars. On the surface, she does bounce back. She's a bit wiser but she still doesn't think before she opens her mouth."

• What has Nikki got in store for series XVIII?

In episode one, Nikki is the general technician at the scene of the crash. Having already lost her husband-to-be, finding Anna trapped nearly destroys Nikki. She is befriended by a young lad at the site, who has lost his parents: "She becomes quite motherly towards him," says Kelly. "He's so frail and vulnerable and she sees a similarity with her own situation. They're both raw at the same time so she understands what he's feeling." She ensures he settles well into foster care, assisted by new paediatric specialist Jim Brodie. The attraction between Jim and Nikki is immediate, and he picks her up as she comes to terms with losing Anna. Nikki goes out with Jim to discuss fund-raising ideas and enjoys his company. She is determined that money should be raised to help those affected by the Holby disaster. Later, she is the driving force behind getting the cast to strip off to make a calendar for the charity. Nikki is seduced by Jim's American charm and maturity and things move very quickly until they come unstuck when a friend of one of Nikki's patients flirts with her. She rather enjoys the attention until she realises who it is...

• Highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?

Former model Kelly loves her sensational storylines. When last year's series bowed out, Nikki's life was left hanging in the balance after she was stabbed, when called to a domestic row. "That last episode in series XVI was a real high for me. Filming that scene made me dig deep into myself to find somebody inside me that I didn't know was there. I feel it is some of the best work I've ever done." One year on, Kelly found herself in the thick of another nail-biting finale as the show celebrated its 400th episode. Kelly also enjoyed filming those scenes: "I loved being fitted for the wedding dress. I had four made – one nice one and three that could be ripped, made dirty and wet as the episode was very action-packed. The lows have been friends leaving the cast. I love it when there are new faces but I miss Will and Zita, who I've worked with for the past couple of years. We stay in touch on a weekly basis, though."

• What is occupying Kelly's time and mind at the moment?

At the time of this interview, all Kelly was thinking about was getting home to her boyfriend, Gavin, who she has been seeing for nearly six years. She says: "I want to go home. I've worked so hard since the beginning of the series – non-stop. I'm leaving this afternoon and I can't wait." When Kelly's not working she can be found in Pizza Express with Ian Bleasdale and Matt Wait, or at the gym. Whilst she has no major plans to buy just yet, she's keeping her eye on the housing market too.

Kelly Harrison's vital statistics:

Age: 23

Born: Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Studied: Hungerhill School, Doncaster

Lives: Partly in Doncaster with Gavin and, when filming, in a waterfront apartment in Bristol.

Joined *Casualty* in 2001

Ian Bleasdale plays Josh Griffiths, Paramedic Operational Duty Officer



• **Ian describes Josh in five words:**
Stubborn, Calm, Dedicated, Loyal, Sensitive

• **How has Josh developed over series XVII?**

Josh has had a hard time and is consequently throwing himself into his work. He is trying to accept his new promotion but often feels stuck behind the desk when he really wants to be out in the field. His marriage to Colette has been completely shaken apart after her affair. He cannot deal with her unfaithfulness, especially with a man he detests. Matters are made worse for him when he discovers she is pregnant, but it is not his. He is reminded of the death of his own family when she miscarries and, once again, has to come to terms with being alone.

• **What has Josh got in store for series XVIII?**

Josh is instrumental in leading the emergency teams at the Holby Disaster in episodes one and two. He is immersing himself in his work now that Colette has left him. Josh is deeply hurt to learn that she has moved on and has even started seeing someone else.

He is comforted by Charlie as the two spend an adventurous day together in episode six and leave

the past behind. After a few drinks, they go running squealing into the sea completely naked. They are adolescents again. “They go the whole hog and it is very sweet,” says Ian. “It is a meeting of minds and signals the end of Josh’s nightmares. Josh has known Charlie the longest – in the story, nearly 20 years – and they’ve been through a lot together so he’s the one person he’ll talk to.” Ian says filming the scene in Weston was great fun. “It was very sweet, very silly and very innocent. It was 8 o’clock in the morning in the spring. Just as we’d finished running into the water, a group of French schoolgirls arrived, walking in a crocodile formation. We’d just got our dressing gowns back on, having taken the whole lot off! They’d probably seen our two little bare bums bobbing along – I hope nobody recognised us from them!”

Later in the series, when Nikki proposes developing a calendar featuring the emergency department staff, Josh supports her idea and even offers to take the photos – that is, until Harry pulls in the assistance of his friend, Lord Lichfield.

• **Highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

One of *Casualty*’s stalwarts, Ian has been in the drama since series four and has seen a massive turnover of cast. “The work is so hard, fast and intensive that you can’t help but bond with each other,” he says. He will particularly miss Adjoa, with whom he had a great working relationship. They went through so much in the last series.

Ian has found playing a paramedic and shadowing a real team very humbling. “The worst thing is not dead people or crashes, it’s the children. It’s the wasted opportunities that I find depressing, it’s just not fair.” The character Josh is based on Clive Adrell, the paramedic advisor who checks the scripts for accuracy. Ian is constantly asking questions, despite having been on the show for years. He finds it very sobering going out on a real “shout” once in a while, especially since “all we actors whinge about is our cold tea or losing our make-up bag – admittedly, I do more on one shift than most paramedics do in a week – but we must remember it is a drama, not a documentary. The London service get between 2,500 and 3,000 calls a day but a lot of them are hoax. You wouldn’t believe what some people do. I’ve become very cynical.”

• What is occupying Ian's time and mind at the moment?

"I spend my free time playing golf, following the cricket, drinking fine wines and cooking. I walk everywhere for exercise." At present, builders are crawling all over his new house in Bristol. "I'm like a bear in the woods; there's no toilet yet!" he laughs.

Ian Bleasdale's vital statistics:

Age: 51

Born: Upholland, Lancashire.

Lives: Bristol

Joined *Casualty* series four

Christopher Colquhoun plays Simon Kaminski, Registrar



• **Christopher describes Simon in five words:** Arrogant, Petulant, Witty, Womanising, Competent (but at times incompetent!)

• How has Simon developed over series XVII?

Simon's had a really difficult year. He knows he's competent enough to do the job but no one else has faith in him. He feels that Lara is favoured by

Harry, who fancies her. Even though Simon was a registrar first, he is not treated with the seniority he deserved. Seeing her being mollycoddled and pushed through the ranks is tough. Simon has got an attitude problem, though.

Viewers saw a vulnerable side to Simon when he fell in love with Jane, a difficult woman. "I don't understand why he would. I can see the desire and the challenge of a woman like that but to fall in love with someone who is giving absolutely nothing back is just naïve," says Christopher. "He tells himself that he's getting something out of it even though he's not. He fools himself that she loves him."

An added complication was his involvement in the split between Colette and Josh, Colette getting pregnant and deciding to keep the child. "He doesn't want to have a child. Maybe one day with someone he loves, but it was a drunken, one-night-stand – not the best circumstances in which to conceive," Christopher continues. "I can't forgive his behaviour towards Colette – he'll pay for it." Simon thus feels beaten down by life, especially when he loses his job at the end of the series. Being suspended effectively puts back his career by two years, which is a real beating for someone with an ego like his.

• What has Simon got in store for series XVIII?

Simon returns in episode one after his suspension is overturned, but he does not receive a warm welcome. He has a lot to prove and the tension and animosity between Simon and Harry is given fuel when Harry discovers Tally is seeing Simon. Christopher says: "A sexy 18-year-old comes up and flirts with him. There is no question in his mind that he can have her. Simon wants revenge at this point and knows it'll hit Harry where it hurts. With the super objective of getting all the references he needs to become a consultant, he drives Harry into a corner." In episode nine, Simon finds out about Harry self-prescribing anti-depressants. He uses the information to blackmail Harry into letting him go on the Rapid Response team, which Lara launches in episode five. "Simon considers leaving, but knowing he now has the choice gives him the psychological momentum to continue in his post.

He knows he's wanted, is valuable and is more than competent enough for the job," says Christopher.

• **What have been your highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

"The low point is that there's an 'anti-Simon' mood around the hospital and that pervades into my own life. It affects me as an actor/human being, too. I'm drawing on real emotions all the time and, as I've got no shoulder to cry on in the storyline, I'm left dragging angry, resentful feelings around constantly. It's exhausting. I've been most happy on a professional level when the character has been fundamentally liked and enjoys being where he is, but I've spent a year and a half playing someone who has been beaten down – of course it's going to affect me."

That said, though, Christopher has enjoyed all his time working with the *Casualty* team. "The company gets you through the times when you're frustrated, tired and things are getting you down. Our trips away have been the most fun. Six of us went down to Devon and hired a cottage for New Year. We had a huge dinner and fireworks down on the beach." Christopher's professional high in recent times is "getting to play someone who's so cocky, arrogant and aggressive, but who gets the girls. It is fantastic – why would you not want to play that? In real life you have to behave yourself in a certain way but, in this role, I can misbehave. Simon's getting more Machiavellian by the week and I'm really enjoying it."

• **What is occupying Christopher's time and mind at the moment?**

Christopher loves his music and is toying with the idea of writing a script but, he says: "Photography is the lynchpin of my life outside work, as is looking for the perfect woman, of course!"

Christopher Colquhoun's vital statistics:

Age: 33
Born: Sheffield
Studied: RADA
Lives: Bristol

Joined *Casualty* in 2002

Derek Thompson plays Charlie Fairhead, Clinical Nurse Specialist



• **Derek describes Charlie in five words:** Focused, Principled, Supportive, Veteran, Dependable

• **How has Charlie developed over series XVII?**

Charlie lost a good friend in series XVII. He and Duffy have gone through thick and thin over the years and her recent heartbreak affected him a great deal. When Ryan returned to whisk her off to New Zealand, he was struck by the realisation that he was deeply fond of her but she was gone.

• **What has Charlie got in store for series XVIII?**

Charlie is key in keeping Anna calm at the crash site and supporting his team when they learn of her death. He offers his best mate, Josh, support when he finds it difficult to come to terms with the fact that his wife, Colette, has filed for divorce. The first big challenge to Charlie this series will come in episode 12 when it is time for the long-awaited visit of his seven-year-old son, Louis, from Canada. Louis's arrival is tainted by the double bombshell that his ex-wife, Baz, has remarried and his ex-father-in-law is dying of cancer.

• **Highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

“Being involved for nearly 18 years now with other people’s pain – albeit pretend pain – is sometimes wearing,” Derek admits. “As an actor, you have no control and the anxiety and distress do get to me. But Charlie’s personal problems come off with the scrubs at the end of a day’s filming. That’s why Charlie’s depression in series five was fun. I didn’t like looking a mess, but I enjoyed the breakdown. I imagined a piece of plutonium in the back of my head.” He also smiles at the memory of Charlie’s long list of failed romances. “I felt sure the relationship with Trish Baynes was going to develop into marriage and was looking forward to it but I think the writers preferred to make a point about the loneliness of the man.” Back in 1993, Derek commented on his relationship with Julia Watson, who played Baz: “The woman who unlocked his frozen emotions.” He says: “We were a great double act then, and after all this time there’s still a shorthand between us.” Julia Watson is currently filming episodes for November, when Baz is set to rock his life again, so he can look forward to filling in some more gaps.

• **What is occupying Derek’s spare time at the moment?**

“I swim about three times a week and go for regular long walks. I also love the sea and sail my boat as often as possible.” Derek also likes to spend time with his son, Charlie. “He loves the notion that I’m a Charlie, too, and I’m in *Casualty*, which he has watched. He likes to tease me.”

Derek Thompson’s vital statistics:

Age: 54

Born: Belfast, with twin sister Elaine

Lives: Bristol, with actress Dee Sadler and son Charlie (14)

Joined *Casualty* at the very beginning in September 1986

Loo Brealey plays
Roxanne Bird, Staff Nurse



• **Loo describes Roxy in five words:**
Gauche, Well-intentioned, Scatterbrained, Kind, Broke

• **How has Roxy developed over series XVII?**

“Roxanne arrived in the Holby A&E Department a well-meaning collection of neuroses. She was very young for her age and had a big problem with authority. She hid the fact that she had a baby from the rest of the staff and was in denial about being a mother. But, after hitting rock bottom and abandoning Nicole in a baby-changing facility overnight (!), she began to face up to her responsibilities and get her life straightened out.”

• **What has Roxy got in store for series XVIII?**

Roxy finds it hard to come to terms with what is happening to Anna, her close friend and mentor. She eventually confronts her fears and visits her before she dies. She is later attacked by a psychiatric patient in the department and, in panic, blurts out the fact that she is pregnant – her secret is out. As a low-grade staff nurse with a rack of

Regular cast members

debts, she's taken it upon herself to make several thousand pounds by having a baby for a childless couple. In episode 11, the father shows up in casualty and the proverbial hits the fan when her boss finds out she's a surrogate mother.

• **What have been your professional and personal highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

“The cast went to Alton Towers in February 2003 and, by the end of the day, we'd been recognised and ushered to the front of the queues, which was amazing. In my defence, I did wait in the queue for the ‘Air’ ride for an hour and a half. It was a brilliant day out but I hated the ‘Corkscrew’ – I banged my head and the funny photo they took had me looking green and everyone else yelling with joy!

“In the show it was brilliant doing all the leaving-the-baby stuff, really challenging. When people stop me in the street, they still joke that I'm a bad mother. And I enjoyed my screen kisses last year, it's always the quiet ones: Roxy managed to get three different snogs – from bad boy boyfriend Hakkan (Bombay Dream's Rezza), Dillon (Dan Rymer) and a snowboarder with a terminal brain tumour. Nice!

“I bought a house in south London, stripped the floors myself and grew my first tomato on the roof terrace. I also snorkelled in the Caribbean Sea off Cuba and burnt to a pork scratching!

“My boyfriend was in Mexico for six months doing a film and I missed him.”

• **What is occupying Loo's time and mind at the moment?**

“I have to buy some lino for the kitchen floor. (This is since October last year). And, in my spare time, I am generally on the M4 going back to London or coming down to Bristol!”

Loo Brealey's vital statistics:

Age: 24

Home town: Raunds, Northamptonshire

Lives: Bristol/London

Studied: Cambridge University and Lee Strasberg Theater Institute (New York)

Joined *Casualty* in 2001

Zita Sattar plays
Anna Paul, Staff Nurse



• **Zita describes Anna in five words:**

Funny, Warm, Honest, Friendly, Brave.

• **How has Anna developed over series XVII?**

As a loyal and devoted friend to Nikki, Anna has had to support her through some tough times as a result of her lovable but roguish boyfriend, Jack (Will Mellor). She has proved to be an invaluable source of strength to her friends in this series, although providing the opinionated, motherly words of warning when Jack returns after running from the police. Though she wanted to turn him in, her dedication to Nikki shone through as she helped him briefly escape and was rewarded by the honour of being bridesmaid.

Her love life has revealed her more vulnerable side as she flirted with Harry and came very near to some late-night activities with him. Although bubbly and hard-working, she became a fun-loving girl, desperate for love as she tried out the uncharted territory that is blind dating. Discovering that one date had a wife already, she became quite fiery and threw her entire drink over him in front of everyone. The course of love never runs smooth and, sadly, she discovered the love of her life was, in fact, her half-brother. At the end of the series she is not able to hide her desperate, miserable state and reveals a far deeper and more depressed Anna than ever seen before.

• **What has Anna got in store for series XVIII?**

In episode one, Anna and Merlin can't escape their feelings for each other. They've been away for the weekend together and Anna has told Merlin she is pregnant with his baby. She insists that they can't keep it. On the way back to Holby, Anna is involved in a train crash and, through the trauma, she realises she does want to keep their baby. The life-and-death situation makes her realise there is no right or wrong about her love for Merlin and she is no longer scared. She loses both of her legs in the crash, and her condition deteriorates until she dies in episode three. Zita believes that the relationship between her and Merlin can be epitomised in one quote from her final episode: "I am so lucky to have loved you, Merlin."

• **What have been your highs and lows since starting in *Casualty*?**

"Meeting people from the cast who will remain my friends forever is the biggest plus since joining. They have become like my family, and since I am still in Bristol I do see people socially. I really value those friendships and they are more important than any plotlines but the whole Merlin story was great. I enjoyed doing Anna's final scenes, but filming the interior train scenes was horrific. I was trapped in the wreckage with half of my body wedged through a window and underneath Emmanuel, who played Nelson. Broken glass and sticky blood was all around me and in my hair and I stayed like that for days and days, hours at a time! I am claustrophobic, too, which obviously didn't help and the accumulation of time made me really twitchy and uncomfortable. Initially, I didn't have to try too hard at the acting part because I was scared.

"My own reaction surprised me, actually, as I couldn't learn the script without crying. It's hard to read what happens to Anna as it's so unjust and she doesn't deserve it. I had to repeat the lines again and again and didn't really like being taken to that dark place. Every time I went to the loo and saw myself in the mirror, it was just as awful!"

• **What is occupying your time and mind at the moment?**

"I have just done live theatre at Stratford East but am holding out for something I want to get my teeth into. I'm glad to be getting my breath back. My old Victorian house in Bristol also needs renovating and I'm starting from scratch. I've definitely been more Anna than I have Zita of late and I'm looking forward to getting my life back. I'm going to do lots of walking in the hills and painting."

Zita Sattar's vital statistics:

Age: 27

Born: Warrington

Studied: Rose Bruford Drama School

Lives: Bristol

Joined *Casualty* in 2001 at the end of series XV

Casualty series XVIII

Episode One – End OfThe Line: Part I

The first of this dramatic two-part episode begins the 18th series of *Casualty*. Fin, who is carrying a diamond engagement ring, is travelling on a packed train with Comfort. Anna is also on the train, returning to Holby, but avoids the couple as she sits and takes a call from Merlin. He is still shocked by Anna's pregnancy but she makes it clear that she is not keeping the baby.

While Fin and Comfort share a passionate moment in a toilet cubicle, the carriage is de-railed to the thunderous sound of screeching breaks and breaking glass. Fin prises open the door to find hundreds of passengers in a blind panic. Initially phased by her fall, Comfort quickly gauges the seriousness of the accident and leaps into action. In the chaos which ensues, a multitude of casualties are tended to by the arriving team who are shocked by the catastrophe.

As news of the crash reaches the emergency department, new emergency nurse practitioner Tess takes control of clearing space to prepare for the inevitable rush. Simon is called in to help. But, despite being cleared of professional mis-conduct, he is not met with a warm welcome.

Fire chief Mike and Josh take charge of the situation as ambulances and buses arrive at the embankment. Medical staff are working at such a stretch that they fail to notice that staff nurse Anna is trapped. They are horrified when they realise the gravity of Anna's situation.

Department staff also fight to save lives and are forced to ignore those who do not have a good chance of survival. At the crash site, Nikki befriends a young boy, Paul, who is searching for his parents. And Comfort clammers through the rubble into a carriage of school children with their young teacher. Everyone works with urgency to evacuate the carriage which is under the weight of a collapsing tunnel when a sudden explosion signals disaster.

End OfThe Line is written by Ann Marie Di Mambro and directed by Euros Lyn.

Episode Two – End OfThe Line: Part II

Back at the site, the tunnel has collapsed, trapping Comfort and the school children. Several children and the teacher have died and Comfort struggles to reassure those who remain alive. Comfort manages to signal for help but the pressure gets to her when she fails to revive yet another child. Fin watches anxiously and eventually breaks through the debris to reach her. He manages to lead Comfort and the remaining children out of the wreck but Comfort is inconsolable. Back at the hospital, she lashes out at Father Frank.

Tess has been waiting for news of her fire chief husband, Mike, but is not reassured by his call confessing that, as fire chief, he feels responsible for the death of his colleagues. She manages to talk him round but an officious structural engineer implies that Mike has been negligent.

Anna is still trapped under fellow passenger Nelson. When he is removed, the extent of the damage to her legs is revealed. Though the team are reluctant to tell Anna how seriously she is injured, she knows they are holding back and persuades Charlie to tell her the truth. Merlin arrives at the site and pleads his way on to the carriage. But there is a growing urgency to remove Anna from the unstable wreckage and the rescue team must risk her legs in order to save her life.

American paediatrician Jim turns up in the department, offering to help, and makes a big impression. Nobody is quite sure what to make of him but Nikki is impressed with his sensitivity in dealing with the vulnerable Paul.

When the mother of a survivor of the crash unfairly complains to the Press about her treatment at the hands of the hospital staff, Bex loses her cool. She gives the woman a piece of her mind,

unaware that the argument has been caught on camera. But the woman later apologises for her outburst and gives Bex a £10 contribution to start a disaster fund.

End Of The Line is written by Danny McCahon and directed by Ian White.

Episode Three – Breathe Deeply

Anna is seriously injured and Merlin keeps a vigil at her bedside. Though the doctors initially think her condition is improving, she begins to deteriorate. Nikki passes on the news that Anna is dying and Merlin is torn at Anna's request not to be put on a life-support machine.

Roxy and others say their goodbyes and Merlin is by Anna's bedside as her monitor signals the end. When the staff gather to be given the news, new nurse Claire's boyfriend, Keith, bursts in with a colourful and ill-timed proposal of marriage.

Roxy is attacked by a patient she has befriended and, when he starts to strangle her, she shouts out that she is pregnant. Tess insists that a full-time psychiatric nurse would help prevent future attacks on staff.

Comfort is feeling depressed and rejects Fin's offer of help. She is suffering from flashbacks from the train crash and Fin is reluctant to tell her of the memorial service that Father Frank is holding.

Harry discusses coming off the anti-depressants he started taking after his wife's death, as he feels they have become an emotional crutch. But his doctor is not convinced and only agrees to reduce the dosage.

Mike arrives at the hospital to tell Tess that he has been suspended from his job because some of his team died due to a decision he made. And Nikki goes to visit Paul, who lost both his parents in the crash, and is warned by Jim not to get too emotionally attached.

Breathe Deeply is written by Chris Ould and directed by Peter Creegen.

Episode Four – Perks Of The Job

Comfort is not dealing with the emotional aftermath of the train crash very well. Thinking she sees one of the children who died at the crash site crossing the road in front of the ambulance, she slams on the brakes and causes a crash. Later, she is deeply affected by the grief of a widow. Eventually, she admits to Josh that her experiences at the crash are affecting her work and he signs her off. But Fin is upset that Comfort went to Josh for help instead of coming to him.

Simon is offered a job with a pharmaceutical company but, after talking to an insecure medical student at an emergency scene, he remembers why he wanted to be a doctor. He decides not to take the position when a procedure he has never performed before is successful and he realises that he still has new challenges to face at the hospital.

Harry seems a bit preoccupied and fails to recognise the symptoms of a threatening disease during a patient's assessment. He also gets the shakes while helping a collapsed woman and explains it away by telling Lara that his body is just adjusting because he has stopped taking his anti-depressants. But he later fills out a prescription form for himself, forging Lara's signature.

Coincidentally, Nikki and Jim both give Paul the same leaving present as he waits for his new foster family to arrive. He is reluctant to leave but Nikki comforts him, saying that she will visit him often. Keith is still pestering Claire and comes into reception to auction off all her things. She is so fed up with his interruptions that she tells him she is moving out. Nikki offers her Anna's old room.

Perks Of The Job is written by Emma Frost and directed by Gwennan Sage.

Episode Five – Flash In The Pan

New psychiatric liaison nurse Abs arrives and sets to work immediately. Later in the day, a second nurse, also called Abs, presents himself at reception. Tess is confused and resolves to discover the identity of the real nurse Abs. She finds out that a

psychiatric patient of the genuine Abs has stolen his identity and is trying to pass himself off as a nurse. Eventually, the situation is resolved as Abs proves himself with great professionalism. He even manages to win Tess's approval, despite emptying the store cupboard and claiming it as his office.

Claire is adamant that she and Keith are not a match made in heaven and firmly but politely explains to his mother that there will be no wedding. The problems in the relationship are made even more apparent as Keith bombards Claire with presents and asks her to marry him again. But she makes her answer very clear indeed.

Lara and Luke are attending a photo shoot for the launch of the RRU (Rapid Response Unit) when they are interrupted by a call out to a road accident. They disagree about how the situation should be handled but the decision is taken out of their hands when they are called to another incident. Lara is aggrieved at leaving the woman casualty but promises her that she will be safe in Josh's capable hands. But Lara is furious when Josh's decision appears to have caused more damage. Despite having just received divorce proceedings from Colette, Josh calms Lara down with his normal professionalism and explains his decision.

Comfort seeks help from Father Frank because she is still having difficulty coping and is questioning her faith. She is scared and angry and feels that her problems cannot be eased by his words and prayers. Later, when she sees Tally flirting with Simon and watches other staff laughing at a bar, she leaves in distress and is unable to pretend that everything is alright.

Back at reception, Bex is flattered to be asked to model by the RRU photographer. And a flirtatious exchange between Jim and Nikki reveals that the pair have chemistry.

Flash In The Pan is written by Jason Sutton and directed by Rob Bangura.