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TV SPECIAL

LOOK

It's Britain's newest soap. It's set in Spain and hits our screens next week. For the BBC it represents a huge gamble...so what's it all about and who's in it? Here's a sneak preview

High up in the mountain above the holiday hot spot of Malaga, a new village has been carved out of the dust. It's called Eldorado and is destined to become as familiar to millions of Brits as any of Spain's well-known holiday resorts. From the team that brought us EastEnders, Eldorado—a new, three-times-a-week show (due to take the Wogan slot on BBC1)—will hit our television screens on July 6. For the BBC it represents a £10 million gamble and a belief that the viewing public will want to tune in for yet more helpings of soap. Soon the antics of nightclub singer Trish Valentine, the Lockhead family, Gerry the drifter and the rest will become as compulsive as the

goings on in Albert Square and Coronation Street. Or at least that's the aim of producer Julia Smith and writer Tony Holland, the team who created EastEnders. The show centres around the fictional Spanish village of Eldorado, where a group of ex-pat Brits mingle with the locals and other foreigners who've chosen the sunshine lifestyle. There's a beach bar, run by two brothers from the North, a riding school, a tennis club and a cabaret spot. And to help introduce you to the show, here's a special sneak preview—a guide to three of the main characters. Martyn Palmer spoke to the talented actors who'll be playing them.

It's all happened so quickly

Buki Armstrong, 27, is best known as Pearl, the tough private detective in South Of The Border. In Eldorado she plays Gerry, a hippy drifter who sometimes lives on the beach and has landed in Spain after touring around Europe.

For actress Buki, moving to live in Spain was a major upheaval, but she's determined to make the most of it and settle into the local lifestyle.

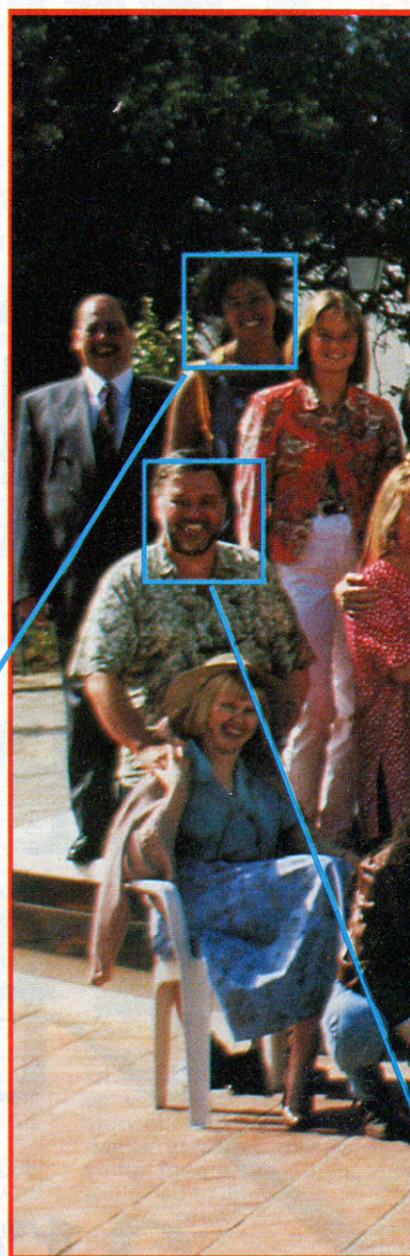
'I came down here in April and moved into my own apartment right away,' says London-born Buki. 'I think it's important to have your own place. Some of the cast have been staying in local hotels but after a while you don't want to call room service, you want to be able to go home and make yourself a cup of tea—although I'm having terrible trouble finding a kettle!'

'I got the job in February so it's all happened very quickly. I was a bit stunned when I first heard about it—going to live and work in a foreign country's



a bit of an upheaval, obviously, but also a challenge.

'I also like the thought of being involved with something like this right at the very beginning. At first there was a lot of secrecy surrounding the show, so it's been a bit of a journey into the unknown, but it's exciting—and frightening!'



Nothing's guaranteed... especially success

Only shoulders as broad as those of this son of a Glaswegian boilerman could cope with the troubles that are about to be heaped on them.

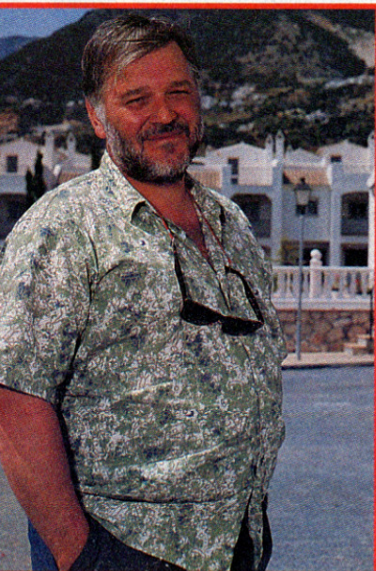
As the head of the series' foremost family, Drew Lockhead has to cope with having a disabled daughter, a drink problem, a rebellious son and a troubled marriage. And that's just in the opening few episodes! It's little wonder he'll be a familiar face at Eldorado's favourite watering holes, the Hindles' beach bar and Joy's.

'He's the backbone of the community really,' says actor

OUT, EASTENDERS!



va España! The British ex-patriots who live in the imaginary soap-town of Eldorado get together for a holiday snap



Campbell Morrison, 'but he's a lost man in many ways.'

Former RSC actor Campbell, 40, is hoping it's going to be third time lucky with a major BBC series. Because after being involved in two police series—*Specials* and *Waterfront Beat*—that were expected to become long-running regulars but failed, he's realistic enough to understand that, despite the hype, *Eldorado's* success isn't guaranteed by any means.

'That's what I'm saying to some of the younger members of the cast,' explains Campbell, himself the father of two sons, Thomas, 10, and Luke, eight.

'You have to keep your feet firmly on the ground. Nothing's

guaranteed in this business,' adds the actor whose best-known TV role was Sammy, the gay barman in the comedy *Life Without George*.

Campbell admits that exile in Spain where, like the rest of the cast, he's had to set up a new home, is proving difficult to come to terms with.

'If the series does work and it looks as if I'm going to be with it for a long time, I'll bring my family out here,' he says.

For now, however, he'll continue pining for the two luxuries he most misses—walking his dogs, Sam and Lucy, and his nightly frames of snooker at the Union Club near his home in Stratford-upon-Avon.



I'm going to be a menopausal superstar!

Polly Parkins has no doubt about it and declares: 'I'm going to be a menopausal superstar, dear!'

Polly, 47, plays Trish Valentine, who works in a video shop by day and becomes a cabaret artist by night. Trish also has a 19-year-old German toy-boy lover, Dieter (played by Kai Maurer).

'I think the storyline's wonderful,' says Polly. 'But I was a bit taken aback when I first read the scripts. Trish is a bit of a tough nut on the outside but she has a heart of gold. People will really take to her.'

Polly herself is no stranger to the nightclub circuit. She began her showbusiness career as a Windmill girl when she was just 15. After two years she left to launch a recording career and had several minor hits in the Sixties and Seventies, as well as acting in top shows like *Z Cars* and *The Sweeney*.

Seven years ago she decided she wanted to live in the sunshine and left Britain to set up home in Spain. She has her own retreat up in the mountains near Coin, just a couple of miles away from the *Eldorado* set.

'I really enjoy Spain. The people are lovely and as soon as that sun comes out I'm in my element. I could never think about moving back to Britain—especially now that *Eldorado's* arrived on my doorstep.'

Trish is one of the most powerful characters in the show—a glitzy, glamorous rival to Coronation Street's Bet Gilroy. 'I've always wanted to work on a soap like this one,' she says, 'and now that I've got the chance, I'm going to make the most of it.'