



ADULT ENTERTAINMENT



Left: Hayley Squires stars as veteran porn star Jolene Dollar.

The creators and star of Channel 4's celebrated porn drama *Adult Material* on pulling off one of the year's riskiest shows

WORDS ELIZABETH AUBREY

Lucy Kirkwood [writer]: It was impossibly hard to get this made: it took nine years to [get a] commission. I was continually surprised by how wary people still were of the subject matter. We were adamant we were making a serious, high-minded drama that's not about being salacious or provocative for the sake of it, but the topic still has this radioactive glow.

Hayley Squires [actor]: Lucy was trying to find the right home for it where they weren't afraid of the content. It feels like there was finally a shift with conversations over the last few years: #MeToo, the way women are under-represented on screen, the idea of women being able to own and tell their sexual stories.

Dawn Shadforth [director]: There's not that many scenes of pornography in *Adult Material*. Part of the approach was for our show not to have any of the tropes of porn. We were always

looking for a camera position that didn't objectify, that didn't feel pornographic.

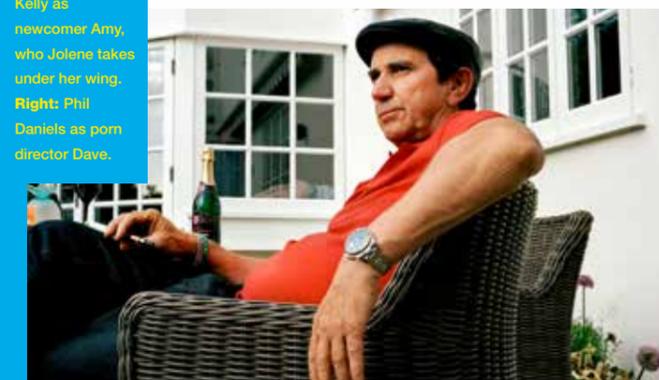
Squires: Dawn and I had spoken at length before we started shooting about the idea of inverting the male gaze, and not just for the porn moments — but to the more personal moments that you see, like when Jolene is having the urine test.

Shadforth: A lot of the time in porn, you get a sense of the camera being held from the point of view of someone. It was very intentional that we decided to shoot mostly with static cameras and not hand-held; to be a certain distance from our performers, to create a grammar that felt very unintrusive.

Shadforth: We made our approach of shooting as uncomplicated as possible, using natural light, a locked-off camera and being very simple with our coverage. There are only three scenes shot



Above: Siena Kelly as newcomer Amy, who Jolene takes under her wing. Right: Phil Daniels as porn director Dave.



with a handheld camera and these are the moments where Jolene is emotionally exposed. **Squires:** In episodes 3 and 4, [Jolene] spends a great deal of time on her own and falling into addiction and alcoholism. The scene where she's passed out on the floor of the kitchen, where she's alone, getting lost in her mind, they were difficult to film.

Kirkwood: The scene a lot of people find the most shocking in episode 1 is Jolene's bad parenting. It's a horrific moment, but it's not the worst thing that happens in that episode. It's pretty unequivocal that [Amy] has suffered horrific abuse, but it wasn't the talking point. There's still a double standard. Amy behaves in really dark, antisocial ways but she doesn't present as someone who is vulnerable and needs help: in fact, she actively rejects it. To me, it was really important to present a truthful representation of a victim.

Shadforth: I used zooms to help create this idea of claustrophobia, especially in the final scenes with Jolene and Tom. Films like *The Headless Woman*, *A Woman Under The Influence* were big references. You could just feel this pressure of moment slowly closing in [on] Jolene.

Kirkwood: [Tom] is yet to have his reckoning, and perhaps it will never come. There's still abusive men out there. I do believe what Jolene says: I think when we see people who've done wrong, we have a duty to say, "Do you understand what you did [was wrong]?" That was a moment to suggest a mode for a constructive #MeToo conversation.

Shadforth: We used contra-zoom at the end as she's about to walk into the scene with Tom. It was Lucy's idea to cut to black afterwards.

Kirkwood: That final scene was important to signal how Jolene was returning to porn with a much greater sense of her own boundaries and of what consent was, is and should be.

Squires: We have so many conversations about porn and its effects on teenagers, and parents not understanding how to speak to their children about consent. I think that's why the first scene with Phoebe and Jolene was powerful: I know it had quite a reaction. I was glad there's a moment in episode 4 where it comes full circle and you realise [Jolene] understands: Phoebe's been able to teach her mother something.

Kirkwood: [Jolene's] not doing the thing that we, as middle-class viewers sitting at home, really want her to do, to leave porn. She's gone back on slightly different terms, but it felt really important to reward her and not punish her.

Shadforth: I think what Lucy did amazingly is to look at the idea of consent in the domain where it is the hardest to define. That was the challenge, and also to create this journey from porn to sex.

Squires: You begin with a fake version of sex and end with the realest one possible.

ADULT MATERIAL IS AVAILABLE ON ALL 4



Director Georgi Banks-Davies on how she created an authentic masturbation episode of *I Hate Suzie*

WORDS HANNA FLINT

I HATE SUZIE, created by Billie Piper and writer Lucy Prebble, follows Piper's Suzie Pickle, a flighty, co-dependent actress whose life gets upended when compromising photos of her and a man who is not her husband are published online by phone hackers. As the threads of anxiety and stress begin to pull apart the fabric of her professional and personal existence, Suzie goes through a journey of self-discovery over eight episodes entitled 'Shock', 'Denial', 'Fear', 'Shame', 'Bargaining', 'Guilt', 'Anger' and 'Acceptance'.

It was a golden rule of the series that each episode would be delivered from Suzie's singular emotional perspective, but director Georgi Banks-Davies says that each one was "designed differently for each emotion". Episode 1, 'Shock', for example, has a claustrophobic feel to convey Suzie's world caving in after the release of these explicit photos, but the fourth episode 'Shame' might just be the series stand-out. It's a 'Masturbation *Inception*', as it were, which explores the manifestation of Suzie's complicated sexual desires.

"If I showed you the reference book for that episode, it's massive, because our imaginations are massive," says Banks-Davies. "There was a lot of research into what masturbation looks like. We're so used to seeing the cis, straight male perspective and a lot of the episode is challenging that."

Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind inspired this interior instalment set mainly within the confines of Suzie's bedroom and her

imagination. "I wanted this sense where what's real and what's not is quite seamless even though, dramatically, it is clearly a fantasy, but the way in which we manoeuvre, it feels like a tunnel in your mind."

Reality, fantasy and memory were the states Banks-Davies wanted *Suzie* to traverse between, and each environment had its own technical rulebook. "We shot on more vintage lenses for the fantasy and the colour grade shifted around in memory," she explains. But it was vital for the director that no matter how abstract the direction Suzie's mind took her, the narrative was always coherent. "The challenge was how do we concretise it, so it doesn't just become a giant mess," Banks-Davies says. "A certain amount of that is done in the edit, but equally it went back to this core idea that we're on the bed and there is always a linear through-line [to it]."

Storyboards were used, but the director left room for movement on set to "work things out" in the moment. And it was deliberately designed to be unsexy to reflect both the shame-themed storylines. "I didn't want to create a masturbation episode for people to wank over," the director says. "You've got one woman grappling with what she finds sexy juxtaposed with another woman being sexually assaulted on a train. It was a difficult episode to edit and it took some time to find itself because it is so unique, but Lucy's writing was genius."

I HATE SUZIE IS AVAILABLE ON SKY ATLANTIC AND NOW TV