

Steve Coogan (Alan Partridge)

Steve Coogan is fresh from a tour of the United States launching his second feature film *24 Hour Party People* and in a few hours he will be flying off to a sunny Mediterranean destination to continue filming his new series for BBC TWO called *The Cruise* alongside Rob Brydon. He's wearing a Paul Smith suit and his hair is long and wavy, its hard to recognise he's Norwich's most famous failed chat show host and Radio Norwich DJ, Alan Partridge.

So five years on since the last series of *I'm Alan Partridge*, why did Steve choose to bring back the Bafta Award winning series? Steve explains " We never didn't choose to bring him back, we always knew we were going to do another one, so it wasn't if - it was when. We were all going off and doing other things and we (co-writers, Peter Baynham, Armando Iannucci) had to get the three of us together in one room for long enough to write a series - it was a question of logistics. Steve continues "we also decided we'd only ever come back and do another series when we were missing Alan. The last series was 1997 and we spent a year writing him and we all got sick of Alan so we had to wait until we started missing him again"

Was it difficult to write the new series after the long break? Steve replies "you need to have fresh ideas, you can't sit in a room and force Alan so we thought hang on lets get ideas cos when you are writing a comedy that people expect great things from, you can't really force it".

So how has Alan has changed since we last saw him? Steve pauses and replies thoughtfully "He's come through a midlife crisis, he's a lot more confident in himself - on the surface. He's got more of a spring in his step, things are going reasonably well for him, he's not at rock bottom anymore, he's making a living and he's getting by".

Let's hope we won't have to wait another five years for a new series, but what does Steve think Alan might be doing by then? Steve smiles "He'll either have gone mad and moved to a hut in the Scottish Highlands or he'll be a kind of Norfolk mini mogul".

Felicity Montagu (Lynn)

Felicity Montagu is wearing an all-black outfit with a smart jacket and looks perfectly sophisticated. Within moments, it becomes clear that this feisty, chatty and friendly actress has almost nothing obvious in common with Lynn, the slightly downtrodden, long-suffering secretary she portrays on *I'm Alan Partridge*.

If anything, she may even be her complete opposite. Claiming to be “bored” by school, Felicity - who comes from an army family - first made her acting debut in a school production of

think what people forget is that Alan brings great wealth to Lynn's life. Lynn's not terribly used to men. She had a father who never used to come down the staircase as he got older. You know, he was very difficult. She put make-up on and he'd throw water all over her face. So Alan is great for Lynn - he's fun, he can go on a little too much sometimes and moan at her, but generally speaking, Lynne feels she can handle this man very well. In fact, she feels responsible for him, really."

It's hard, however, to feel compassionate for Alan, which is partly what makes his character so brilliant. Trying to pin down the reason behind the show's previous success, Felicity doesn't hesitate to mention the team of Armando, Steve and Peter. "They all have different facets that complement each other," Felicity says, "and I think Steve takes things into a different league with his character of Alan Partridge. As you've seen, Alan Partridge stands

Felicity Montagu Biography

Best known for playing Bridget Jones's ostentatious colleague in the award winning movie *Bridget Jones's Diary* and taking care of Alan Partridge's affairs as the shy and down trodden assistant Lynn in *I'm Alan Partridge*, Felicity Montagu has become one of this country's leading character actresses.

Felicity returns to our screens mid November with *I'm Alan Partridge*, the second in this highly successful series featuring Steve Coogan. Lynn joined Alan's small empire seven years ago and has become a crucial part of his life and career. This series, filmed after a five-year break, will see Lynn Benfield in a whole new light having gained a new friend.

Felicity is a versatile actress who has had a varied and successful career to date, which includes theatre, TV and film. Her career began after studying at the Loughborough University before moving into the Webber Douglas Academy. One of her first acting jobs was alongside Richard Griffiths in the highly acclaimed ITV series *FFIZZ*.

She has worked with some of the greats of British comedy including Harry Enfield, Paul Merton, Josie Laurence, Steve Coogan, Gary Olsen, Stephen Fry, Alexi Sayle and Victoria Wood.

Past TV credits include: *Trust, Coming Through, This is David Lander, Wish Me Luck, Tumbledown, Harry Enfield Television Show, Josie, Adoption – The Mother, Paul Merton The Series, 2.4 Children, A Touch of Frost, Coogan's Run, Knowing Me Knowing You..with Alan Partridge*, amongst many others.

Past theatre includes: *Unsuitable for Adults, Macbeth, Susan's Breasts, Are You Sitting Comfortably, Up On The Roof, The Shaughraun, Angles in America and The Knocky*.

Amelia Bullmore (Sonja)

She spent four years touring around in a transit van for a cabaret company, took a turn down Coronation Street, hid her pregnancy in front of a producer and most recently plays an eccentric Ukrainian, who finds herself smack in the middle of none other than Norwich, in a whirlwind career that doesn't show signs of slowing down - at least not if Alan Partridge has anything to do with it.

Amelia Bullmore is delicate and petite, with a soft-spoken, affable nature. Wearing a short denim skirt, fishnet stockings and a dainty burgundy cardigan, she doesn't look like the kind of woman who could tame Steve Coogan's Alan Partridge, but her fiery character of Sonja has snagged the sweater-loving, cheesy chat-show host, who returns to BBC Two after a five-year hiatus.

After a long pause, the brown-haired, London-born actress describes the character of Sonja as "childlike". Sonja, who is new to *I'm Alan Partridge*, hails from none other than, well, Ukraine, and finds Alan Partridge irresistible in a way that no English woman probably would. "She is eccentric," Amelia continues, which seems to be a bit of an understatement, "but she does slightly live in her own world."

Alan was last seen having a run of bad luck. He was living in a nondescript hotel off a motorway half way between Norwich and London; he worked the graveyard shift on a local radio station; and a BBC boss popped his clogs just as Alan was about to sign a five-year contract worth a considerable amount of money. But it seems that the tide has shifted and Alan couldn't be happier to proudly parade Sonja around town. And it appears that Sonja wouldn't like anything better either.

"She thinks that he is a very powerful man," Amelia says seriously. "He has a radio show; she thinks he's a gentleman; and he has a big house and it's a good life ... but she's also indiscreet. She likes sex very much and that's great, he loves that too, but she's more outspoken. Her English isn't brilliant but that

Simon Greenall (Michael)

Biography

Simon Greenall is probably best known for his role as Michael in *I'm Alan Partridge* series one and two for BBC TWO, but Simon is also one of this country's most established comedy writers as well as being a successful and respected radio actor.

Returning in mid-November for a new series of *I'm Alan Partridge*, Simon rejoins the team after a five-year break. He will also be appearing in *Think The Unthinkable* and *The Sunday Format* on BBC Radio 4.

Simon's career started as a child actor alongside Matthew Kelly and Bernard Hill in *Macbeth* at the Edinburgh Festival. He studied acting at Manchester Polytechnic, alongside Steve Coogan, before heading south to London to begin his career as a writer and actor.

Success came in the form of writing *You Bet* for ITV and appearing in *Newman & Baddiel In Pieces*. Simon then teamed up with writer Kay Stonham and between them they have written and appeared in numerous radio comedies including *Robin & Wendy's Wet Weekends* (Radio 4), which is now in its second series and being developed for television.

Other past TV credits include:

Armando Iannucci

Biography

Armando Iannucci is the co-writer and the director and producer of *I'm Alan Partridge* - the BAFTA nominated and critically acclaimed comedy show which returns for its second series this Autumn.

Armando is well-known for his widely acclaimed series *The Day Today*, which he co-wrote with Chris Morris and produced for BBC. He followed this with co-writing and producing the hugely successful *Knowing Me, Knowing You ...with Alan Partridge*. Armando also devised, co-wrote and performed in *The Friday Night Armistice* (which won the Bronze Rose award at the 1997 Montreux Festival with David Schneider and Peter Baynham for the BBC) as well as the live three hour comedy spectacular *Election Night Armistice*. He followed this up with *Clinton: His struggle with Dirt*, a mock-documentary on the Clinton / Lewinsky scandal. Recently he directed and appeared in *The Armando Iannucci Shows* for Channel Four.

He began his career in Glasgow, working for BBC Radio Scotland. Armando then moved to London to become a writer and producer for BBC Radio Light Entertainment. Also for radio, Armando and Chris Morris won a Writer's Guild Award for *On The ED5t*

Peter Baynham (Writer)

Peter is a writer and actor, fresh from co-writing the new series of *I'm Alan Partridge*, he is currently working on a new animation series for BBC TWO.

When asked whether Alan has any sense of self awareness, Peter chuckles, "Oh God no! I'm sure he has the odd glimpse or the odd moment where he might wonder what affect he's having on the world!"

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Award winning series, is the intriguing relationship between Lynn and Alan, does Peter think it changes in the new series? "Its as solid as ever, Alan and Lynn are a unit. He continues "in this series what we're very excited about is that Lynn and Michael are much more to the fore than they were last time, his (Alan's) relationship with Lynn is key and she's moved on as much as she's had a new haircut"

In the new series, Alan has finally got himself a girlfriend, how did the three writers come up with the new character Sonja? "We did think a lot about what kind of woman in her right mind would be in a relationship with Alan Partridge and so we came up with the solution that Sonja is not necessarily always in her right mind!"

When asked if he gains inspiration for his characters in people he knows, Peter exclaims "Thank God there aren't many people in my life who are like the people Alan Partridge! He continues " but rather than basing things on behaviour on people who are around you, the thing with Alan is that he's says things that other people are thinking a lot of the time - a lot of people think he is completely unsympathetic but I think he's strangely sympathetic in a way, I just think he doesn't have a stop button on his mouth so he will just come out with the crap that some of us might just be thinking but he is unable to keep it inside"