



TORN

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TORN

The ties that bind are often the ones which tear us apart.

ITV delves into the bonds which tie families together, and can tear them apart.

Starring Holly Aird (Losing It, Waking The Dead), Bradley Walsh (Coronation Street), Adam Kotz (The Last King Of Scotland) and Nicola Walker (Spooks), TORN is a new drama from TXTV.

David (Adam Kotz) and Sarah's (Holly Aird) world was ripped apart when their eldest daughter – 4 year-old Alice (Jo Woodcock) disappeared on a family beach holiday. In the absence of a body, the child was pronounced missing presumed dead and the case was closed. Despite everyone else in Sarah's life grieving and eventually moving on, as a mother, she never gave up hope of finding her daughter alive.

Twelve years on, Sarah's seemingly impossible dream of finding her lost daughter may become a reality when she is shocked to catch sight of a girl she is certain is Alice. Without understanding why, she instinctively knows in her heart that the girl is the daughter she lost so long ago, despite the protests of the girl's parents, Stephen (Bradley Walsh) and Joanna (Nicola Walker).

What follows is an emotional account of one child torn between the love of two mothers.

TORN is a TXTV production for ITV1, for ITV1, is commissioned by Nick Elliott, Controller of Network Drama for ITV1, is produced by Jeremy Gwilt (Kitchen, Under the Greenwood Tree, Monarch of the Glen) written by Chris Lang (Amnesia, Lawless), directed by Sarah Harding (Lewis).

Jeremy Gwilt says: "We are delighted to be making this powerful drama for ITV1 and to have assembled such a talented cast."

Nick Elliott says: "To lose a daughter on a crowded beach is every parent's nightmare. To find her again many years later but not to know if you will still be allowed to be her mother is an agonising dilemma. And when I read this script I knew we had to do it."

CAST LIST

Holly Aird	Sarah Hooper
Adam Kotz	David Hooper
Owen Donovan	Sean Hooper
Emma Miles	Jasmine Hooper
Jenny Ogilvie	Gabby
Sarah Ball	Emily West
Jo Woodcock	Alice/Lori
Richard Betts	Pete
Leroy Liburd	Security Guard
Mia Fernandez	Melanie
Jumayn Hunter	Nathan
Tom Turner	Lifeguard
Bradley Walsh	Stephen Taylor
Poppy Miller	DS Bridges
Tim Faraday	Matt Hendy
Nicola Walker	Joanna Taylor
Alethea Steven	Sue Reece
Karen Bryson	Debbie Weaver
Robert Mountford	Solicitor
Richard Rees	Committal Judge
Jon Rake	Bystander
James Buckley	Hoodie

HOLLY AIRD IS SARAH HOOPER

Holly Aird is just back from holiday and talking about her latest role as Sarah Hooper. Having lost her daughter on a beach eleven years previous and with no body to mourn, Sarah has lived not knowing what happened to Alice, and has never given up hope of finding her alive. Talking about the role and the gritty story line Holly says:

*"In the beginning **Torn** is about a family who lose one of their children on a beach. But actually, the story is predominantly about getting her back and trying to find a balance of getting things right. There are so many emotional complications which arose with this situation. There is no handbook telling any of them how they should re-act and behave. For the Hooper's, they have spent eleven years grieving Alice, only to find that she is alive, and for her, she has grown up in another household thinking that they were her family. It's very complicated and incredibly heartbreaking, for everyone."*

Describing Sarah, she goes on:

"I think in the beginning she is like any young, middle class, happy but quietly tired mother. And then, when the narrative cuts to eleven years later, Sarah is obviously a very different woman. We wanted to try and portray someone who has become almost obsessive about ensuring that her environment is as controlled as possible.

Everything is immaculate; her, her house, everything is clean to a point which is almost clinical. We wanted Sarah to look like someone whose emotions are consistently on the verge of cracking; so much so that she wants to control everything around her."

The contrast between the brittle Sarah and her husband David is quite considerable. David is a man who clearly feels their loss deeply, but has not let his sadness and fear take control. How does Holly feel that affects the dynamic between husband and wife?

"David managed to put Alice to bed so to speak. In his mind he truly believes she died on that beach. Whereas Sarah would never ever accept the possibility that they would never see Alice again and so she remains stuck; unable to move forward. Consequently there is a huge amount of resentment between them.

He resents her because she won't focus on her family, and she resents him because in Sarah's mind, David gave up on Alice. And of course when she does actually find their daughter, she almost resents him even more. Sarah feels absolutely vindicated and almost says to him 'you

gave her up, I never gave her up, and she came back to us BECAUSE I never gave her up'. Their relationship is incredibly tense, but that's not to say they don't care for each other."

She goes on:

"One of the emerging themes throughout Torn, one of the continuing discussions in rehearsals and on set, was that it was really important to show the audience that these two people are still together because they care. There is so much unsaid between the two of them; they're almost frozen in time. You get little glimpses of what they had, or what they could have," says Holly.

"Really I think they are joined together by their loss even though they don't necessarily have that same vision or reaction to it. But I think grief is an incredibly personal thing any way. Two people can lose the same person and it can be a completely different experience. And that's why grief is so hard to talk about, because you can't really share it with anyone, it's difficult to put into words how you are feeling and make that other person understand."

She continues,

"Sometimes we hear that people who experience loss don't make it, but sometimes they do because it is the only thing they can hang on to, and of course Sarah and David have the other two children. You can understand why David starts this relationship with the other woman. It's not about sex; it's about having someone to talk to. He can't talk to Sarah anymore- she is just so wound up all the time with guilt and sadness. It's incredibly sad."

So when the seemingly impossible happens, and Sarah discovers that Alice is indeed alive and living with another family under a different name, there is a hope that this woman and her family can finally begin to start living again.

"Just for the briefest of moments you think Sarah is going to be able to relax and be happy again. As a viewer you get the sense everything is going to be alright; when they have that first meal together at the table there is a ray of hope. But Sarah's control problem becomes even worse. Essentially she lives in fear that she is going to lose her daughter again and ends up trying to morph herself into whatever she thinks Alice wants her to be just to get her to stay. She lets Alice get away with things she would never, ever let either Sean or Jasmine do.

Ultimately she ends up living in complete and utter fear; fear that Alice will leave, fear that Joanna will steal her away again, and ends up worse, more terrified than she was before Alice came back to them."

But it's not just Sarah who is affected by Alice's return; how would Holly say the re-integration affects the rest of the Hooper family?

"I think it affects them in so many different ways. Jasmine is incredibly jealous of this other, beautiful, streetwise girl who suddenly appears from nowhere and starts getting all the attention; Sean is a shy teenage boy being asked to live in the same house as a very attractive teenager who is his long lost sister. It's an extremely uncomfortable and tense situation for everyone."

She continues:

"And that's the thing about Torn as a drama" she explains "It pushes the viewer into a whole new area of very real stories. One would naturally assume that when Alice comes back everything will be perfect. But of course, how could it be? Everyone's lives have been so shattered that the notion of a perfect family could only ever be a poetic ideal for the Hooper's. But then of course, we are not just dealing with one family; we are dealing with two. The loss for Joanna and Stephen is also just as enormous and I think that's what makes it so interesting.

Nicola and Bradley are incredible together; they have turned in such extraordinary performances, you find yourself really loving Joanna as a mother; you can really see her love for that girl. But then of course you catch yourself, and think "well hang on, she stole Alice, she has destroyed an entire family and I should hate her for that."

And that's part of what makes Torn so challenging; there are many grey areas, no easy answers and consequently, as a viewer, your sympathies are consistently shifting. There is a point when Stephen Walker suggests that it would have been better for everyone if Sarah had never found Alice again. Given the emotional complexities and devastating consequences for everyone, would Holly agree?

"If I were to pull myself away from it and view it objectively I could possibly see a view in that. But honestly I think a child should definitely be with its biological family. However that's where I think Sarah goes wrong; if she hadn't been so afraid of life, of everything, she might have found a place in heart where she could have allowed Joanna and Stephen to see Alice in a controlled way. She can't see beyond herself and her own fear and insecurity.

For instance, when Joanna asks Sarah to speak for her in court, Sarah's reaction is 'why the hell should I?' As a mother myself I can understand that reaction, but it's an utterly selfish one despite what she tells herself. At the end of the day it's not about her, it's about Alice, and Sarah should be making decisions based on what is best for her daughter. But she doesn't, which is why, ultimately she is as much to blame as Joanna was initially."

She goes on:

"Obviously I questioned myself; questioned whether I would be able to be that generous for the love of my child. But honestly I don't know if I could."

Given the emotional complexities of the drama as a whole and her character, how did Holly approach portraying Sarah?

"We were very fortunate in our director, Sarah Harding, who was so sensitive to these things and so clever about the way she filmed it. She never allowed me to become too angry or aggressive; she kept saying "no one will care about Sarah if you get too angry". I don't ever remember having such a level of trust in a director, and somehow she always managed to find time within time to work through scenes. It was really nice as an actor to completely let go and trust her. Torn is a difficult drama, it was emotionally draining and required delicate handling but Sarah made it so much easier."

Obviously the subject matter is rather dark, and all the actors had to play out and film consistently intense, emotional scenes. Did Holly find it difficult to leave her work on set?

"Actually, it's probably the first time I've felt incredibly drained by work, or found it difficult to leave behind. I certainly didn't come home skipping and regaling hilarious stories of the day at all. I really am not, hand on heart, one of those people that takes their work home with them, but this was different; more intense certainly."

Hooper is a marked departure for Holly, who by her own admission has never taken the lead before. Did she feel a certain amount of pressure?

"I felt incredibly responsible for the first time, so yes, I did. Being one of the most central characters comes with a huge amount of responsibility which I have never had before. And I think that's what was making me feel so drained; I thought a lot about what I was doing on set, and then I was coming home from a long day and would have to learn six or seven more scenes for the next day. And they weren't light, fluffy scenes, these were heavy, emotional scenes; it was all quite relentless. That's not to say I didn't enjoy it, because I did. I really did, but it was a different kind of enjoyment. Torn has been such a huge challenge for me and consequently immensely rewarding. I've learned so much."

And it seems it wasn't all tears on set, as Holly goes on to explain:

"At the end of the shoot when we went to Croyde in Devon to film all the beach stuff you could really feel everyone's spirit lift because we were away from the sets we had been in day in day out for five weeks.

We were lucky because we were praying for good weather in April and we got it! We got the only bit of summer we've had all year!"

ADAM KOTZ IS DAVID HOOPER

Adam Kotz star of Last King of Scotland and Messiah is describing his latest role as David Hooper in Chris Lang's heart breaking drama, **Torn**.

"David is, married to Sarah (Holly Aird), and is the father of two beautiful children Sean and Jasmine whom he loves very much. He and Sarah did have a third child, Alice, who went missing on a beach during a family holiday when she was four years old. Her body was never found and consequently was pronounced 'missing presumed dead. While David tried to move on and help the family move on, Sarah could never let go of the idea that Alice was still alive. Her seemingly unrealistic hope really drives a wedge between the two of them as a couple.

When we meet him, they've really drifted apart; it's been a slow and almost unconscious process and something neither of them have confronted, but I think that each blame the other for the state they are in. He blames her for not moving on and concentrating on what they do have, and she resents him for giving up on Alice, Of course, when Sarah actually finds Alice, their initial joy is quickly smothered by years of unspoken pain on both sides."

Adam considers David as a very strong male character.

"I really believe that he's thrown everything he can into trying to hold the family together both emotionally and of course financially. He's worked very hard and has become very successful. He's ensured that they have all wanted for nothing; providing a stable environment, a beautiful home and all the comforts a successful career brings. But all his efforts together have come at a high price; principally, the relationship with his wife.

He has been overprotective of Sarah and of his remaining kids over the years, which is understandable. We are told that Sarah completely fell apart after Alice went missing and you can feel his constant fear that they might go back to the dark days after she was lost. David is very much the rock on which the remaining family have continued to survive."

He goes on:

"The interesting thing about the drama is that you see them before Alice is lost and then 10 years later so you do get a glimpse of what their life was like before the tragedy hits them, and before David has found success in his life."

As Adam has mentioned, Sarah has clung to a hope over the years that against all the odds her daughter is still alive somewhere. Does he think that David shares the same secret hope, or does he really believe she has been lost to them forever?

"I think he believes she has gone. Not having the closure of a body to grieve over is beyond imagining. I think you are essentially left adrift wondering, hoping and waiting for something to happen, for that person to come back. Unless however you take a conscious decision to deal with the reality of the situation and try to move on, to turn your attention to those that are left behind.

It's evident early on, when David and Sarah are arguing over whether she has actually seen Alice, that have been episodes in the past where Sarah thinks she's seen her daughter so David's scepticism is well founded. He has no reason to believe her and feels that she is clinging to a false hope which is destroying her and the family as a unit. It's not that he is being unfeeling or harsh, as I think Sarah feels he is being, he is simply trying to hold them all together; to try and make her see what she has. But of course she doesn't see that."

David often puts what he feels to be for the good of the family first and foremost and buries his own feelings, often leaving him isolated and alone. This emotional disassociation leaves him with no-one to talk to in his own family, and drives him towards an entirely ill advised relationship with his PA.

"He is a man who has nobody to talk to and nowhere to go so yes, you see him form a growing attachment with his secretary. I think it makes it very interesting from an acting point of view as at first glance he seems to be far less emotional and engaged than Sarah. But actually he is a very emotional person and in the end his love and support for his wife proves to be total."

Does Adam think that blame plays a part in the division between the two adults?

"Absolutely, yes I do. There is an unspoken element of blame between him and Sarah and you can imagine there is an endless reservoir of guilt that never goes away. In the same way that accidents happen and you constantly question yourself 'why didn't I do this or that?' I think the blame is as much on each other, but it is there."

When Alice is returned to the Hooper family, obviously there are ramifications for everyone. Would Kotz say her return has a positive effect on them as family unit?

"I think David's antenna for potential chaos or disaster is very acute and I think that he is initially just as surprised, delighted and amazed by Alice being returned as Sarah is. But very quickly his protective side also comes into play. He gets swamped by the way that Sarah becomes so utterly overtaken by her emotions, but he is more able to stand back and see what is going on as a result; to see what effect it's having on their other kids. At one point he says to her 'I have three children to look after'. Sarah is just so focused on Alice she neglects everyone else and becomes obsessed. The alarm bells, for David, start very early on that this is not going to be straightforward."

It seems that as well as trying to keep his family together, he is almost distancing himself from Alice, realising that it is going to take her time to adjust; that she needs her space to deal with this extraordinary shift in her life. He also sees that she isn't going to want to cut ties completely with this family that she has known for twelve years. Would he agree that this view is something which Sarah just won't accept and is one of the major sources of their division?

"Yes, absolutely. Despite the emotion of it all, he is a reasonable man and is thinking with more clarity and in some ways more compassion than his wife. He is more worried about everyone else's feelings and reactions, whereas Sarah's attention really it is on herself, even though she would say that is was on Alice. This is the source of the tension between them, and she regularly accuses him of being uninvolved or having lost faith over the years. Alice's return merely serves to exacerbate their problems and intensify them."

There are various reports of families being reunited; parents looking at a child in the street and knowing instinctively that he/she was theirs. Does Adam, as a parent himself, think that this is plausible?

"I asked myself that question and of course you want to say yes. There are bonds that go beyond the physical that you would pick up. I quite believe that things that happen on a more subconscious level would kick into place. So yes, I do think it's plausible."

Would he agree that **Torn** constantly challenges expectations, that what could so easily have been painted in black and white is in fact, many shades of grey?

"I do think that your sympathies as a viewer are going to be changing constantly. Even though what Joanna does is appalling and utterly wrong, the whole nature/nurture debate is extremely prevalent in this piece. It really does makes you think 'who's to say that she wasn't better off with Stephen and Joanna as a child?' I think we have a view of the family being sacrosanct but kids adapt. I did a program called 'Born With Two Mothers', about a baby being brought up by the wrong parents due to an IVF mix up. We worked with lawyers, doctors, social workers and judges and apparently, the better the upbringing a child has in the first year of its life, the easier it is for that child to be transferred to another family, which is a horrible irony in a way."

NICOLA WALKER IS JOANNA TAYLOR

Nicola Walker is perhaps best known to viewers as Ruth Evershed in Spooks. However the determined, enthusiastic member of the glamorous MI5 team couldn't be further removed from the woman whose actions set in motion a devastating series of events in **Torn**.

"This is a completely different character to Ruth; you can't compare them in any sense at all. It's great to be given the chance to play someone totally different. Joanna is a very ordinary woman who has got away with this terrible thing she has done for eleven years, but of course she was never going to get away with it forever. So when viewers meet her, she's at the point of being discovered."

And the 'terrible thing' Joanna has done, is to have abducted four year old Alice from a beach 11 years previously and brought her up as her own. Re-naming her Lori, she meets Stephen, a year after the event who has no reason to believe the child is anyone but Joanna's. For 11 years, the trio live together as a strong and loving family unit with only Joanna knowing the real truth. That is however until Sarah, quite by chance, catches sight of Lori in a shopping centre. As Nicola explains, this is precisely the moment that Joanna has been dreading since that fateful day:

"I think that she has probably lived every day, being terrified of someone tapping her on the shoulder, but I do think that is only on a subconscious level.

This is her life now and as far she is concerned, Lori is her daughter. Somehow she has made it completely acceptable to herself; in her mind she has managed to twist events so the lie is now the truth. That is how she lives with it. Obviously a large chunk of her is still in denial."

She goes on to try and explain how she believes Joanna has managed to reconcile her actions over the years.

"I find her incredibly interesting in that she has done this terrible thing and is yet to be able to justify it.

When we were talking about it in rehearsal, Sarah the director was saying that for Joanna, Alice is like a gift. She comes at a time in her life when she desperately wants a baby and can't conceive. She is at her lowest point, and is really not a very well girl who gets to a point in her life where she feels she can't go on; who feels that her future is bleak and so empty that it isn't worth continuing."

Yet on the point of attempting to commit suicide, Joanna sees Alice, who appears in front of her, and who is apparently abandoned and very unhappy. It is this moment which changes everyone's lives.

"In her fragile mental state she really believes that this little girl is a gift for her and 'meant to be'. I don't think she even thinks about what she does then; she's on autopilot. I can't judge her and play her, its impossible."

And this is exactly where the emotional difficulty of **Torn** lies; this is a drama painted in many shades of grey. The usual television rules of 'evil child snatcher= bad, mother = good' do not apply here as Joanna simply does not conform to such a two dimensional image as Walker goes on to explain:

"Joanna isn't a bad person. She has done a terrible thing but she is not evil in the traditional sense.

If you separate people from society by saying they are evil or insane, then that makes us feel better about ourselves. Whereas with Joanna, you have to look at her as a product of our society; she was someone who slipped through the cracks, who desperately needed help but was left utterly on her own.

In order to try and cope with life, she does this thing, which she actually sees as an act of kindness. Joanna actually believes that Alice had been abandoned on that beach and therefore her actions were born out of a genuine desire to help the child as well as herself.

If she were the traditionally scary witch living in the gingerbread house luring kids into cages with sweets, then there wouldn't be the same emotional weight to this. Viewers would know where their allegiances lie, whereas with this, your emotions are constantly shifting."

She goes on:

"I really feel that there are some points in this where you are almost angry at Sarah. I felt so terribly sorry for Joanna, even though she is the one who destroyed this family, which is really clever writing from Chris.

Our natural inclination is to lay blame without question, but this script confounds our expectations. While there is no doubting what she did was wrong, vilifying and punishing her doesn't gain you anything. It doesn't make anyone feel any better.

Maybe there was a point when putting Joanna in prison or in care might have been useful but here it is sort of pointless; that's not the story. It throws up so many issues because to put her in prison would be to punish the wrong people. By the time Joanna is in front of a judge, she

almost wants punishment because she has seen first hand what she has done, and feels so appalled by the devastation she has caused. But that really wouldn't help any of them at this stage, certainly not Lori or indeed Stephen for that matter."

For her partner, Stephen the discovery that Lori is not Jo's child is the end of his world. When he met Jo he had no reason to suspect that the little girl wasn't hers and raised Lori as though she were his own flesh and blood; the discovery that she belongs to someone else is completely devastating.

"The position Stephen finds himself in is really awful. He and Alice are the real innocents in all of this. Neither had any idea of their history; neither saw it coming. I think the only person who ultimately suffers the most is Stephen, who of course is completely innocent! Through her actions she completely destroys one of the two people she loves the most in the world.

BRADLEY WALSH IS STEPHEN TAYLOR

Bradley Walsh is most famous for his role as Danny in Coronation Street, but his first dramatic role as Stephen Taylor in ITV1's new drama **Torn** is a huge departure for him since leaving the popular soap. How would he describe his newest on-screen incarnation?

"He is just a regular guy who has always wanted a family unit to be part of and care for. He loves the fact that he's got one; he works hard for them and absolutely loves being with them. He met Joanne and took on both her and Lori; a child he treated as if she was his own daughter. Stephen looks after them both as though they've always been in his life. He's a good, decent man who is utterly destroyed by the events which taken over him."

The sequence of events are of a particularly difficult and tragic nature. It transpires that Lori, the girl whom he has brought up as his own flesh and blood is not actually Joanna's. Through a dramatic series of events, he learns that his partner abducted a four year-old from a beach 11 years previously. And that little girl is his Lori, whose real name is Alice. With her biological mother fighting to have her daughter returned to her, Stephen's world collapses and he loses everything.

"In the blink of an eye, Stephen goes from being the happiest man in the world to having the sky fall in. Out of the blue, this woman Sarah enters his life telling him that she is actually Lori's mother, that Lori's real name is Alice and that his partner abducted her when she was little. He of course has no idea what the hell is going on. He has no idea about what happened in the past. Everybody else does but he doesn't. He's completely in the dark. Not only does he lose a young girl he treats as his very own daughter, but you have to remember he also loses the love of his life. Joanna's actions set in motion this chain of events, and he realises that he doesn't know and probably never knew her. How can you really know someone who has managed to keep this terrible secret for so many years? I think he just loses his mind in the end."

At one point, such is the fall out from the act of Sarah finding her daughter, Stephen, hints at the idea that it would have been best for everyone if Alice hadn't been found; that it would have been better if she had been allowed to stay where she was. Does the actor believe that Stephen is simply saying that out of a desire to want to make things better for himself, or does do he think there is an argument for leaving Alice where she grew up?

"That's a tough one because Stephen is ultimately such a decent, selfless bloke. He can see how awful it must have been for Sarah to have lost her child, and understands her motivations. So, I think there is genuinely a part of him that wants Lori to go back to being Alice, and being with her biological family"

But then there is a scene which really sticks with me, and it's when he is talking to Bridges in the police station. He says to her 'I used to moan about the lack of space in our flat but all of a sudden it seems so big'. He doesn't want to be there without Lori and that tiny flat is like a mansion now to him. He feels like he has lost everything.

He's been a dad to this girl for 11 years and to have her taken away in just one day is obviously devastating; he doesn't know how to cope. He is the innocent party in this piece; his life is ripped apart by a sequence of events he has no control over and has played no part in. It's terrible. So while he understands Sarah's actions, of course he just wants things the way they were. Who wouldn't?"

As he speaks about Stephen Taylor, it is clear that Walsh is relishing this new role. Given the difficult subject matter of the material, what was it that made the actor want to tackle such a tough storyline?

"When I read it, it struck me just how sad and poignant it was and how different it was to my previous work. So I went to speak to Jeremy Gwilt the producer and the writer Chris Lang to ask them what they needed from the character and from me as an actor. And that was it. The script is wonderful and I thought 'I really want to do this now'. The timing was perfect for me. So as soon as they were happy that they wanted me to do it that was that."

Would it be fair to say that the actor has made a conscious decision to take on a difficult role like this in an attempt to put a bit of distance between himself and the role of Danny in Coronation St?

"Oh it was absolutely deliberate, Stephen is just such a departure for me. His character is a highly emotive one and the nature of the piece is just so far removed from anything I've done before. It was precisely the change in direction this offered me that was attractive in the first instance.

I think for actors coming out of long running soaps, it's really important to have a little break from the screen and look for roles that are quite removed from the ones they played. I want to try and help shift perceptions people may have of me as an actor."

Given that Danny was such a popular character, does the actor find that he is being sent scripts with characters similar to one which people most identify him with?

"Actually, no, I haven't found that to be the case at all. I was given about three or four ideas that weren't like Danny at all. I guess I was quite lucky in that sense. I was expecting to be offered roles that were a lot lighter, particularly given the fact that I've been Mr Light Entertainment since 1989!"

Oddly, having done Corrie, a lot of people forget that I did all that. I think people have kind of forgotten that I hosted game shows! But Torn really stood out for me. I really wanted this. Drama is where I want to be at the moment and I have really enjoyed working on this film."

Having been involved in one of the biggest television shows in the country, what would he say are the major differences in the filming processes of a drama like Torn and a long running soap opera?

"Time. I have more time. Time to film scenes; time to discuss things. It's amazing. And on something as emotional as this that's been invaluable for me. I always get in early and make sure I know my lines. I rely a lot on the director Sarah. I always ask her what she wants and she'll tell me exactly what she needs. Then I'll go away and literally try and put myself in Stephen's position."

I used to ask the director on Corrie what they needed but there are so many actors to cater for there that they understandably can't devote all their time to one person. But on this, there is more time and we can say, 'ok, let's think about this', which I hope translates on screen!"

He goes on:

"Both shows have taught me so much, but both experiences have been very different. Coronation Street was more 'crash, bang, wallop'. It's an amazing experience to work on a show like that as it teaches you how to work quickly. It's very, very fast paced. You have one, maybe two chances if you're lucky, to hit your mark and then that's it, everyone is on to the next scene. Torn is a much gentler pace. I've had time to really get my teeth into it."

Obviously the storyline is a very difficult one, and he, like all of the other actors involved has quite a number of incredibly emotional scenes to play. Just how difficult has it been to switch off?

"If I'm honest, some of the scenes are gut wrenching and just awful to do. It's not a nice place to be in, but having such an amazing cast and crew around has made a huge difference. I've really enjoyed the whole process; it's been much more collaborative than anything I've experienced before. It has just been an absolute joy."

JO WOODCOCK IS ALICE/ LORI

For 15 year old Jo Woodcock **Torn** is a big deal as she is taking the lead in what is her very first acting job. Having never been on a television set before, she has had to learn the ropes quickly. And the character she plays is central to the action as she is Alice, the child over whom two families fight and tear themselves apart. As first jobs go, it's a tough gig, so how did she find the experience?

"Oh, it was great, just wonderful. Every day I would get up, and think 'I can't wait for work today. I can't wait to do this'. I love it. For me, it never should end."

As the smiling teenager talks about how much she enjoyed being on set, it becomes clear however that while Jo relished the process, there is no denying the subject matter is a difficult one. Alice is the catalyst for a maelstrom of emotions, and the central figure around which both families revolve. Consequently, many of the scenes the young actress is involved in are incredibly heavy going. Woodcock was not however to be deterred.

"When I woke up, sometimes I might have been a bit tired from having spent the previous day crying my eyes out." she laughs "But honestly I didn't want to be doing anything else. Admittedly there weren't many times any of us got much relief as most of the scenes were quite heavy. But we all got to go home at the end of the day and be light and happy there."

Given the emotional investment required, did she find it difficult to just switch off and be 'light and happy' at home?

"To be honest, I was knackered when I got home. I remember one day I got back and just started to cry over something really silly. I can't remember what it was, it was that inconsequential, but it was a good release though! I went 'Right. That's it. I can go to bed now'. I had a little cry and then I was fine. I do remember thinking that it was weird because as Alice/ Lori I cried enough on set, and surely there were no more tears left! But it was more for me I guess."

She goes on:

"Don't get me wrong, everyone was really lovely and very supportive. I felt very well cared for and looked after. But it is such an emotional story and I would have been pretty hard hearted not to be affected in some way by it. You can't help but identify with the story. It's about ordinary people like you and me, who have been forced into an extraordinarily emotional situation and asks them to just deal with it."

Assured and confident Jo demonstrates a real maturity as well as a genuine understanding of the ambiguous nature of the film. There are no real villains and there are no easy answers.

"It affects different people on different levels and makes them ask different questions. Take my character Alice, she asks herself, is this all my fault? Am I to blame? And then you look at Nicola Walker's character and your instinct is to blame her as she is the one who has set in motion such a horrendous chain of events. But it's so difficult to do that because of where she was in her life when she took Alice; because of who she is now; what kind of woman she is. And you can't deny that she showed Alice the most extraordinary amount of love. Joanna isn't the bogey man. She's a really good woman; a doting mother, and a great girlfriend. But of course she has done this terrible thing. It makes you feel worse because she isn't evil. She's just very, very sad. Everyone does good things and everyone does bad things. That's just part of human nature."

Alice goes through a huge emotional journey, so just how would Jo describe Lori, as she is known to Stephen and Joanna, when we first meet her?

"She is pretty confident at the beginning of it. She is really streetwise. Lori has grown up on a rough estate and is someone who knows what she likes and doesn't like and she certainly doesn't like school. She's made the decision to quit and go into hairdressing or something."

Lori has a large circle of friends and is very popular; she has a boyfriend; a social life and in many ways seems like a young adult. She smokes, she clubs, she's tried drugs. She's grown up really fast.

So you go from this very sure girl, to someone who is totally unsure of themselves. All her points of reference are taken away completely and Lori is replaced with Alice, who becomes a child again.

Everyone needs people around them as a support but Alice kind of gets forgotten about as a person. She becomes an object that everyone is fighting over and all the adults become so focussed on how they are feeling they forget about her."

With all this drama occurring around Alice, does Jo feel that the teenager takes on a lot of responsibility for the actions of those around her?

"Yes I do. She's kind of left in the middle looking at everyone screaming and crying, not knowing where she fits and feeling entirely to blame. I think it's something that children do more than adults. She's not a child really but she's also not quite an adult either."

When you're growing up, if there is a problem with your parents, or one of them is crying, you don't have that wider understanding of the world and you feel that it must be your fault. The fact that everyone is crying over her, in her mind means it's absolutely her fault. She's carrying a lot of guilt.

The most important thing should be the child. But because she's under 16, she's not allowed to choose where she goes, she is never asked what she wants. She hardly ever gets asked how she is and I think the only person who does that is Joanna."

She continues:

"I tried to put myself in Alice's position and think 'what would I do, how would I feel', but it's just so difficult as the fact is, Joanna wasn't an evil person. She didn't treat Lori badly. Then there is this woman, Sarah who is your real mother, but a total stranger to you. Can you imagine what it would be like, someone turning around and saying 'This woman here, who you call your mother, whom you love unconditionally, isn't actually your mother, but this stranger over here, this person you don't know, she IS your mother'. It must be awful!"

Knowing that this is Jo's first job, and given the emotional investment clearly required of them all, have Bradley, Holly and Nicola been supportive?

"They were brilliant. They're lovely people and were all really supportive. I know I was a bit unsociable when we were on set. If I've got to be in a negative state of mind on screen, I become withdrawn and quiet. It's not because I'm being all stuck up or anything, it's just because I can't be all chatty and then suddenly start crying. But nobody is like 'oh that Jo, she's a bit moody today'. They really understood that this is what I have to do to make it work."

And then Jo pauses and laughs,

"Actually, I blame Bradley for the fact I'm permanently crying. If it weren't for him I don't think I'd be crying in most of the scenes! I don't need to use a tear duct for the ones we share together. I just look at his face and it makes me want to cry. He's an amazing actor."

TORN EPISODE ONE: PI

During a family holiday at the seaside, mother Sarah and father David lose sight of their eldest daughter, four year old Alice Hooper. Despite a frantic search the child's body is never found.

11 years later Sarah and David are still trying to cope with their loss. Their two other children, Sean and Jasmine now young teenagers and Alice would be 14.

As Sarah goes to her local shopping centre she catches sight of a girl who she believes to be her missing daughter. Positive it is her, Sarah returns the next day waiting to confirm her suspicions. Nervous and tense with anticipation Sarah sees the same teenager walking through the mall with a group of her friends. Unable to approach her, Sarah follows the girl to a flat on an out of town estate.

Now absolutely convinced the girl is her missing daughter, Sarah is determined to uncover the truth. She goes back to the estate the following day and waits in her car. As she watches the estate, she sees the young girl emerging from the block of flats and to meet a man who is calling her Lori. Sarah confronts the pair and physically attacks Stephen Taylor as he believes he stole her child all those years ago. Both he and Lori are visibly shocked; Lori, confused and frightened, locks herself in Stephen's car as he phones the police.

DS Sally Bridges is attached to case, and when Sarah is brought in, she cautions her. However, there is something about Sarah that makes Bridges look twice. Sarah clearly believes what she is saying, and is so adamant that Lori is in fact Alice, the police officer unable to dismiss her argument. A mother herself, when Sarah asks Bridges if she could recognise her own child after 11 years, Bridges believes that she could.

The officer pays a courtesy visit to Stephen's home where she bumps into Lori who is with her mother Joanna. It's the first time the two women have met and it's instantly clear to DS Bridges, that Joanna and her daughter are very close. Having just returned from a shopping trip to celebrate Lori's 16th birthday two weeks prior the two are loaded down with bags. Joanna has also allowed her daughter to get a tattoo on her upper left arm; something it seems she had been reluctant to do up until now. Bridges feels Joanna's gift of a tattoo is overcompensating for the 'ordeal' she has gone through.

Bridges' suspicions are now aroused, and she calls Sarah later that day asking whether Alice had any distinguishing marks. Sarah confirms that Alice had a small scar on her upper left arm.

The following day, Bridges goes back to Lori's home asking to see a birth certificate or some other documentation that can confirm Joanna and Stephen's paternal links to Alice. Stephen, is Lori's step father, but is furious at the accusation that Joanna is not Lori's biological mother. He vehemently denies any wrong doing and demands Joanna show proof Lori is hers. However, Joanna becomes agitated under the pressure and it becomes clear she is unable to provide any documentation. When she is taken into custody, Joanna breaks down and tearfully re-counts a chain of events which will have huge ramifications for both families.

CAST CREDITS

Holly Aird

Film

Scenes of a Sexual Nature, Possession, The Criminal, Dreaming of Joseph Lees, Theory of Light, Fever Pitch, Intimate Relations, The Happy Valley, Secrets

Television

Secret Life, Casualty, Losing It, Waking The Dead, Dressing For Breakfast, Have Your Cake, Rules of Engagement, Circle of Deceit, Kavanagh QC, Soldier, Soldier, The Life and Death of Philip Knight, Miss Marple, Hope It Rains, Sea Dragon, The Chain, Mother Love, Double First, Inspector Morse, Seal Morning, The Muse, Affairs of the Heart, Agatha Christie: The Spider's Web, The Flame Trees of Thika, History of Mr Polly

Theatre

The Indian Boy, Protection, Stop Kiss, The Iceman Cometh, Grace Note, Peaches, Paddywack, Below The Belt, Ring Around The Room, Brighton Beach Memoirs

Nicola Walker

Film

Shooting Dogs, Shiner, Four Wedding and a Funeral

Television

Spooks, Red Cap, People Like Us, Dalziel and Pascoe, The Last Train, Jonathan Creek, Touching Evil, Chalk, Pie In The Sky, A Dance To The Music Of Time, Cows, Moll Flanders, Aristophanes, Milner, Faith.

Theatre

Fresh Kills, Tales From Vienna Woods, Edmond, Modern Dance For Beginners, Free, The Dead Eye Boy, Sexual Perversity In Chicago, A Lie Of The Mind, Passion Play, Fifty Revolutions, Sweetheart, Party tricks, The Lovers, The Man Of Mode, The Libertine, Hated Nightfall, Sod, Killing Him, Neville Southall's Washbag.

Bradley Walsh

Film

Television

Theatre

Adam Kotz

Film

Nightwatching, The Last King Of Scotland, Born With Two Mothers, Rabbit On The Moon, Secret Passage, Max and Helen, Without A Clue, Love Potion No9.

Television

Whistleblowers, Holby Blue, Messiah, The Bill, Rosemary & Thyme, Blue Murder, new Tricks, Murder Squad, Canterbury Tales, Under Suspicion, The Man of Law's Tale, Albi, Billy Jo Jenkins Story, Heartbeat, Holby City, Spooks, Midsomer Murders, The Lost Battalion, Perfect, Never Never, Anchor Me, Monsignor Renard, All The Kings Men, Shot Through The Heart, Mr White Goes To Westminster, Touching Evil, Out Of The Blue II, Band Of Gold, Symmetry, Dangerfield, Casualty, The Bill, Wycliffe, Asylum War, Brookside, Moving Story, Heartbeat, The Mushroom Picker, The Big Battalions, Poirot, East Of The Moon, The South Bank Show, Bulman, Miracles Take Longer, Juliet Bravo, the Practice, Driving Ambition, Tuckers Luck, OI For England.

Theatre

Falling, Credible Witness, The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie, 1953, Measure For Measure, Murmuring Judges, Trelawny Of The Wells, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, The Miser, Racing Demon, Leonce and Lena, As You Like It, The Ghost Sonata, A Midsummer Night's Dream, A Family Affair, Ambulance, Royal Borough, Dealers Choice, The Fraud Scenario, Watching, Gotcha, Hamlet, No Pasaran, Spring Awakening, Romeo & Juliet, Command Or Promise, True Dare Kiss, Loves Labours Lost, War Play Trilogy.

Jo Woodcock

Film

Harry Potter and The Philosophers Stone, Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkhaban.

Television

Doctors, Miss Marple, Casualty, The Bill, Hero of The Hour, Black and British, PSHE Citizenship.

Theatre

Great Expectations.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producer & Producer - Jeremy Gwilt

Television

Kitchen, Under The Greenwood Tree, Like Father Like Son, Heartless, Amnesia, Monarch of the Glen, Ballykissangel, The Ambassador, Ivanhoe, The House Of Elliot, House of Cards

Executive Producer & Writer - Chris Lang

Television

Sirens, Unconditional Love, The Glass, Amnesia, Lawless, Primeval, The Palace

Director - Sarah Harding

Television

Lewis, Poirot, Dad, Beneath the Skin, Too Good To Be True, Dead Gorgeous, Pollyanna, The Innocent, Clocking Off, Queer As Folk, The Grand, Reckless, Annie's Bar, Our Hands In Your Safe, Firm Friends, Straithblair, Breakthrough At Reykjavik, Bulman, First Among Equals, The Practice

Editor – David Reed

Director Of Photography – Dominic Clemence

Casting Director – Di Carling

Production Designer – Dave Arrowsmith

Art Director – Kate Purdy

Costume Designer – Joan Wadge

Make-Up Designer – Christine Walmsley-Cotham