



## **1. Bali 2002 Press Release**

ITVX confirms that Bali 2002, the new series that explores the terrorist attacks on the Indonesian island 20 years ago, will stream exclusively on ITVX from 16th March. Bali 2002 is an inspiring and emotional four-part drama that explores how everyday heroes from Bali, Australia and beyond, defied the odds to bring order from chaos and hope from despair during the 2002 Bali bombings.

Co-produced by Banijay labels Endemol Shine Australia and Screentime for Stan and 9Network in Australia, and distributed internationally by Banijay Rights, the series was developed in consultation with those directly impacted by the tragedy.

On October 12, 2002, the island paradise of Bali was shattered by a terrorist attack on two of Kuta Beach's busiest nightclubs. Both the local Balinese, and international tourists scrambled to escape, to rescue the injured and to comfort the dying. Australian and Indonesian authorities not only mobilised to evacuate survivors and identify victims, but to hunt down those responsible.

Amidst this chaos, heroes arose to defy the odds from the most unlikely places and cultures united in the search for healing, justice and- meaning.

Bali 2002 features a stellar cast led by AACTA Award-winner Rachel Griffiths (Total Control, The Wilds), Richard Roxburgh (Catherine The Great, The Crown), Claudia Jessie (Bridgerton), Sean Keenan (Glitch, Wake In Fright), Ewen Leslie (Pieces Of Her, The Luminaries), Srisad Saccpraseuth (Mystery Road, The Code), Arka Das (Top Of The Lake, Lion) and newcomer Sri Ayu Jati Kartika.

## **2. Series Outline**

12th October 2002, the island of Bali is shattered by a terrorist attack on two of Kuta Beach's busiest nightclubs.

Local Balinese and the mainly Australian and British tourists scramble to rescue the injured and comfort the dying. Australian and Indonesian authorities mobilise to evacuate survivors, identify victims and investigate what really took place. Amidst this chaos, heroes arise from the most unlikely places and cultures unite in the search for healing, justice and meaning.

Victims struggle to rebuild their broken lives as the Indonesian and Australian security forces face a clear and present danger – they must work together to capture the terrorists before they strike again. But even if justice can be achieved, can it bring true healing and redemption?

## **3. Episode Descriptions**

### **Episode 1 – Island of the Gods**

On the night of October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2002, two suicide bombs rip through Paddy's Bar and the Sari Club in Kuta, Bali. Many are killed and even more badly injured, including local Balinese and tourists from around the world. Among the injured are UK citizen Polly Miller, who is recently married and on her honeymoon, and Australians Nicole McClean, Jason McCartney and Jono Liddel.

First responders and volunteers race to the crime scene, desperate to help and to extinguish the huge fires that have been ignited by the bombs as, on the outskirts of Kuta, a young Balinese mother, Ni Luh Erniarti, begins to worry that her husband, Gede, has not returned from work at the Sari Club.

Hundreds of injured people are transported in cars, trucks and ambulances to the medical clinics and hospitals in and around the Balinese capital, Denpasar. Most of the most severely injured end up in Sanglah hospital which is overwhelmed by the number of patients who are desperately in need of care. Among the volunteer medics who come to offer whatever help they can are Australian doctors Vijith Vijayasekaran ("Vij") and his wife, Priya, who have been holidaying in Bali.

The Australian Defence Force is sent to evacuate the injured and repatriate them to Australian hospitals. A makeshift triage system is implemented to make sure the most badly injured are transported first. Nicole McClean, Polly Miller and Jono Liddel are among them. Jason McCartney gives up his place in favour of patients in greater need.

Australian Federal Police Commander, Graham Ashton, is called upon to lead a contingent of Australian police being sent to Bali to investigate what happened and who is responsible. Meanwhile, Ni Luh Erniarti begins searching for her beloved husband, of whom no trace can be found.

## **Episode 2 – From the Ashes**

A few years before the Bali bombings, burns specialist Fiona Wood and her colleague, Marie Stoner, develop a new treatment for treating burn victims – spray-on skin. There is scepticism among Fiona's peers about the effectiveness of this treatment, but she is confident that it not only works but works extremely well.

When the suicide bombings occur in Kuta in 2002, young Australian surfer Jono Liddel and his friend, Danni Maestri, are caught in the blasts and taken to Sanglah Hospital in Denpasar for treatment. Danni appears to be the more badly injured of the two, but Jono does his best to keep Danni's spirits up as they await evacuation and are treated by Doctor Vij and Balinese medicos. Vij contacts Fiona, his colleague at Royal Perth Hospital, and tells her to prepare for the admission of many more patients than the burns unit is equipped to accommodate. Fiona acts immediately. She puts her busy family life on hold and goes about securing the equipment and human resources she knows will be required for the big job ahead.



On the other side of Australia, doctors work hard to save the lives of Polly Miller and Nicole McClean, both of whom have been badly burned in the blasts. Supported by family and friends, they fight for their lives.

Meanwhile in Bali, Graham Ashton is reacquainted with his erstwhile colleague, Balinese police chief General Made Pastika. Together they and their respective teams of investigators painstakingly piece together the sequence of events that led to the suicide bombings. But there is tension between the two investigative teams as issues of jurisdiction and responsibility emerge.

After searching desperately and unsuccessfully for her beloved husband, Ni Luh begins to understand that Gede is probably never coming home. She faces difficult questions from her oldest son about what happened to his father - questions she cannot answer.

Jono and Danni, along with twenty-six other victims of the bombings, are admitted to Royal Perth Hospital under the care of Fiona and her team, including Doctor Vij who has returned to work tired but keen to continue helping to save as many lives as possible. Fiona's and Marie's spray-on skin treatment is quick and effective and Danni's condition improves. But Jono's condition deteriorates and the difficult decision is made to amputate his legs.

The Australian and Indonesian police get a break in the investigation when they find a motorbike, used to transport two of the bombers to the crime scene, parked beside a local mosque.

At Royal Perth Hospital, most of the Bali bombing victims recover quickly, thanks to the revolutionary spray-on skin treatment. But Jono is not so lucky. Despite the best efforts of Fiona and her team his life is unable to be saved. Devastated by Jono's death, Fiona takes a moment to quietly appreciate the good fortune of having her large, supportive family.

### **Episode 3 – Operation Alliance**

Professional AFL footballers, Jason McCartney and Mick Martyn are in Paddy's Bar discussing their performances in the season just gone, and their prospects in the season ahead, when a suicide bomber walks into the bar and detonates the bomb strapped to his chest. Chaos and mayhem ensues and Jason is badly injured. After being airlifted to Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, it becomes apparent that Jason may not survive his injuries.

The Australian and Indonesian investigative teams continue their work, piecing together the forensic clues left behind by the bombings. Within days, they realise that the blasts were caused by suicide bombs and, following the evidence trail that led to the motor bike being left at the mosque, trace the van used in the bombings to three brothers in Java – Amrozi, Imron and Mukhlis. The idea that this was an act of homegrown terrorism is a big political problem for the Indonesian government and, in turn, for Made Pastika and his team.

Nicole McLean's condition improves but her injured right arm cannot be saved. She is informed that her arm must be amputated if she is going to survive. Luke Beasley, with



whom Nicole has a nascent romantic relationship, is determined to stay by her side while Natalie Goold, who survived the blasts and pulled Nicole to safety, is protective of her friend's emotional wellbeing.

Jason McCartney survives his injuries to the great relief of his fiancé, Nerissa, but he has a long road back to full recovery. Despite the obvious challenges, Jason is determined to play football again in honour of all the football players who were killed in Bali. Nerissa is concerned that he is prioritising football over his own health.

Ni Luh is finally given a small box of her husband's remains after it becomes apparent that he was obliterated by the Sari Club blast. Ni Luh's Hinduism dictates that she must cremate Gede's remains in order to release his spirit to the Gods but she is almost destitute and has no money for the cremation.

Jason goes through tough rehabilitation and a gruelling training regime, leaning on his friend Mick Martyn, to regain his match fitness. Despite Nerissa's concerns for his health, Jason finally makes a triumphant return to the football field, playing for his beloved North Melbourne Kangaroos. The nation stands and applauds his courage when he scores a goal in this, his last ever professional game.

Amrozi, Imron and Mukhlas are arrested in Java but it soon becomes clear that they were only foot soldiers in the terrorist attack. Interrogation of Imron leads Graham Ashton and Made Pastika to the organiser of the bombings, Imam Samudra, who reveals that the bomb maker – an academic named Doctor Azahari – is still at large.

#### **Episode 4 – Restoring the Balance**

A week after the terrorist bombings in Kuta Beach, Polly Miller wakes in a Brisbane Hospital to find her deeply relieved mother by her side. Polly's mother has the heart-breaking task of telling her daughter that Dan, her husband of just five weeks, and eight of her friends were all killed in the blasts. She is the only person from her group of friends who survived.

Determined not to let her loss overwhelm her, Polly returns to work in London on the eve of the bombers' trial in Bali. She has no interest in the fate of the men who turned her life upside down and puts all her energy into her work.

There are tense and chaotic scenes in Denpasar as Amrozi, Imron, Mukhlas and Samudra are led into the courthouse for their trial. Having caused so much harm to the local community, the Balinese are very angry with the bombers – none more so than Ni Luh Erniarti who explodes in fury at the defiant terrorists and is asked to leave the court.

Bambang Priyanto, a Balinese Muslim who helped to rescue many people from the wreckage of the bombings gives a tearful impact statement to the court and accuses the bombers of betraying Islam.



In Melbourne, Nicole McClean is coming to terms with life without her right arm. Luke Beasley refuses to leave Nicole alone, despite being told to go and live his life without her. Luke declares his love for Nicole and she realises she has found the love of her life.

The Australian and Indonesian police continue their work, tracking down Dr Azahari to a small town in Java. When he is cornered by Indonesian police in a crowded market with a bomb in his backpack, he is allowed to escape in order to save more innocent lives. Graham Ashton is forced to defend the reputation of the Indonesian police when the Australian government questions the Indonesians' commitment to Azahari's capture.

Despite her best efforts, Polly Miller finds it increasingly difficult to put the trauma of the bombings behind her. When she sees Hanabeth Luke, a survivor of the bombings, confront Tony Blair on national television over the wisdom of the Iraq invasion, Polly begins to feel like she can never escape the past. And when she starts seeing apparitions of her dead husband, Dan, she realises she must change her life if she is ever going to recover emotionally.

With the help of Bambang Priyanto and several other women who were widowed by the Bali bombings, Ni Luh starts a sewing co-op and, with the money she is able to earn, finally lays her husband to rest in a cremation ceremony, releasing Gede's spirit to the Gods.

Dr Azahari is finally surrounded by an Indonesian task force in a Javanese safe house where he is preparing more bombs. In a deadly shoot out, Azahari is killed. Back in Australia, Graham Ashton is deeply upset by the idea that the Australian government may have been warned about the possibility of the bombings and took no action to warn its own citizens.

#### **4. Character Descriptions**

##### **Polly Miller played by Claudia Jessie**

Go-getting, successful equity trader. Polly is deeply committed to her husband, Dan, and together they adore Bali, the place where they fell in love. Polly is a focused and determined woman, alive to all opportunities around her. She is ambitious, gregarious, makes friends easily and is very close to her parents, particularly her mother, ROSEMARY. Polly's positivity and optimism is turned on its head when she is badly injured in the Bali bombings and nine of her closest friends – including her husband Dan – are killed. The grief that affects Polly as a result of the bombings is profound and Rosemary's support is vital to her recovery.

##### **Fiona Wood played by Rachel Griffiths**

Brilliant plastic surgeon and burns specialist. Elegant, disciplined and a high achiever in her field. She is a medical pioneer while also being a mother of six. Fiona has an opportunity to apply her revolutionary "spray-on skin" when 28 burns patients arrive from Bali for treatment at Royal Perth Hospital, despite the misgivings of some of her peers. The cost of her awe-inspiring success is that her attention is regrettably often diverted from her children's lives.



Fiona's impressive professional composure covers a deep love for her family, which is the constant driving force behind her work.

**Graham Ashton played by Richard Roxburgh**

Australian Federal Police Commander, loving father and husband. Ashton is sharp, diligent and fluent in Indonesian, a quick thinker and adaptable to the most difficult of circumstances. His colleagues hold Ashton in high regard, and he manages his team with professional and personal care. Despite his professionalism, the emotional magnitude of the calamity doesn't escape him. Ashton is a big picture thinker, and must navigate the diplomatic minefield involved in running a police investigation on Indonesian soil.

**Jason McCartney played by Graham Ashton**

Professional AFL footballer. Work oriented and focused, Jason is in Bali to relax and plan the next steps in his career having just had a disappointing playing year. Life changes forever when he's caught in the bombing blasts and suffers severe second degree burns to over 50% of his body. His fierce focus on redeeming himself as a player only makes him more determined to get back on his feet and recover from his injuries. This single mindedness can sometimes be to his own detriment, but his sheer determination and the support of his fiancée helps him to recover and succeed.

**General I Made Mangku Pastika played by Srisacd Sacdpraseuth**

Balinese police chief and lead investigator in the Bali bombings. A loyal Hindu, Pastika is a composed, intelligent leader who thinks before acting. Pastika is revered in society and greatly respected by both his Indonesian and Australian colleagues alike. He is able to manage a combined Indonesian/Australian investigation while being sensitive to the different policing styles that the two teams bring to the investigation.

## **5. Cast Biographies**

**Claudia Jessie - Polly Miller**

Claudia Jessie is an English actress, best known for her role as series regular Eloise Bridgerton in hit Netflix period drama Bridgerton, which she will reprise for series 2 in Spring 2022. Prior to this, Claudia was seen as Amelia, opposite Olivia Cooke, in ITV/Amazon series Vanity Fair, as Nessa in BBC Two's Defending the Guilty, as DC Jodi Taylor in award-winning BBC's Line of Duty. She has also had roles in BAFTA-winning Call the Midwife, Channel 4/Netflix's Lovesick, Josh Widdicombe's BBC Three sitcom Josh and Doctor Who.

Outside of her professional life, Claudia is a Brand Ambassador for Barnardos UK, heading their Look Good, Do Good campaign.

**Rachel Griffiths - Fiona Wood**

Rachel Griffiths is a multi-award winning Australian actor and content maker. After making her debut in the iconic Muriel's Wedding, her film credits include The Rookie, Blow, Hacksaw Ridge and Hilary & Jackie for which she was nominated for an Academy Award.



In television, Rachel starred in the acclaimed HBO series *Six Feet Under*, *Brothers & Sisters* and Amazon's *The Wilds*. In 2018 she directed and produced *Ride Like a Girl*, the highest grossing Australian film of the year. Recently she co-created, EP'd and starred in the political drama *Total Control* recently completing its second season.

This year Rachel executive produced her first factual series also hosting ABC's - *Finding the Archibald*. She was awarded an AM order of Australia last year and currently sits on the board of ACMI, the world's leading museum of the moving image, and also acts as Patron of Bus stop films and an ambassador for the Melbourne international film festival.

### **Richard Roxburgh - Graham Ashton**

Award-winning actor Richard Roxburgh has worked on stage and screen around the world. His film credits include *Moulin Rouge*, *Doing Time for Patsy Cline*, *Mission Impossible II*, *Oscar & Lucinda*, *Thank God He Met Lizzie*, *Children of the Revolution*, *The Turning (Reunion)*, *Matching Jack*, James Cameron's action adventure film *Sanctum*, Mel Gibson's *Hacksaw Ridge*, the adaptation of Tim Winton's novel *Breath* and Sue Brooks' *Looking for Grace*.

Most recently Richard has appeared in feature films *Danger Close* with Travis Fimmel, *Angel of Mine* with Noomi Rapace and Yvonne Strahovski, *Go!* opposite Frances O'Connor and Dan Wyllie and *H is for Happiness*, with Miriam Margolyes, Emma Booth and Deborah Mailman.

Richard's well-known television credits include the role of Cleaver Greene in the ABC hit series *Rake*, which he also co-created, co-wrote and produced. His brilliant performance earned him a TV Week Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Actor and the 2012 AACTA Award for Best Actor in a Television Series. His performance in the role of Prime Minister Bob Hawke in Channel TEN's telemovie *Hawke* earned Richard critical acclaim along with his award-winning electrifying portrayal as the notorious Roger Rogerson in the ABC's controversial mini-series *Blue Murder*. The 2017 sequel *Blue Murder: Killer Cop* earned him a Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama nomination at the 2017 AACTA Awards. Recently he can be seen in the SBS mini-series *The Hunting* opposite Asher Keddie and Pamela Rabe and alongside Helen Mirren in the HBO/Sky UK Miniseries *Catherine the Great*. For the ABC he collaborated with Somersault director Cate Shortland on the two-part drama series *The Silence* and *East of Everything*, where he played the lead role of Art Watkins.

Most recently, Richard appeared in Netflix television series *The Crown* as Bob Hawke. Richard is an accomplished director. His debut film, *Romulus, My Father*, starring Eric Bana drew critical acclaim when it was released in 2007.

In theatre, Richard has shared the stage with some of Australia's finest actors including Cate Blanchett,

Hugo Weaving, Jacki Weaver and John Bell. He appeared on stage in the critically hailed *The Present*, an adaptation of Chekhov's *Platonov*, at the Sydney Theatre Company and on





Broadway. The Present continued his association with Cate Blanchett, with whom he also appeared as the title character in STC's hugely successful production of Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, directed by Tamas Ascher. The play had a revival at the Kennedy Center in Washington in 2011. The play was remounted at Lincoln Centre New York for Sydney Theatre Company in 2012. Additional stage credits include Waiting for Godot (including a critically acclaimed 2015 tour to the Barbican, London), Toy Symphony, The Seagull, Hamlet (Company B) and Closer (Sydney Theatre Company).

### **Sean Keenan - Jason McCartney**

Sean Keenan made his screen debut at the age of fourteen in Lockie Leonard, playing the title role of the 26-part children's series based on Tim Winton's novels. He then starred in the award-winning Australian drama series Puberty Blues (Season 1 and 2), opposite Dan Wyllie and Claudia Karvan. Sean's other television credits include Cloudstreet, Dance Academy, Glitch (Series 1, 2 and 3), Hunters, Hoges, Newton's Law and Wake in Fright.

Sean's film credits include Strangerland opposite Nicole Kidman and Hugo Weaving, Australia Day, Hard Target 2, Is This the Real World, Drift, Nim's Island, The True History of the Kelly Gang, alongside Thomasin McKenzie, Essie Davis and Nicholas Hoult, and most recently in Jane Campion's The Power of the Dog and Justine Kurzel's Nitram.

For his performance in Wake in Fright, Sean was nominated for an AACTA award for Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama. Sean's other accolades include a Logie Award Nomination for Most Outstanding New Talent, an AFI Nomination for the Young Actor's Award and was an AIF Heath Ledger Scholarship Finalist in 2016.

Sean also stars in the ABC series Barons.

### **Srisacd Saccpraseuth - General I Made Mangku Pastika**

Srisacd Saccpraseuth was born in Laos. He came to Australia with his family as refugees. He graduated from Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA).

His film roles include Michael James Rowland's award-winning film debut Lucky Miles, Thank God he Met Lizzie and the telemovie Answered by Fire.

Recent TV credits are Mystery Road, Reef Break (US), The Code, Maximum Choppage, Wonderland, The Straits, Spirited and East West 101.

His recent theatre credits include Sydney Theatre Company's Australian Graffiti.

## **6. Claudia Jessie**

### **Who is Polly and what is her role in the story?**

Polly Miller, as she's called in the series, is a businesswomen who is newly married for five weeks. She and her husband fly out to Bali, a place they've been to before which they loved,





and unthinkable they get caught up in the tragic events that took place in 2002. The real Polly [Polly Brooks] was the only person in her group to survive.

**Did you meet Polly Brooks before or during filming?**

No, mainly because of Covid restrictions, but we spoke on Zoom and texted and emailed each other. We ended up spending a good few hours on a Zoom call. I can imagine Polly gets asked questions a lot and has to relive things about that time, and I didn't want her to have to do that again. I basically said to her 'Tell me what you do want to see and tell me what you don't want to see'. Those were the only two specific questions I asked and the rest was us getting to know each other.

She's an incredibly funny, quick-witted and very successful businesswoman who I get along with incredibly well. We connected really nicely. I think we've both got a bit of a dark sense of humour, which we discovered quite quickly. She's also such a cool person.

**What attracted you to this project?**

Getting to tell a true story feels like a rare opportunity, for me at least. I've never done it before. And with it being the 20th anniversary when the show aired in Australia, I knew how much it would mean to people. Australia is such an isolated place and Bali is like their go-to for holidays. Alongside what it would mean to people, it's rare that you get to tell true stories. As I say, it certainly has been for me in my career so far and I would have deeply regretted not seizing on such a fantastic opportunity to play such an incredible woman.

It's an interesting project to talk about. It's so different to anything I've had to speak about before because, given the nature of the story, we all wanted it to be good. It was handled with so much respect across the whole project from start to finish.

**Were you already familiar with the Bali bombings?**

I knew about them but not in great detail. These horrific events happen throughout our lives and we've seen so many. I'm 33 and there are things I look back on like 9/11, the London attacks on the tube and the bus, and the Paris attacks. The Bali bombings didn't feel as plastered across the backdrop of my life as much as something like 9/11, which felt closer to home. My mum and family friends had more of an understanding of the Bali attacks through experience and memory, whereas it was something I looked into more and learned more about once I discovered I had the role.

**Were there things you were surprised to learn about the attacks and their aftermath?**

All of it. It's hard to express how awful it was. The strategy of how they intended to hurt and kill people was awful to learn - the first bomb and the second bomb and how they planned to get people out into the streets in order to have the van detonate another bomb. With any of these horrific things that happen, it's so unthinkable that anyone would want to cause such harm to others. Coming to terms with that is always hard.

**How was it stepping into the recreation of the Sari Club, where the real Polly was seriously injured and her husband and friends were killed?**



The scene that stayed with me most is after the bomb has been detonated. We have the build-up of them having a wonderful evening, not expecting anything like this to happen, then there's the scene after that. It was night shoots and the rain was really awful at that time in Australia, so I remember being really cold. It was very choreographed for safety but when the cameras started rolling and we did the first take, a lot of us were crying because it was so horrific. You really throw yourself into it and we were so shaken after that first take.

Again it was that thing of 'We want to do our best and we want it to be good'. Seeing the set it was like 'This looks incredible' but then you go 'Oh no' because you know what is going to happen. As a team you want to be respectful and to be as true to it as possible.

### **How tough was it for you doing the hospital scenes?**

I kind of hate talking about acting techniques but I think I'm more of an instinctive and responsive actor. That's my first gear; it's where I'm always at. So with the sets and the supporting artists and the hair and make-up, when you go into that room it feels like 70% of the work has been done for you. It felt quite smooth for me to be able to respond to it in the performance that you see and how I played Polly.

She's in so much pain but adrenaline is there and adrenaline removes pain, as does pain medication. It's a lot to get across so sometimes you have to do a little bit less, I think. But Peter Andrikidis is such a warm director. He's got to be one of the best people I have ever worked with; I adore him. He was always so supportive of those spaces as well and he was keen to talk with me about any concerns I had. But like I say, a lot of it was there for me as I was wheeled into the room.

### **More than two decades later, why do you feel this is an important story to tell?**

There's that saying about if you don't know history then you're destined to repeat it. What we wanted was to show the heart of these heroes who were lost or lived through it. We're so capable of either/or, by which I mean we are so capable of either altruism or destruction. You see a microcosm of that in how people behave online towards each other. When you're in the comfort of your car you feel like you can shout anything at anyone, don't you? That's what I feel the internet is like.

People are capable of doing horrible things but then they are all these people who are capable of doing beautiful, giving, compassionate things. That's what the project really wanted to show - the heart of these communities, these people who are at the vanguard of taking care of others with such a rapid response. It's a reminder that we can take a step towards one thing or another, can't we? Ultimately we could mean the world to each other, couldn't we? And we should really. Sadly there's no light without dark and things like this are a reminder of what we can be to and for each other.

### **How do you feel about it reaching a wider audience through streaming on ITVX?**

I'm thrilled. I loved every one of the people I met and worked with in Australia. It's been and gone over there, and I'm so grateful and happy that it now gets an extra life on ITVX.



## **7. Polly Brooks MBE**

### **More than two decades after the attacks, why do you feel this is an important story to tell?**

When I was approached about it I was in two minds but ultimately it's a part of history. I think it's important for everyone to understand and look back at history. The Bali bombings were basically a revenge attack after September 11th and the USA subsequently invading Iraq. The terrorists who were linked to al-Qaeda were trained in Java and that's really why it came about.

So it is part of history and I knew someone would make something about it for television whether I was involved or not. I felt that if I was involved it would at least be as accurate and as truthful as possible. We don't want to be scared in this world but we all need to be aware of what's going on.

### **What was the extent of your involvement in the production?**

They contacted me early on and said they wanted to follow five stories to offer different perspectives and that my story was one that stood out for them. They were also looking for a positive spin on it through stories that didn't have a happy ending as such but where something good had come out of it. My storyline was particularly interesting for them and they wanted to spend time with me on Zoom, talking through everything that happened. Then they emailed me a load of questions as a back-and-forth follow-up.

When it came to casting, they asked my opinion and I ended up having a Zoom with Claudia Jessie beforehand so she could understand my spirit. And the guy who played my husband Dan [Paul Michael Ayre] was lovely. He contacted me and was very keen to portray Dan as accurately as possible. He even sent me recordings of his voice to try and get it right. It was in some ways quite distressing - because how do you describe a voice you haven't heard in 20 years? - but also really lovely.

While filming was going on I had emails from Paul and Claudia telling me what was happening and it seemed to be a very difficult shoot because it was during Covid. Claudia had to quarantine after arriving in Sydney, then there was torrential rain, one by one all the major actors got Covid... Paul said to me that if it hadn't been for such an esteemed crew they probably wouldn't have pulled it off but somehow they did.

### **How did you feel when you saw the finished show?**

Before it was released in Australia they sent me my own copy to watch but I was quite busy at the time, as I always am, and I didn't get around to it before the link expired. I had to go back and say 'I'm really sorry, I haven't managed to watch it' because I had to pick the right moment.



My fiancée Paul and I watched it, and it was quite horrendous building up to the actual bombings. In some ways it's good that Claudia doesn't look exactly like me but he said he found it really hard to watch because seeing someone you love about to be blown up - even though you know the whole story - is quite emotional. And I did cry myself when I saw it. There's a part where I'm back in London and that brought up a lot of dark memories.

### **What memories did it stir up for you?**

There's the initial terror of what happened, then you go into survival mode. The period of time that is very difficult is when you are coming out of the shock, where it's: 'I've got to get well enough to get back to England. I've got to get well enough to live independently. I've got to get back to work'. You have all those things that you fight towards. My crisis came when I'd achieved all of that, then it was 'What next?' I hadn't allowed myself to really think about Dan because it was just too painful. I was like 'Keep moving forward, keep moving forward' but to ever find peace again you have to address what you've been through. So that part brought back some very deep, dark, horrible memories.

### **Did you suffer from survivor's guilt at any point?**

I don't know if 'survivor's guilt' is the right way of putting it. I just felt it was really unfair. I felt angry that I had been left and I felt angry that I was the only one who had to cope with it all. The others were gone and in some ways it felt like they had the easier option. One minute you're there, the next minute you're gone and you don't know anything about it whereas I was left in agony in hospital - finding out one by one that all my friends, my husband and my best friend had died. Then it was about trying to deal with the grief and the healing as well as the impact across all of their families and their friends.

It was the magnitude of that that I've had to live with for the past two decades. Even yesterday I was talking to my son and saying that a girl in New Zealand who'd seen the series had reached out to me, telling me: 'I was in Bali with nine other friends, ironically. We were right at the back of the club. We got out. My husband was burned but we were all OK, but we went back to New Zealand completely traumatised and most of the marriages fell apart. Mine did too and I ended up married to one of the other chaps in the group.' I was telling my son about this and he asked 'How many of your group survived?' My answer was 'None of them'. He's 15 so he's heard the story many times but he was still like 'Really?'

That was the really hard bit for me, knowing that I was the only one left. I had to speak to all the parents and deal with everything. Then my second husband died two and a half years ago and again I was left.

### **How did you cope with such another devastating blow?**

It was like 'Jesus, why is it always me that has to be the strong one, who has to hold it together and somehow rebuild everything?' That said, my 50th birthday is approaching. I wasn't going to celebrate it but my sister said: 'My God, you have to celebrate it because you're still here. It's a miracle that you are and life is wonderful.' It took me a couple of years to get my head round the fact that actually it was a good thing that I was still around and there are still lots of amazing things that can happen in life.



From something really horrible there have been amazing acts of kindness and I've done things I never would have thought I would. I've got an MBE and awards left right and centre whilst raising millions for burns survivors. I've had a very colourful life. No-one could ever accuse me of having lead a boring life.

**Can you tell us about the charity you set up in Dan's honour?**

It's called Dan's Funds For Burns and we are an adults burns charity in the UK. We raise money for anything a burns survivor may need. That includes immediate crisis funding so families don't have to be miles away - which involves transport and hotel costs, refurbishing apartments and houses, anything that a survivor needs to get back on track. We also have an online weekly support group and a befriender service to help them through the journey. Unfortunately it's a lifelong journey; your scars stay with you. We also buy equipment for hospitals and help the NHS by training staff in the areas they don't have enough funding for. And we do weekends away, where we get some 50 burns survivors together for a mixture of activities.

It keeps me busy and I'm quite a determined person so when it all happened and everything was so bleak and so dark I was like 'I can't believe these terrorists decided to try and trash my life'. My response was to think: 'You can't take everything from me. You can take my husband and you can take my body but I will make more good come from what you did and I will beat you.'

**What do you hope viewers take away from watching the series?**

It's about resilience and it shows that life can throw you a curveball. I'm proof that just because you have one curveball it doesn't mean you won't have another but it is possible to get through devastating experiences and thrive. It's a mindset and a learning situation. When I was in hospital in Australia someone gave me a book about this girl who was an Olympic skier, got knocked off her bike and broke her back, and it was all about her inspirational journey to being able to fly a plane. She never really walked properly again but she had children. I hope that someone will watch my story and think 'She's still going at 50 and she's still smiling'.