

By **EVA MILLETT**

TV weatherman and EastEnders Des Coleman has announced a new show – and it starts right here in his home city of Derby.

The production marks a return to theatre for Des, drawing on his performance background, engaging audiences through jazz music, swing music and storytelling. It opens at Derby Theatre on July 4.

“It feels like everything’s suddenly come together,” says Des. “I couldn’t have done this show without going through what I’ve been through... and the good thing about that is it’s all based around people having a great time, having fun when they come to see it and letting go.”

Backed by a 10-piece big band, the show blends swing classics with West End favourites, tracing Coleman’s remarkable journey from early jobs as a bin man and welder to a career in television and musical theatre.

The performance will explore key moments from his life, including time on EastEnders, surviving serious illness, and brushes with fame in Hollywood. Des draws on his experiences of working in the West End, attending Oscar parties, and recovering from life-threatening incidents.

“I’ve been doing musical theatre for years, in the West End and overseas,” says Des. “I just got to the stage where I thought ‘I’d love to do something that I think the people of Derby would enjoy.’

“I wanted to do it for my Mum because she’s getting on a bit now. I wanted to do something where I could be the person that produced it. I’ve got a wonderful team of ten musicians, and the songs are linked to my life story.

“Going through drama school to the incidents of me going into Eastenders and what songs that I was listening to and singing then, me being in trouble with the police, what was happening then, from when I was born, the songs that were, around then, what reminded me of when I was a kid.”

The musical theatre and jazz-inspired show takes audiences on a journey through Des’s life, featuring live storytelling, archive photographs, and interactive moments.

Having worked closely in collaboration with the production team at Derby Theatre, Des has been behind much of the design choices making his show the musical spectacle it promises to be.

After leaving school aged 16, Des initially worked as a welder before pursuing a career in performing arts, attending the Guildford School of Acting in Surrey.

Once he graduated, he worked on the musicals Chicago and Miss Saigon before being cast as Lenny Wal-

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DES COLEMAN TELLS IT ALL, GOOD AND BAD, IN HIS NEW SHOW

lace in Eastenders, remaining in the show until 1999.

“I remember the first audition I went for was Miss Saigon,” says Des.

“I walked in and I was completely naive. I didn’t know what to do.

I remember going to the front of the stage and going, ‘Hi, my name’s Des Coleman. I’m going to sing...’ and the pianist just went, ‘Go!’ and I was like, ‘Oh!’ I just started singing.

“And then they said thank you and I walked off. And I was like, what happened?”

Despite an uncertain first audition, the experience marked the start of Des’s professional stage career. He went on to appear

in major musicals, performing in the UK and abroad.

The show is structured around key events from his life, with each song selected to reflect a particular chapter, from training at drama school to his time on television, as well as more difficult periods including illness and legal challenges.

Des describes the production as a narrative-led performance designed to entertain while offering audiences an insight into the experiences that have shaped his life.

“I want them to sit and watch, but I want them to feel as though they can say something,” says Des.

“The fact that we’re singing different styles of songs is something else that adds a little bit of depth and colour. The fact that we’ll have some maybe pictures of me up there at

school or something, looking gawky teenager with big bloody teeth. That will add something else. The whole show’s been put together to try and fill the senses of sight and sound.

“I’m excited. Everything that’s happened in my life has been incorporated into the show. We’re coming back home, the people of Derby can come down and think ‘There’s a Derby lad. He’s done this and done that, and kissed a couple of girls and been in trouble,’ it will be great fun.”

Des’s transition into weather began when he was asked to do a weather report at the Broadcast Centre in Nottingham while working for BBC Radio Derby.

This led him to train as a weather presenter, and in 2007, he began presenting for East Midlands Today.

However, in 2010, Des was arrested and charged after it was claimed he had pointed an imitation firearm at another driver on the M1 in Buckinghamshire.

Des was cleared of the charges in 2011, after a judge criticised the prosecution for not checking the credibility of the witnesses, saying he had been “completely exonerated”. His accuser had convictions



Des with Patsy Palmer in EastEnders

Des Coleman pictured at a Derby Telegraph awards event and, right, a publicity image for his new show

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attended Littleover school before becoming a welder aged 16.

“You’ve always got to have a trade behind you,” says Des. “Way before the days of health and safety – your hands would be filthy, you’d eat a sandwich, and the blacker the sandwich, the more of a man you were. But I thought ‘flippin’ hell, do I really want to be doing this for the rest of my life? There’s got to be something out there more suited to me.”

Despite leaving Derby and attending acting school in Surrey, Des has always remained attached to his home, and is proud of the multiculturalism that’s always been welcomed in the city.

He recalls playing football with friends at Littleover school, kicking balls into Rolls-Royce and the release of the video game Space Invaders in 1978.

Des is hoping the interactive elements woven into his show will allow him to connect with the audience and potentially rediscover old friends or uncover memories.

“When it comes to a show I think the opening is really important,” says Des. “The first part is going to be really chatty. Finding out about the audience, where they’ve come from, all sorts. Allowing them to realise that they can break that fourth wall and speak back to me.

“I’m not saying it’s going to be raucous but I want when I ask people a question: ‘Where do you come from, guys?’ and for them to be able to answer back. It’s going to be great fun seeing where everyone’s from – Dovedale, Ashbourne, wherever. I just want the audience to feel totally at home, and like it’s a community from Derby together.”

Des hopes the show will resonate with audiences of all ages. From childhood memories in Littleover to West End theatres and national television, the performance encapsulates a lifetime of experience.

“It’s a celebration of the highs and the lows,” says Des. “It’s my story, told my way, and I can’t wait to share it with the people of Derby.”

■ Show dates: Fri, July 4, Derby Theatre; Sat, July 12, Coventry Albany Theatre; Fri, July 18, Tamworth Assembly Rooms; Sun, Sep 14, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall; Thu, Nov 6, Wolverhampton Grand

for so-called road-rage had tried to sell the story about the alleged attack to a national newspaper, the court heard.

Des lost his job as a BBC East Midlands Today weather presenter several months after he was charged.

The BBC said he had breached editorial guidelines by making a reference to his case on air, when he said: “You cannot believe everything you see or read.”

In 2016, he joined ITV News Central as a weather presenter. Since then, Des has also served as a guest weather presenter on ITV’s Good Morning Britain in September 2020 and August 2021.

While working in the Midlands as well as presenting on Good Morning Britain, Des would finish work in Birmingham at 7pm, arrive in London for around 11pm, before getting up at 3am to leave for work on GMB.

“You’ve got no time. You don’t sleep,” says Des. “You’re all energised at three, you get in the car, it takes you to the studio and when you get there everyone’s buzzing.

“They’ve all got caffeine, so you’ve got to energise. The show starts and it’s great because you’re focused for the first three hours.

“It goes up, six, seven, eight, nine – and then you come down, and you’re wanting to sleep because you’re tired, but you’re so wired you can’t sleep. So you’re just walking round London for hours to try and wind yourself down.”

After a successful career in acting and as a weather presenter, Des is excited to kick off his tour bringing it home to his roots, connecting with old friendly faces.

He grew up in Littleover and