



## ITV and ITV Studios announce new cast members as *Breathless* begins filming on location in London

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As the stylish and compelling new ITV medical drama, *Breathless*, begins filming in London, **Jack Davenport** (*Smash, Pirates of the Caribbean*) is joined by **Natasha Little** (*Kidnap and Ransom, Vanity Fair*), **Oliver Chris** (*One Man Two Guvnors, Green Wing*), **Zoe Boyle** (*Downton Abbey, Sons of Anarchy*), **Joanna Page** (*The Syndicate, Gavin & Stacey*), **Shaun Dingwall** (*Above Suspicion, Rock & Chips*), **Catherine Steadman** (*The Tudors, Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*), **Sarah Parish** (*Hatfields & McCoys, Monroe*), **Pippa Haywood** (*Mr Selfridge, Scott & Bailey*), and **Iain Glen** (*Game of Thrones, Prisoners Wives*).

Produced for ITV by ITV Studios, the drama follows the lives of a group of doctors and nurses working in a London hospital, a world in which everything and everyone has their place. But underneath the shiny veneer simmers a cauldron of lies, deception and guilty secrets, driven by love, ambition and sex.

*Breathless* has been co-created and written by Paul Unwin, who will also direct the first two episodes of the series. The other writers are Peter Grimsdale (the show's co-creator) and Simon Tyrrell (*Lightfields, Survivors*).

The series opens in 1961, a time when Britain was on the brink of the '60s revolution – abortion is illegal and the contraceptive pill is only just available to married women. Set in and around a busy Gynaecology unit, medicine becomes the perfect stage to play out the shifting and complex moral codes of early 1960s society.

Jack Davenport plays Otto Powell, a brilliant and charismatic surgeon, who passionately believes he can make a difference to women's lives, even if that means risking imprisonment under the abortion laws of 1961. Otto and his elegant wife, Elizabeth (Natasha Little), preside over the rich ensemble of characters – they are the beautiful people living the consumerist dream and the couple that the others aspire towards. But Otto and Elizabeth are hiding a devastating secret about their marriage - an event in their past which could shatter the careful illusion they have created.

Otto's oldest friend and closest colleague, Dr Charlie Enderbury (Shaun Dingwall), is an experienced anaesthetist who is married to ex-nurse Lily (Joanna Page). Together they share a warm and loving marriage and Charlie hopes for a promotion that will guarantee a better life for him and his wife.

But his hopes are dashed when newcomer Dr Mehta (Ronny Jhutti) is appointed Chair of Anaesthesiology and the couple struggle to keep up in the wake of their circle of friends. Charlie also holds another, far deeper burden – he alone knows the truth about Otto and Elizabeth.

Dr Richard Truscott (Oliver Chris), a junior consultant, oozes boyish confidence and charm in the face of his medical students and is constantly irritated by Otto's superiority. He is engaged to Jean (Zoe Boyle), a sensual and fiery nurse who is convinced her dream is to become a doting housewife living in the lap of luxury, but as an independent woman, Jean cannot always do what her husband expects of her.

New to London is Jean's sister Angela (Catherine Steadman), who arrives from Portsmouth to take up a job in the hospital. Angela is a dynamic and striking nurse with a strong moral sense who won't let her responsibilities be compromised. But when she meets the charismatic Otto Powell, she can't help feel an urge of temptation that she struggles to repress and no one has caught Otto's eye in years in the way that Angela has.

Breathless has been commissioned for ITV by Acting Director of Drama Commissioning Steve November.

"I'm delighted to be adding a new medical drama to our roster of returning series. Paul and Peter have created a compelling group of characters at a fascinating point in the history of the NHS" said Steve.

**Breathless** is produced by Jolyon Symonds (*Thorne*, *Complicit*). ITV Studios Kate Bartlett will executive produce the series with Paul Unwin, who is directing the first two episodes.

Kate Bartlett, executive producer for ITV Studios said: "**Breathless** is an exhilarating and charismatic character drama, set against a glamorous London backdrop. The medical stories and events are there to illuminate and complicate the lives of our key characters and 1961 is a fascinating time in which to explore the changing role of women in society."

ITV Studios Global Entertainment will distribute **Breathless** internationally.

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