

WELSH LANGUAGE SOAP BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH MALE SEXUAL ABUSE

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S4C / BBC WELSH LANGUAGE SOAP OPERA, POBOL Y CWM (PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY) HAS REVEALED A NEW GROUND BREAKING CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE STORYLINE, WHICH GREATER MANCHESTER BASED MALE SEXUAL HARMS CHARITY, WE ARE SURVIVORS, WAS CENTRAL TO DEVELOPING.

Last night saw Mathew, played by Mark Stuart Roberts, returning to a childhood home to meet with the mother who abandoned him, only to realise this was a place of pain which brought back the traumatic memories of the experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

Chief Executive Officer of **We Are Survivors**, Duncan Craig OBE, whose previous work on drama includes Hollyoaks, Coronation Street, Eastenders and Casualty said:

*"the whole experience of working with the team at **Pobol y Cwm** has been incredible. Right from the start, from the first email I received from them asking if I would be interested in working with them on this story to emails, texts and WhatsApp messages we had last night after the big episode aired, they have been 100% committed to telling this story with as much authenticity as possible."*

Duncan worked closely with writer Gareth Owen, Story Producer Osian Edwards, Line Producer Rheinalt Rees, Director Gwion Tegid and Series Producer Dafydd Llewelyn to work through the psychological, physical and emotional aspects to Mathew's experience, using some of his own experiences of traumatic memories as child abuse survivor himself. Duncan says:

"Gareth and Osian were amazing, never once did they make me feel like what I was saying wasn't useful or that I was being critical. Gareth took everything I said over time and crafted one of the most powerful pieces of drama I have seen for ages"

Founded and led by Duncan, **We Are Survivors** has previously worked on similar projects including the Hollyoaks John Paul (James Sutton) rape storyline; the drug facilitated rape of David Platt (Jack P Shepard) in Coronation Street; the Hollyoaks grooming abuse storyline based on the real life events of the Football sexual abuse scandal; and more recently, Casualty's Cameron Mickelthwaite (Barney Walsh) past childhood sexual abuse.

Speaking in the latest edition of **We Are Survivors'** Beyond the Silence magazine, actor Mark Stuart Roberts recalls starting this process off:

"I don't know what I was expecting when Duncan came on screen during our initial online meeting, but he just burst onto the screen!"

"You almost have a pre-conceived idea of what a 'victim' is. But what I saw in Duncan was someone who had taken everything horrific that had happened to him and just turned it on its head. And that's an absolute triumph."

but has thrown himself into the story and role

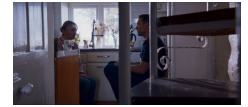
"There's more to this story than entertainment, and whether it's received positively or negatively, the point is to create the discussion."

"It's a big, difficult storyline. I've lost sleep at night. Coming off set, there have been times where I've just sat in a room for about six hours afterwards really trying to process everything. Because I'm doing this 14-16 hours a day, you almost become so connected to Mathew that you forget to be Mark."

Mark reflects

"There's something incredibly powerful about seeing difficult issues explored in a familiar setting, with characters people have grown up watching. It breaks down barriers. It reminds us that these things don't just happen 'somewhere else' - they happen in our towns, our streets, even within our own families. I think drama has a responsibility, not just to entertain, but to inform and to create space for empathy and change. And the work being done here shows how important and transformative that can be."

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The connection that both **Pobol y Cwm** and Mark have made with **We Are Survivors** is a solid one.

So much so that **We Are Survivors** is proud to announce that Mark Stuart Roberts has accepted an invitation to become the latest charity Ambassador, joining Hollyoaks James Sutton; Entrepreneur Charley Lester; RuPaul's Drag Race legend, Cheddar Gorgeous; Superstar DJ, Sam Thompson; and Emmy Award Winning actor and writer, Richard Gadd.

Speaking so proudly about his new role with the charity, Mark said:

"This will and has been one of the most emotionally demanding and deeply important experiences of my career. But it's a drop in the ocean compared to what survivors have had to endure - I'm not afraid of what's to come. I'm proud of what we've achieved and created."

"WE DID IT!"

The latest edition of **Beyond the Silence**

is out now, whilst you can catch Pobol y Cwm on BBC iPlayer.

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