



FINDING ALICE

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ALL-STAR CAST JOINS KEELEY HAWES IN NEW SIX PART DRAMA *FINDING ALICE*

An all star line up joins award-winning actress Keeley Hawes in ITV's new contemporary drama *Finding Alice*. The six-part drama created by Roger Goldby, Keeley Hawes and Simon Nye, and written by Roger and Simon focuses on Alice's honest, raw, blackly comic journey of grief, love and life after the death of her husband Harry.

BAFTA-nominated Hawes (*Honour, The Durrells, Bodyguard, Line of Duty*) plays the role of Alice, and is joined by a star-studded cast including Joanna Lumley (*Gangster Granny, Absolutely Fabulous*) and Nigel Havers (*Benidorm, Coronation Street*) as Alice's parents Sarah and Roger, and Jason Merrells (*Agatha Raisin, Safe House*) as her husband Harry.

Also joining the cast are Gemma Jones (*Gentleman Jack, Unforgotten*) and Kenneth Cranham (*Hatton Garden, Bancroft*) as Minnie and Gerry, Alice's in-laws. Alongside the core cast is rising star Isabella Pappas (*Paranoid*) as Alice and Harry's 16-year-old daughter Charlotte, Sharon Rooney (*The Capture, No Offence*) as Harry's sister Nicola and Rhashan Stone (*Keeping Faith, Agatha Raisin*) as mortuary worker Nathan Johnston.

For Alice (Keeley Hawes), Harry (Jason Merrells) and their daughter (Isabella Pappas), Charlotte, moving into their new home should have been a dream come true. But it quickly turns into a nightmare when Alice discovers Harry dead at the bottom of the stairs. Harry designed the smart house, so it's weird and wonderful, and one more disorientation for Alice on top of her sense of loss and abandonment.

Alice's beloved partner is no more, and now she can't find the fridge. Family should be a source of comfort, but Harry's parents, Minnie (Gemma Jones) and Gerry (Kenneth Cranham), keep popping round uninvited. Whilst Alice's own parents, Roger (Nigel Havers) and Sarah (Joanna Lumley), only seem to add to her list of problems. With Harry gone and Alice struggling to cope, Charlotte is forced to bottle up her grief and be the responsible one. Especially when the police turn up asking questions about the night that Harry died.

To make matters worse, more unexpected visitors start knocking on Alice's door, and she begins to realise that Harry's business debt wasn't the only secret he kept hidden from her.

Directed by Roger Goldby the series has been produced by RED Production Company (a STUDIOCANAL company) in association with Bright Pictures TV, Buddy Club Productions and Genial Productions.

Nicola Shindler, executive producer added; *"To have such a strong calibre of actors join the cast alongside Keeley to breathe life into these complex characters is incredibly exciting, and I look forward to audiences meeting them."*

Finding Alice will be internationally distributed by StudioCanal.

Character biographies

Alice Dillon played by Keeley Hawes

Alice has never been a very practical person. She's brought her daughter Charlotte up to believe that life is beautiful and to be enjoyed; the boring bits like money and house maintenance will take care of themselves. Except now she's not so sure. In recent years she's been working part-time at a bridal shop. Alice is the first to admit that she's not great at the job - she's too honest, chaotic and interested in her clients to keep it "professional"- but the people skills will come in handy when Harry's sudden death kicks up a storm of secrets, debt and suspicion, which Alice will be forced to confront in order to survive.

Harry Walsh played by Jason Merrells

Harry was Mr Charisma, a working-class boy made seemingly good. Brilliant at making and fixing things, hands-on, the money-maker, while Alice was the creative one. Harry was so proud of and devoted to Alice. He wanted his family to have a special house, so he designed them one, a bit flash but fun. Harry, so passionate and sure of himself, was Alice's rock. When in reality Harry had become a screw-up, but increasingly adept at covering it up. A successful builder, he had moved into property development, where the real money was to be made. And, it turns out, lost.

Charlotte Walsh played by Isabella Pappas

Charlotte is bright, beautiful and funny, the perfect mix of Alice and Harry. Growing up as an only child never bothered her before. To Charlotte, Harry and Alice were more than parents, they were her best friends. Everything changes when their team of three becomes two and Charlotte quickly realises that being an only child isn't all it's cracked up to be. With Harry gone and Alice struggling to cope, Charlotte is forced to bottle up her grief and be the responsible one. But with Charlotte busy looking out for Alice, who's looking after Charlotte?

Sarah Dillon played by Joanna Lumley

Sarah is blunt and prickly. She believes she was destined for better things and can't help placing all the blame on Roger. Once a glamorous model, she had big dreams of fame and, most importantly, fortune. When they first met, Roger was an ambitious law student, but now Sarah finds herself stuck in a strained marriage with an oversensitive small-town solicitor. She does love Roger; she's just forgotten why. And she can't help but feel cheated, like she's wasted her best years on a lost cause. Sarah might disagree with a lot of Alice's decisions, but she'll stop at nothing to save her daughter from suffering the same fate as her. Afterall... she's only being honest.

Character biographies

Roger Dillon played by Nigel Havers

Roger is mild and needy. Ultimately Roger feels like he's a failure. Sarah's called him one so many times he's started to believe it, and he'd much rather keep the peace than cause a fight, even if it means putting up with her insulting behaviour. All Roger really needs is a project to stop him feeling worthless. But when Alice turns to her father for legal advice, Roger begins to feel like he's bitten off more than he can chew. Is Roger capable of stepping up for his daughter and standing up to his wife...? Or was Sarah right about him after all?

Minnie Walsh played by Gemma Jones

Minnie is sweet and pathologically 'helpful'. Minnie is devastated by the loss of her only son and now finds herself conflicted. She wants to be the supportive grandma for Charlotte and a good friend to Alice, but Gerry's been hurt by debt in the past and Minnie's scared of going backwards. Minnie's nerves will be put to the test as Gerry and Alice continue to butt heads over the mess that Harry left behind. While Minnie might seem like the quiet one in the family, in order to keep the peace Harry's dear mum will need to find strength she never knew she had.

Gerry Walsh played by Kenneth Cranham

Although Gerry might appear to be a stubborn pragmatist, in truth he's neurotic, terrified of history repeating itself. Just like Harry, Gerry tried to move from being a builder to a developer. But when his business crashed and burned, it left Gerry and his family in a difficult financial bind. Now Gerry's determined to put a brave face on his grief and protect himself from debt at any cost. Gerry might believe that he's acting in his family's best interests but the more he pushes, the more he risks tearing his family apart.

Nicola Walsh played by Sharon Rooney

Harry's younger sister Nicola is a mass of uncontrolled energy, with a frustrating habit of blurting out the wrong thing at the wrong time. In their parents' eyes, Harry was the golden boy who could do no wrong, whereas Nicola's life has been a series of disasters. Although she works hard to be the 'fun one', the unexpected death of her big brother sends Nicola spinning. Without Harry around as her safety net, Nicola is forced to look at her life and learn how to stand on her own two feet. But will Nicola's parents ever take her seriously?

Character biographies

Tanvi Lal played by Ayesha Dharker

Tanvi is smart, tough and practical. She too comes from a family of builder-developers and Tanvi has more to prove to her family than most. Only recently back in town, Tanvi is fiercely protective of her private life and prefers to keep her cards close to her chest. Although she claims to be an accountant, it's clear that Tanvi knows more about Harry's business than she'll admit to Alice. Tanvi may think she's in control of the situation but underestimating Alice could be her downfall.

Nathan Johnston played by Rhashan Stone

Alice meets mortuary worker Nathan when she goes to say her final goodbyes to Harry's body. Whilst she's initially shocked by his blunt attitude towards death, Alice soon realises that Nathan has a deeply personal understanding of how it feels to lose someone you love. Nathan has made it his mission to make death less destructive for others, and soon becomes Alice's 'Death Guru'. As their friendship develops, Nathan turns out to be a tower of strength for Alice in her time of need.

Graham Napely played by Graeme Hawley

Alice first meets friendly accountant Graham at Nathan's bereavement group. Having lost his wife a year ago, Graham is trying to learn how to cope as a single parent and do his best for his young son. Graham is good looking, single and keen to get back on the dating scene. He soon develops a soft spot for Alice, but as Graham's feelings grow stronger, he becomes less caring, more insistent, and runs the risk of pushing Alice away altogether.

Yasmina Dunne played by Dominique Moore

Yasmina is kind and genuine but not to be underestimated. Before Harry died, Yasmina really enjoyed her job as his assistant. Despite his flaws, Harry was a great boss and always looked out for Yasmina. Now someone new is in charge and suddenly it feels like the rug has been pulled out from underneath her. A natural born people-pleaser, Yasmina goes out of her way to help Alice and Charlotte and they soon become good friends. But as she blurs personal and professional lines, Yasmina's well-meaning efforts to help Harry's family could come at a price to herself.

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye

Creators, writers, executive producers and (Roger) director

Q: Had you worked together before *Finding Alice*?

SN: “I wrote *The Durrells* and was blessed with Roger Goldby directing in three of the four series. We forged a creative relationship and a friendship. Roger has better ideas than me, so he has since brought me projects we might want to work on. He’s a brilliant director and we’ve had a great time working together again. I knew he’d written too so we wrote this together. I like working on my own, but it’s been pretty joyful collaboration.”

Q: How did *Finding Alice* originate and come to the screen?

RG: “I was toying with how to tell a story about what happens to us when we die. Is heaven or hell the memory/legacy we leave behind? Then I just came around to grief. It seemed such a simple notion that touches everybody. And that it was the way to tell a story. To look at the person who is left behind and the effect of the death on that person and the memory and all the rest of it through grief. Something that touches us all yet still something of a taboo to discuss and confront openly.

“Simon, Keeley and I all met for the first time and all got on really well on *The Durrells*. Making that series was such a brilliant experience, so it seemed obvious - why not a woman whose husband has died and Keeley would be perfect. I took the idea to Simon first and he liked the notion. Then we took it to Keeley and thankfully she did too! It went from there. Then we went to Nicola Shindler at Red Production Company whom we all greatly admired and knew wanted to work with Keeley and hopefully us!”

SN: “We all brought our own bereavement stories. It’s a lucky person, especially when you get to my age, who hasn’t experienced loved ones dying. We deal specifically with a sudden unexpected death when you are caught unprepared. Harry in *Finding Alice* leaves behind a mess - financial, emotional and more. Hopefully the show is a rich blend of our ideas, all feeding in.

RG: “We all share a very similar sensibility in terms of our humour. None of us wanted to tell a miserable story. We wanted to tell something that was truthful and didn’t shy away from anything, but also a story that had a sense of hope and warmth. Also focusing on the humour that naturally is right next door to death, pain and loss. There are laughs, warmth and humour right next to all of that.”

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye continued:

SN: “It’s a naturalistic story, life with the boring bits taken out. I do get frustrated sometimes with television, that it doesn’t hit that middle ground of human life - comedy, tragedy, the normal with the occasionally extraordinary. Even after a death, most of us are programmed to seek the light. When Alice falters in that, we hope showing her moments of despair will make for cathartic viewing. Most TV deaths are murders - Harry’s death is almost banal by comparison, but I think all the more interesting for it.

“Keeley, along with other cast members like Joanna Lumley and Nigel Havers, are really good at conveying our underlying need for buoyancy in the face of what is going on around us. Alice thrashes around in search of peace, saying and doing wildly inappropriate things. She can’t stop herself. Her daughter Charlotte wishes her mother would behave more normally but Alice has lost her bearings, the human condition suddenly seems anything but normal to her.

“*Finding Alice* is set and was filmed in the well-heeled Home Counties. The polite, uptight quality of that environment contrasts with the emotional turmoil going on in the characters’ lives.”

Q: How did writing together work in practice?

SN: “We basically thrashed out the themes and plots together and then did alternate drafts. Roger does the first draft. I do the next and so on. When we get to nine drafts we both burst into tears. I don’t know if many writers these days work in the same room.”

RG: “I am very lucky. Simon is such a brilliant writer; I’m just trying keep my end up! Somehow, and we shouldn’t analyze it too much, it works! The most important thing is we have a good time and laugh a lot. In seriousness, I think it boils down to trust and respect for each other. I do think we bring different things to it, and our writing process is very different, I lie down at home with my headphones in and he sits in cafes! It’s been a brilliant creative collaboration with all four of us, Keeley Hawes and Nicola Shindler are deeply active partners in the story development, script process and production which has been invaluable.”

SN: “Roger, as a director, probably has a more visual eye and a slightly different angle in. I’m more regimented and pedantic, the script-nerd. It feels like a good combination. And we had the added thrill of having to rewrite scenes because of issues arising from lockdown.”

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye continued:

Q: What sort of research did you undertake?

SN: “My only research was my own life - my father died suddenly when I was a young adult, and inevitably I’ve had people die on me since. Not literally. There are bereavement podcasts which I’ve dipped into because people’s experiences are different and the interest is often in the details and the oddities. *Finding Alice* is in many ways about how awkward it is for the bereaved person, the small embarrassments. Not to mention all the practical fall-out.”

RG: “I read various books on grief, including *A Grief Observed* by CS Lewis, and looked through the various online resources, websites, blogs, etc. that are there to offer help and support for those who are grieving. And of course, as Simon says, we both have our own experiences and those of people we know. When you are grieving there is this notion of life goes on. Life goes on around you but not for you.”

Q: How does Alice deal with the sudden death of her partner Harry?

SN: “Initially Alice doesn’t know how to react. Then she remembers Harry hated gloom so she puts on a crazy, bright dress. It takes a very self-contained and controlled person to know how to behave because at that age you don’t plan for a partner’s death. Alice doesn’t know what to do. Her daughter Charlotte, perhaps because children all subconsciously think their parents are ancient, manages to hold in her emotions and so becomes the “sensible” one. Which, in a way, gives Alice carte blanche to indulge her feelings. Whatever she feels, she shares and that’s not always helpful.”

RG: “She’s in shock, and alone, in a very separate space to everyone else. You don’t change character just because there’s a bereavement. She is what she was before. But everything has just become accentuated. Harry was a bit of a rock in their relationship. He would deal with money, the business and sort everything out. Alice was more spontaneous. Now he’s suddenly gone it’s like she’s lost her filter. Alice can be quite selfish but she’s not a nasty selfish. It’s understandable.”

SN: “Alice is fighting for Harry’s legacy which is embodied in this new house he’s built for her. She resists any attempt to take that away from her in the financial maelstrom that follows his death. It’s not that she wants to live in a nice house; she wants to protect Harry’s life’s work.”

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye continued:

RG: “My sister died very suddenly aged 27. You do cry and you get very emotional, but then the next moment you can be laughing, and there will be times when you’re just normal, whatever normal is!?”

SN: “But feeling normal seems wrong, so you feel guilty, which sets you back into an emotional spiral.”

Q: What is it about Keeley Hawes that makes her a top choice for leading roles?

RG: “Keeley is a brilliant actress, one of the best and most versatile actresses I’ve ever worked with. She has such a huge depth of performance and a funny bone which is rare, an incredible ability to play such a wide range of characters. Brilliant actors and actresses are able to bare their souls and inhabit different characters like that, that feel truthful. It’s an incredible skill and very hard to do. It’s about being able to ‘let it be’ somehow which is really hard. Particularly with humour. To play a character with an innate sense of humour who also finds themselves in ridiculous situations. To play that and make it feel truthful requires an actor to not feel embarrassed in front of the camera. To just let it out. Keeley has all that skill, and she has an amazing charismatic quality, incredible depth of performance but also such a lightness of touch. She is able to immerse herself in a role without seeming effort, there is a thought behind everything she does. So clever.”

“For me there has always been something extra compelling about a female lead. While not decrying men in any respect, I think it’s basically because women have so much more to contend with in life. Having to confront the obvious inequalities and misogyny, then on top of that being expected to parent, mother, be carers etc. A strong female led drama potentially opens up a much more complicated character world.”

“Alice says at one point that men are better at pretending and brushing things under an emotional carpet. I think that’s often true.”

Q: Were you both involved in the casting?

RG: “All four of us - Keeley, Nicola, Simon and I - were involved in the casting. Keeley is very good at casting and Joanna Lumley was I think her idea. We have been so lucky with all of the cast. Gemma Jones and Kenneth Cranham as Minnie and Gerry provide a brilliant contrast to Joanna Lumley and Nigel Havers as Sarah and Roger in terms of their characters. Suzanne Crowley and Gilly Poole, our casting directors, were brilliant. We had worked with them on *The Durrells*. They are creative and clever and so thoughtful in thinking about who to bring in and cast.

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye continued:

SN: “Joanna Lumley and Nigel Havers have a lovely lightness of touch but are no slouches at drama. As Alice’s parents, their middle class worldview clashes with Harry’s proudly working class parents’. Harry’s funeral, of sorts, is like a wedding - one half of the registry office posh, the other half not. A crisis like a family death has a terrible habit of accentuating these divides.”

RG: “We were also so lucky to get young Isabella Pappas as Alice’s daughter Charlotte. She is brilliant. What’s so great about Isabella is she has a wonderful instinct and naturalness. That’s rare to find with actors her age (18). That’s what it is in acting - it’s what’s going on behind. The thought. And what’s going on when you’re not saying anything or just before you say something and while you’re saying it. That’s a real skill. She is very clever. While Sharon Rooney as Harry’s younger sister Nicola has an incredible depth of performance. She can be both very funny and moving at the same time. Another brilliant actress.”

SN: “Rhashan Stone plays Nathan who is a death professional, if you like, working at the mortuary, and he can see that Alice is suffering. He has a great sense of humour which is exactly what she needs. Another great actor.”

Q: What look and feel were you aiming for with this drama?

RG: “We had a clear vision for the show. A heightened but always believable aesthetic, the visuals conveying the ‘other worldliness’ that reflects Alice’s state of mind and her electric energy. Everything comes from Alice. It’s all down to a brilliant team, Ashley Rowe DOP, Debbie Burton production designer, Sharon Gilham costume designer and Rosie Octon make up designer, all working together to make it happen. We used light, production design, our camera work and our costume and make up design to reflect Alice’s state of mind in the visuals. Careful planning of colours and textures for all the sets, locations and costumes. Camera work at times still, using narrow depth of focus to bring Alice to foreground, at other times moving to replicate her energy and emotion, always carefully composed. Strong light and shade with an overall warmth to represent the ethereal space that Alice is in.”

“I’m also particularly pleased with the opening title sequence which I think sets up the tone of the show really well. *Finding Alice* has a depth to it but also has a sense of hope and that things are going to get better. That you can come through the other side after something like this. It’s about life after death.”

“The brilliant score by Ed Butt completes the show perfectly, again bringing a depth of emotion, but also a warmth, humour and contemporary feel inspired by Alice and her state of mind.”

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye continued:

RG: “It is all through Alice’s eyes but it is all about the impact of a death on two families. The wider ripples that affect everybody.”

Q: What stage had you reached before having to stop filming ahead of the first lockdown?

RG: “We had to stand down two weeks into the second half of filming. With three of the six episodes finished and all of the studio section - the interiors of the house - all done. The final week of shooting before we locked down, with brilliant Juliet May directing, was pretty full on, but they did a brilliant job to get the studio shot and done. Behind the scenes, Simon, myself and Nicola Shindler were going through what we could do to re write for our come back.”

“We were rather naive back in March 2020 thinking we would be back shooting in a couple of months! So six months pretty much to the day after we had to stop, we returned, with a vengeance, and with pretty much our scripts in tact.”

Q: How did the resumption of filming work in practice?

RG: “The immediate prep before we started shooting was quite difficult and concerning. People not knowing how it was going to work and worrying understandably, a kind of fear of the unknown. But we had a brilliant production team who put all of the Covid testing and protocols in place, so that when we actually started shooting it ran very smoothly. We had a brilliant crew, who all knew each other so there was already a shorthand, and In some respects, we worked a lot faster because we were leaner in a way.”

“The crew were extremely conscientious of working to the rules. The hygiene and social distancing were strictly observed and because everybody was tested we were in a bubble.”

“The actors would wear a mask for rehearsals. They would come on set quickly and then they would go off the set. On smaller interior sets only a certain number of people were allowed in. That all worked surprisingly smoothly. It worked well and we were very lucky that nobody tested positive. We were lucky that didn’t happen.”

“We had to make some changes to scripts and scenes but I don’t feel we have short changed the show at all. The changes we had to make and the re-writes ended up feeling very organic and meant.”

Production interview

Roger Goldby & Simon Nye continued:

Q: How would you sum up what *Finding Alice* is about?

RG: “It’s a heartfelt, human take on grief. On what happens when somebody dies. A human, real, ultimately hopeful take on bereavement. Alice is somebody who is grieving, but also having to deal with the mess left behind after the person’s gone. We’re not shying away from any of the pain but we’re also embracing the humour that comes with the pain.”

SN: “Which is why it’s called *Finding Alice*. Because it isn’t really about burying and mourning Harry. It’s about Alice finding herself from the ruins of his death.”



Q: How did *Finding Alice* originate and come to the screen?

“Roger Goldby, Simon Nye and I had such a brilliant experience over the years on *The Durrells*, and formed a great working relationship and friendship. It felt like an organic progression to work together again.

“When *The Durrells* came to an end we started thinking about ideas we could develop together. Lots of conversations were had and ideas thrown around. We came to the idea of the story that became *Finding Alice*. We were all interested in the subject of grief. It was something we wanted to explore further.

“*Finding Alice* is co-produced by my company Buddy Club and I’m an executive producer alongside Roger and Simon. I love being involved in all aspects of production, everything from casting to building a great crew.

“It’s a really collaborative process and there are lots of people involved. Putting a team together is one of the parts I really love. You get involved with everything, really. Production shutting down due to Covid 19 was a real learning curve. For everyone in fact!”

Cast interview

Keeley Hawes continued:

Q: What does *Finding Alice* explore?

"*Finding Alice* explores grief and shock and what happens when someone's life is turned upside down in the space of 30 seconds. Alice's future as she sees it and her past, as it turns out, isn't as she thought it was going to be or as she has known it. It's about that unravelling. I think it's more common than you'd think.

"That allows us to explore lots of things. There is a lot of black humour in death. Both Simon and Roger have quite a dark sense of humour. That is something we all share. It was good to mine that. You have to find the light during those moments in your life. Crying and laughing are so close together in terms of emotions. It's inevitable that one spills over into the other."

Q: How would you describe Alice's relationship with partner Harry?

"Alice and Harry were soulmates and friends. We see them together in flashbacks. They are like teenagers together. Their relationship is full of love, fun and humour. Alice is not immature but she is quite outspoken and can put her foot in it. Harry loves that about her and he is not dissimilar. They are very young at heart as a couple. Their daughter Charlotte is actually more grown up than either of them.

"Alice and Harry make a great pair and Harry has done this crazy thing and built this new 'smart house' for her as a labour of love. Unfortunately, it's the house that kills him. Because he didn't like bannisters. The sensible thing would have been to put bannisters in. But he is a bit reckless in life and doesn't always do the sensible thing."

Q: How does Alice deal with her grief?

"Alice is in shock. We did lots of research and quite often a woman will put her face back on and do her hair after losing somebody. Presenting herself to the world as though everything is quite normal. That is what Alice does for a while. Until the unravelling gets too much.

"It's absolutely fascinating to look at the seven stages of grief. We all know someone who has passed away. We've all been there. One of the only things that unites us all is death and loss. You look at the seven stages of grief and think you won't feel like that. But of course it's totally natural. You feel cheated and angry and furious with the person. You feel desperate and guilty that you maybe feel okay one day and a bit better. It's absolutely tortuous. But everybody goes through it. Or we all know someone who has."

Cast interview

Keeley Hawes continued:

Q: What about Alice's daughter Charlotte?

"Charlotte finds herself having to deal with her mother rather than dealing with her own grief. Alice is so wrapped up in her own grief and shock that she initially can't see beyond that. She is a great mother and loves her daughter with all her heart. Charlotte is an only child and a living reminder of the man Alice loved so much and has lost. Charlotte finds herself dealing with both her own grief and her mother's grief and starts to bottle things up. Because she doesn't really have an outlet.

"Isabella Pappas, who plays Charlotte and I did a chemistry read together and Isabella was our perfect Charlotte. She gives a brilliant performance. Restrained and beautifully played. She is so good at portraying the emotions and never over playing it. it is beautiful and subtle and totally believable. We were very lucky with Charlotte and all our terrific cast."

Q: Did working with Isabella bring back memories of your own first jobs in TV?

"I did so much when I was a child and younger than Isabella. She also went to the Sylvia Young Theatre School in London so we had that in common. Lots of staff I knew are still there. So it was really lovely to talk about that. Dominique Moore, who plays Yasmina, also went to Sylvia Young so we all felt very at home talking about that."

Q: Bereaved Alice faces problems with a bank and missing computer passwords. Do you think that is a common experience?

"All of that is factual. It's astonishing in this day and age that you can't withdraw money from your partner's account. On top of everything else it just seems deeply unfair that having lost someone you then can't live your life with any sense of reality. You don't even have that to rely on.

"As well as dealing with your grief, shock and awful sadness you are then expected to be able to deal with that side of things as well. It's very common that one person in a relationship pays all of the bills and has all of the passwords. And if they die then the other person is stranded."

Cast interview

Keeley Hawes continued:

Q: Can you tell us about 'the house that Harry built'?

"The house we used for the exterior shots of the smart house that Harry built was in Farnham in Surrey. It was amazing. And very similar on the inside to what you see on screen as we based our interior studio sets on the actual interior of that house. Our design department have done an extraordinary job creating it.

"The owners of the house were very welcoming and patient with us. It was an amazing place to shoot."

"As for it being a 'smart house' in the story, it all looked very good on paper. But nothing could control the curtains. Not even Alice's iPad. Our production designer Debbie Burton did such a fantastic job. Along with our wonderful DoP Ashley Rowe. The look of *Finding Alice* is crucial and it works so well. To work, it needs to be believable and it needs to look great. And it does.

"Lots of the crew had already worked together on *The Durrells* and various other productions so we all knew each other really well. Which also means you are immediately relaxed. It just makes for a lovely working environment."

Q: What was it like to have Joanna Lumley and Nigel Havers as your screen parents?

"Joanna Lumley was top of our list. And also incredibly busy, so we were thrilled when she agreed to be part of the show. She does these amazing documentaries and is constantly busy. But she agreed to come and be my screen mum Sarah. A bit of a dream come true. It was a joy to work with Joanna.

"And then to have Nigel Havers as my dad Roger was brilliant. Joanna and Nigel have worked together over the years so were very happy together. I think we make a very good family.

"Alice is very close to her dad while her mother is the more complicated character. Her dad is quite straightforward, very well meaning and lovely. Satisfied with his world. While her mother is dissatisfied with her lot. They have their own secrets like everybody else in the show. We find out about those as the story unfolds.

"We were very lucky with all of the cast. Sometimes it just happens. Everybody gets along and there is a lovely chemistry. It really was the case with *Finding Alice*. Sharon Rooney's character Nicola is involved in both sides of Alice's life, the family and the bereavement group. It's such a wonderful relationship that they start to build."

Cast interview

Keeley Hawes continued:

Q: Did you do any of your own research into bereavement groups?

“We did a lot of research into bereavement groups. That is one of my favourite parts of the show. All of those characters coming together are totally believable. I loved working with that group of actors and the writing for those scenes was very well judged.

“We have a bereavement group night out later in the series. That was a real highlight. We all went bowling. I’m not the world’s greatest bowler but I had more fun on that day than I ever had actually going bowling for fun.

“Rhshan Stone is brilliant as pathology technologist Nathan. I’d worked with him before on *Mutual Friends*. When I read the first draft of *Finding Alice* I had him in my head for the role. Because you do. You slot people in as dream bits of casting. He is a wonderful actor.

“There is a brutal honesty about Alice in terms of most things. As there is with Nathan. He is a real rock for her as a friend and also being very good at his job.”

Q: What stage had you reached when filming had to stop ahead of the first lockdown?

“We had almost finished filming in the studio when we had to stop for lockdown. We were just about to head out on location. Our main objective towards the end of that period was to finish in the studio so when we were able to return to filming we could get straight out on the road. And we achieved that on the Friday we finished.

“There was a very strange atmosphere by then. No-one was on the roads. People were scared. And long before people were talking about them we were all in a bubble. We stayed safe. No-one was going out. We were just coming to work and going back home again.

“It was just a frightening time. Then at that moment when we had to stop we were all saying, ‘Well, see you in a few weeks.’ Little did we know that we would all be older when we came back! It just went on and on. I learned so much about Covid regulations being an exec on the show and having those conversations about how we could get back on track and resume filming. How things would operate then. We all became protocol experts on this awful virus.”

Cast interview

Keeley Hawes continued:

Q: When and how did filming resume?

"We resumed filming in the autumn. The great majority of people were tested twice a week on our show. The proper 48-hour tests. We were put into cast bubbles. We did have to re-write the scripts, but managed to do that without having to compromise anything.

"At one stage Alice shares a kiss and a hug with someone. Their wife had to come in and double for me so we could get some footage of another character kissing Alice. Because, obviously, I couldn't be kissing anybody. I know other productions have shot scenes through Perspex, but we didn't have to do that.

"It's also amazing what you can do with camera tricks. Also keeping the older members of our cast at a distance was a huge priority and by using green screen and bubbles along with other things we were able to tell the story. I really do think it has worked and looks great.

"We couldn't introduce Covid into the story because we were so far in to filming. And nor would we want to, really."

Q: Alice is seen driving a digger. How was that to film?

"That is really me driving the digger! I am ridiculously proud of myself. I had a lovely double called Nellie who came in ready to do it. But I find a challenge like that is something I often like to do myself. If it's not too dangerous and it's insurable then I'll give it a go. It was very satisfying driving the digger. I loved it. Someone gave me a lesson and I didn't have to drive it especially well. Alice isn't an expert!"

Q: Alice also wields a power hose at one stage. Did you enjoy that?

"That was great fun. And luckily for the brilliant Joe Bannister a really sunny day! We did it lots of times. I was having the time of my life!"

Q: How do you reflect back on making *Finding Alice*?

"This has been unlike any other series I have filmed. I am genuinely sad to have finished, but hugely relieved to have got it done. It was just such a pleasure to make. All the more so because of everything we had to go through in order to get it done. People worked so hard and so tirelessly. Everyone came back after lockdown and it felt very much like the same show in the last five weeks of wrapping it up. We got there in the end.

"I hope people will find *Finding Alice* moving and relatable, and I hope they'll love our family of wonderful, funny characters as much as I do."

Cast interview

Isabella Pappas | Charlotte



Q: What is your background?

"I was born in Italy and am fluent in Italian and English. I moved to Japan when I was aged five for two years because of my mum's job and then we moved back to Italy because the majority of my family lives there. Then we moved to London when I was 10. So I have lived here the longest and consider this my home.

"When I moved here I started at Sylvia Young Theatre School in central London, which is where Keeley Hawes also went. Which I didn't know until we started the show. That was amazing and I stayed there up to my GCSEs and then I went to sixth form at ArtsEd in Chiswick in west London, which I also loved. I'm really sad that it's over because it was so much fun.

"My first job was when I was aged 11 at Sylvia Young, one of the leads in *The Nether* at the Royal Court Theatre in London. We then transferred to the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End. That was very exciting. And I was really lucky to be nominated for Best Supporting Actress in the 2015 Olivier Awards. In the same category as Angela Lansbury, who I worshipped. I met her at the awards, got to take a photo with her and when she won I was so excited that I stood up for her.

Cast interview

Isabella Pappas continued:

“Then I was in a TV drama called *Paranoid* made by Red Productions and ITV. That was an amazing job where I got to go to Germany. Most recently I was in the second series of *Home* on Channel 4 and *Appropriate* at the Donmar Warehouse in London. Which was actually really funny because the night after my audition the *Finding Alice* casting directors came to see me. So I walked out of the stage door and they were there! Having just seen them for the audition. They had got tickets beforehand so that was just a coincidence and really unexpected.

“There is no history of acting in my family. My dad is a pilot. My mum is an autism specialist. Everyone in my family is very academic. I was the first person to get involved in the arts. Which is scary but exciting. Charlotte in *Finding Alice* is my biggest TV role to date.”

Q: Who is Charlotte and how does she cope after her father Harry’s sudden death?

“The first time I read the script I could tell that Charlotte is really emotionally stifled. To compensate for her mum spiraling out of control and fully embracing her grief, Charlotte does the opposite in order to keep the family intact. She bottles everything up. Her father had a number of secrets and that is a lot for a teenage girl to process. When she is trying to mourn the person she knew and then they turn out to be maybe something different, that is really confusing.

“It’s almost a reversal of the mother and daughter relationship. Charlotte is having to be the adult in the relationship between her and her mother. Which is a lot to put on a 16-year-old girl. Especially when she is dealing with her own loss and doesn’t know how to process it. She is branded as the grieving child both at home and at school. Everyone has a lot of sympathy for her but that can be toxic in a way. In that she loses her identity.

“Before we began filming I lost my aunt. I was really close to her so I can relate to that grief. That experience helped me understand how truthful the *Finding Alice* script is. In terms of you deal with it through humour. You make jokes you don’t think you would make. And then you feel bad for laughing because you think you should be feeling sad.”

Cast interview

Isabella Pappas continued:

Q: Did you do any of your own research into bereavement?

"I had already done some of my own research on grief and family and the way people cope with it for *Appropriate*, just before *Finding Alice*. So I had all of my notes from that. But I tried to not research it too much because my character doesn't know how cope. So I felt if I knew too much then I wouldn't be able to portray her cluelessness. I didn't want to be too informed."

Q: Charlotte makes a short speech at her father's funeral. Was that hard to film?

"That was one of the most intense days of filming. When you first read the scene, because I haven't done lots of film before, I didn't think to myself that I was going to have to do it a number of times for all of the different shots they do. So then I'm there doing the scene thinking, 'Oh great, I've done it.' And then they say, 'OK, we need to do more shots.'"

"It taught me a lot. Especially about having to conserve your emotions and knowing when to fully let go. And that was one of those scenes when I just needed to let go. It was very cathartic."

Q: What was it like having Keeley Hawes as your screen mother?

"I found out Keeley was playing Charlotte's mum Alice when I went for the second audition. That was obviously big news. My whole family watched *The Durrells*. My grandma was obsessed with it. She was so excited when I told her what I was auditioning for."

"I was really nervous when I went in for the final audition because I was reading around 12 scenes with Keeley. She just made me laugh and kept making jokes. I'd never met anybody so well known who is so down to earth and so funny. She was really lovely."

"Keeley is one of the most considerate actors I've ever worked with. There are going to be times when you're delivering the lines in a scene with another actor and you're not on camera. A lot of actors will not put as much into it as when it's done with them on camera. One of the first things Keeley told me was, 'Don't be afraid to fully play it, even when you are off camera. Because it helps the other person so much.' And she always did that for me. Even if it's a scene where she has to cry or whatever she will do it for me so I can react to what she is doing. Which I think is just so nice."

Cast interview

Isabella Pappas continued:

“Working on *Finding Alice* was a huge learning experience for me. Especially as I’d never done such a big role on TV before. I feel so lucky that I got to do it alongside Keeley. She taught me so much and always kept me feeling really positive and like I was contributing something.”

Q: What about working with the rest of the cast?

“When I found out about the rest of the cast I was just in shock. It was crazy. I couldn’t believe I was going to work with these people.

“It was a job where you leave every single day knowing something new and having that to take away with you. For me it was like a huge masterclass in acting watching Keeley, Joanna Lumley and Nigel Havers and everyone else. Trying to absorb some of what they do.

“There was one scene where most of the cast were together on screen. That was one of my favourite days on set as we were all in the same room and could hang out with each other all day. It reminded me of being at school when you get to be in a class with all of your favourite friends. We had so much fun across the shoot but that day is one I will definitely remember.”

Q: Did it become clear fairly quickly that filming would have to stop ahead of the first lockdown?

“It all moved really quickly and even more quickly for us. We were filming in the studio. So already when you’re doing that you feel like you are in your own little bubble, your own little world. I was in from six in the morning until eight at night. So we didn’t really have that much interaction with the outside world because we spent most of the time filming.

“Then people started getting their mobile phones out and the news spread around the cast. I remember the day when they told us we had to stop filming. I was just so sad. I knew it was the best thing to do but it was just crazy. The whole world just stopped. It was surreal.

“Right before we had to stop filming everyone in the cast was saying, ‘We need to do things during lockdown. We can’t just sit around and do nothing and simply wait to go back to work. We are all going to try and learn a new skill or something. Or do something interesting.’

Cast interview

Isabella Pappas continued:

"I got out my old keyboard and I've been playing it ever since. It was so much fun. That was one thing that really kept me going every day. Having that time to sing and write some original songs. I released my debut single in November. A song called *Playground* which I co-wrote with Deelo Arizona. It's a song about rebirth and knowing that a part of you will change as you grow older. And learning to love the new things about yourself rather than trying to cling on to the old things. It's a very special song to me because we worked on it for a really long time.

"I also got back into script writing and wrote a play with my best friend Zoe Brough, who was in *The Nether* with me. We FaceTimed every day during lockdown for two hours and wrote this huge play that we're now trying to refine because we wrote so much.

"That was our outlet because it's hard to practise acting at home. You can but it's a bit different. You just need to channel your creative energy into something. We both discovered that we love writing so we have kept on doing that. My ultimate dream would be to write and star in my own TV series. I know that sounds crazy. But I'm going to keep writing and maybe it will happen.

"I also took my A-levels at the ArtsEd online in March. I was due to finish filming about a week before my A-levels. So stopping filming for lockdown gave me a lot of time to study for the exams."

Q: What was it like going back to resume filming?

"The first day back was strange. We were tested for coronavirus a week or so prior to filming resuming. And then Keeley and I were having to get tested every four days. Everyone was wearing masks, obviously, aside from the actors when they were actually filming a scene. So it was really weird to act with someone when you're rehearsing a scene and they are wearing a mask. It's hard because you can't see what their face is doing. But you do get used to it fairly quickly. It became second nature.

"I would sit in my trailer between scenes and obviously I was then alone. One day I was in my trailer for an hour and I had forgotten to take my mask off. So I was wearing my mask by myself in my trailer. It was only when my mum FaceTimed and asked why I had my mask on that I realised."

Cast interview

Isabella Pappas continued:

Q: How do you reflect back on making *Finding Alice*?

"I miss it so much. You don't realise how much you're going to miss something like this until it's over. For me, it was the biggest part of my life for almost a year. I feel like I have experienced so many emotions through Charlotte which I hadn't experienced in my real life. It taught me so much about how to handle certain situations. I can be quite an emotional person and Charlotte is the opposite. I found more of a happy medium in coping with things.

"She is someone who very much sees the plain, honest truth. She is not someone who obsesses about things being perfect. She just does things as they are. I'm quite a perfectionist so that definitely helped me in my everyday life. Still retaining the ability to try to do my best but also not obsessing about it.

"I miss walking in first thing in the morning, going into make-up and seeing Joanna Lumley on one side of me and Keeley Hawes on the other side. It was an amazing experience.

"It also definitely made me think about the subject. In one scene we were filming right next to an open grave. It makes you think about life and be really grateful. It really made me appreciate everything much more."

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley | Sarah



Q: What attracted you to *Finding Alice* and the role of Sarah?

“First of all it’s a lovely part. Secondly Keeley Hawes, who I have admired for a long time and is such a good, accomplished and varied actress. And thirdly the writing. I thought the story was brilliant. You always read the story first because no matter how nice your own part is, if the writing isn’t there, if the story isn’t gripping to the audience, it’s not going to work.

“I thought *Finding Alice* was enthralling from the very beginning. Something completely different. Funny, but quite tragic without being self-pitying. Keeley was a big part of the creation of this along with Roger Goldby and Simon Nye, constructing a really complex central character. So all of the people linked to her - her daughter, parents, husband’s parents, the friends she makes - are all rounded people. Sometimes we’re bookmarks, ‘Tall woman with red hair or something.’ And you think, ‘That doesn’t really tell me much.’ But all of these characters seem to have reasons for why they behave as they do. It’s quite funny and it’s not dark....but with a sombre centre to it in a strange way.”

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

Q: Who is Sarah?

“Sarah doesn’t hold back. I don’t think she has been a particularly good mother to Alice. She seems a bit of a cold fish. In the writing it says she had been a model. So she was obviously extremely beautiful when she married her husband Roger, played by Nigel Havers. Roger was an up and coming young, good looking lawyer and the feeling was he would become a QC and she would be a glamorous society hostess. And, of course, it didn’t work out like that.

“They have ended up in a small suburban house. Sarah is slightly aggrieved as she feels they should have done better. She feels antagonistic towards her daughter Alice. But she dotes on her grand-daughter Charlotte, played so beautifully by Isabella Pappas. In that she is interested in her in a way that quite often grandparents can leapfrog their own children and become obsessed with their grandchildren. I think she pours all the affection she ought to have shown to Alice into her grand-daughter, who she thinks she can change.

“I felt Sarah was completely believable. There are also other things going on in her life which we find out about as the story unfolds. I think she has a real affection for her husband deep down. But she has forgotten how to show it. With age those signs of love and affection atrophy if you don’t use them and do them. Now she snaps at her husband and is used to belittling him. In a way that happens in a lot of marriages. People get so accustomed to each other that they don’t think about what they are saying.

“There is a real, rounded story involving Sarah and Roger. This is the cleverness of really good writing. It’s that you feel everybody has got a complete story. With this story focusing on Alice as the centre, you feel if you wheeled off into Alice’s dead husband’s parents, Minnie and Gerry, played by Gemma Jones and Kenneth Cranham, they would have a complete tale to tell there along with their daughter Nicola, so gorgeously played by Sharon Rooney. Terribly touching and incredibly funny, with lots of hidden depths.

“Sarah is a terrific snob and looks down on Harry’s parents and sister. She thinks Alice could have done much better for herself. And I think secretly she might not be too sad that Harry has gone. Sarah is also pretty nonchalant. And says she is the only one who is being honest. Which is true. She is clear sighted. Sarah has a forensic mind and says things without any tact at all. I loved playing her.”

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

Q: How would you describe Sarah's relationship with her daughter Alice?

"There is certain amount of friction between mother and daughter. That's terribly realistic. I and my mother and my sister and my mother, we just all loved each other completely. But I've met so many people who don't get on with their mothers. Or indeed have daughters who they find, for some reason, they can't really communicate with.

"I think a mother-daughter relationship can be odd. A father-daughter relationship is always devoted, it seems. And a mother-son. But sometimes it's mother-daughter and maybe father-son too. Sons who feel they never could earn the approval of their father. These relationships are very well observed in *Finding Alice*."

Q: Sarah claims she and Roger live like students on a pension. Can you remember a time when you had very little money to get by on?

"Oh yes. Until I got The New Avengers and my name was finally a name - good or bad - that people could remember. Although I didn't make money out of The New Avengers: I couldn't get out of being in the red. But by the time I got to Sapphire and Steel I then paid off all my overdrafts.

"By then I was about 32 or 33. So from the ages of 18, when I started modelling, up until that time it was all pretty much hand to mouth. I used to play a trick on myself which was to fold a ten shilling note up into a thin slice and put it at the bottom of your wallet. So when you are looking through your money and you hadn't got any, then suddenly you think, 'Do you know, I think there might be something at the bottom?' And you'd find a ten shilling note. You'd go, 'This means I can buy some bread or take a taxi home.' It never quite stretched to going to a launderette so I still washed my sheets in the bath.

"But I can remember that penny-pinching time. It wasn't a sad time. It was fairly anxious because you think, 'Where do I get the next ten bob from?' But it's interesting to have done it. I think it's a great shame for people who have never known a little bit of looking in your purse and going, 'OK, that's got to be for electricity. So I can't touch that.'"

Q: You have worked with Nigel Havers before?

"The first time I worked with him was terribly disconcerting. We were in a thing called *A Perfect Hero*. He was playing a young air ace, and I was playing a kind of soubrette singer during the Second World War, and they had an affair.

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

"I knew Nigel and his wife through friends. Suddenly, during filming, I was in bed with Nigel and had to have no clothes on. I can't tell you how odd it is. It's always odd being with no clothes on with an actor. But when it's somebody you know quite well it's very odd indeed."

Q: *Finding Alice* highlights the fact that even in death there is humour?

"We all know there is a terrifying edge of absurdity sometimes which makes you want to laugh at funerals. The smallest thing. Because your sensibilities are so heightened. Words come out, things you didn't mean to say or do happen because of this extreme sense of heightened awareness, responsibility and anxiety."

"*Finding Alice* has some very funny lines. Why shouldn't Alice bury her husband in the garden? I think people around the country will go, 'Good for her.' It's fascinating on so many levels. It did make me wonder what is wrong with the idea of being buried in the garden at home? I think we'd all love to be in our own sweet land. No matter how small or humble it is. We'd love to know that granny is in the back garden."

"It also made me think about the amount of money people spend on expensive coffins which are then burned at cremations. It such a waste of money and wood. They could have one end of the coffin that flops open and you could shoot out the beloved body to be cremated and then the coffin could be used again."

"People are terribly over sensitive about death. In the old days it was so familiar to us because people lived in houses where, horrifyingly, children died, grannies died, people died. Death was ever present all around. And now it's something that only happens behind closed doors or in distant rooms and is always considered a great failure."

"I think we have become unrealistic about it and so we dress it up. The money people spend on funerals seems to me as odd as the money people spend on weddings. There's something quite disproportionate about it. I hope *Finding Alice* prompts people to talk about death. Even if it is just about the practicalities. Get it all sorted before you go."

"Alice also encounters a bereavement group. So people might realise they can talk to somebody. I'm sure quite a lot of decisions or horrors are endured on your own because you don't know who to turn to and you feel a fool not knowing how to do things."

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

Q: Alice places items in remembrance of her partner Harry on top of his coffin. What would best represent you?

"Rather than on top of the coffin I might ask for them to be put into my coffin. I collect, for some reason, wild and beautiful bird feathers so I'd like some feathers. Not an enormous amount. But I'd like my big vulture feather, my red kite feather and some of the others to go in. I wouldn't mind some shells from my time on my desert island.

"I'd like some books in case I can read on the other side. I would like to take some kind of hand writing from those I love very dearly, obviously my husband and my son and my sister, people like that. Little notes they have scribbled or something. I wouldn't mind taking a few works of the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore.

"The coffin's obviously filling up now a bit. I might take some Buddhist flags. Actually, I might put those outside so they can catch the wind and blow. Would it be wrong to take a torch? Yes it would. A torch would be wrong. But I quite like the idea of going off equipped for the other side."

Q: What was it like working with Keeley Hawes?

"Keeley has that extraordinary quality of just becoming a different person. You can still tell it is her, but she doesn't bring any mannerism or tried practices with her. She seems just to become the person and you can't really see how it's done. It's the alchemy of acting.

"When she was Mrs Durrell she couldn't have been more different. *Line of Duty*, *Honour* and all those sorts of things. She effortlessly appears to be that person. Well, of course, it was played by Keeley Hawes. Who else could have played it? But then you realise you have only said that because she appeared to have been that person. The prime minister or Mrs Durrell or a police officer or whatever. She is also incredibly nice. Wonderful to work with and very funny."

Q: Would you like to live in a 'smart house' like the one Harry built?

"I would dread it. I live in an old Victorian 1840s' house. I'm slightly old fashioned and I like a lot of clutter. So, bookshelves jammed, pictures frame to frame along and up and down every wall. I love things. Just glancing along. All the things I can look at. I collect, collect, collect and they sit around. Maybe they can come into my coffin with me, as well."

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

Q: Alice is baffled by aspects of her 'smart house'. Do any modern innovations confuse you?

"Having travelled all over the world, I dread those clever things in hotel bathrooms. You're trying to run a bath and you can't. Then you twist something and a jet of shower water comes on your head. Or just not being able to turn things off or on. Then you lie in bed and think, 'How do I get these lights off?' You've tried every light, every combination, you've pushed things here and there and you are none the wiser."

Q: What was it like on set just before filming had to stop ahead of the first lockdown?

"I was in on the very last day of filming before lockdown. We weren't quite into all of the restrictions then, but everyone was conscious of not standing too close to each other and we didn't hug each other goodbye."

Q: And when you returned to work?

"When we went back in several months later everyone was in masks, having our temperatures taken every morning, testing every two or three days. It was a phenomenal operation. I asked if the actors could rehearse without masks because I thought, 'We're losing sight of everything now. As actors we've got to be normal.' So that was allowed. But they were so scrupulous with the safety of everyone. I'm so proud of them all."

"What we've discovered throughout all of this is we all love people. We love people and we all want to be with people. We want crowds of people. We love hanging out with people. We love the muddle of the make-up room in the morning. But, of course, now we have to sit alone in our trailer or having done your make up yourself. It's not really the same. A lot of the heart of stuff has been kicked out. I'm longing for that to return because people are pack animals. You miss hugging people as much as anything."

"The staging of things slightly changed. You could find different ways of doing things. And, of course, if the viewer doesn't know what it was going to be originally then they won't miss it. They did all of that very skillfully. It's just the tricks of the trade. No more extraordinary than when you open a door in London in a film and step out in Barcelona."

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

Q: Did you keep busy during lockdown?

"I did a lot of painting of things in the first lockdown. Painting chairs, chest of drawers, tables, doors and more. All the same gorgeous colour - green smoke - which I appear to have a lot of. I am a green smoke woman.

"But I kept working for a lot of the year. Including seven radio plays, *Finding Alice* and a new three-part series for ITV called Joanna Lumley's Home Sweet Home. I usually go all over the world doing these wonderful travel programmes, but because of the virus we weren't able to travel in 2020. So, we decided to look at the United Kingdom, which is my adopted home because I was born in India and brought up in the Far East.

"We were all fairly anxious and bit our nails to begin with. Thinking, 'First of all the virus is going to make things difficult. And is this country going to be as thrilling as Azerbaijan?' Well, of course, it's come out with flying colours. Fabulously beautiful. We were aided by some stunning sunshine and some gorgeous stormy weather because we want to see all sides of it.

"We wanted to celebrate the diversity and the extraordinary achievements of communities and individuals, and we met some amazing people. It was absolutely eye-opening. We went all over - the Midlands, the North, West and East. Up into Scotland and the Highlands and Islands. We went to Belfast and Derry, down to Wales and down to the toe of Cornwall. And London. It's like putting a pin on a map. Just occasional things. There's no real reason or rhyme to my story. It's just saying, 'Let's go there. Or I once remember that. Or I once did that.'"

Q: How do you reflect back on your career?

"It's extraordinary and it makes me love life more and more and more. One of the greatest, and smallest, recommendations one can make is, 'When you talk to somebody, talk to them utterly. Concentrate on them utterly.' Because then a five-minute conversation becomes fascinating no matter who you're talking to. If you're expecting people to be something, or you're half-thinking or not really listening, or bent on being funny or dismissive, or you think they might be dull, just focus on people.

"Because everybody is like a jewel. Everybody is jewel bright. The stories we've all got inside us. If you can find that, with a lever, you can make people feel assured and then the oyster shell opens and out come the pearls. You should never ignore anyone. They have all got a story and are all just as valuable and as important as you are.

Cast interview

Joanna Lumley continued:

“That’s quite a thing to take on board. You sit down and you think, ‘But there are so many of us?’ Yes. So, therefore, go slowly. Don’t throw your net so wide. Take care of those you do know. Make sure you understand.

“As ever and as Eric Idle said, ‘Always look on the bright side of life.’ Try to be happy. Try to savour things. Do things. Make that phone call. Be kind. Be consciously kind. Make a big effort to make things better. Every day just a little few tiny things and the world will turn into a better place.”

Gemma Jones | Minnie



Q: Can you tell us about Minnie?

“I thought the whole concept of *Finding Alice* was rather bold. If you tried to describe it, it would sound like a tragedy. But it was very real and human. In my role as the mother of the deceased I had to tread a fine line. There is a lot of humour in this series as well.

“I have worked with Ken Cranham, who plays Minnie’s husband Gerry, a number of times before so this was a very nice reunion. There is a great contrast between them and Alice’s parents Sarah and Roger, played by Joanna Lumley and Nigel Havers which I thought was an interesting idea.

“Minnie absolutely adored her son Harry (Jason Merrells) and is devastated at his death. But without giving too much away, he was quite a jack-the-lad. Even so, Minnie forgave him everything and put him on a pedestal. Essentially, she wanted to keep the peace. While Minnie isn’t quite sure what she feels about her daughter-in-law Alice, played by Keeley Hawes. Because Alice’s family move in a very different world to Minnie and Gerry. By saying less, she is thinking more. So, she may think rather clearer than some of the others.”

Cast interview

Gemma Jones continued:

Q: How would you describe her relationship with husband Gerry?

"Her husband can appear quite intimidating at times but I think he's a softie underneath. Minnie isn't cowed. She toes the line and appears not to say boo to a goose. But is very much her own person. After their son's Harry's death, they are left with certain problems to face."

Q: What does she want for her son?

"Minnie and Gerry would very much prefer a traditional last resting place for their son Harry. While Alice wants to bury him in the garden. They can't be doing with all this ballyhoo their daughter-in-law creates. They find it very disconcerting."

"I'd describe Minnie's relationship with Alice as 'careful'. Minnie knows that Alice loved her son Harry so she appreciates that. And that her son adored Alice. But initially in the relationship Minnie is rather suspicious of Alice."

"I'm very respectful of Keeley Hawes, who was also part of the creative team. Alice was a very difficult part for her to play, but she was wonderfully committed to it. She brings a great truth and reality to everything she does. You always believe her. To work with as a person, she is very down to earth. Very nice to work with."

Q: What are your thoughts about the tone of *Finding Alice*?

"*Finding Alice* is not a bleak drama. There is a lot of humour. Elements, almost, of farce which I think there probably are in these terrible situations."

Q: The drama also highlights some of the problems people face after the death of a loved one?

"I think a lot of people will relate to the practical problems Alice faces after Harry's death. You do reach an age where suddenly people say, 'Should we make our will?' I think most people just put it off. Thinking it somehow won't happen to them. Talking about inheritance tax and frightening things like that."

Q: How have Minnie and Gerry treated their daughter Nicola, played by Sharon Rooney?

"I think Minnie did favour her son Harry over Nicola. He was probably rather spoiled. Maybe locked horns with his dad Gerry. With his mum always defending him. Because Nicola was more robust they just let her get on with it. Not realising how much they have actually neglected her."

Cast interview

Gemma Jones continued:

Q: Would you like to live in a 'smart house'?

"Absolutely not. I've just been staying in a hotel and I can never work the light switches, remote controls, air conditioning and so on."

Q: What was it like working with young Isabella Pappas who plays Minnie's granddaughter Charlotte?

"Isabella is lovely and seems to have an absolute instinct, like Keeley, for being real."

Q: Minnie makes a video call in the drama. Is that something you used yourself during lockdowns?

"I have discovered Zoom and talk to my grandchildren on FaceTime, which is a great boon. After returning to work in September I filmed against a green screen for some of the scenes so we could be kept safe. They used some very clever filming techniques to put it all together. Ken and I standing against a green screen for a party scene."

"Obviously restrictions have prevented many actors from working. People always say, 'When are you going to retire?' And we all say, 'I won't retire as long as people want me.'"

Q: How do you reflect back on making the drama?

"It was very enjoyable making *Finding Alice*. Then, of course, this threat appeared over it all which was very disconcerting. But then I had a nice reunion with Ken as we filmed Minnie and Gerry's final scenes when we were allowed to resume work. I also saw the director and the cameraman again, but not the whole crew."

"I hope viewers think *Finding Alice* is an intriguing and enjoyable watch. It's difficult to categorise and sum up. Something a little different."

Kenneth Cranham | Gerry



Q: Why did you want to play Gerry?

“Gemma Jones, who plays Gerry’s wife Minnie, and I have acted together a number of times. We have survived a few campaigns. So we’re an old marriage and we get on very well. Gemma and I have got so many people in common. All of the people we know from way back. Gemma is very special.

“I’ve also known Nigel Havers, who plays Alice’s father Roger, for a long time. Alice’s parents and in-laws come from very different classes so they wanted their looks and homes to show that contrast.

“When we first met on the set Nigel looked so elegant. They had actually let him wear his own clothes, including a shirt made in Paris and a classic suit. It saves time. But also you’re not going to get clothes like that easily. While I dipped in the side pocket of my zip-up and found a £3.50 receipt from the hospice shop!”

Cast interview

Kenneth Cranham continued:

Q: Who is Gerry?

"Gerry is the lowest of the social order of the older quartet of characters in *Finding Alice*. He is an ex-builder who got himself into all sorts of problems financially when he was younger. His wife Minnie is a bit upmarket of him. Their son Harry, played by Jason Merrells, is central to the story but is dead.

"Gerry's daughter Nicola, played by Sharon Rooney, says her father has a black belt in intimidation. He can appear a little bit threatening but it's not that serious. It's simply that he's in a panic because he finds himself with a big problem to deal with.

"I imagine Gerry's relationship with Alice and her family wasn't easy. There are real barriers between classes in our society. Gerry doesn't show his emotions. He's an ordinary bloke.

"I'm afraid I know an awful lot about the subject explored in *Finding Alice*. Because so many of my friends have died. And what happens is, if you don't get everything sorted before you go it's horrendous what you have to deal with. Including things like being locked out of bank accounts and computers because you don't know the passwords. One of my friends managed to die without signing his will. And the chaos that ensued and the burden upon his family is frightening.

"People make all sorts of assumptions about the use of modern technology and computers. My doctor sends me these things with hashtag references. I don't know what they are. What I really liked was the fax machine. I completely knew how to operate it and found it totally useful. I haven't really moved on from there.

"People get left behind. Part of me thinks, 'Well, perhaps I want to be.' But I have now become a burden on my family because they have to do all of these things for me.

"But while *Finding Alice* explores things like death and grief it also has a lot of humour in it. Comedy and tragedy can sometimes overlap."

Q: Had you worked with Keeley Hawes before?

"I was in *Our Mutual Friend* with Keeley Hawes over 20 years ago and she has gone from strength to strength. I was also in the 2012 revival of *Upstairs Downstairs* with her. Part of Keeley's success is there is something very unthreatening about her beauty. There's something of the little girl about her even as an adult.

Cast interview

Kenneth Cranham continued:

“When you play the lead in something, the nature of the piece is very much in your hands. And Keeley is very kindly. She doesn’t trouble anyone. She’s got a real sweetness to her and doesn’t lord it at all.”

Q: Did you draw on your own experience of death for the role?

“Filming the funeral sequence in *Finding Alice*, you use trigger points. Like thinking of the death of your dog. And when you’re of a certain age you’ve got so much information and so many things you can call on. Even if it’s just a line of a poem.

“Kipling wrote a line about ‘giving your heart to a dog to tear’. We had a dog for 12 years. He died and we haven’t recovered. Because of the simplicity of your relationship with an animal. You actually looked in those eyes for so many years and you know all about them. And suddenly they’re gone.

“All of that information is more available when you’ve got a lot of texture in your life. When the playwright Joe Orton was murdered in 1967 I still had four grandparents. So I hadn’t known anyone that had died until then.”

Q: Gerry and Minnie keep popping around to see Alice out of the blue without prior arrangement. That seems to be something younger generations no longer do?

“When I was in my early 20s in London my family moved to Hastings. I realised what I did from then on was I borrowed families in London. My best friend at RADA was Roger Lloyd-Pack, who played Trigger in *Only Fools and Horses* and much else besides, including Owen in *The Vicar of Dibley*. We were in the same class at RADA.

“So I became dependent on his family because he lived in Islington with his daughter Emily. I realised what I was doing was calling in on a family situation. The thing about people with kids is they tend to be available. You can call in on them.”

Q: Would you like to live in a ‘smart’ house?

“No. I would not like to live in a smart house. I realised I have been very influenced by people I have met along the way. When my wife gets cross with me she says, ‘Well, you wanted to live in an art gallery.’ I do like to be surrounded by old things.

“My father’s father worked for the Post Office, but he used to buy things at auction. So even though he lived in a bungalow he had paintings and reproductions all over the place. So I was brought up with old things and I still live with old things. I like them.”

Cast interview

Kenneth Cranham continued:

Q: How have you coped during the lockdowns?

"I've been reading books I've possessed for years and haven't read. Particularly books that cover a period I lived through. From 1966 onwards I was in 13 plays at the Royal Court in London and eight of those were leads. On the, then, BBC Third Programme on the radio I was described as 'the archetypal Royal Court actor'. They might have been having a pop but I was delighted. That's all I wanted to be.

"I have come across photographer and designer Cecil Beaton in volume two of his *Unexpurgated Diaries* - an account of him watching me in *Saved* at The Royal Court in 1968. It's a wonderful piece of writing. He is very perceptive. I wouldn't have known this existed had I not read it. Looking back that was an incredible period. Doing all of those new plays. All great theatre events."



Q: What appealed to you about *Finding Alice*?

“There were so many things that attracted me to *Finding Alice* including working with Keeley Hawes, Simon Nye and Roger Goldby. While working with Red Production Company is something that has been on my bucket list for a long time. So before I even read the script I thought, ‘I know I’m going to love it.’”

“I just fell in love with Nicola, the younger sister of Harry who has died. She is such a lost soul in so many ways and a joy to bring to life. Nicola puts on a front but inside she is so broken. It’s a lovely part to play. She is that person who always wants everyone else to be okay, but goes under the radar herself. People think, ‘Oh she’s loud and always having a laugh. She’s handling this really well.’”

“I saw a quote that says, ‘Remember to check in on the strong friend.’ Because no-one checks if they are okay. The ones who are making everyone laugh and looking after people usually go home and take off the front they have presented like a cloak. With Nicola it’s her make-up, jewellery and her clothes that are all bright. And they get brighter the harder she is finding it.”

Cast interview

Sharon Rooney continued:

“Nicola has to fill every silence. She tries to say something funny to make people laugh. Because when she is in the silence, that’s probably the only time she ever takes her own armour off.”

Q: How does Nicola get on with her parents Minnie and Gerry, played by Gemma Jones and Kenneth Cranham?

“It’s clear that Harry was always Minnie and Gerry’s favourite child. Nicola came second. Nicola was an accident because there was quite a big age gap between her and older brother Harry. He was the golden boy doing very well in life. And then along comes Nicola. It’s also obvious that Nicola’s father Gerry has quite a hold over her.

“If you’d have told me a few years ago that I would be playing Kenneth Cranham and Gemma Jones’ daughter, I would have said, ‘No way will I get to work with such legends.’ It was great fun. And it’s quite easy to drive them a bit mad with Nicola. It was lovely playing their screen daughter.”

Q: How did Nicola get on with her brother Harry?

“Nicola absolutely adored Harry. He was the big brother every young girl wants. That protective and fun role he would have taken. There is probably a similar age gap between me and one of my uncles. He would always take me bowling and make me feel really special, cool and protected. I absolutely love my uncle and I think it would have been the same for Nicola with Harry.

“Harry looked after Nicola but kept his own family life separate. Nicola doesn’t know Alice and her daughter Charlotte very well. I think Harry and Nicola’s little world was pretty solid but separate from Harry, Alice and Charlotte. Probably because Nicola can be a bit of a nightmare. But she never really saw that as an issue because if things were going wrong she still had her brother Harry to help. Now he’s gone.

“Nicola doesn’t think a lot of herself at all. Which is really sad. Nicola is a lot sadder than anyone would ever know. I think she is constantly on the edge of a complete breakdown. But she just puts more make-up on and wears brighter clothes to try and balance it out somehow.

“While she is trying to keep everyone’s spirits up, she is not dealing with her own grief. Nicola doesn’t really have anyone she can talk to. Her boyfriend Ed loves her, but he doesn’t get it. She can’t go to her parents. No-one knows Harry like she did. The only other person is Alice.”

Cast interview

Sharon Rooney continued:

Q: How would you describe Nicola's relationship with Alice?

"Nicola just throws herself upon Alice. In Nicola's eyes she thinks, 'We get it. We both loved Harry. We both adored him. And we're both hurting.' Alice talks to Nicola as a normal person. That sounds really silly. But with her parents, Nicola is always in trouble. She's always done something wrong. There's always a drama with Nicola. Yet while Alice might roll her eyes, she talks to Nicola and doesn't expect anything from her. Nicola sees Alice as a friend.

"Working with Keeley Hawes was just the best. I don't think I've ever laughed so much and felt sad when I wasn't called on set for filming. I remember having a day off and thinking, 'Can I just come in?' And they were like, 'No. Have a day off!' I loved every single minute of working on *Finding Alice*. From the pick up in the morning to the drop off at the end of the day, it truly was a dream job."

Q: What does Nicola think about Alice's plans for Harry?

"Nicola is 100 per cent in support of the idea of a home burial. Why would you not want to have him in the garden? Rather than with strangers. So you could visit him every day. Nicola really doesn't get why other people think it's such a big deal."

Q: Would you like to live in a 'smart house'?

"No. I don't think I could be bothered. I remember when we were filming on the stairs which don't have a bannister. I was thinking, 'Why would you not have a bannister? It's just so dangerous.' Although, of course, it was very safe when we were filming. But then I forget that not everyone is as clumsy as me. I'm very clumsy. So the thought of me not having bannisters on stairs fills me with fear.

"Also the thing of having to talk to your house to open the curtains and so on. I'm bad enough with the Alexa. Sometimes I'll say something at home and she'll suddenly talk to me. And I think, 'No, I don't want to talk to anyone, never mind a machine.' I mean, what is she listening to? What has she heard? She's probably just fed up with me watching telly. 'Oh no, she's watching *The Royle Family* - again!'"

Q: How does Nicola get on with Alice's daughter Charlotte?

"Charlotte is trying to cope with the loss of her dad and then has this whirlwind in Nicola descend on her. If I was Charlotte that would drive me mad. Isabella Pappas is fabulous as Charlotte."

Cast interview

Sharon Rooney continued:

Q: What does Nicola want from life?

“Nicola says she wants to pin her boyfriend Ed down, wear the wedding dress and have a baby. That’s her. I don’t think Nicola has ever been told she could do anything else. She has never been nurtured and pushed to achieve things. So that is all she wants to do. Get married. But Ed is so daft that he has never thought about it.

“Nicola thinks what people consider as normal in terms of getting married, having a house and so on would make her mum and dad proud. Which makes me feel very sad. But I hope, in time, some doors open for Nicola and she sees how you can achieve things.

“I did get to model a wedding dress and I huffed and puffed about it for the whole day. Because Nicola, being Nicola, kept all of her clothes on underneath and just snuck it on. So it was a very warm puffy wedding dress.”

Q: Nicola is a big hugger. How did you film that after the first lockdown?

“Fortunately, we filmed most of the hugging scenes before we had to stop filming ahead of the first lockdown.

“Returning to filming was very tricky. But they handled it like total professionals. Everything was made very clear and I felt so safe back at work. It was very well managed. And everyone was really happy to be filming again.

“We had one of the best make-up teams I’ve ever worked with. Rosie Octon and her team were amazing. They were completely suited and booted in PPE. We also had to wear gowns and masks. And we could only take our masks off to get the make-up applied. The same with having our hair done. It was all done very safely. Like a well oiled machine. A conveyor belt of actors.

“It’s really weird how quickly it became the new normal. And actually, how much better it was, in a way, not to be on your phone in the morning because you couldn’t take any personal items into make-up. So you could just sit and not scroll through Instagram. That was nice.”

Q: Can you tell us about some of the location scenes you filmed with Keeley?

“There’s one part of the story where Nicola and Alice go jogging. We actually did do a lot of jogging. I’m not going to say I’ve developed a love for it. But I’ve developed a liking. It was not as bad as I expected. It was a really good day with lots of laughter. Great fun.

Cast interview

Sharon Rooney continued:

“We also filmed a night out at a bowling alley. Nicola gets a strike in the script and that genuinely happened. It was sheer luck. I got a strike on camera. Nobody could believe it. Which was a little annoying. ‘Did you have no faith in me?’. I felt like I had scored the winning goal in the World Cup. It was a complete fluke.”

Q: How do you reflect back on making *Finding Alice*?

“It was like making a series and then going back to film a second series. That’s what it felt like either side of the first lockdown. I loved the job and miss everyone. It was a real joy to be a part of a show like that.

“There is a lot of humour in *Finding Alice*. It’s just like life. Even in the saddest of times there has to be joy. Because there is nowhere else to go. How do you breathe again when you’ve been through such tragedy and pain? Because you have to. Life is crazy. You have to laugh again.

“People are still people. I love how Nicola always wants to remind people with stories about Harry at any opportunity. That’s how he lives on. With reminders of him on top of the coffin at his funeral. My gran always used to say to me, ‘A funeral is for the living.’ That’s so true.

“There’s no cheat sheet that comes when somebody dies. To say, ‘This is what you have to do.’ We don’t get taught that. You learn how to look after a baby when you are given a doll as a little girl. But no one tells you how to live on after a death.

“I really hope *Finding Alice* gets people talking. Just a quick conversation. No-one wants to talk about death. It’s not a nice thing to think about. But it is important. Things have to be put in place. You have to know what to do in practical terms. It’s a big scary thing and when you’re grieving the last thing you want to think about is bank accounts and passwords.”

Rhashan Stone | Nathan



Q: Who is Nathan?

“Nathan’s official title is ‘Anatomical Pathology Technologist’. Most people would say he was a mortician. He’s the one who takes care of the bodies and prepares them for funerals and so forth. He and Alice (Keeley Hawes) collide when she is at the height of her grief and doesn’t really know what she’s feeling. Because grief is so surprising and unexpected.

“They move in completely different worlds and when they first meet he’s had a bad day and is flustered. She is panicky and doesn’t want to go in. And these two people who seem to be so different from one another collide with each other. Then a very tentative, strange and, I think, quite lovely friendship develops between the two of them.

“Nathan’s back story is that he used to work in PR and Communications in London. Then due to the tragic death of his daughter from leukaemia, he gave up his job and decided on this new career. When Alice asks him what made him do that, he tells the story of seeing his very sick daughter and just wanting to be the one to look after her. He didn’t want anybody else tending to her needs. And that continued after she died. He kept going. The memory of what happened to Nathan is still very close to him and he recognises that in Alice.”

Cast interview

Rhashan Stone continued:

Q: How would you describe Nathan and Alice's relationship?

"It's not very often on TV that you see a man and a woman with a real intimacy between them. A closeness there but they can just be friends. It may be there is a whiff of something in the air but neither of them are acting on it. It's really nice to see. A close relationship between two people who have met under tragic circumstances. Sometimes those lines can be blurred but there's no reason why they have to be. I love that. Aside from the fact I get to be in so many scenes with Keeley who is a joy to work with. So much fun.

"Despite everything, Nathan is actually really funny. It's one of the things about the show which I really love. You could look at *Finding Alice* through one lens and think, 'That looks like quite a sad drama.' But actually I think it's incredibly uplifting and very funny. It's never allowed to wallow in self pity or anything like that.

"You have to have respect when it comes to death. But I'm not sure, talking personally, how useful reverence is. I think it's really healthy to be able to laugh. There's something Nathan says at one point about us needing to do more around dead people so we're not so freaked out by it. We're all so cut off from death that it takes on this mythology and becomes this thing we're all quite frightened of. Nathan says it needs to become much more part of life and lose its mystery. We've become ever more fearful of death because we're all wondering what's behind the curtain."

Q: Did you bring some previous experience to this particular role?

"I did at play at the Hampstead Theatre in London called *The Strange Death of John Doe*. It was based on the true story of a body found in a suburban street. It turned out the victim had fallen from the landing gear bay of a plane as it opened ahead of landing at Heathrow Airport. One of several cases of stowaways killed in that way.

"The play was all set in a mortuary. And I play a mortuary technician in *Finding Alice*. So I had already spent quite a lot of time in a real morgue doing a lot of research for the play. It turned out I knew quite a lot about it by the time we started filming *Finding Alice*.

"The people who worked in the morgue were absolutely amazing. There is so much care and diligence that goes into it. What was so surprising, which I could bring to the part of Nathan, was the respect given to the bodies that come into the mortuary. They call every body by their name. They say, 'Look, we've got some visitors here. Would you mind if we did this? Would you mind if we do that?' And if they have to clean the body they say, 'OK, sir, we're just going to turn you over now.'

Cast interview

Rhashan Stone continued:

“It was a real insight into how those of us who pass on are taken care off. It was really life-affirming, actually. Very reassuring to know you are in good hands with those kinds of people.”

Q: What is Nathan’s attitude to death?

“Nathan has an honest attitude to death. He’s not shackled by the norms of what you are supposed to do. So when Alice comes to him with some of her more unusual suggestions, he doesn’t bat an eyelid. He says, ‘Yes, absolutely. You have to do what feels right to you.’ There are a lot of social norms we are all supposed to follow. Nathan doesn’t have any of those. He is refreshingly honest and open.”

Q: Can you tell us about filming Harry’s funeral scenes?

“When we filmed the scene with the coffin coming down the slope towards the grave there had been a torrential downpour. It was like a ski slope with mud. We skidded, slipped and fell over a number of times. It was genuinely difficult to get from the top of the slope down to the hole in the ground.”

Q: Nathan runs a bereavement group. Did you do any research into that?

“The bereavement group is a collection of random people who are so different from one another. The group has its own energy within the show which is absolutely fantastic. Each person in the bereavement group definitely has their own very unique personality.

“I didn’t do much research for that particular aspect because Nathan is really winging it to a certain extent. He’s the kind of person that wants to bring people together and work out how you move on from these tragedies. But he’s not skilled at it. He’s not an expert. Nathan doesn’t have the answer to life and death. He just books the hall, arranges the orange squash and tea and biscuits and brings these people together then sends them on their way. What I love is it doesn’t feel like a highly organised well-oiled machine. It really is a bunch of people getting together to just thrash it out.”

Q: You seemed to have a lot of fun filming a group night out at a bowling alley?

“What a day that was. It was brilliant, very funny and just bonkers. The sound team were going crazy as it’s one of the noisiest environments you could ever film in. I think it really will be a great set piece in the show. I thought of myself as quite good at bowling until Daniel Laurie, who plays Zack, got three strikes in a row. At one point he turned his back on the bowling alley, rolled the bowling ball backwards through his legs and, I kid you not, scored a strike. It was as if he had a remote controlled ball.”

Cast interview

Rhashan Stone continued:

Q: Do you think *Finding Alice* might encourage more people to talk about the practicalities involved when someone dies?

"I think so. I know things like wills take a bit more organisation. But then there are those habits you fall into where one half of a couple may look after the bank account. It's not necessarily that you have decided to separate these tasks. But in a marriage you do very often fall into roles according to whether you both work or not or whether you have kids or not. Then it's only after an unexpected death that you realise how little you both did across the board. And like Alice, you can be locked out of bank accounts and computers.

"In fact my wife and I, when I got the job and read the scripts, we went and had our wills redone. We had actually done it before but had realised quite a few years had passed since then. So we went in and got everything organised. I don't think I'll be the only one who does that after this."

Q: Various items are placed on top of Harry's coffin. What would best represent you?

"I love my music so it would be something to do with that. My instruments. Although I play the piano and I'm not going to get a piano on top of my coffin! Maybe some of the smaller instruments I play. I studied music when I was younger so probably some sheet music. And I'm very connected to my friendship groups. I lost my parents when I was younger so when I grew up my friends were my surrogate family. It would be nice to have pictures of them as my second family, close to me."

Q: What was it like working with the rest of the cast?

"It's an amazing cast. So brilliantly diverse as well. All ages and backgrounds are represented. Although the funeral scenes were one of the only opportunities to meet and get to know each other. One of the joys for me was Joanna Lumley. Possibly the cleverest person I've ever met in my whole life.

"She and I used to do the cryptic crossword between takes. I thought I was pretty decent at it but I didn't stand a chance. She's like a whippet out of the traps. So quick. That was a joy. Just seeing her brain tick over. Joanna is so resilient. You will never hear her complain. You could put her in a bivouac in the middle of the Andes and she would say, 'Oh this is fine, darling.' She's great."

Cast interview

Rhashan Stone continued:

Q: Were you involved in filming ahead of having to stop before the first national lockdown in March 2020?

"I was actually filming another show, *Baptiste*, in Budapest at the same time. I was given a couple of weeks off from *Finding Alice* to go and film that and was then due to come back and finish my scenes as Nathan. I nearly got trapped in Budapest but managed to get the last flight out of Hungary. They moved very quickly to close the borders and the airport.

"During the first lockdown from March the new skill I learned was patience. I thought I was quite a patient person. But in lockdown when you're in a house with the same people for a long time you have to learn more. I'm a writer as well so if I wasn't in the garden with the kids or going for walks, it meant I had time to catch up on scripts.

"Human beings are incredibly adaptable. When work on *Finding Alice* was able to begin again I'd just finished filming on *Keeping Faith*. So already had some experience of the new way of working with masks, social distancing and so on. On the first day people say, 'This is so weird.' Then by the end of the day they have completely taken it in their stride. You just adapt very quickly."

Q: What do you hope viewers will take away from *Finding Alice*?

"I hope they will take away the fact that a story about death doesn't have to be depressing. And by extension, it's okay to talk about it. We've just got into the habit of thinking that stories like this are depressing.

"There is some wonderful television out there and I enjoy some of the things on offer. But television is becoming ever more harrowing, pushing the boundaries of what you can show. We need more TV drama that you can watch and discuss with other people. That you can watch with your kids. Shows about human connection that make you smile and feel like you're part of this whole thing with everybody else.

"We needed a show like *Finding Alice* before the pandemic and we certainly need it now."

Episode one



For Alice (Keeley Hawes), Harry (Jason Merrells) and their daughter (Isabella Pappas), Charlotte, moving into their new home should have been a dream come true. But it quickly turns into a nightmare when Alice discovers Harry dead at the bottom of the stairs. Harry designed the smart house, so it's weird and wonderful, and one more disorientation for Alice on top of her sense of loss and abandonment.

Alice's beloved partner is no more, and now she can't find the fridge. Family should be a source of comfort, but Harry's parents, Minnie (Gemma Jones) and Gerry (Kenneth Cranham), keep popping round uninvited. Whilst Alice's own parents, Roger (Nigel Havers) and Sarah (Joanna Lumley), only seem to add to her list of problems. With Harry gone and Alice struggling to cope, Charlotte is forced to bottle up her grief and be the responsible one. Especially when the police turn up asking questions about the night that Harry died.

To make matters worse, more unexpected visitors start knocking on Alice's door, and she begins to realise that Harry's business debt wasn't the only secret he kept hidden from her.

Cast and Production Credits

Cast credits | Episode one

Alice Dillon.....	KEELEY HAWES
Harry Walsh.....	JASON MERRELLS
Charlotte Walsh.....	ISABELLA PAPPAS
Sarah Dillion.....	JOANNA LUMLEY
Roger Dillion.....	NIGEL HAVERS
Minnie Walsh.....	GEMMA JONES
Gerry Walsh.....	KENNETH CRANHAM
Nicola Walsh.....	SHARON ROONEY
Detective Davis.....	MATTHEW FLYNN
Detective Prior.....	CHARLYNE FRANCIS
Nathan.....	RHASHAN STONE
Yasmina.....	DOMINIQUE MOORE
Tanvi.....	AYESHA DHARKER
George.....	GEORGE WEBSTER
Hospital Receptionist.....	OLIVIA BERNSTONE
Coroner.....	JANE SHAKESPEARE
Funeral Director.....	PHILIP BIRD

Cast and Production Credits

Production Credits | Episode one

Executive ProducersNICOLA SHINDLER
.....KEELEY HAWES
.....ROGER GOLDBY
.....SIMON NYE
Co-Writers.....ROGER GOLDBY & SIMON NYE
Director.....ROGER GOLDBY
Producer..... MARGOT GAVAN DUFFY
Line Producer..... CHARLES BATES
Script Editor.....LAURIE KIRKHAM
Director of Photography.....ASHLEY ROWE BSC
Casting Directors..... SUZANNE CROWLEY AND GILLY POOLE
Costume Designer.....SHARON GILHAM
Hair & Make Up Designer.....ROSIE OCTON
Production Designer..... DEBBIE BURTON
Art Director.....JOE HARDY
Sound Recordist.....RUDI BUCKLE
Editor.....DAVID THRASHER
MusicEDMUND BUTT
First Assistant Director.....MATTHEW ALDER
Location Manager.....MANDY EDWARDS
Head of Production.....MICHAELA FEREDAY
Production Executive.....ANGELA TAYLOR
Post Production Supervisor.....EMILY BRAUDERS

