

At last, the ex-pats are back! Sunny soap *Eldorado* returns to your screens, on UK Gold

Sun, Sea and Sangria



Back in July 1992, the BBC launched what many considered to be the ultimate soap – *Eldorado* – which followed the fortunes of a community of ex-pats living in southern Spain. It had all the right ingredients – sun, sand, sangria and sex were part of the staple diet.

At £10 million, this sunshine soap opera was also the BBC's most expensive project to date and was shot entirely on location in Spain. The series was the product of a crew with a proven track record: created by Tony Holland from an idea by John Dark and Verity Lambert and produced by Julia Smith, who had



Problems abound for Drew (Campbell Morrison) and Gwen (Patricia Brake)

already created *EastEnders* along with Tony Holland.

Tony Holland's inspiration had come from a visit to Majorca three years before the launch of *Eldorado*. To make the idea reality, a 25-acre production village was built in the mountains above Malaga, giving extra authenticity to the atmosphere of his fictitious village, Los Barcos. Two

hundred workmen from a nearby village built the set, which included villas, swimming pools, a shopping plaza, petrol station, theatre, police station, restaurant and old-style Spanish village. It took five months to transform the remote mountainside into a village that was then called El Milagro – The Miracle.

However, in March 1993, just as viewers were really beginning to get hooked, the cult serial was cut off in its prime.

Now you can have the chance to decide for yourself whether the decision to pull the popular drama was correct, because *Eldorado* will begin its run on UK Gold on Monday 31 July, and will continue every weekday at 3.30pm and 7pm.

Reacquaint yourself with the ex-pats who uprooted themselves from old Blighty for a new life on Spain's 'coast of dreams'. The residents of Costa Eldorado are a multilingual melting pot of Brits and Spaniards, Scandinavians, French and Germans, divided by culture and united by a common pursuit – the search for a new life in the sunshine.

'This series is about characters who have been brave enough to uproot themselves,' explains Julia Smith; and as creator and storyliner Tony Holland agrees, the essence of the story is escapism: 'Everybody has a secret and they're

all running away from something,' he says of the 30-strong cast of characters who inhabit Eldorado.

Where are they now?

But whatever happened to that cast? Here's the latest news about some of the main characters.

Jesse Birdsall (Marcus Tandy, *Eldorado*'s villain who, in opening episodes, is under scrutiny for his dubious business deals) is now starring in the BBC1 caper *Bugs*.

Polly Perkins (Trish Valentine, *Eldorado*'s cabaret singer in Joy's wine bar who is dating a 19-year-old toy boy called Dieter) still lives in Spain and actually works as a singer on the cabaret circuit.

Kathy Pitkin (Fizz, 17-year-old bride of Bunny, who's nearly 50) is a successful model and can be seen on the front of teenage magazines.

Patricia Brake played unlucky Gwen Lockhead, whose life was plagued by problems including a difficult husband (Campbell Morrison) and delinquent son. Patricia has continued acting in theatre roles and TV shows such as *Casualty*.

Julie Fernandez (Gwen Lockhead's wheelchair-bound daughter) is still acting and also campaigns for disabled rights.



Escape to *Eldorado* on UK Gold, every weekday from Monday 31 July at 3.30pm and 7pm.

Photographs: Scope/Mark Bourdillon



Eldorado villain, Marcus (Jesse Birdsall) with Pilar (Sandra Sandri)