



# Burning bright

*RT* rustles through the schedules to find seven hot stars lighting up this autumn's dramas

EXCLUSIVELY PHOTOGRAPHED FOR RADIO TIMES BY RICHARD GRASSIE

**Blake Harrison**  
34, from south London  
WORLD ON FIRE BBC1

**Micheal Ward**  
21, from east London  
TOP BOY Netflix

**Rose Williams**  
25, from west London  
SANDITON ITV

**Will Sharpe**  
32, from north London  
GIRI/HAJI BBC2

**Sarah Greene**  
35, from Cork  
THE DUBLIN MURDERS BBC1

**Jade Croot**  
20, from Merthyr Tydfil  
THE LIGHT C4

**Lily Newmark**  
25, from south London  
TEMPLE Sky Atlantic



**▲ Jade Croft**  
**THE LIGHT C4**

**Who do you play in *The Light*?**

Leona is the daughter of Polly [Sarah Lancashire]. She's involved in a massive accident on a building site, loses the use of her legs, and feels terrible guilt for what's happened.

**Did Sarah take you under her wing?**

We became really quite close. She was my hero; I've looked up to her for years. If I ever have a little girl, I'll probably put "Sarah" in her name!

**When did you start acting?**

I was very shy so I took up karate, which gave me self-belief, then I began acting. I got into the RSC and played Helen of Troy aged 16, which was a bit intimidating. I was in the middle of A-levels but I just had to do it.

**What was your first TV role?**

*Casualty* [2013] - eating my dead cat's ashes!

**Did your family ever have reservations about you acting?**

My mum and grandparents took me anywhere I needed for auditions. There are hard times and it's lovely to have a team, spurring you on.

**Is this an exciting time to be an actor?**

I think so. I love dramas like *Broadchurch* and *Happy Valley*, which have really strong women at the forefront.

**Do you dream of Hollywood?**

Of course! It would be a massive privilege and honour one day. I've never been to America.

**▼ Blake Harrison**  
**WORLD ON FIRE BBC1**

**Who do you play in *World on Fire*?**

It's a Second World War drama, linking Polish, American, German and French stories. It does what *Game of Thrones* did: different characters linked by one common thread. I play a sergeant called Rodney.

**When did you start acting?**

I was Romeo aged nine, in a wacky production set to the music of the Monkees. I went to Sylvia Young then the Brit School.

**Was it instant fame and success when you got the role of Neil in *The Inbetweeners* in 2007?**

No! When it was first delivered, a Channel 4 exec said, "This is like the worst episode ever of *Grange Hill*." There weren't high hopes. In between the first and second series, I worked in the "Scare Chamber" at Madame Tussaud's because we weren't paid well.

**Did your family have any reservations about you acting?**

I was doing call centre training when my mum persuaded me to do the *Inbetweeners* audition. My dad was less sure at first. He'd have liked me to go into the police.

**Has it been hard to switch from high-profile comedy to straight drama?**

You have to turn down work to move away from the "cockney idiot", which is not easy when you have two kids. You get the fear but you have to convince people you can do more than "goofy".

**Is the acting world a safer place these days?**

Years ago I certainly witnessed moments where people may have been pressured to do things they weren't keen on. But I don't know if that's down to different sets, or budgets, rather than a different era.



**▲ Micheal Ward**  
**TOP BOY Netflix**

**Who do you play in *Top Boy*?**

Jamie is the legal guardian for his two little brothers. He's very different at home compared to the streets. He does bad things, but he's soft with them.

**Were you a fan of the first two series on Channel 4?**

Massive. Years ago I messaged Ashley Walters [who plays drug dealer Dushane] to ask for an audition! This is a dream.

**Did Ashley take you under his wing?**

I learnt a lot from Ashley. Even just how he is on set - he talks to everybody.

**What are the challenges of being a young actor?**

When I filmed *The A List* [BBC 2018] in Glasgow, it was my first time away from my mum and I hardly saw my friends.

**When did you start acting?**

I got the bug playing McDuff at the Shakespeare Schools Festival, then did performing arts at Epping Forest College.

**Did your family ever have reservations about you acting?**

No. We're a noisy, creative, overdramatic family. My mum always supported me.

**What was your first TV role?**

My first jobs were actually music videos for Tom Walker and Lily Allen.

**Do you dream of Hollywood?**

One hundred per cent. I auditioned in New York recently - my first time in the US - and it was everything I wanted.

**What's next?**

A film with Charlize Theron called *The Old Guard*. ▷

MICHAEL WEARS: SUIT FROM MARCIANO; MUSTARD BROWN KNITTED TOP FROM UNIQLO; CREAM TRAINERS FROM ALL JEWELLERY MICHAEL'S OWN.

JADE WEARS: RED FRILL SLIP DRESS FROM H&M; WHITE SNEAKERS FROM CONVERSE; BLAKE WEARS: T-SHIRT AND LIGHT GREY SUIT, ALL BURTON; NAVY COAT FROM UNIQLO; GREY SUEDE TRAINERS FROM OLIVER SWEENEY.

► **Sarah Greene**

**THE DUBLIN MURDERS** BBC1

**Who do you play in *The Dublin Murders*?**

A detective, Cassandra Maddox. It's a dark psychological thriller by Sarah Phelps, and I actually play several roles because Cassie goes under cover, then a girl turns up dead who looks like her. It's a show you can get lost in.

**When did you start acting?**

Aged five I was Miss Hannigan [in the musical *Annie*] with a bottle of "vodka" and my mum's high heels and pearls!

**Did your family ever have reservations?**

No, because I was dedicated. While my friends travelled the world, I was in Cork, working at three bar jobs, going to acting classes.

**What are the challenges for a young actor?**

It's a scary world if you're not thick-skinned. Some days I'm vulnerable and sensitive.

**Is there a pressure on actresses to look good?**

I did a Roddy Doyle film recently [*Rosie*] and I put on weight because I was a mum of four kids living hand to mouth. I wanted to look real, and there was a great freedom in that.

**Do you dream of Hollywood?**

I've spent time in LA but British TV is having an absolute moment – gritty and real.

**What's next?**

*Normal People* [BBC], based on the Sally Rooney book. It's beautiful. I'm having a ball.



◀ **Rose Williams**

**SANDITON** ITV

**Who do you play in *Sanditon*?**

I play Charlotte Heywood in Jane Austen's coming-of-age story. She only wrote 11 chapters before she died and Andrew Davies has adapted it and written the rest.

**When did you start acting?**

When I was 18, I was working in the costume department of the E4 drama *Misfits* and I had a "Eureka!" moment: a big urge to join in with the actors.

**What was your first TV role?**

An American show called *Reign* [2014–17], filming for ten months of the year. I didn't go to drama school, so that was my training.

**Did your parents ever have reservations about you acting?**

A bit. They worked in TV – my mum in costume and my dad in various production roles. I think they're even more surprised than I am that it worked out!

**What are the challenges of being a young actor?**

A lot of the time you're alone, and there's no structure to your life.

**Is the acting world a safer place these days?**

There's been a massive change in the character breakdowns since #MeToo. Previously they'd say "She's beautiful and vulnerable" or "athletic". That's pretty much stopped now, unless it's an action role that requires a lot of physical work.

**Do you dream of Hollywood?**

I stayed in LA when I made *Reign* and I still rent a place there, so it would be fantastic, but I just want to be where the good work is.

**What's next?**

An independent British film called *The Power*, written and directed by Corinna Faith. It's a thriller set in the early 1970s and I play a young nurse. ▷

SARAH WEARS: SNAKE SKIN PRINT DRESS FROM GUESS; HAWK SPORTS LUXE COAT FROM AMANDA WAKELEY; BLACK BOOTS FROM ALDO. ROSE WEARS: BURGUNDY SHINY TRENCH FROM FIND; BLACK CROP TOP FROM FOREVER 21; LEATHER JOGGERS FROM HUSH; TRAINERS FROM DOROTHY PERKINS.



◀ **Will Sharpe**  
**GIRI/HAJI BBC2**

**Who do you play in *Giri/Haji*?**

It's a detective drama but I play Rodney, a Soho sex worker. He's a colourful dresser and he's funny but he's suppressing a lot of pain. He's like a peacock in a skip.

**You wrote, directed and starred in the Channel 4 comedy *Flowers*. Was it the comedy in *Giri/Haji* that attracted you?**

Yeah. It's a thriller, but there are laughs, like a Coen Brothers film. I'm not moved by things unless they have a sense of humour. It doesn't feel like a true reflection of life otherwise.

**When did you start acting?**

I played Jack Frost at school in Japan where I grew up [Sharpe moved to Tokyo as a child and lived there until he was eight], and my costume fell off.

**What's next?**

I've co-written a feature film that I'll be directing [*Louis Wain*, which stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Claire Foy]. And I play a barrister in BBC2's comedy *Defending the Guilty*.

**Lily Newmark ▶**  
**TEMPLE Sky Atlantic**

**Who do you play in *Temple*?**

Eve's the daughter of a doctor called Daniel [Mark Strong] who's secretly performing illegal surgery in an underground bunker.

**When did you start acting?**

I played a worm at primary school, then a lot of old men for some reason. I'm all for those lines being blurred on TV like they are on stage. My dream role is Sméagol in *The Lord of the Rings*.

**What was your first TV role?**

*Emerald City* on NBC [2017]. I was Ginger the Witch. It was an incredible first job.

**What are the challenges for a young actor?**

I get called "sweetheart" and "darling" on set a lot. I just say, "Call me Lily." You're not calling Mark Strong "sweetheart", so why say it to me? It's an age thing, a gender thing.

**Is there still a pressure to look good?**

I've always played the quirkiest roles, having red hair and googly eyes! I find the weirder roles more interesting.

**What's next?**

A new Netflix fantasy series called *Cursed*. I've been wanting to do fantasy for ages.

**Do you dream of Hollywood?**

I've got dual American citizenship so I do have the luxury of working there if it's offered. But the work over here is so good.

INTERVIEWS BY EMMA COX



WILL WEARS: RED AND WHITE TOP FROM JACK JONES; NAVY SMART TROUSERS FROM COS; SUEDE AND LEATHER TRAINERS FROM TED BAKER. LILY WEARS: BROWN LINEN SUIT FROM TOPSHOP; RUST KNIT POLO TOP FROM JIGSAW; YELLOW SNEAKERS FROM CONVERSE; EARRINGS, LILY'S OWN.