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Funland



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A disturbingly funny thriller written and created by Simon Ashdown and Jeremy Dyson

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Funland is the hotly-anticipated collaboration between Bafta Award-winning EastEnders writer **Simon Ashdown** and **Jeremy Dyson**, multiple award-winning writer of The League of Gentlemen.

Set in Blackpool, over one long weekend, Funland brings us to the black heart of Blackpool - bringing the saucy seaside postcard screaming into the 21st century.

Funland takes us on a mysterious journey where things are not quite what they seem.

There's Carter Krantz, played by newcomer **Daniel Mays**, who arrives in Blackpool to avenge the death of his mother. Without a penny to his name and carrying only a fragment of paper containing the words 'Ambrose Chapel', Carter tries to uncover the truth about his mother and in doing so is sucked into the most disturbing of mysteries.

He meets the dysfunctional Woolf family who are at the heart of everything that happens in Blackpool: there's Shirley Woolf (**Ian Puleston-Davies**), a borderline psycho; his mother, the evil and manipulative Mercy (**Judy Parfitt**); and his foolhardy wife Connie (**Frances Barber**).

Meanwhile the Suttons - Dudley (**Kris Marshall**) and Lola (**Sarah Smart**) - arrive in Blackpool for a dirty weekend to spice up their marriage, but their weekend at the Shangri-La guesthouse in Blackpool turns their world upside down and their lives will never be the same again.

"At the centre of the story is the Woolf family," explains Simon Ashdown, one half of the writing partnership.

"There is a lot of history to the family and they have their own storyline going on. Then there is Carter, who is a very dangerous and dark character with a mystery to solve; and the

Suttons, a very ordinary couple who are having problems with their marriage.

"The idea was to keep the three storylines very separate at first and then with each episode move the three storylines more and more together until they become completely entangled."

"I think you very much see things from Dudley and Lola's point of view," continues Jeremy Dyson.

"Funland is this bizarre and crazy mythical world with a larger-than-life set of characters. But Dudley and Lola are the most ordinary out of the characters and they show us the way into Blackpool.

"They come to Blackpool for the weekend, which is how most of us would experience Blackpool, so they become the easiest to empathise with."

There is a fantastic array of weird and wonderful characters in Funland, most of whom people would never hope to meet in everyday life.

There's the corrupt town Mayor, played by **Roy Barraclough**; Vienna Keen (**Beth Cordingly**), the enigmatic lapdancer; **Kevin Eldon** as the mysterious Shadowman; and **Philip Jackson** as the seedy Leo Finch, who runs the Shangri-La guesthouse.

"The idea is that you have this spectrum of characters where you go from the most seemingly ordinary, which is Dudley and Lola, to the most bizarre - which is probably Ambrose Chapfel, the repressed Dutch taxidermist, played by **Mark Gatiss**.

"I had been watching Mark in *Nighty Night* and thought he was fantastic in that and just perfect to play Ambrose," says Ashdown.

And for many of the actors, this involved taking on roles unlike anything that they had ever done before.

"In particular, I think Judy Parfitt playing Mercy feels so different because you have never seen her play a character like that," explains Ashdown.

"And so when you see her for the first time it really does feel like a big moment. And Kris Marshall gives a very brave and honest performance as Dudley because he had to do so many things that were quite humiliating, really, and he did it brilliantly."

The seaside town of Blackpool provides the perfect backdrop for Funland, and visiting the town again has brought back a lot of memories for Jeremy Dyson.

"I adore Blackpool! One of my earliest memories is being taken on a family holiday to Blackpool. I absolutely loved the place and have been back many times since," he reminisces.

"I think the world that Simon and I have created is very much a fictitious world which was inspired by Blackpool. We've created a mythical version of Blackpool which has one foot in the truth of the place and there was a great pleasure in taking a real place and creating a very heightened version of it."

For Simon and Jeremy, bringing the worlds of comedy and continuing drama together was an exciting prospect and a challenge that both couldn't wait to get started on.

"I think it's unusual for two writers who are both established in a particular field to be able to

then fuse with someone else," explains Dyson.

"I think when we first sat down together we both began quite nervously, like people who had been sent on a blind date or something - but in the beginning we talked and talked for hours and seemed to get on really well so the writing process seemed quite natural, really, and hopefully it gives the show a totally original feel.

"It was a very different experience to how I have worked before though. On *The League of Gentlemen* there were four of us writing and the other three are also the actors. Writing with the actors is very different to writing with another writer. And not knowing the cast in advance was all new to me too - basic stuff to most writers - so it was a big learning curve for me."

"And I'm not the kind of person that would normally write with another writer," adds Ashdown. "I think we got really lucky because we hardly had any creative disagreements at all.

"There certainly wasn't loads of ego in the room! If there was a difference of opinion then we would both argue our case and whoever had the best argument would win."

"I think what's interesting is there's a lot of overlap between the worlds of drama and comedy and Jeremy would quite often write the dramatic lines and I would write comic lines.

"Despite mainly working on drama series, I have always been interested in comedy and my first job was in comedy, writing scripts for John Cleese for a series of short films. I have definitely learnt a lot about comedy from sitting in the same room as Jeremy Dyson."

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Main cast

Daniel Mays

Carter Krantz, the charismatic young hero

Judy Parfitt

Mercy Woolf, the head of the Woolf family, a manipulative and powerful woman

Ian Puleston-Davies

Shirley Woolf, Mercy's son and a borderline psycho

Frances Barber

Connie Woolf, Shirley's third wife, strong-willed but a little foolhardy

Kenny Doughty

Liam Woolf, Shirley's son who is keen to impress his father but always seems to get it wrong

Emily Aston

Ruby Woolf, outrageous but lovable daughter of the Woolf family

Kris Marshall

Dudley Sutton, nice but dull, Dudley arrives in Blackpool to spice up his marriage

Sarah Smart

Lola Sutton, Dudley's wife who comes to Blackpool looking for some excitement but gets more than she bargained for!

Roy Barraclough

Rev. Onan Van Kneck, the Mayor

Philip Jackson

Leo Finch, runs the B&B

Brian Hibbard

Willy Woolf, Mercy's other son, the family joke

Jason Watkins

Bradley Stainer, ex-care-assistant turned glamour photographer

Paul Courtenay-Hyu

Bryan, obsequious manager of Mercy's lap-dancing club

Kevin Eldon

Shadowman, a melancholic mystery man

Beth Cordingly

Vienna Keen, enigmatic and beautiful lapdancer at Mercy's club

Ryan Pope

Chris Church, keen young cop, Ruby's ex-fiancé

Mark Gatiss

Ambrose Chapfel, the Dutch repressed taxidermist

Simon Greenall

Ken Cryer, embittered local journalist

Shaun Williamson

Cliff, photographer and one of Stainer's cronies



Daniel Mays plays Carter Krantz

Lives in: Crouch End in London.

Studied at: RADA.

What's he been in before? Played Sidney Drake in the Mike Leigh film, Vera Drake, and Max in the ITV drama Beneath the Skin.

Did you know? Daniel won Best Actor at the Palmare-Reims TV Festival for his role as Adam in the BBC TWO drama, Rehab, directed by Antonia Bird.

It's been a fantastic year for Daniel Mays, who has appeared in Vera Drake and co-stars with Robert Carlyle in an ITV drama later this year.

In Funland, Daniel takes on the lead role of Carter, a young man who arrives in Blackpool determined to avenge his mother's death and will stop at nothing until he finds the culprit.

"Right at the beginning of Funland, Carter's mum dies in his arms," explains Daniel. "Her last words were Ambrose Chapel, Blackpool and Danger and she also gives him a key. So he sets out on a voyage of self-discovery to find out who killed his mother and also to unravel the truth about his past.

"He hitch-hikes to Blackpool on a coach full of women on a hen do, who strip him so he arrives in Blackpool naked apart from the key and a scrap of paper containing the words Ambrose Chapel."

Having arrived in Blackpool, Carter doesn't know where to start to try and discover the truth. As he investigates the meaning of these two words, he is sucked into the most disturbing of mysteries and meets the intriguing array of characters who lie behind Blackpool's funhouse doors.

Convinced that Ambrose Chapel is a person, he tracks down a man with a very similar name called Ambrose Chapfel, a gay taxidermist played by The League of Gentlemen's Mark Gatiss.

"Carter takes what he wants out of any situation," says Daniel. "The scenes with Mark are really great because he tries to seduce Carter and Carter goes along with it for a little while - but then he suddenly changes and turns on Ambrose because, for all Carter knows, this is the man who murdered his mum."

In fact, Ambrose Chapel is a church which is now used as a nightclub called Sins, owned and

run by the infamous Woolf family.

"Carter very quickly gets involved with the Woolf family. He is sleeping with the daughter, Ruby (Emily Aston) and starts working for her grandmother Mercy (Judy Parfitt) and then Ruby's father Shirley (Ian Puleston-Davies), playing them both off against each other.

"There's a really good relationship between Shirley and Carter: they are strangers and yet there's a real element of them sizing each other up and there's something between them that they can't quite pick up on.

"They're really similar people, they've both got this silent rage in them and they're not complete as people."

But Carter is only after answers and information from all these people and he just uses them all to get what he wants.

"Carter can be this young, charismatic guy but there is another side to him, a more demonic and violent side. He's very instinctive and unpredictable. He's able to seduce people, scare people, please people and trick people at any given time. As an actor I have to decide when and where to reveal his true character.

"You see this very early on in episode one, shortly after he arrives in Blackpool," continues Daniel. "He needs to find some clothes and goes into this charity shop and in a perverse kind of way he comes on to these two old ladies who work there in order to steal money from the till to buy a new suit!"

Carter is a man on a mission and everyone that he meets is a suspect. As the series unfolds, he suspects everyone from Shirley Woolf to The Mayor and even Leo Finch of murdering his mother.

He can't trust anyone and he doesn't give too much away to anyone that he meets. The only exception to this is Lola, with whom there is a definite connection.

"Carter is a very closed-off person and as a result he's never really had a proper relationship with anyone. But when he meets Lola, there's a definite attraction there: she's the one character that he can empathise and identify with.

"He recognises that they are both stuck in this situation and are both victims, but he doesn't understand why Lola is putting herself through all of this; he doesn't understand why she doesn't just get up and leave."

All the time, Carter is having flashbacks where he is being pursued by two hitmen - so the pressure is on him to discover the truth.

"He's absolutely petrified - he can't show this fear, but deep down he is really scared and he will stop at nothing to get to the truth."

Daniel has clearly become very attached to his character.

"I have loved playing Carter," he enthuses. "I have really enjoyed trying to make him as different as possible. The writing is absolutely fantastic and the way that Simon and Jeremy have collaborated is amazing because you get the dark, twisted humour of The League of Gentlemen coupled with the narrative element of EastEnders.

"As soon as I read the script I couldn't say no!"

Daniel graduated from RADA in 2000 and hasn't looked back since as his career has gone

from strength to strength.

"I've really tried to take on a variety of TV, film and theatre roles," he explains.

"I have particularly enjoyed working with Mike Leigh on All or Nothing and Vera Drake; it's a totally different way of working and you get much more time to spend on the characters.

"In some ways you're more than just an actor - you become part-director, part-writer too and I would love to get involved in writing or directing one day, but we will have to wait and see."



Ian Puleston-Davies plays Shirley Woolf

Comes from: Flint in North Wales.

What's he been in before? BBC THREE drama Conviction.

Did you know? Ian wrote the ITV drama Dirty Filthy Love based on his own experiences of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Ian Puleston-Davies always seems to end up playing the bad guy - and Funland is no exception, as he takes on the role of Shirley Woolf, a reformed sex addict and a small-time Blackpool gangster.

"I have played some pretty horrible characters over the years," laughs Ian.

"I have played a few paedophiles and I was starting to think that I was listed under P for paedophile not Puleston-Davies!

"In Funland I play Shirley Woolf, who is a very mixed-up character. He's a very troubled man with a troubled, aggressive mind."

Shirley is caught in the middle of two formidable women, his wife Connie and his mother Mercy.

He is struggling to juggle the roles of loving family man and Blackpool hard man.

"He's trying his best to be the perfect husband and father," explains Ian. "But Shirley has had such a dysfunctional upbringing that I think he's incapable of feeling true love.

"He's addicted to sex and has been known to shag around, but he's trying to make out to Connie that all that is behind him and I think he genuinely does want to make a go of his marriage."

Shirley does try but his resolve is short-lived when the enigmatic lapdancer Vienna works her magic - and Mercy knows her son only too well and uses his weakness for her own gain.

"The relationship between Mercy and Shirley is very complex," says Ian.

"She is manipulative but she's not just doing it to be controlling. I think she is a very terrified soul as well - she needs her son and in fact they need each other. But Shirley is a puppet; he's completely controlled by Mercy.

"I think he's different to a lot of the other gangsters that you see in TV shows like The Sopranos, because for them it is just a day job and they can switch off and go home to their families - but for Shirley it's more complex than that because the lines are blurred."

Shirley is the hard man of Blackpool but this reputation is questioned when Carter arrives on the scene. Played by newcomer Daniel Mays, Carter arrives in Blackpool to avenge the death of his mother.

Carter doesn't know who to trust when he arrives in Blackpool but he finds himself entangled with the Woolf family, playing Shirley and Mercy off against each other.

When he notices distinct similarities between Shirley's tattoo and the mystery key that his mother gave him before she died, his suspicion increases.

"The relationship between Shirley and Carter is brilliant. We have this hugely suspicious, distrustful relationship. Shirley is curious about this kid who has been washed up on the shores of Blackpool and is asking too many questions.

"Normally Shirley would just knock this kid off, but he's compelled not to - something mysterious stops him. In normal situations he would be in the back of the boot and buried in concrete but for some reason he's not."

When he's not appearing in front of the camera, Ian is busy writing scripts of his own and earlier this year he had his first success.

Dirty Filthy Love is a largely autobiographical story, mirroring Ian's own struggle to deal with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

"It all exploded overnight, really. Dirty Filthy Love was such a personal story played out so brilliantly by Michael Sheen. A lot of my friends, when they watched it, said they could see aspects of me in Michael's portrayal - but it took me a few screenings before I could start watching the things on screen that were lifted directly from my own experiences."

Ian's next script is also based on personal experience, but of a very different kind.

"I'm working on something at the moment about two misfit farmer's sons. It's set in North Wales, where I come from, and the backdrop is the predicament of small farmers - because, as a farmer's son myself, the plight of small farming is something that's very close to me."

Ian is also working on another script with Jeff Pope with whom he co-wrote Dirty Filthy Love, and also on a comedy with his girlfriend Sue. And on the acting side he has just started filming a new drama with David Jason.

"I've suddenly become very busy on the acting side at the same time that my writing career has taken off. Sometimes it's difficult to find time for both but I'm certainly not complaining!" says Ian proudly.

"I think I've had the longest acting apprenticeship of anyone I know - and with the writing I'm still in my honeymoon period really, but I'm loving every minute."

Being an actor and a writer can be difficult at times and Ian has had cause to question the scripts for some of the roles he's played, but on Funland he has nothing but praise for the writers.

"I think Simon and Jeremy have really rolled up their sleeves on this: there is so much attention to detail. Sometimes, when I play a role, I find that my writer's head has to take a backseat - but on this both my writer's head and my actor's head have been nodding!"

And although Shirley Woolf isn't the nicest character in the world, there are some parts of him that Ian envies.

"Shirley drives a Rolls Royce Corniche and so I have spent many hours driving along the promenade in Blackpool dressed in a gold lamé suit and driving a Corniche. It's every actor's dream!"



Kris Marshall plays Dudley Sutton

Age: 32

Lives in: Windsor, Berkshire.

What's he been in before? My Family on BBC ONE and BBC THREE's My Life in Film.

Did you know? Kris was voted Best Comedy newcomer at the 2003 British Comedy Awards.

When Kris Marshall jetted off on holiday after accepting the role of hapless Dudley, little did he know that The Maldives would provide him with the perfect inspiration for the role.

"I met this guy, while I was on holiday, in the queue for my breakfast one morning!" laughs Kris. "He was wearing these awful sandals and long shorts and he just looked like a fish out of water.

"He had a bad razor rash and a bit of a pot belly and so I was stood in the queue trying to copy his gait and sticking my belly out when he turned round and caught me looking at him! But the guy was absolutely perfect and I decided to model Dudley on him.

"I was chatting to the costume designer and asked if he could get Dudley the same kind of sandals. Dudley has got no dress sense! His shorts are really badly cut and unflattering and he even tucks his shirt into his shorts. Never before have I worn shorts except on the beach, but in Funland I have spent most of the shoot in shorts!"

Dudley has been married to his wife Lola for three years and they arrive in Blackpool for a dirty weekend to spice up their sex life. Dudley has booked the B&B as a surprise and desperately wants everything to be perfect - but when they arrive at the Shangri-La it isn't quite what they were expecting.

"The Suttons are quite a naïve couple really and I think their first impression when they arrive at the B&B is abject horror!" explains Kris.

"Anyone else would have taken one look at the place and said 'We're not staying here' but Dudley lacks a bit of backbone when the chips are down. He's quite spineless really.

"So they decide to stay but that decision is the first of many bad decisions that Dudley makes that weekend. The Suttons try to make the best of things as Dudley doesn't want to let Lola down, but it doesn't end up being the weekend of fun that they had intended."

Dudley and Lola try not to let their insalubrious surroundings get in the way of their dirty

weekend and with the help of an appropriately placed bucket Dudley is able to excite his wife for the first time!

"The bucket scene is quite comical but also a very touching scene. I think Dudley is pleased that Lola is enjoying herself but it's also about his performance and him feeling like a real man. But then he messes it up as usual!"

The Suttons find themselves embarking on a rollercoaster journey into the dark side of Blackpool. Dudley joins a poker game with Leo Finch who runs the B&B and he quickly racks up a debt of thousands of pounds that he simply can't pay.

When Leo offers him a way out – the use of his wife and the debt will be cleared – Dudley reluctantly agrees.

"What starts out as some photography leads to Lola performing in a lapdancing club. When Lola starts dancing for the first time, Dudley is right behind her. Partly because he wants the debt to be paid off as quickly as possible, but also because he really enjoys watching her.

"He sees a side of her that he never knew existed and so there's a certain amount of excitement in it for him and it really turns him on."

Kris has been a big fan of one half of the Funland writing partnership, Jeremy Dyson, since The League of Gentlemen began - and has really enjoyed the challenge that working on Funland has provided. But his next role will take him back to the theatre.

"I'm a bit scared, to be honest, as I haven't been on stage for about six years. I'm doing a Molière play at The Almeida Theatre in London which I'm really looking forward to.

"TV can mean long hours but you never have to remember two hours of dialogue in one go, so it will be interesting to see whether my memory is still as good!"

And away from both the worlds of screen and stage, there is nothing Kris likes more than heading to the coast and going surfing.

"I'm not very good but I have been doing it for about five years now. I think you would have to do it every day to be any good. But I love the beach and I love the ocean and surfing is a really good way of keeping fit and cleaning out your system at the same time."



Sarah Smart plays Lola Sutton

Age: 28

Comes from: Birmingham.

What's she been in before? Sarah played moody teenager, Virginia, in *At Home with the Braithwaites* and has also appeared in the BBC dramas *Sparkhouse* and *Love Again*.

Did you know? Sarah's mum is a scriptwriter and has written for the BBC ONE drama, *Doctors*.

Sarah Smart is relishing playing the part of Lola, Dudley Sutton's wife, and she is feeling liberated at the prospect of taking her clothes off.

"I swear, after playing this part I can do anything," laughs Sarah.

"I feel invincible now! I've never done naked scenes before but because the script is so good it really doesn't bother me. I would never do it if it wasn't good work, but the nakedness really shows Lola's vulnerability. My mother won't recognise me when I've finished this shoot!"

Lola arrives in Blackpool with Dudley, her husband, hoping that a weekend away will spice up their sex life. But what happens while she's there changes her life forever, as Sarah explains.

"Lola is really straight, really shy; I think the best way to describe her is as a sexual anorexic - she's really uptight about sex. Dudley brings her to Blackpool for a romantic weekend but the guesthouse that they stay in isn't the nicest of places. They're trying to make the best of it but then Dudley loses a game of poker and it all goes completely wrong!"

After losing the poker game, Dudley can't pay his debt and Leo Finch, who runs the guesthouse, asks for the use of his wife instead. Dudley is forced to agree and Lola starts out doing a sexy photo shoot.

She does so well that she then agrees to do a guest spot at the lapdancing club in order to pay the debt off as quickly as possible.

"The lap-dancing scenes were quite scary to do as I had to do them in front of all the other cast and crew," explains Sarah.

"But it was fine in the end because it's the first time that Lola has ever done it so she doesn't really know what to do. Dudley tries to help her out by showing her the only dance that he knows – the Superman dance! And because she gets so nervous when she's on stage she

does revert to doing it because she doesn't know what else to do!

"But she's a survivor and she's very determined so she does get through it. She finds this inner strength which you can really see. She ends up thinking that all these guys are looking at her and finding her desirable and that kind of turns her on and opens up this door in her head.

"There are so many scenes where Lola could sink or she could swim but she always seems to go for the swim option."

Fortunately for Sarah, Lola isn't an experienced dancer and with all the action set over one weekend, there isn't much time for her to improve - so Sarah didn't have to do too much practice.

"I decided it was better to have fewer lessons rather than more! I did have a couple of lessons though and the girls who taught me were fantastic. It's a really good form of exercise and I was aching after my first lesson."

The prospect of pole-dancing and wearing skimpy clothes for the part did, however, provide Sarah with the motivation to get fit for the role - although this initial enthusiasm didn't last long!

"I'm naturally quite slim, so normally I can get away with it - but I decided that I had better get fitter for this role because of the pole-dancing.

"So, as soon as I got the part I started going to the gym but after a little while I got really lazy and decided not to bother. The whole thing about Lola is that she's not supposed to be perfect, she's a normal woman who just happened upon this crazy world."

And what a crazy world it is. Lola's journey sees her get involved with Shirley Woolf (Ian Puleston-Davies) which proves to be a mind-blowing experience; and Carter (Daniel Mays) with whom Lola has a real connection; Lola gets involved with things that she could never have previously imagined.

"Lola, Dudley and Carter are the outsiders really as they are all strangers to Blackpool. As Lola gets further embroiled in this world, the audience go with her. As Lola meets new people, so do the audience and they experience things with her.

"Lola goes on this great journey which really changes her as a person. She finds this whole other side to her that she didn't know she had and in the end she becomes a much stronger person. She has a real arc and that's a really nice role to play as an actor.

"You want to be able to tell a story - that's what acting is all about - and entertain people along the way. From that respect I think this has probably been my favourite job!"

Lola is a very different role to those that Sarah has done before. "I played Virginia in *At Home with the Braithwaites* - who was a moody teenager - and then a detective in *Murder Prevention*, when I had to learn how to use a gun... but Lola is such a sweet and innocent girl so she's quite a contrast."

Lola's innocence is shown very much through her costumes, particularly her shoes.

"All the costumes have been great and everyone looks totally different in their wigs and make-up. For Lola, the key thing is her shoes because they are the most innocent looking shoes - which really sums her up!"



Judy Parfitt plays Mercy Woolf

Comes from: Sheffield, but now lives in Sussex.

Studied at: RADA.

What's she been in before? Judy has starred in a number of films, plays and TV dramas including *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *The Jewel in the Crown*.

Did you know? Judy made her stage debut with *Fools Rush In* in 1954.

For Judy Parfitt, having spent the last twenty years playing queens, duchesses and aristocrats, she was surprised and delighted when she was offered the part of the evil, manipulative Mercy Woolf in BBC THREE's new disturbingly funny thriller, *Funland*.

"I always think casting against type is the most interesting thing to do," says Judy. "People don't take enough risks at the moment, but this was the most exciting script that I have read in many years and I was thrilled to be offered the part."

"The thing that is interesting about Mercy from an actress's point of view is that normally as an actress you draw on your own emotional experiences or people that you know, but with Mercy there was absolutely nothing about her that I could identify with."

"Mercy is totally ruthless: she will do anything to get what she wants and she is so detached from any sort of real emotion, if she does show any emotion then it is only in the hope of manipulating someone to do what she wants them to do!"

"She's totally different to me as I think I'm about as frightening as Minnie Mouse!"

Mercy is the head of the Woolf family, who are at the heart of *Funland*, and a very significant player in the Blackpool business world. She has a strained relationship with her son, Shirley, as Shirley finds himself caught between two very formidable women, his mother and his foolhardy wife, Connie.

"Mercy runs a lapdancing club in Blackpool but she also has ambitions to own Blackpool in the same way that the Mafia used to own Las Vegas. It's a world that I know nothing about, a world of sex, violence and bad language, so Mercy's behaviour really must reflect this world."

"Shirley is the one person that she feels anything for, but her relationship with Shirley is a deep and dark relationship and the reasons for that only really become apparent as the plot unravels."

"And then there's Shirley's wife Connie who really amuses Mercy! Connie does put up a fight but I think she knows she is fighting a losing battle. Connie is feisty and she's a worthy opponent but she simply isn't as clever as Mercy!"

Shirley's two children, Liam and Ruby, are also drawn into Mercy's scheming as she uses them to get what she wants. But this relationship couldn't be further removed from Judy's relationship with her own grandchildren.

"I have two grand-daughters," says Judy proudly. "One is aged three and one just a few weeks old. The three-year-old loves dancing and showing off and I think she may have a little bit of me in her!"

"She's so different to my son when he was a child; he was always very embarrassed by the fact that his mum and dad were famous and used to walk a couple of paces behind us whenever we were out anywhere!"

Funland was filmed in both Blackpool and Manchester and filming in Manchester has brought back a lot of good memories for Judy.

"I have always liked Manchester. It feels like home in many ways," she reminisces. "I filmed several shows in Manchester in the Seventies and Eighties and they were probably the happiest times of my life."

"I think the two highlights were probably Secret Orchards which was about this banana king who had a wife and three children on one side and a secret lover on the other side - and I played the mistress who was an extraordinary woman."

"And then, of course, there's The Jewel in the Crown - which I am incredibly proud of."



Frances Barber plays Connie Woolf

Lives in: London.

What's she been in before? Frances has appeared in the BBC ONE drama *Real Women* and more recently in *Where the Heart Is* on ITV.

Did you know? Frances will be making her pantomime debut this Christmas, playing alongside Ian McKellen at The Old Vic Theatre in London's West End.

The role of sexy but ageing Connie Woolf calls for Frances Barber to wear some incredible outfits.

"I'm certainly revealing more flesh than I intended to, that's for sure!" laughs Frances.

"We were filming one particular scene in Blackpool and I had to walk across the road in this completely see-through dress and there were lots of comments flying about from passers-by!

"But I think it's right for my character, Connie - the outfits that she wears are absolutely in tune with *Funland* because it's a heightened realism of how Connie would look."

Connie is Shirley Woolf's strong-willed wife and she will do anything to hold on to her man.

"Shirley is a sex addict and Connie knows he sleeps around," explains Frances. "She has to permanently look her best because she is insecure that he will disappear with a younger model. She's had her boobs done, her nails done, her hair highlighted... everything.

"Even sitting at home, she's in an extravagant outfit of stockings, suspenders, basque, feather boa, everything, to wait for Shirley to come home. I imagine she spends all day at the beauty salon, at the tanning salon and in the hairdressers'.

"It's an exhausting existence, but she knows she has to do it to hang on to her husband. You do see women like that, who are in their forties and dress like they're in their twenties. She's a footballer's wife 20 years on!"

Connie is tough, but not quite as tough as she first seems. "Connie appears to be quite hard-nosed, but she has a desperate side to her as well," explains Frances.

"She has been with Shirley for about 20 years and they genuinely do love each other. But she knows that if she loses Shirley, then she will lose everything."

Connie makes plans to escape Blackpool and the overwhelming influence of Shirley's mother,

Mercy, who she feels slightly threatened by.

"Connie's biggest fear is that Shirley will be persuaded by his mother to abandon her and so her sole concern is to get Shirley away from Mercy and to make a new life in Spain.

"I think Connie knows that Mercy is stronger than her: she can see that Mercy is a ruthless and callous character but although Connie recognises that Mercy is evil, she doesn't realise quite how evil she is until later in the series."

Connie and Mercy have several scenes together, which has given Frances the opportunity to realise a personal ambition: "It's been a massive thrill to work with Judy Parfitt, who plays Mercy, because I've been a fan of hers for years!" she says enthusiastically.

"It's also been fantastic to work on something that has such fabulous writing, which is very unusual and very different. If I wasn't in it, I'd be very jealous that I wasn't in it!"

Frances likens Funland to Twin Peaks because of the way the central character, Carter, leads viewers into the bizarre world that lurks behind Blackpool's funhouse doors.

"In Twin Peaks, Kyle MacLachlan's character took the viewers through this extraordinary sort of landscape of very curious characters doing odd things which they thought was perfectly normal - and I think that's exactly what Carter does.

"Carter comes in as an outsider and he takes the viewer into this sort of labyrinth of very bizarre occurrences and strange characters, like Ambrose Chapfel. But within that world, noone thinks it's particularly strange."



Mark Gatiss Plays Ambrose Chapfel

Comes from: Darlington, County Durham.

Studied at: Bretton Hall Drama College.

What's he been in before? Mark has written and appeared in *The League of Gentlemen* and more recently he has appeared in the BBC THREE comedy, *Nighty Night*.

When Mark was first asked whether he would be interested in taking on a role playing a repressed Dutch taxidermist, it was an offer that he couldn't refuse as it was a role that was never likely to crop up again!

"I remember when Jeremy first called me up and asked if I would be interested in playing this Dutch taxidermist and that immediately got my interest!" laughs Mark.

"I obviously know Jeremy from collaborating with him on *The League of Gentlemen* and he knows that grotesque characters are my speciality! But I had never done a Dutch accent before so I had to do some research.

"I knew Simon Greenall (who plays Ken Cryer in *Funland*) had played a Dutch character before so I talked to him and he gave me some really good advice."

And Mark was able to have quite a lot of input into Ambrose's appearance, although he was a little worried as to how far he could go.

"I didn't want to stick out like a sore thumb if the rest of the episode was very naturalistic," says Mark. "But I wanted him to have hair like Purdey from *The Avengers* and an Amish beard - he looks quite gnomish really.

"And then the costume designer created this fabulous denim smock with is absolutely stuffed full of these strange taxidermy instruments."

Ambrose Chapfel is a sexually repressed character who doesn't get many visitors to his shop, *Animal Magic*. So, when Carter, a good-looking young man, walks into the shop he can't quite believe his luck and quickly gets the wrong end of the stick!

"Ambrose thinks that Carter has something to do with his one and only sexual conquest when he was in London many years ago!" explains Mark. "But Carter is in fact sitting on this reservoir of anger because he thinks that Ambrose has something to do with his mother's murder. He almost flirts with Ambrose at first to get the info that he needs and then just turns on him."

But Carter soon realises that Ambrose's name is Chapfel not Chapel and that he has the wrong man! Their relationship then quickly takes a turn for the better.

"I think Ambrose and Carter really develop a mutual respect for each other, which is a bit sad really but also quite touching. Carter will come to Ambrose in his times of need and I think in some ways Ambrose is the only person that Carter actually trusts in the whole show.

"And I have had a great time with Danny Mays, who plays Carter - we have had a real laugh.

"There's a line in the first episode where Carter is trying to entice Ambrose to give him some information and he asks Ambrose to go for a drink and then I say in this Dutch accent – 'I don't know, maybe later,' which became a bit of a catchphrase amongst the crew!"

2005 is proving to be a busy year for Mark as, having just finished The League of Gentlemen film, he is also about to head off on a tour of The League of Gentlemen at the end of the year.

And earlier this year he took part in The Quatermass Experiment for BBC FOUR.

"It was a fantastic experience to do a live TV broadcast of a two-hour drama. I had never done anything like that before and it was really exhilarating.

"But I discovered, watching it back, that although I thought I was pretty nerveless when I did it, I found that I was rubbing my nose all the way through the piece! I think it was a completely subconscious thing because at the time I had no idea that I was doing it.

"And next up I will be playing Bamber Gascoigne in a new romantic comedy called Starter for Ten."



Beth Cordingly plays Vienna Keen

Age: 27

Lives in: Clapham, London.

What's she been in before? Beth has played PC Kerry Young in *The Bill* and Sara Warrington in *Family Affairs*.

Did you know? Beth's father is an expert in pirates and was a consultant on the film, *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Beth Cordingly spent over two years playing PC Kerry Young in *The Bill*, but now she has swapped the police uniform for false eyelashes, fake tan and platform heels in her latest role as a pole-dancer in *Funland*.

"I play Vienna Keen, who is a pole-dancer in a Blackpool nightclub," explains Beth. "She is a very cool character, very detached and very aloof, totally different to Kerry."

"Kerry was always very animated and wore her heart on her sleeve, whereas Vienna doesn't give anything away."

Playing a pole-dancer has been a huge challenge for Beth, not least because she had just a few weeks to learn all the tricks that Vienna has been performing since she was 14.

"I've had a few lessons and watched some pole-dancers perform at a club in London. I've learnt some of the spins that they do but the biggest thing that they taught me was not to be self-conscious about my body."

"I'm not a dancer and I'm not someone who feels naturally sexy, but my character has to look confident because she's been dancing for years."

"I've had to get used to walking around on set in just a bikini! The cast have all been really supportive, which helps, and the costume that I wear is amazing – false eyelashes, fake tan, hair extensions and amazing make-up, which all really helps me feel the part, and I don't feel like me at all!"

As well as all the pole-dancing lessons, Beth has spent a lot of time getting fit for the role.

"I've been trying to do exercise every other day. I do quite a lot of running and yoga already. I've got a personal trainer when I'm filming in Manchester - that's been good because he really pushes me. And when I'm at home in London I do a body pump class which is such a

brilliant way to start your weekend.

"I'm normally quite an anxious person but with doing so much exercise I'm feeling so much calmer and happier, it really makes a difference!"

And all this exercise will prove invaluable as Beth sets out on a trek to Cuba for Christmas to raise money for CLIC Sargent, the UK's leading children's cancer charity.

"CLIC is such an amazing charity and I'm really pleased to be able to get involved and help raise funds to help children suffering from cancer, and their families.

"Each and every day, children with cancer are fighting their own challenge, overcoming the stresses and strains of their treatment. This challenge will give me the chance to escape the commercialism of Christmas and make a real difference to help these children."

The other challenge in taking on the role of Vienna has been the accent. With Vienna being born and bred in Blackpool, Beth has had to get to grips with the Lancashire accent - but fortunately help was at hand!

"It's been interesting having a go at the Blackpool accent! Fortunately, Emily Aston, who plays Ruby, is from Lancashire so she has been giving me some tips - but I will let the people in Blackpool be the judge!"

And although pole-dancing has proved to be a fantastic way to keep fit, there is a downside!

"My knees are absolutely covered in bruises," laughs Beth. "With all the rolling around on the floor that you have to do, I have got loads of bruises on my knees and legs so I look like an eight-year-old child!"



Roy Barraclough plays The Mayor, Reverend Onan Van Kneck

Comes from: Roy was born in Preston.

What's he been in before? Roy played Alec Gilroy in Coronation Street and has recently appeared in Holby City and Last Of The Summer Wine.

Did you know? Roy has had the honour of switching on the Blackpool Illuminations and there is even a waxwork model of him in Tussauds in Blackpool.

During the filming for Funland, Roy was hoping to be able to keep a low profile: "I wear a toupé for this part and I thought no-one would recognise me. But the first time I stepped out onto Blackpool promenade somebody said, 'Hello Alec!'"

"So I was recognised straight away! I couldn't fool anybody!" he laughs.

Roy plays the Mayor of Blackpool, the Reverend Onan Van Kneck.

"He's running his mayoral campaign to clean up Blackpool, but underneath it all he's as corrupt as all hell!" explains Roy.

"He's a fun character to play because all his schemes always come to nothing and he's just made to look an absolute fool! He's very pompous and full of his own self-importance which makes it very funny when things go wrong for him."

Along with the rest of Blackpool, the Mayor is controlled by the evil Mercy Woolf, played by Judy Parfitt.

"Mercy is there the whole time to block him. He's in her power because she finances all his campaigns and so she rules him completely, although he likes to think he can stand up to her, but it never works. All his best laid plans come asunder!"

A comedy veteran, it's not the first time that Roy has been a part of a show which features a disturbing sense of humour.

"I think there's almost a comedy postcard humour in Funland. I remember when Les Dawson and I first started in the Seventies, we did some very extraordinary sketches that were quite surreal and really quite ahead of their time."

Roy has had countless stage, radio and television roles, but is probably best known for his role in Coronation Street, playing the scheming Alec Gilroy.

"There are lots of similarities between the Mayor and Alec because Alec never got his own way and always got his come-uppance. Alec was also slightly pompous and full of himself.

"But I think there's a nastier streak to the Mayor than there was to Alec. I don't mind playing nasty characters at all! At the end of the day the audience gets to laugh at the Mayor, although you know he'll stop at nothing to get to get his plans pushed through."

Roy is delighted to be back on home territory with Funland, having filmed in Manchester and Blackpool.

"I was born in Preston, so Blackpool was very local and as a kid I used to pop to Blackpool all the time. I used to love all those rides on the Pleasure Beach."

And Roy has had a chance to relive that experience whilst filming Funland.

"Mercy drags the Mayor onto the Big Dipper at the crack of dawn to put pressure on him to grant her certain licences which she needs. It's such a noisy clattering old thing and you get thrown about a lot, so I was a bit bruised when I came off!"

At the age of 70, Roy is not slowing down. "It's lovely when the work keeps coming in! When you leave something like Coronation Street, you wonder whether you will work again!

"But the last couple of years have been busy! Last year I worked on a BBC ONE drama called A Thing Called Love and earlier this year I was in Holby City.

"And then at Christmas I'll be going back to theatre to play Santa Claus in Santa Claus - The Musical at the Mayflower Theatre in Southampton, which I'm really looking forward to."



Emily Aston plays Ruby Woolf

Age: 23

Lives in: Originally from Bacup in Lancashire, Emily now lives in London.

What's she been in before? Emily was Bafta-nominated for Best Television Actress for her role in *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* when she was just seven years old. More recently, she has appeared in the BBC THREE drama *Conviction*.

Did you know? Emily's little brother Sam plays Chesney Brown in *Coronation Street*. Emily has also appeared as a regular in *Coronation Street*, as has her brother Joseph. Emily is one of nine children!

Emily was dreading the start of filming on *Funland* because there is one thing about Blackpool which terrifies her: "I hate fairground rides - it's a big phobia of mine, in fact it's my worst fear.

"I was dreading it in case there was a scene where Ruby has to go on a ride. I was praying that they wouldn't put me on the Big Dipper! I wouldn't be able to cope, I would be sick everywhere!"

Emily plays Ruby, the outrageous but loveable daughter of the Woolfs, a notorious Blackpool family.

"The brilliant thing about Ruby is she's got front. She is a strong character who tells it like it is, but underneath, she's actually quite vulnerable. She's conscious of her weight, she's just longing to be with someone and she doesn't like being on her own.

"Ruby hasn't really ventured out of Blackpool - she knows everyone in town and has probably slept with most of them! She just loves being in relationships and wants to be married to everybody. She falls in love within two minutes of meeting a guy, as you see with Carter. She decides that she loves him within half an hour of meeting him."

At the start of *Funland*, Ruby is engaged to the local policeman, Chris Church, played by Ryan Pope - who appeared in the BBC THREE comedy, *Ideal*.

"She's totally fickle," explains Emily. "She goes from Chris Church to Carter and back to Chris Church. It's wedding on, wedding off, wedding back on!"

Emily, however, has been dating her boyfriend, MC Nicholas Gallante, for over a year but she admits to being a little bit like Ruby in other ways.

"We both have a very dry sense of humour. And sometimes I don't mean to say something out loud but then I've said it and it's too late! There is the odd thing that Ruby says that I would say too.

"During the lunch break, other cast members have told me to come out of character!"

Like her brother Sam Aston, who plays Chesney in Coronation Street, Emily started acting at a very young age.

"I started when I was seven and I'm 23 now, so I've been acting for 16 years! That makes me sound like I should be 60!

"I was discovered by the BBC when they were casting for Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit. They came to my primary school but we didn't think much of it at the time. Then I was short-listed and had to go to Manchester to read the script.

"I didn't even know what a script was! I ended up getting the part, which was fantastic. I was so lucky - if I had been off school that day then I probably wouldn't be here now."



Kenny Doughty plays Liam Woolf

Age: 30

Lives in: Originally from Barnsley, South Yorkshire, Kenny now lives in London.

What's he been in before? Kenny's television credits include BBC ONE's *The Canterbury Tales* (*The Miller's Tale*) and *Servants*. Kenny will soon be seen on the big screen in *My First Wedding*, *The Aryan Couple* and *The Great Raid*.

Did you know? Kenny has a mysterious benefactor who paid for his drama school training.

Kenny Doughty plays the dim-witted Liam Woolf, who is more interested in music than in the violent world which his dad Shirley inhabits.

"All Liam wants in life is to be a band manager and he's obsessed with the late Eighties and early Nineties Manchester music scene," explains Kenny.

"He completely models himself on The Stone Roses, The Happy Mondays and Oasis. Liam's got great taste in music! Playing this role, I've had to rediscover Manchester music, which has been brilliant!

"The background to Liam is that he's just spent some time in Manchester, after his grandma Mercy gave him some money to start a band, but he blew it all on drugs.

"So Shirley brought him back to Blackpool and is now trying to make a man of him by sending him to collect protection money."

But Liam shows his incompetence yet again.

"Rather than getting the money that he's owed, he gets fobbed off with taking the shop owner's cat as collateral!" laughs Kenny.

Without meaning to, hapless Liam stirs up old family tensions in the Woolf family, reigniting the power struggle between his dad Shirley and his grandmother Mercy.

"Liam is not supposed to see Mercy, but he approaches her for more money to start a band and that kicks off the family feud again. Liam's quite selfish because he crosses the line. His dad categorically says to him 'No spliff, no women and don't see Mercy' and he does all three within five minutes.

"As soon as he gets out of the house, he's forgotten what his dad has told him.

"Everyone in Blackpool is terrified of Shirley, apart from Liam, who is too simple to see what's going on - or he turns a blind eye to the violence. He immerses himself in his music as much as he can and tries not to get involved in all the ins and outs of what his dad and his stepmum Connie get up to."

Kenny finds it difficult to sum up the strange world of Funland.

"It's probably one of the most unique, original scripts I've read for a long time. The characters are real and yet they're really heightened. Every time Carter picks up a stone, he uncovers another world."

Kenny had always wanted to be an actor, but was never allowed to believe that he could choose acting as a career.

"At school I was always told I couldn't be an actor. When I was 16, I went to Manchester Youth Theatre, which is run by professional directors, and they said that although it might not be easy, acting didn't have to be just a hobby. I got into drama school but I didn't have the money to pay the fees."

Kenny wrote to a number of charities and movie stars looking for financial help to get him through his training, but it was a chance meeting which helped him to realize his dream.

A wealthy anonymous American, whom Kenny got chatting to at Hardwick Hall in Chesterfield, went on to support his training at The Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

With three films due out on the big screen in the near future, Kenny's not resting on his laurels.

"I star alongside my girlfriend Caroline in a new thriller called The Aryan Couple and then in My First Wedding we also appear together - she plays my sister which is a bit weird because she is the one who helps me get the girl!

"I'm also planning to direct my own short film, so I've been doing a lot of research into that. With directing, there's so much pressure and so much to think about, it's a lot easier being an actor!"

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Press
Packs

Funland



Production credits

Writers/Associate Producers

Simon Ashdown and Jeremy Dyson

Directors

Dearbhla Walsh (eps 1 and 2), Susan Tully (eps 3 and 4), Brian Kirk (eps 5 and 6)

Producer

Sanne Wohlenberg

Executive Producer

Kenton Allen for BBC THREE Comedy

Development Producer

Gabbie Asher

Production Executive

Claire Asbury

Editors

Tony Cranstoun (eps 1 and 2), Emer Reynolds (eps 3 and 4), Mark Elliot (eps 5 and 6)

Script Editor

Louisa Hopgood

Director of Photography

Lukas Strebel

Production Designer

Chris Wilkinson

Casting Director

Rachel Freck

Composer

David Hughes

Costume Designer

John Krausa

Hair and Make-Up Designer

Janet Horsfield

Funland is produced by BBC Comedy - North, which was launched in October 2003 with a brief to develop and nurture the next generation of comedy talent in the North of England.

As well as Funland, BBC THREE has also commissioned BBC Comedy - North to turn the recent pilot of **I'm With Stupid** into a series which will go into production later this year.

And a second of series of **Ideal** started filming earlier this month.

Two new comedy pilots for BBC THREE will also go into production later this year.