



PAUL UNWIN - BREATHLESS

**What the papers are saying
at 20th November 2013**

“Show of the week... [Kate] Bartlett says Paul Unwin and the team always had multiple series and story arcs in mind and are set up to create more series.”

TBI Vision, 1st October 2013

“A successful show isn't just about compelling characters and plot. The styles and fashions that sashay across the screen can stamp a drama on our minds. And *Breathless*, ITV's new primetime medical drama starring Jack Davenport, know it. As TV editor Alison Graham writes in this issue, it's a sleek, polished aquamarine of a piece. But we'll have to watch to see whether there's substance beneath the undoubted style.”

Radio Times, Editor's Comment, 5th October 2013

“Stylish new drama... Pick of the day, Drama of the week... *Breathless* wears the sleek, undeniably attractive patina of the cult US drama *Mad Men*. It's set in 1961 and features a handsome, suave sexual conqueror at the top of his profession with a bored blonde trophy wife in the suburbs from whom he is emotionally estranged... *Breathless* is tremendously stylish, a brightly polished aquamarine of a drama, with hints of a substance that, I hope, won't take too long to emerge.

Radio Times, 5th October 2013

"Pick of the day... Glossy new drama... [Jack Davenport says]: 'Like all good mysteries, it reveals itself piece by piece...' A cross between *Mad Men* and *Call The Midwife*."

Total TV Guide, 5th October 2013

"HotList... *Call The Midwife* meets *Mad Men* in a stylish new drama."

TV & Satellite Week, 5th October 2013

"Don't miss!"

Inside Soap, 5th October 2013

"**** Boasts a strong cast."

Heat, 5th October 2013

"What do you get when you cross *Call The Midwife* with *Mad Men*?... stylish new drama series."

Closer, 5th October 2013

"Don't miss..."

Reveal, 5th October 2013

"*Mad Men* meets *Call The Midwife* in this glamorous new medical drama."

The Daily Telegraph, Review, 5th October 2013

"What to Watch... has a whiff of *Mad Men* about it. It aims to combine the stylish retro setting of the US series (or its British equivalent *The Hour*) – all sharp suits, vintage frocks and cigarette smoke – with the heart-warming storylines of *Call The Midwife*... A strong cast... soapily watchable."

The Daily Telegraph, Review, 5th October 2013

"Pick of the day... After all those series of *Heartbeat*, ITV should know a thing or two about a period drama set in the early 1960s. Happily *Breathless*... feels far more stylish than its predecessor."

The Guardian, 5th October 2013

"Colourful new drama, a cross between *Call The Midwife* and *Mad Men*."

The Times, Saturday Review, 5th October 2013

“Television choices... *Call The Midwife* and *Mad Men* are both obvious influences... Catherine Steadman is appealing as the young nurse struggling with the prospect of marrying a man she doesn't love.”

The Independent, Radar, 5th October 2013

“**** Stylish new medical drama... Jack Davenport is superb as Otto.”

The Daily Mail, Weekend, 5th October 2013

“**** Pick of the day... This new series gets off to a terrific start. In terms of plot and characterisation, this first episode is as gripping as a pair of forceps... This stylish series should easily win the ratings war over the next six weeks – and it thoroughly deserves to.”

The Daily Mail, Weekend, 5th & 10th October 2013

“Stylish new drama.”

Daily Express, Saturday Magazine, 5th October 2013

“**** Critic's Choice... glossy new 60s hospital drama.”

Daily Express, Saturday magazine, 5th October 2013

“Breathtaking new drama. Jack Davenport leads an all-star cast in ITV's must-see medical series... The stylish six-part drama boasts and impressive ensemble cast, including Joanna Page, Shaun Dingwall, Sarah Parish, Iain Glen, Zoe Boyle and Oliver Chris... 'I had said that I wasn't going to work for a year after having the baby, but then my agent sent me the scripts for *Breathless*. I loved the drama and the character. I was in that world anyway, with obstetricians and giving birth. But I realised that the medical side is just a backdrop. It's not the whole story by any means.'... this drama is sure to leave you breathless.”

Daily Express, Saturday magazine, 5th October 2013

“We love... Best TV... a smouldering, 1960s-set medical drama. A bit like *The Hour*, but with a hospital backdrop, the six-part series was penned by the creator of *Casualty*, yet is a far more stylish affair... The show boasts a stellar cast.”

The Daily Mirror, We Love Telly, 5th October 2013

“When the script for ITV's racy new medical drama *Breathless* landed on her doormat earlier this year, the last thing Joanna Page wanted to do was sign on to another show... 'I wasn't going to work for a year but then I read the script and loved it.”

The Sun TV magazine, 5th October 2013

“We suggest you make an appointment to see this 1960s-set drama.”

The Sun TV magazine, 5th October 2013

"Picks of the Day... *Breathless* is a rather jolly trip through the lives of the staff at a London Hospital in 1961... Its charm will leave you gasping for more."

The Sun TV magazine, 5th October 2013

"Choice... This sleek new series sets up future personal and professional flashpoints with a nurse knowing her surgeon fiance is not marrying her for love, an anaesthetist desperate for promotion, a suspicious detective and Davenport's surgeon, with an estranged trophy wife, drawn to a new nurse."

The Observer, 6th October 2013

"Pick of the week... A six-part drama with mainstream appeal set in and around a 1960s hospital. Period styling, narrative and the Don Draper-like character of surgeon Otto (Jack Davenport) call *Mad Men* to mind; and the setting (a gynaecology ward) and aspects of Catherine Steadman's nurse, Angela, shout *Call the Midwife*. Also present is a scene straight from *Casualty* but so, too are pointers towards a positive prognosis."

The Sunday Times, Culture, 6th October 2013

"Today's highlights... A strong cast includes two *This Life* alumni in Jack Davenport and Natasha Little, with solid support from Sarah Parish."

The Sunday Telegraph, Seven, 6th October 2013

"**** *Mad Men* meets *Call The Midwife* in a British medical drama that savours all the details of its early 1960s period.. a story full of intrigue, adultery and stylish clothes."

The Mail on Sunday, Event, 6th October 2013

"**** Beneath the neat, starched uniforms of Otto's London hospital are plots and secrets which will gradually be revealed over the series' six episodes. It's a headily watchable brew... looks promising for the coming weeks."

The Mail on Sunday, Event, 6th October 2013

"A cross between *Emergency – Ward 10* and *Mad Men*... 'I fell in love with the scripts and the role of Jean. At the time I was reading other scripts (Zoe has already appeared in US dramas *Gray's Anatomy* and *Sons of Anarchy*) and I felt saturated with them. Then this one landed and it was so brilliant. I immediately engaged with the time period and each character has intrigue and contradictions. There's such humour in it as well,' [Zoe Boyle] says."

The Sunday Express, 6th October 2013

“Stylish new medical drama... 'When I first started reading the script, I thought it was just another of those doctor shows, which aren't my thing. But very quickly I was like 'Wow... they've commissioned this? That's crazy – they would never have done that in the past.' Not so much hospital drama, more an expose of the secrets and lies of the 1960s.

The Sunday Express, S magazine, 6th October 2013

“We can't wait for *Breathless*.”

The Daily Star on Sunday, 6th October 2013

Get ready to be transported back in time, as this hospital drama starring Jack Davenport breathes new life back into the 60s.”

New!, 7th October 2013

“Stylish new medical drama... Dubbed ITV's answer to *Call The Midwife*, its glossy look is more akin to *Mad Men*.”

Woman's Weekly, 8th October 2013

“TV to make you... Better. *Mad Men* on meds or *Call the Midwife* in vintage mini skirts? The dashing Jack Davenport stars in this classy '60s hospital drama.”

Time Out, 8th October 2013

“Must-see TV... Fancy a medical drama with a difference? We reckon you'll love this... this series is full of sex, lies and ambition – the perfect ingredients for a night in front of the telly!”

Take a Break, 10th October 2013

“What to Watch. Hot on the heels of Channel 4's *Masters of Sex* comes a second drama about sex in the Sixties. And this, too, has a whiff of *Mad Men* about it. It aims to combine the stylish retro setting of the US series (or its British equivalent *The Hour*) – all sharp suits, vintage frocks and cigarette smoke - with the heart-warming storylines of *Call the Midwife*.... A strong cast includes two *This Life* alumni in Jack Davenport and Natasha Little with solid support from Shaun Dingwall, Joanna Page and Sarah Parish.”

The Daily Telegraph, 10th October 2013

“Watch this. After all those series of *Heartbeat*, ITV should know a thing or two about a drama set in the early 1960s. Happily, *Breathless*... feels far more stylish than its predecessor.”

The Guardian G2, 10th October 2013

“Critic's Choice. *Call the Midwife* and *Mad Men* are both obvious influences on a new hospital drama set in a gynaecology ward in 1961 London. Jack Davenport is the Don Draper

of the piece – a charismatic surgeon with a sideline in (then illegal) abortions – while Catherine Steadman is appealing as the young nurse struggling with the prospect of marrying a man she doesn't love.”

The Independent & i , 10th October 2013

“What does the snazzy new Sixties medical drama **Breathless** bring to our TVs apart from the delectable Jack Davenport? Which in itself is a feat, as he left these shores almost 10 years ago... Davenport says he was enticed by the script and the revelations made about “the facts of life” in the Sixties. This first episode jumps straight in... **Breathless** quickly grabs our attention with its intricate storyline. This is not the usual story-of-the-week medical series – not a *Munroe*. Instead, the battle to save lives takes second place to the battle with the social mores of the time... Amongst a bunch of strongly drawn characters Zoe Boyle stands out as theatre nurse Jean Meecher... Apart from such intrigue, the Sixties styling must also be admired. **Breathless** looks absolutely lovely – it takes our breath away. The graphics, the dresses, the settings both in hospital and in period homes are extravagant, colourful and a true delight after so many recent colour-drained affairs such as *The Fall*, *Peaky Blinders* and even – dare I mention- *Downton Abbey*... The calibre of the storytelling looks promising... with eight episodes [stet] planned the series appears to have enough material and budget to mature into a UK TV showpiece to savour... **Breathless** brings glamour, intrigue, and a dark story that reflects on the moral attitudes of our recent past. ”

The Independent, Art Blog, 10th October 2013

“What to Watch...Best Retro. Missing *Mad Men*? Well, get your stylish Sixties fix with this homegrown hospital romp, set in the same swinging era.”

The Sun, 10th October 2013

“Pick of the Day... This series gets off to a terrific start. In terms of plot and characterisation, this first episode is as gripping as a pair of forceps... This stylish series should easily win the ratings war over the next six weeks – and it thoroughly deserves to.”

The Daily Mail, 10th October 2013

“Picks of the Day. Over 13 episodes [sic] viewers are invited to share in the lives, loves, secrets, petty jealousies and malicious lies of the doctors and nurses. “

Daily Express, 10th October 2013

“What's Hot To Watch Today... ITV's stylish new six parter... **Breathless** isn't just trying to mimic the style of [*Mad Men*]... but also to weave gritty storylines around the very different attitudes, laws and lifestyles of 60s Britain.”

The Daily Star, 10th October 2013

“Being quite a shallow human being, I took one look at the distinctive 60s style of the whole thing... and thought, yeah, d’you know what, I’m going to slag this series off as a *Mad Men* rip off... But now that I’ve watched episode one again, properly this time – followed by previews of episodes two, three and four – I realise just what an ignorant ninny I was being. **Breathless** is, in fact, superb... What really matters is the substance. If superficial 60s snazziness were all **Breathless** had to offer us, the whole thing would have disintegrated within the first 20 minutes of episode one... Instead, it had me hooked. Britain was such a different place in 1961... [the characters] are having to deal with situations that seem fascinatingly alien to us.... Suffice to say this is another cracking ITV drama – as gritty as it is stylish. And rest assured, the best is yet to come.

The Daily Star, 10th October 2013

“If *Mad Men* were set in the gynaecology department of a London hospital it would look like this, with Jack Davenport as Otto Powell, the Don Draper of obstetrics, suavely performing secret abortions at a time when they were still illegal.”

The Daily Mirror, 10th October 2013

“Jack Davenport turns the charm factor up to the max as suave, brilliant surgeon Otto Powell, smoothest of smooth operators in what is, on the surface, a frothy saga of doctors and nurses in the early 1960s. But it’s not all flirtatious chat on the ward round – a shadowy subplot involving illegal abortions gives it a touch of muscle and there’s the suggestion of skeletons rattling in a few closets of the staff at the New London Hospital. With period style to spare and an engaging cast featuring Natasha Little, Oliver Chris and Catherine Steadman as a nurse who catches Powell’s wandering eye, **Breathless** could catch on.”

Metro, 10th October 2013

“[ITV Studios] coaxed buyers from their beds for an 8.15am Monday morning screening of **Breathless**. The room was packed. The latter has been compared to *Mad Men*, largely because of its early 1960s setting, but creator Paul Unwin has also weaved multiple storylines and a fair degree of complexity into the series. It’s a project he first mentioned to me a few years ago at a Directors UK event... and proves that talent and perseverance can be a powerful combination.”

Broadcast, 11th October 2013

“ITV’s new hospital drama set in the Sixties, **Breathless**, is the best looking British drama since *The Hour*. The nurses, led by Catherine Steadman and Zoe Boyle as a scrupulous and less-than-scrupulous pair of sisters, are pretty. The sets are stylish, not only the drawing rooms and clubs of the well-heeled but the poverty too... And its lead, Jack Davenport, is devilishly handsome... For older ITV viewers there is piquancy in seeing the era of

Emergency-Ward 10 revisited, in colour, from the perspective of social and interior design history. There is even a dash of *No Hiding Place* in the cocktail. An unpleasant police inspector on Otto's case... is played by Iain Glen in the same hat and moustache sported by Raymond Francis back then. Unlike Francis's Inspector Lockhart, however, we see 1961 with moral clarity. Without over-delineating it, the programme invites us to wince at the period's sexism, its attitude to mental illness and the organised hypocrisy of getting a nurse, who has just miscarried, to the altar on time because she won't get another chance to marry a surgeon."

The Times, T2, 11th October 2013

"It was very pleasant to watch. Writer and director Paul Unwin (whose 27-year stint on *Casualty* proves his medical credentials) gave us a drama perfectly pitched between *Mad Men* and *Call the Midwife*, from the characters' permanently rouged lips to the opulent décor, old London street scenes and mournful saxophone solos. The dialogue was witty, historically accurate and hinted at just enough repressed emotion that something explosive is sure to go off in the next installment. The period, too, was well-chosen."

The Daily Telegraph, 11th October 2013

"*Breathless* is good at that; the 60s kitchens, the dresses, the Brylcreem and the buses, the Austins and the Morrises, the drink-driving. Also at the paradoxes of the age – the looking both forwards and backwards, the rampant sex and rampant sexism, the shiny new NHS and the lingering stuffiness etc. It looks great, and it captures an age, a fascinating one – key elements in any period drama. Plus there are no screens or texting. You can forget the modern world for an hour."

The Guardian, 11th October 2013

"**** [four stars] Cads, E-Type Jags and naughty nurses... what a brilliant birth! Both [*Masters of Sex* and *Breathless*] had been billed as raunchier versions of *Mad Men*. But with so much slap 'n' tickle on telly this week, it was a relief to discover that *Breathless* owed much more to *Call The Midwife*... It could have been corny, if it had not had so much fun and flair about it. Oliver Chris, who was born to play cads, stole every scene in which he appeared with Davenport, like a cocky sixth-former mocking his indulgent head teacher... There was a lovely image of a suburban street after breakfast, with all the husbands kissing their housewives goodbye at the garden gates and driving off in a convoy of Hillmans and Fords. It was a beautifully choreographed shot, and a promising sign of things to come. This show is prepared to take pains."

The Daily Mail, 11th October 2013

“Early 1960s London is subtly drawn and Catherine Steadman’s Angela has the presence to bear the weight of being the show’s moral compass.”

Metro, 11th October 2013

“**** [four stars].”

Heat, 12th October 2013

“Your essential 7-Day Guide... The fabulous hospital drama starring Jack Davenport continues.”

Closer, 12th October 2013

“Closer’s Top TV. The fallout from last week’s fab opening episode continues.”

Closer, 12th October 2013

“Thursday Highlights. As long as there’s more of our favourite character, no-nonsense Matron (Diane Fletcher), and the brilliant Pippa Haywood as end-of-her-tether wife Valerie Smallwood, we’ll keep watching this stylish drama.”

TV Times, 12th October 2013

“**[Breathless]** was actually rather good. Characters have weird secrets and tell weird lies... There’s a whiff of sexual revolution in the air.”

The Times, Saturday Review, 12th October 2013

“This 1960s-set hospital drama is a super stylish, if deeply silly affair; more *Carry On Gynecologist* than *Mad Men*. But there’s no denying that it has confidence and that it looks very slick.”

The Times, Saturday Review, 12th October 2013

“Pick of the day. With its 1960s setting and ambiguous central character, **Breathless** may be marked out as a *Mad Men* clone, but strong performances and a sharp script more than compensate.”

The Guardian, The Guide, 12th October 2013

“TV Highlights.”

The Independent Radar, 12th October 2013

“**** [four stars] This stylish 1960s medical drama continues to impress with the quality of its performances and its attention to detail.”

The Daily Mail, Weekend, 12th October 2013

“**** [four stars] Pick Of The Day.”

The Daily Mail, Weekend, 12th October 2013

“Picks of the Day... Stylish sixties-set medical drama.”

The Sun, TV Magazine, 12th October 2013

“**** [four stars] Critic’s Choice.”

Daily Express, Saturday Magazine, 12th October 2013

“3 To See.”

The Daily Mirror, We Love TV, 12th October 2013

“**Breathless** is ITV’s big new 1960’s-set medical series starting this week... [Natasha Little] hopes viewers will be gripped just like the cast, who got restricted script access... ‘When the scripts were released, we were all really excited.’”

The Weekly News, 12th October 2013

“Davenport’s character, locked in a sham of a marriage, shows signs of depth and complexity. So too does Catherine Steadman, playing a young nurse caught between the repressions of the 1950s and the freedoms of the decade to come.”

The Week, 13th October 2013

“Choice... A stylish take on the birth of modern mores and a world of interior-design inspiration.”

The Sunday Times, Culture, 13th October 2013

“Today’s Highlights.”

The Sunday Telegraph, Seven, 13th October 2013

“Picks of the Day.”

The Observer, The New Review, 13th October 2013

“ITV 1’s slick new medical drama.”

Hello!, 14th October 2013

“This Week’s Top Telly.”

OK! Magazine, 15th October 2013

“OK, this could be complicated. If the BBC’s drama *The Hour* was an ersatz *Mad Men*, then what is ITV’s ***Breathless*** (Thursdays, 9pm)? It’s a pale imitation of a pale imitation, that’s what. Still, I liked it. No, scratch that: I loved it. You have to love a series whose writers’ pitch was clearly: “This is *Mad Men* on a budget with doctors and nurses.” The chutzpah of it! Also, the slight campness. “You’ll find London full of temptations,” says Matron Vosper (Diane Fletcher) to Angela Wilson (Catherine Steadman), a pert new nurse recently transferred from Portsmouth. “And this hospital is no exception. Try not to make a fool of yourself.” If Leslie Phillips had appeared from behind the nearest curtain, a part of me wouldn’t have been surprised.... I liked the way these relationships were drawn, the attention the writers (Paul Unwin and Peter Grimsdale) have given to social class: think of ***Breathless*** as a medical pyramid with Otto at the top. Ah, yes, Otto. Davenport, who can often be something of a plank on screen, is so well cast here: his expression when he told a newly married man that his wife was still, alas, *virgo intacta* was (to pinch those voice-overs he does for MasterCard) priceless, only the merest hint of a curl at the edges of his mouth. But beneath the smooth exterior – I’ve seen conkers and even silk handkerchiefs that look rougher – kindness lurks and perhaps a touch of righteousness. For by night, Otto dashes about London helping rich girls out by giving them illegal abortions. I’ve just written a book about this period and the way women’s lives were then, and although I don’t buy every detail in ***Breathless***... its heart seems pretty authentic to me. I’m glad the series acknowledges that not all terminations at this time were *Vera Drake* style backstreet; they weren’t. You just had to know the right people and be able to afford to put the right number of banknotes in the brown envelope. The pragmatism and low-level ruthlessness of its female characters is also just right: leftover Forties stoicism combining with late- Fifties glamour and consumerism to produce women whose placid, lipsticked exteriors tell only half the story. Like ducks, they sail along, all the while paddling furiously. They are fragrant opportunists, because they have to be. Their sisterliness lies, at this moment in history, in turning a blind eye to such things as a pregnancy before marriage. So, I will keep watching, in spite of the feeling that this is a copy of a copy. There’s something soothing about drama set in a time when so much went unsaid. And the clothes are fantastic, if, like me, you’re in the market for ogling paste earrings and a good swing coat.”

New Statesmen, 17th October 2013

“*Mad Men* meets *Call the Midwife*.”

Red magazine, 1st November 2013

“Curl up on the sofa and enjoy some great programmes... our fave [is ***Breathless***].”

Essentials, 1st November 2013

“What to Watch... This glossy Sixties-set medical drama has captured a fascinating age with Jack Davenport on characteristically louche form as the suave gynaecological surgeon Otto Powell.”

The Daily Telegraph, Review, 26th October, The Sunday Telegraph, Seven, 27th October & The Daily Telegraph, 31st October 2013

“Pick of the day.”

The Guardian, Guide, 26th October 2013

“Picks of the Day... Golly gosh, as a character from this 1960s-set period drama might say. Isn't Natasha Little just an absolute pip as desperate housewife Elizabeth, who's under increasing pressure?”

The Sun, TV Magazine, 26th October 2013

“3 to see.”

The Daily Mirror, We Love TV, 26th October 2013

“**** [four stars] guide to the week's TV... Episode four (of six) of the tremendously stylish series in which everyone has something to hide.”

Daily Mail, Weekend, 26th October 2013

“**** [four stars] Pick of the Day... the addictively soapy series continues.”

Daily Mail, Weekend, 26th October & Daily Mail 31st October 2013

“***** [five stars] Critic's Choice.”

Daily Express, Saturday Magazine, 26th October 2013

“Today's Highlights.”

The Sunday Telegraph, Seven, 27th October 2013

“What's Hot To Watch Today.”

Daily Star, 31st October 2013

“TV Pick.”

City AM, 31st October 2013

“Your easy guide to TV.”

TV Easy, 2nd November & 9th November 2013

“Thursday Highlights. This series has always packed a punch in the style stakes, but tonight it begins to deliver some substance too... as the Otto-Elizabeth-Mulligan storyline gets even more tangled.”

TV Times Magazine, 2nd November 2013

“**** [four stars].”

Heat, 2nd November 2013

“Watch this... Small plot niggles aside, *Breathless* has got better as it's gone on. The penultimate episode, which also has Charlie going for a job interview and Angela pondering a big decision, sets things up neatly for the season finale.”

The Guardian, G2, 7th November 2013

“Looks fantastic.”

The Daily Telegraph, 7th November 2013

“Critic's choice.”

Independent, i, 7th November 2013

“Critics' Choice... Never a dull moment.”

Daily Mail, 7th November 2013

“Picks of the Day.”

Daily Express, 7th November 2013

“What's Hot To Watch Today... It's the last-but-one instalment tonight of ITV's brilliant drama *Breathless*.”

Daily Star, 7th November 2013

“TV Pick.”

City AM, 7th November 2013

“Angela of the dazzling smile... this romance is about all that remains of light relief in a drama that has grown so much darker. The plight of the spirited Margaret (Sarah Parish), dying from inoperable cancer, is moving enough. But with both Jean and her unfaithful husband Richard appearing at the bedside, the scenes became downright tear-jerkers... On the sunny side, my favourite scene has to be the fountains in Battersea Park lake, as Powell gallantly removes his jacket and wades in to retrieve Mr Meacher, (a touching Finbar Lynch), Angela's demented dad... *Breathless* continues to steer its mischievous course between conventional society and the changes introduced by increasing control of human reproduction and the entry of women into the working world. Co-creator Paul Unwin acknowledges the influence of Todd Haynes' 2002 film *Far From Heaven*, which focused on the effects of race and

homosexuality on American society in the post-war era. But Unwin also adopts *Far From Heaven's* more melodramatic style, in which characters tend to be larger-than-life, their hairstyles, make-up and wardrobe immaculate and colourful, and the composition of the scenes artfully structured. This week I was struck by the camera shot looking down on the disconsolate Jean and Richard in their dark blue bed, and by Jean with her flaming red hair sashaying around town in contrasting green and yellow coats. Such styling now seems American rather than British, though these features were not uncommon in the early years of British colour TV before social realism dominated our screens. The plights of Jean, Richard and Margaret, the “shame” of Angela’s dad, and the dashed hopes of Lily Enderby all stirred my emotions – despite being delivered without a “gritty realist” wrapping.”

The Independent, 8th November 2013

“**** [four stars].”

Heat, 9th November 2013

“Closer’s Top TV.”

Closer, 9th November 2013

“Picks of the day.”

What’s on TV, 9th November 2013

“Your easy guide to TV.”

TV Easy, 9th November 2013

“TV highlights... This glossy, Sixties-set hospital drama concludes and beneath the well-executed veneer it’s been enjoyably soapy stuff. Tonight the hospital hosts a lavish fundraiser and Mulligan (an excellent Iain Glenn) forces Otto (Jack Davenport) to face up to his past.”

The Daily Telegraph, 14th November 2013

“Pick of the day... The last episode of this addictively involving series finds everyone at the hospital congregating for a fundraiser and beauty pageant, starring (much to the doctors’ delight) reluctant, swimwear-clad nurses... Of course, there’s more, much more – but that would be telling. Let’s hope series two is in the pipeline.”

Daily Mail, 14th November 2013

“Picks of the day.”

Daily Express, 14th November 2013

“What’s hot to watch today... It’s the final part tonight of ITV’s brilliant drama *Breathless*... with some suitably shocking revelations. It also does a fine job in (a) throwing light on the mysteries of the previous five episodes, and (b) chucking in enough twists to have us gagging for series two.”

Daily Star, 14th November 2013

“What to watch... Best Finale... This Sixties medical drama has at times relied more on style than substance but if you have followed the various messed-up couples’ antics, you will want to see the finale. Things reach fever pitch where creepy Mulligan is concerned.”

The Sun, 14th November 2013

“TV Pick.”

City Am, 14th November 2013

“The last episode of *Breathless* is not only a ravishing reflection of the zeitgeist of the Sixties, but also delivers some wonderfully interwoven storytelling. While the doctors and wives fight their corners against the expectations of spouses and society at large, scenes from one plotline make sly comments on what is happening in another.

“The opener is a real treat: a tongue-in-cheek look at the hospital staff gala, where the nurses parade in their swimsuits - for a good cause, all agree. Scarcely time to finish the champagne before the first life or death situation arrives on a trolley for gynaecologist Richard Truscott, which interweaves with a dilemma of the heart for his boss Otto Powell, and with Lily catching husband Charlie Enderby in last week’s blatant lie. Phew! – that’s the first 10 minutes, but the drama cranks a couple of notches higher when the odious Ch Insp Mulligan discovers Otto at the Meacher’s house.

“The performances of Jack Davenport and Iain Glen are to savour as they face off for the first time this series. What tortures Mulligan is that he is a pillar of society compared with Powell, but will always be thought inconsequential next to him. Why don’t people respect him as they do this cheat? Alas, he doesn’t have Powell’s bearing – his touch of class...

“Oh where is light relief to be had? At the funeral of course – simply everyone turns up for Margaret’s “indie” funeral, again wonderfully set in the Brompton Cemetery with a gospel singing guitarist...

“Only as the credits rolled did I realise how claustrophobic the hour had been, trapped in a society which so obviously suppressed the behavior and ambitions of both men and women.

“**Breathless** has brought something new to our TV screens – a modern ensemble melodrama as an aesthetic experience, which immerses viewers in the oppressive yet somehow delightful reality of our recent past. Which is within living memory for many of us, unlike BBC2’s *Parade’s End* set almost 50 years earlier. In both, the heroes are caught between marital misery and the hope of true love, but the morally hamstrung Tietjens (Benedict Cumberbatch) is the more improbable, less sympathetic character. It’s hard not to feel empathy with Davenport’s Powell, as he sits across the table from his wife, contemplating his fate.

“Nor is **Breathless** the “UK’s *Mad Men*” – there are important differences in both style and content. *Mad Men* focuses on Don Draper’s life and the sharp dialogue of its characters, whereas **Breathless** is an ensemble piece with carefully crafted visuals, relying more on “what is not said.” *Mad Men*’s world is that of the office and advertising, while **Breathless** visits medical matters in the hospital only occasionally. The social milieu provides a background for *Mad Men* but is the raison d’être of **Breathless**.

“Two and a half million is a fair audience figure for an ITV series that is by no means comfort viewing – and significantly higher than that of *Parade’s End*. Next year, in the company of other masochists, I would hope to be watching the Powells, Enderbys and Truscotts once more struggle with their private and professional predicaments, as the changes brought by the Sixties swirl around them.

Independent Arts Blogs, 19th November 2013