



Drama

# 7 Questions with... Sheridan Smith: 'Reading the script gave me complete jelly belly'

Sheridan Smith talks to us about her latest hard-hitting drama, No Return, on ITV, and what it's like playing Kathy Powell, the mother of a teenage boy arrested on holiday in Turkey.

By James Descombes

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ITV

New edge-of-your-seat drama, No Return, is heading to ITV soon and it stars Sheridan Smith as Kathy Powell, the mother of a family very much in need of some fun in the sun.

Unfortunately things quickly go wrong when her son Noah is accused of a crime that gets him tangled up in the Turkish legal system.

We chat to Sheridan about playing every mother's worst nightmare, filming abroad and what audiences can expect from No Return.

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## 1. What did you think of your character Kathy when you first read the script?

Before I even read it I was like "I definitely want to be on board", but I read it and was gripped. I didn't stop. Usually I have a break between episodes, but I had to know what happened. It instantly gave me that jelly belly feeling of what would you do in that situation. It's ordinary people in extraordinary situations, and especially Kathy. I was instantly like "wow" and was very honoured that they asked me.



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## 2. What was it about Kathy that you loved so much?

She's a lioness. It's just high-angst and hopefully the audience will think what if this happened to them. I thought this has never been done and I've never read anything like this before. From the minute Noah is arrested it's four hours of intense high drama. And she's a great character – fiercely loyal and fiercely protective, and just someone I can relate to and was great to play.

## 3. How much pressure and responsibility did you feel telling this important and cautionary tale?

It's a huge responsibility, especially when it's written so well. I've never been to a read-through like the one for this. It was so powerful, Danny's [co-creator Danny Brocklehurst] writing is all there on the page. Some writers change it as you go along, but Danny's is perfect when you sit down and read it, so there's then this huge pressure to bring it to life when you get on set. I cried all the way through the read-through, so there is pressure and I really wanted to do my best for Nicola [executive producer Nicolas Shindler] and Danny.

## 4. How was it playing the sibling relationship with Kathy's sister Megan, who joins the Powell family on holiday?

Danny writes so well for women. Those scenes just came off the page and Siân [Brooke, who plays Megan] I'd worked with on Moorside, and she's an incredible actress. Kathy thinks that Megan is the favourite with dad. She's landed on her feet – she's got the young, successful husband, big house, nice cars.

Whereas Kathy and Martin (Michael Jibson) have got married quite young and had the kids young. They're now 14 and 16 and all grown up, and she feels stuck.

I think what Kathy thinks of Megan's lifestyle is completely wrong. There's so much going on underneath, which comes out in the story. That whole sisterly dynamic is just brilliant and changes throughout the show.



## 5. What Kathy goes through on holiday is every mum's worst nightmare. Could you relate to Kathy and her situation, being a mum yourself?

Playing roles before I had Billy (her son) to playing roles now I have Billy is totally different. People have said you can't understand the protectiveness of when you have a child. Billy's not even two yet, but I feel it. Reading the script gave me complete anxiety and I hope all that angst will resonate. It is every parent's worst nightmare.

## 6. What was it like working on location in

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## Spain for the show, which is set in Turkey?

We all went together, as a team, for a whole month. I didn't get much downtime, which I don't mind because I love being on set, but a lot of the cast had a bit of downtime, so were going out to restaurants and sightseeing and enjoying the sun.

But we filmed all the interior stuff in Manchester, and the prison scenes in Bolton. So we were all doing really hot acting, but actually really freezing. So, when we got to Spain it just brought the whole thing to life. We had a Spanish crew that joined us there who were amazing and I made a lot of friends, so it was just a brilliant experience.

## 7. What do you hope audiences will take away from No Return?

I hope that people will relate to all the characters that Danny's written and just think "What if I was in that position?" When I watch telly I want to relate to the characters and be taken away from my front room and I think this drama does that. It gives me jelly belly just thinking about the situation so I hope people will be gripped and be thinking what would they do.

No Return airs on ITV at 9pm on Monday 7 February.



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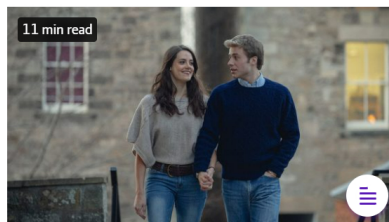
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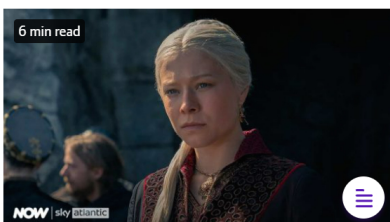
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