

ANYONE GOT ANY VERAS?

Ashes To Ashes

GENE HUNT, the politically incorrect, loud-mouthed and sexist DCI from the brilliant *Life On Mars*, was an unlikely cult figure. However, the combination of his winning personality, nifty turn of phrase ("you're surrounded by armed bastards!") and somewhat 'traditional' approach to policing helped to firmly establish him in the national consciousness.

Sam Tyler may have left our screens for good, but the 'guv' is back in *Ashes To Ashes*; it's 1981, he's moved to London and he's going show those southern ponces what proper policing is!

The "am I in a coma, am I dreaming, am I mad" set-up remains but this time it's Keeley Hawes (*Spooks*) as DI Alex Drake who's landed in the past. But Gene Hunt's reputation precedes him because Drake is a psychological profiler and having met the delusional Sam Tyler, she has prior knowledge of her new boss and his penchant for frequenting copper's subconscious after an accident.

The walls are closing in on DCI Hunt and his dusty old methods; not only does Gene now have a woman to deal with but the police are no longer seen as friendly coppers - they're resented by the communities they're trying to police. It's the year of the Brixton Riots, the Royal Wedding and the Docklands Development, and Thatcher is here to stay. With the Scarman Report just around the corner, the days are numbered for Hunt and his inimitable style.

Talking of style... Gawd help us; it's 1981 and there are speedboats, city dealers, guns, brothels, well-dressed criminals and New Romantics. Ray and Chris have donned Ray-Bans, bomber jackets and leather ties, and Gene (following the departure of Mrs Hunt) has bought himself a brand, spanking new red Audi Quattro, but their attitude is still the same - scum is scum wherever you are and they'll get results whichever way they can.

Go online to the TV section of the magazine website (address opposite) for behind the scenes info and interviews with the cast and crew.

Skins is back; making a welcome return with ten brand new episodes following the chaotic lives and lusts of that loveable group of spliff-head Bristol scamps.

It's been six months since Tony (Nicholas Hoult) suddenly met with the front end of a bus - remarkably he isn't dead, but he sure isn't the same person. As if waking up with a body that doesn't work properly isn't tough enough, getting back on top of things is even harder when your friends are all acting totally weird.

Sid (Mike Bailey) can't get his head around the fact that his best mate is a shadow of the man he's always looked up to. And to top it off, he finally got the girl, Cassie, only to see her whisked off to Scotland by her crazy parents. Sod's law. But to Cassie (Hannah Murray) it's totally okay because they'll email all the time and then one day she'll come back and they'll live happily ever after... wow... yeah... like totally!

Michelle (April Pearson) is lost without Tony too, and her Mum has gone and married yet another man - but this time there's a 'big-titted' step-sister involved who's intent on trying to make a move on her mates. Maxxie's (Mitch Hower) got hell at home too because his Dad (Bill Bailey) doesn't want him to follow his dream of being a dancer. Even Anwar (Dev Patel) has changed since he bagged himself a secret girlfriend called Sketch (Aimee-Ffion Edwards).

Her mates are mixed up, but Jal (Larissa Wilson) is throwing off the good girl image and letting her hair down. And what about pill-popping, teacher-shagging Chris (Joe Dempsie) - well getting expelled wasn't his finest hour - but now the party animal is stepping out on his own and starting to sort out his life out... what could possibly go wrong? And while all around is falling apart, it's Effy (Kaya Scodelario) who's taking control.

Series two features a host of new guest appearances, including Shane Richie, Bill Bailey and Josie Long. They'll join the ever-impressive list of returning guest stars including; Harry Enfield, Arabella Weir, Geoffrey Hughes, Josie Lawrence and Peter Capaldi.

E4 are understandably still grinning from ear-to-ear at the success of their home-grown 'yoof' drama. Head of the channel, Angela Jain says of the show; "Skins was always a brilliantly creative premise, written and performed by a remarkably talented (and young) writing and acting team, but still no-one quite anticipated the noise, enthusiasm and acclaim it would generate specifically amongst young people. *Skins* ended up being the most successful home-grown E4 commission ever; a channel-defining show that proved you can have a breakout drama hit on multichannel and one

So. It's been almost exactly a year since series one of *Skins* launched on E4. The first episode of the series attracted one of the biggest audiences ever seen on a digital channel and inspired reviews both damning (one) and glowing (the rest). Since then we've seen *Skins* grow into something entirely unexpected. We've watched the internet community expand into fan sites, forums, and Facebook groups. We've put on crazy parties, invited the fans along and filmed the results. We've been shown on Channel 4. We've released a soundtrack album, a calendar. We've

Changes needed to be made though. The creative team needed to be expanded. We had more shows to do this year (ten episodes), and we wanted to fully exploit our investment in new and emerging British talent.

This paid off in the shape Daniel Kaluuya, now 18, from Camden. He was quickly commissioned to write a script after spending a year in our writers group and has turned out episode eight, one of my favourites of the year. I'm pretty sure he's one of the youngest people, if not the

There are also a ton of new guest actors and comedians; Bill Bailey, Harry Enfield, Shane Richie, Sean Pertwee, Geoff Hughes, Mark Heap, John Thomson, Fiona Allen, Peter Capaldi, Josie Lawrence, Arabella Weir, Josie Long, Mark Monero and Kevin Eldon. We didn't ever dream we'd persuade such a talented bunch to join our show. And this series sees new directors including BAFTA award-winning

Skins Series 2 - An Introduction by Jamie Brittain, series co-creator and writer

seen the once-unknown stars of the show mobbed by fans. And we've been shown on television in France, Australia, Italy and Slovenia.

Not bad going for a low-budget show cooked up in my dad's kitchen. Now all we had to do was make the second series of *Skins* even bigger, even better. Pretty much as soon as series two was commissioned, co-creator Bryan Elsley and I were back in the office with the creative team, scribbling away on a white board. With a year's worth of experience, we knew we could match if not better the first series.

youngest, ever to have written an hour of television drama. Other additions included Sally Tatchell, a ferociously talented writer fresh from working on *The Bill*, and Lucy Kirkwood, a witty and sharp young playwright whose work is soon to be put on at the Bush Theatre. Both have written superb scripts for us this year.

They join myself, Ben Schiffer, Jack Thorne and Bryan Elsley to make up the core writing team behind *Skins*. We also have our brilliant young contributors, not to mention the comedians Josie Long and Robin Ince. In other words, one of the most diverse teams working in television drama.

Other changes this year are new cast member Aimee-Ffion Edwards, playing the mysterious and conflicted Sketch.

Charles Martin, and Harry Enfield who is making his television directing debut.

So. What is series two about? Well, there's arguments, make ups, make outs, violence, deaths, songs, rapping, music, dancing, drugs, sex, tears, smiles, laughter, posh kids, white kids, black kids, exam results, parents, relatives, holidays and Bill Bailey dancing with a dog. Sometimes light, sometimes dark, always funny, series two is ten hours of ambitious, emotionally-charged television drama that portrays the complex and vivid lives of a group of characters on the edge of adulthood, as they grow and develop.

It's been an immense amount of fun to make, and it will be even more fun to see how it is received by our much-loved fans who drive a very active and responsive online community, and those beyond.



that can establish a loyal and involved fan base online too."

Skins is written by a team of writers and young contributors, including Ben Schiffer (24), Lucy Kirkwood (23), Daniel Kaluuya (18) [who appears on-screen as 'Posh Kenneth'], Sally Tatchell (30, *The Bill*) and Jack

Thorne (28, *Shameless*) with co-creators Jamie Brittain (22) and Bryan Elsley (*The Young Person's Guide to Becoming a Rock Star*).