

SCREEN

INTERNATIONAL

www.ScreenDaily.com

Issue 1779 November 2014



LA Stars of Tomorrow 2014

■ China territory focus ■ AFM preview ■ Bringing Paddington to life

Chris Vance and Daisy Lewis

LA Stars of Tomorrow 2014

Profiles by Elbert Wýche. Photography by Frazer Harrison at Viceroy Santa Monica

These days it is difficult to watch your favourite TV show or visit the cinema without being reminded of the proliferation of established or up-and-coming talent from the British Isles.

Exports like *Downton Abbey* and *Doctor Who* and stars of the big screen such as Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley have become household names.

Rightly so. The talent that comes from across the pond has always been first-rate and it seems that US audiences, not to mention the movers and shakers in Hollywood, cannot get enough of our peculiar accents and quirky charm.

This year's LA Stars feature boasts nine individuals whose names emerged from a diligent trawl of agents, managers and publicists on both sides of the Atlantic.

Screen was looking for actors, directors, writers, producers and composers from Ireland and the UK who spend much of their time in Los Angeles and demonstrate a promising track record and/or a tantalising slate of upcoming projects.

In short, entertainers who are about to pop. *Screen* wishes all the LA Stars the very best in their careers.

Jeremy Kay, *US editor*

Chris Vance [\(previous page\)](#)

Chris Vance's route to acting and producing was far from traditional. Born in Paddington, London, and raised in Bristol, Vance attended Newcastle University and moved back to the capital to work as a civil engineer — a job he held until he was 30 years old.

"Somewhere in my late 20s I decided to have a change in direction because I saw my whole life in front of me. I knew I needed to do something else, to experience something else before I committed entirely to a life of civil engineering," Vance recalls.

So he went to London to take creative writing and screenwriting courses. That led to drama training at the UK branch of The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute.

Vance dove into acting with all the enthusiasm and energy he could muster. Leaving the comfort of a steady paycheck for the uncertainty of the entertainment industry required a huge leap of faith.

"It was a breath of fresh air for me. It wasn't always easy at times but I was fully committed. I was willing to try anything. It was more than just the acting; it was the writing and directing and producing. I was trying to put plays on. So I really embraced the whole thing; the whole storytelling aspect. Through a combination of trial and error, things sort of worked out."

He got his first acting job through school connections in a version of *Romeo And Juliet* at Oxford University.

But the actor-producer does not believe in the notion of big breaks: he views success in this industry as a progression of learning from every role or position held.

That said, he pinpoints his stint in the Australian television show *All Saints* as the moment he was able to walk away completely from engineering. Following *All Saints*, Vance — who lives in Los Angeles — has appeared on US television series such as *Prison Break*, *Mental*, *Burn Notice*, *Dexter* and *Rizzoli & Isles*.

When approaching a new project, Vance says he looks at it in its totality rather than focusing on the character he is intending to play.

He explains: "For me it's more about the writing and the piece as a whole. I'm willing to play a small role in what I think is a very good project. That makes me just as happy as taking on a challenge like a leading role in a television series. It doesn't matter to me; it's about the writing and what the story has to say."

Vance wears many hats on his latest project *Transporter: The Series*, inspired by the trilogy of Jason Statham films. The show, which had its US premiere in Octo-

ber, has Vance as lead actor and executive producer.

"My capacity is to oversee the production shooting. Pushing the writing team as far as they can go to improve the scripts and make sure we get production done every day. Sorting out the logistics of everything. It's quite a big undertaking. It's something that I want to do much more of."

"I'd love to explore the feature film side because it's not something that I've done much of. Right now, I still have so much to explore in terms of producing, directing and writing as well as acting."

A strong work ethic is at the centre of everything he touches, an attribute he credits to his father, who worked in the construction industry.

"Success often doesn't come easily in this business and you really do have to keep on top of your game, be patient and pursue it with an open heart."

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Daisy Lewis [\(previous page\)](#)

Daisy Lewis knew unequivocally that acting was her destiny. Her huge personality led those that knew her to ask when she would make it happen. "It's the only thing I've ever loved," she says.

Born in London, her family moved to the Dorset countryside when she was seven. Lewis trained at the National Youth Theatre from the age of 15 to 22.

That is when her acting was on hold for a while. Her parents were very clear that if she wanted to pursue it, she needed to complete her academic studies first. Professional acting was out of the question. Lewis participated in the Royal Court Theatre's young writers programme and wrote for *The Sunday Telegraph*. She also studied English literature at King's College London.

This year she came to the US, where she has an apartment in Los Angeles, and sold her first show to the CW network, on which she is co-creator and executive producer. The show, *The Last Debutantes*, is a period costume drama that centres on the final year of the season in 1958.

"I've got a couple of other shows in development at the moment and a feature that I'm writing. So things are pretty busy," says Lewis.

She just shot *Sons Of Liberty* with *Breaking Bad* alumnus Dean Norris. She plays Abigail Adams, the wife of John Adams. "A very influential, strong, kind, moral woman. What's so interesting is that obviously it's about the American fight for independence from the British.



Giles Matthey (left) and Julian Morris

My first American role is playing a woman who is attempting to free her country from the shackles of England. That was really fascinating."

She credits the role of Sarah Bunting on *Downton Abbey* as her big break. "The auditions, oh my god! It was so brutal," she remembers. "They told me to get on a train with one other girl who had been shortlisted and we went to Highclere Castle, which is about an hour outside of London and I turned up at Downton Abbey. It was kind of like, 'All this could be yours but first you have to get the part.' It's like showing a starving man a feast," she says.

For Lewis, success in this industry depends on several things. "I was lucky. I'm good but I was lucky and you need both of those things. It's timing, hard work, heartbreak and luck. I do believe you can make your own luck."

When possible, she loves to play char-

acters that have a controversial edge to them. She's naturally inclined to people and stories on the margins. "People who are neither one thing nor the other. I think every character, like every human, is complex."

She continues: "At the movies I like to have sweet and salty popcorn together. So I like sweet and salty characters together. And that's hard to find in female characters."

As a writer and producer, it is difficult to find time away from the industry. When she does, she likes to go to Malibu and read on the beach. "In London, I love to go to the museums and libraries. With LA, it's such a beautiful and natural environment and the weather's so good. I like to be outdoors as much as I can."

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Julian Morris

Julian Morris was a shy kid. As much as he wanted to be, he wasn't very good at sports, so acting was what he did after school, just to have fun and make friends.

While growing up in Muswell Hill, north London, Morris went to an after-school acting programme run by Anna Scher, a place that was "less about acting and more about having fun", he says. "She never taught acting. I mean, that's what we did, but all we did was improvise."

Although he discovered that acting was what he loved, Morris never saw it as an attainable goal until a director from the Royal Shakespeare Company came to one of his classes and recruited the youngster to play roles in productions of *Macbeth* and *Richard III*.

In his gap year before university, Morris signed with a UK agent and landed the lead role in an NBC pilot called *Young*

Arthur. "The pilot was never picked up to series, however it did get me to America. I started getting other offers. I never went to university but I did end up having that career I always dreamed of in acting."

Morris may have managed to bypass a college education but learning is ingrained in his approach to everything he experiences. "Part of the reason why I love acting so much is it gives me another excuse to learn, to be other people, to explore. When you're exploring character, you're exploring the way other people are and how they live."

He is inspired by the careers of actors such as Michael Fassbender, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and James McAvoy. "I love the projects they associate themselves with."

There are no any specific characteristics Morris looks for when evaluating potential roles. Instead, his focus is on story and the visceral response it engenders inside him.

His role as Victor in Kieran Evans' dark romance *Kelly + Victor* is one that remains one of the actor's favourites. "That was a character that I thought would be a huge challenge. Victor was very unlike myself; this sort of young working class lad in Liverpool. The idea of playing him was enticing because there was so much for me to explore."

Another key role in his career came this year in director Marc Forster's Amazon Studios series *Hand Of God* in which he plays Reverend Curtis, a conman turned preacher. The pilot, which can now be seen on Amazon, has been picked up to series and will go into production in the beginning of 2015.

Before Morris moved to the US, he put himself on tape for a role in Forster's feature film *Stay*, a role that ultimately went to Ryan Gosling. "I remember reading the script and being so excited and the character was so enticing. And of course

the director was Marc Forster and I desperately wanted to work with him. Cut to 10 years later and I get another Marc Forster script and a great role but I get it this time," he says.

Morris, who resides in Los Angeles, can be seen in a recurring role on the Fox series *New Girl* in which he plays Zooey Deschanel's love interest, Ryan.

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Giles Matthey

Giles Matthey's family moved from Sydney to London when he was eight years old, and he knew very early on that acting was what he was meant to do. Looking up to actors such as Philip Seymour Hoffman and Daniel Day-Lewis led Matthey to venture far from home to New York, studying drama at The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute.

While there, Matthey formed a strong bond with his acting instructor. "Robert Ellermann, who was a fantastic teacher, got me to think in a deeper way. He changed my whole outlook and approach to acting. Although he was a teacher, he became more of a mentor in acting. I felt like the connection was a bit stronger than just teacher-student."

His first acting job was a single episode of *The Good Wife* in which he played a Dutch rapist, uttering a mere three lines. Next he had a role on the Kiefer Sutherland series *24*.

He got his big breakthrough auditioning for the role of Claude Crane, a faerie, on the HBO series *True Blood*. "I had no idea what the part was. It turned out to be nine episodes. It was a great character. The show's creator Alan Ball was in the room during my audition. I had no idea who he was and then I researched the whole show and I was just wowed and knew it was a big deal."

Matthey followed his stint on the smash series with feature work alongside industry veterans and actors he holds in the highest esteem. He co-stars alongside the late Robin Williams in Dito Montiel's film *Boulevard*, a role he says truly challenged him.

"I'm excited about things that push you and help you to step to those extreme sides of yourself; not just playing your own general truth but playing an extreme version of that. With *Boulevard* I got to play a gay, ghetto southern pimp. That's what's really rewarding for an actor."

He is currently filming *By Way Of Helena* with Woody Harrelson. "I'm very excited for the release of those two films. Working with Robin Williams and »



Gerard Barrett

Woody Harrelson in the space of a year — I'm so lucky and so grateful that I've had the opportunity."

He is proud of the work he has done on television. "TV is so strong right now, if you look at things like *True Detective* and *Homeland*." Yet film has a special place in his heart. "TV is much more regimented in its structure and its form. With film anything can happen. It has that special quality where if you're working with a great director I feel you have a bit more freedom. Film is a special place where lightning can strike."

When away from set Matthey, who lives full time in Los Angeles, enjoys football, sushi and playing his Xbox to take his mind off of things. He is also something of an adrenaline junkie with a new-found hobby in skydiving.

Agent Nick Collins, Gersh (310) 274 6611

Gerard Barrett

Pilgrim Hill had its world premiere at Telluride Film Festival in 2012, marking the beginning of what would be a life-changing two years for Irish director Gerard Barrett. The film also garnered the inaugural Bingham Ray New Talent Award at Galway Film Fleadh that summer.

Born in the small village of Knockanore, in County Kerry, Barrett studied media and film studies at the Institute of

Technology Tralee and made *Pilgrim Hill* in his final year as a thesis film. A 30-minute film was all that was required but he had other plans. "I just thought I could put as much effort into making a feature," he remembers. He went to his local bank and borrowed \$5,700 (£4,500) and shot the movie with three crew members over seven days.

"It was a great learning curve because I wrote, produced, directed and edited it. It really grounded me on how the industry works on all levels. I took that into my next film, *Glassland*, which I shot in January of this year."

It was at Telluride where Barrett was signed by his current agency WME.

"I am lucky that James Farrell and Simon Faber at WME are people that get behind me so much and they know what I'm trying to do."

Barrett finds inspiration by studying the career of film-makers he admires. On a list of many are Jim Sheridan, Paul Thomas Anderson and Christopher Nolan. "With Jim Sheridan, the way that he told very personal stories was something that inspired me from a young age. As I started to grow up, Paul Thomas Anderson influenced me in how he does his work with such originality. Christopher Nolan made his first feature film *Following* for, like, £6,000."

His newest film, *Glassland*, had its Irish premiere at Galway in July. At 26

years old, Barrett has made two feature films that have won awards and taken him around the world.

"What's interesting for me is I'm kind of growing up and living life as I make my films. What I've really wanted to do from my first and second film and obviously with my third coming up is explore the human struggle."

Pilgrim Hill is about a farmer living in rural isolation in Ireland. *Glassland* centres on a young man trying to keep his family from being ripped apart by addiction. He is currently in pre-production on an adaptation of a *New York Times* best-selling novel. Details remain under wraps, but Barrett hints: "My next film is about a girl whose life falls apart all of a sudden and she needs to keep going to stay alive."

"What I'm after is to show how we handle struggle and how we keep going through the worst times," says Barrett. "That's what is keeping me up at night and what gets me up in the morning; exploring that."

As his career moves forward he hopes to broaden his horizons in terms of genre and style. "I can't tell you where I want to go because I probably haven't settled on what I really am yet, in a sense."

In the wake of his early triumphs, the Los Angeles-based Barrett is intent on staying humble. "I don't take it for granted. There are so many people out there trying to break into the industry. It's difficult and I'm so honoured."

Agent James Farrell, WME (310) 285 9000

Amy Pemberton

Amy Pemberton had a big break working with Derek Hough of *Dancing With The Stars* fame in the stage production of *Footloose*. After that she was offered roles in musical theatre. "I went on to play the lead in *Rock Of Ages*, then I did *Jersey Boys*. I was lucky to go back and forth between theatre and TV."

The Romford-born actress secured her first acting agent Michael Cronin, who was with The Narrow Road Company at the time, from her third-year agent showcase while attending the Arts Educational Schools in London (she would later move with Cronin to International Artistes, now Qtalent). Pemberton won her first television role in the UK children's series *The Mysti Show* as a result.

She continues her training in Los Angeles at Anthony Meindl's Actor Workshop. "Just keeping the training going," she says. "I was kind of lucky to start working pretty quick. I've had guidance along the way, mainly since I've been in LA and I haven't been here long. I've definitely started enjoying having

some one-on-one lessons." Her training paid off to land a key role in Noel Clarke-starring thriller *Storage 24*, a film she shot in London before her recent move to Los Angeles.

"*Storage 24* definitely opened up doors for me in the film world. It's great when you finally get that film role. People go, 'OK, we'll see you now.'" She has two short films that will premiere this year: drama *Kaufman's Game* and action film *Death Machine*.

Willing to utilise her talent in every way possible, Pemberton has done extensive work in voice acting. She has done five years of voiceover work for the *Doctor Who* audio series playing opposite Sylvester McCoy. "All of a sudden here in the US [*Doctor Who*] has just blown up and I've been really busy with that," she says.

Pemberton has also recorded voice-over roles for Disney on the *Marvel Heroes* video game. "I've been recording the new *Game Of Thrones* video game. I'm one of the leads in that. I never thought that would happen. It's amazing what LA has to offer in different ways. That in itself has been a big break for me. I love being in the studio, it's so much fun."

The world of comedy is where Pemberton feels most at home. She finds inspiration in comedians such as Wanda Sykes and Ricky Gervais. The latter she has met on a couple of projects.

"I'm a massive Wanda Sykes fan, of both her stand-up and every movie that she's been in. If I ever get to work with Wanda Sykes I will be a happy lady. Ricky Gervais, he's just so good. Comedy excites me. Most of what I've done on stage and screen and voice has been comedy stuff. It gives me a buzz," she says.

When not in the studio or in front of the camera, Pemberton acts as a patron for a charity that her father led before his death. "They're called Headway. They are an international brain rehabilitation charity that runs units all around the UK and other places too. But my focus, obviously, is on where I'm from. I do a lot of work for them, fundraising. The work they do is fantastic."

Manager Justin Grey Stone, Management 360 (310) 272 7000

Nick Blood

"I was born in Aylesbury, a little town north-west of London," Nick Blood says. "I grew up around there, skateboarding and doing drama workshops and stuff. Just getting up to mischief, really."

A couple of local actors ran a drama workshop that kept the youngster and many other kids off the streets. "I didn't come from a background where anyone was an actor," he says. "I didn't know any »

Amy Pemberton and Nick Blood





Tehmina Sunny

actors. I didn't know how you went about becoming an actor."

He began going to the workshop when he was seven. "We just saw it as a youth club, originally, but as soon as I went I fell in love with it. And kind of without thinking, I knew this was what I wanted to do."

He found his way to London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in west London, graduating six years ago. After drama school he spent a few months going to auditions and ultimately decided to write a play.

"I devised this short 15-minute physical theatre piece that we entered into the Old Vic Theatre's competition, Old Vic New Voices. We won that. At that time the whole idea of getting paid for acting was still a bit of a fantasy."

After finding moderate success in theatre, Blood found a role on the long-running UK police series *The Bill* playing "a really camp gay fashion designer". He continues: "I get bored playing stuff that's too close to home. My attention span is pretty short so I like to vary it up."

Blood views a career in film and television as one that "ebbs and flows" — and he is up for it. He relocated to Los Ange-

les and can be seen playing mercenary Lance Hunter on the hit ABC series *Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, which is his first project in the US. He will also be seen in Danny Boyle's UK television series *Babylon*, which has its US premiere in 2015 on the Sundance Channel.

He has written a feature script with his writing partner, Ben Deery, and he has also written, co-written and directed a slew of short films that he hopes will garner some attention on the festival circuit.

"The first one, called *The Devil On Each Shoulder*, I wrote and co-directed. The one I just directed was written by my writing partner — it's called *Hero*. And then we've got another that I've written, which I'm hoping to direct in the hiatus from shooting *Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, which is in April. So I'm starting to try to get a director showreel together."

When free time presents itself, Blood likes to attend live music events and spend time with friends and family. He says: "I've got a gorgeous niece and nephew that I miss a lot being over here."

Agent Steven Brown, ICM Partners

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Tehmina Sunny

London-born Tehmina Sunny is on a streak of high-profile projects that stem from her dream start in entertainment. Sunny's first acting job was in *Children Of Men* for Alfonso Cuarón. Working on that film was more than a first job for her; it was, she says, an irreplaceable learning experience, a veritable film school on set.

"Even if I wasn't in any of the scenes, Alfonso would just let me hang out on set and watch," says Sunny. "I had no idea how it worked, who did what. I was absolutely clueless about the whole process. It was so great that I was able to sit in a corner and take in what was going on."

Acting was not initially on Sunny's radar. Her parents made it known early on that acting was not a viable option for their daughter. A strong education would be of paramount importance to her success in life.

Sunny recalls: "Coming from an Indian family, it was always pushed that it would be academic subjects. That is what I would get my degree in. That's

what I would have my job in. So going into acting was a 180-degree turn."

She pursued and excelled in academia. A graduate of the University of Leeds, Sunny studied business marketing and computer science. Fortunately, while at university there were opportunities for her to pursue her interest in the arts without sacrificing her other academic pursuits.

It was just over six years ago that UK acting agent Joe Hutton at The BWH Agency asked if he could represent her as an actress. "I thought it was pretty bonkers. I asked him if he was joking. He persuaded me that he thought it would be a good idea and it just transformed my life and opened my eyes to something I wish I did study and I wish I did more when I was younger."

Sunny has a very clear view of the kinds of genres and roles that suit her best. "The genres that I really like are drama and thriller. They are the areas I seem to be put up for as well. It's the niche that I fit in well. I like characters that are flawed and a little bit confused on a journey."

Living in Los Angeles, Sunny is making her presence known with a string of projects in television and film. Earlier this year she filmed a major part on *24: Live Another Day* with Kiefer Sutherland. "I loved working with the team on *24*. Just a fantastic team, the storyline was great and I loved the character I played." She has also appeared in *NCIS, Californication, Heroes* and *The Newsroom*.

She recently filmed the next instalment of the *CSI* franchise, the Patricia Arquette-produced *CSI: Cyber*. "That was great because I've always admired her work"

Sunny has also landed a project called *Battle Creek* from *Breaking Bad* showrunner Vince Gilligan, in which she will star alongside Josh Duhamel and Kal Penn. "It's been a really great year and very versatile. I've been able to step into lots of fun characters."

On the feature side she acted in Roland Joffé's upcoming epic romance *The Lovers*. She also has Jorge Garcia's *Running Out Of Time*, which goes into production in the beginning of 2015, and is in the middle of a Kickstarter campaign to fund action thriller *A Perfect Weapon*.

Sunny is also trying her hand at another skill. "I've found a really great script that I would like to develop and produce, so I've collaborated with the fantastic writer who wrote it. I'm taking that on board and putting on a producing hat and seeing how that goes."

Manager Melanie Greene, Affirmative Entertainment (310) 858 3200

Ceiri Torjussen

Ceiri Torjussen was born and raised in Cardiff, Wales. He discovered his love of music at an early age. "I started playing the piano and the trumpet when I was about eight. As I got a little older I played in local bands, orchestras and jazz groups — all sorts of ensembles. I started composing when I was 16 or 17," he says.

Torjussen completed his undergraduate studies at the University of York in England, subsequently relocating to the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles to study composition.

His first paying job in scoring came shortly after graduating USC, working as an orchestrator for composer Marco Beltrami.

"I had been doing a lot of short films for the film-makers at USC. That led me to orchestrating for Beltrami, which allowed me to pay the bills, pay my student debt and other things."

Torjussen's eclectic musical style was influenced by various genres. "I'm into the classics like Mahler and Stravinsky but I also like bands like Radiohead. I love Squarepusher, Aphex Twin. I'm also a huge jazz fan. Everything from bebop up to the present day."

Torjussen has positioned himself as the go-to composer for documentaries, hip indies and horror genre films. His most recent horror title, *The Canal*, opened theatrically in the US in October.

When working on a film, Torjussen has a very specific approach. He views every film he scores several times, closely examining character and plot, creating a complete picture of the film. "Just to get the vibe of the film," he explains.

"After my solitary viewings, without music, I'll discuss it with the director to see what he is after. Sometimes there's a discussion. Often they're strong on what they want and sometimes they're not sure and it's much more of an open question. From then on it's about telling the story in whatever way it needs to be told."

Torjussen is staying busy. He worked on a documentary that premiered at Vancouver International Film Festival called *Becoming Bulletproof*, which follows film-makers creating a Western. He is working on a short film for Disney and another documentary feature about the Welsh boxer Joe Calzaghe, which will have its premiere in the first half of next year.

For this composer, scoring is all about enhancing the visceral reaction to the film. "In *Becoming Bulletproof*, the music is reflecting the characters. It's a lot of emotional music that is set in the scenes."

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