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Carl is played by Chris Coghill, Jon by William Ash, Andy by Kieran O'Brien, Tina by Marsha Thomason, Emma by Lisa Faulkner and Claire by Melanie Brown.

Burn It is produced by RED Production Company for BBC Three. *Burn It* writer Matt Greenhalgh's previous credits include the critically acclaimed *Clocking Off*, and producer Tom Sherry was the Associate Producer on the groundbreaking *Queer As Folk*. *Burn It* is directed by Sheree Folkson and Ed Fraiman.

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CAST LIST

Jon

William Ash

Claire

Melanie Brown

Carl

THE BIRTH OF *BURN IT*

By Matt Greenhalgh

Around five years ago, on another messy night out in town, me and two mates were simultaneously projectile vomiting over a wall into the Manchester Ship Canal (it must have been a bad pint). In between barfing rest-bites, I remember being in uncontrollable fits. Each individual spew, a green light for me to crack-up – then spew myself...and so it went on. It was like something out of *Jackass*.

I knew then, I had to write *Burn It*.

Y'see there's a lost generation out there that this programme will appeal to. Masses of fucked up, confused, crazy individuals. I wouldn't start crying for them or anything...but they'r

THE MAKING OF *BURN IT*

Q & A Session

**with Nicola Shindler (Executive Producer)
and Tom Sherry (Producer)**

1.

Tom:

CHARACTER SYNOPSES

WILLIAM ASH **Plays Jon**

Jon's the most sensitive of the three lads, and a bit of a romantic. And though the three of them have been living their lives like a party for the past 12 years, when Jon looks at his past and what he's done, he realises he's got a gaping hole in his life where his daughter should be.

"He's lost at the beginning of the series, he's got loads on his mind," explains Will Ash. "He wants to take charge of his life and find out where his daughter is, who he and his teenage sweetheart Tina put up for adoption 13 years ago. When he finds out this is almost impossible, he's completely helpless.

"*Burn It* perfectly captures the desperation of Jon. He can't tell anyone how he really feels, and that's how it is. Blokes will talk about anything but their feelings," admits Will.

The powerful and realistic script was the main draw for Will: "The script related to me and my friends and our age group. It's how you are with each other. He [Matt] catches all the humour, it's just like being down the pub with your mates."

Jon has been mates with Carl and Andy forever, and they're more like brothers to each other. Will believes the strong bond between the lads comes from the great times they've had together. "Everything they've done has been together. Everything they've experienced they've all been involved. But when they start to look further afield, there's a change in their relationship, and *Burn It* is about how they deal with that."

Will was delighted to be reunited with Marsha Thomason who plays Jon's ex love, Tina. Will and Marsha have played on screen lovers before in ITV1's *Where The Heart Is*: "I've known Marsha since we were nine years old, and we're good friends and have always kept in touch. For me, working with Marsha makes the job so much easier – I didn't have to worry about making suggestions, and she's got such a great energy."

Will can be seen next in the film *Nicholas Nickleby* (starring Charlie Hunnam, Jim Broadbent and Christopher Plummer), out now in the US. His TV credits include *Daddy's Girl*, *Clocking Off* and *All The King's Men*. Will has just finished appearing in *Port* at the Royal Exchange, Manchester.

MELANIE BROWN **Plays Claire**

A free-spirited, single mother, Claire doesn't bother with steady relationships, not when she can just have the odd fling here and there. Melanie Brown, in her first big TV acting role, explains that though Claire may seem flighty and a bit wild, she's really very moral.

“She’s a really good listener for her best mate Emma, and she gives her sound advice because she knows and understands her. And though she sticks up for Emma when her relationship with Andy hits a rough patch, she’s still very moral in the way she sees things, and tells Emma so.”

Though Melanie has appeared on stage in *The Vagina Monologues* in London and Manchester – where Nicola Shindler spotted her for the role of Claire – this is Melanie’s first big TV drama role, and she’s been having a great time.

“I’ve been offered scripts before just from being Mel B out of the Spice Girls, and I didn’t want that. So when Nicola approached me after she’d seen me in theatre and told me she believed I could do this part, I was really pleased,” beams Melanie.

“But Andy and Jon do begin to find mature paths in life and go off in a different direction, while Carl doesn’t. He gets the fear a bit – a premature mid-life crisis – he doesn’t want to stop partying.”

Carl doesn’t give up easily where his mates are concerned, and his demands on his friends’ time, especially Andy’s, begin to take their toll contributing to break ups, infidelities and fights.

“He’s trying to put off the inevitable, he just wants to keep going, whereas the other boys haven’t got time for it anymore. Jon’s got his family, Andy’s got Emma, but Carl seems unable to have a proper relationship with a woman, at least not with the one he really wants to be with,” adds Chris.

“It’s turned into that brother-sister relationship, and it’s really hard when you’re in your twenties and that happens,” explains Lisa.

Emma’s unhappiness and soul searching has provided Lisa with one of her biggest acting challenges in her career.

“*Burn It* is very raw. There’s a lot of drama around that’s slightly on the edge but doesn’t quite make it and plays it safe. *Burn It* doesn’t play it safe, it just tells it how it is.

“I think people are going to enjoy it, there’s such an energy about it. I love it. I think if it comes across in any way like the script, then we’ve done a brilliant job. It’s the best thing I’ve ever done in my life,” admits Lisa.

Lisa’s TV credits include *Spooks*, now infamous for her untimely demise courtesy of an industrial sized deep fat fryer; *Holby City*; *Brookside* and *Dangerfield*. Her film credits include *Stiff Lips*; *The Lover* and *The Parent Trap*.

KIERAN O’BRIEN **Plays Andy**

Andy lives with his first serious girlfriend Emma, works as a postman, and spends most nights down the pub with his best mates.

As the only one of the three lads with a girlfriend, Andy often comes in for a lot of stick, mainly from Carl, about his commitment to the cause of never growing up.

“Andy’s life is more complex than Carl and Jon’s in that sense,” admits Kieran. “He has a home life with his girlfriend of ten years – the others don’t. He has to try and balance the two.

“When you’re younger and immersed in the club culture like those three were, you think you’re going to be mates forever. But the things you desire change and the choices you then make lead you down different paths.”

Kieran believes that Andy and Emma’s relationship problems are a pretty accurate account of what happens in many long-term partnerships.

“His relationship with Emma is typical of a couple who’ve been together for ten years. It becomes habitual. That’s not to say there’s any less love there, because they still do love each other, life has just become ordinary.”

Kieran recalls talking to Chris (who plays Carl) about receiving the scripts for *Burn It*: “I worked with Chris on *24 Hour Party People*, and we ended up at the Cannes Film Festival for it. So there’s me and Chris having a drink on a balcony overlooking Cannes saying ‘wouldn’t it be great if they cast us as best mates on *Burn It*!’

“Luckily for us they did, and for me it was one of those rare jobs where I already knew most of the main cast members from previous jobs and most of the crew as well. It was just amazing.”

The dialogue used and the stories told in *Burn It* are something that Kieran feels have probably not been seen on TV before.

RED Production Company

Nicola Shindler set up RED Production Company in January 1998 to work with writers on modern, innovative and entertaining dramas.

RED first went into production in Spring 1998 on Russell T Davies' 8-part serial, *Queer As Folk*, for Channel 4, followed by a two-hour finale in 2000. Soon to follow, RED produced *Love In The 21st Century* - devised by Catherine Johnson - six stories about sex, love and relationships.

Always looking for new writers, RED set up a script competition with Channel 4 called Northern Soul, which unearthed a number of, now commissioned, writers.