



The **GIRLS** are **BACK** in **TOWN**

I'm on the set of hit lesbian web series Different For Girls and acclaimed director Campbell X is explaining what a "dirty reverse" is (think camera shots, not bedroom antics) while Bad Girls and Emmerdale star Alicya Eyo, Marcella alumna Victoria Broom and actor/director Tuyen Do film their sexually charged scene. The room is lined with hardworking crew, made up almost entirely of women and LGBT people. There's a collective hush for the next take, as I try not to snigger about that whole "dirty reverse" misunderstanding.

Once Campbell's called cut, satisfied they've nailed that scene, we visibly relax and break for lunch. I'm suddenly surrounded by familiar faces (The L Word's Rachel Shelley, writer/producer and DIVA Choice 2018 winner Jacquie Lawrence) and new ones too (the inimitable Denise Welch, even Radio DIVA newsreader, lesbro Jonathan Phang has a cameo – "I'm thrilled! I've hardly slept all night!").

WE MEET THE CAST AND CREW OF DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS: THE WHOLE STORY

WORDS: ROXY BOURDILLON

The mood is jovial. There's a hell of a lot of love and laughter. "It's like family," smiles Tuyen, who is back as Cam for DFG part deux, alongside other original cast members including Guinevere Turner of The L Word fame and Her Story's Caroline Whitney Smith. I ask why this project is so dear to her, and to the LGBT-starved world of entertainment. "My god. It's so important to show real life as it is. Diverse in every way – age, sexuality, race." She adored her experience on the first few episodes, admitting proudly, "The response has been phenomenal".

It's true that the show has been eagerly embraced by the lesbian and bi community. We needed this. Heck, we deserved it. A series dedicated to telling our stories, created by a talented group of LGBT people and loyal allies – allies like honorary lesbian Rachel, aka Helena Peabody. Over lunch she tells me, "It's amazing how the DFG supporters have given us this opportunity

to make more episodes. It's such a pleasure to be working with the director Campbell X and Oona Menges, the cinematographer, again."

I chat to Diversity In Media Rising Star 2017 and DIVA Choice 2017 winner Victoria about reprising her role as screwed-up party girl Fran. "Everyone can relate to having your heart broken and then not ever really letting that person go emotionally. She's messed up and that's really fun to play." Why does the world need DFG? "Representation of women over the age of 35 is really important, because it's not seen. And this is about lesbians just being, rather than making a point of them being gay."

In this highly anticipated second instalment, a new character enters the already complicated relationship between Fran and Tuyen, in the shape of lawyer Jo, played brilliantly by Alicya. "They sent me scripts and I just thought, 'Yes please!' Anything LGBT in the industry is important to me. The

character of Jo... she's complex, she's strong, she's kickass."

Alicya's happy to report that the rest of the cast have been "really lovely, really cool, really welcoming" to her as a newbie. "What a lovely environment to be around. There's an understanding and a sensitivity around the issues. And what is different about Different For Girls, especially in the second series, is that you start focussing more on the people. It's not a novelty anymore, seeing LGBT people in anything, but to have almost an entire cast of that is pushing it a little bit further. They're doing it in such a lovely way. You care about them, what they're going through, their stories."

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We do care deeply about these layered, flawed, relatable characters, and in DFG: The Whole Story we get to know them even more. It's been almost a decade since The L Word finished and six years since the end of British drama Lip Service. While it's encouraging to see more queer characters crop up on mainstream shows, we're still woefully underrepresented. What a gloriously life-affirming, unabashedly queer treat to have our very own show once more. Programmes like DFG prove how much representation still matters.

I speak to Sophie, a DFG superfan, and I'm moved when she reveals why this series is so special to her: "I watched Different For Girls when I was first coming out as a gay woman. This gave me that strength to be open about who I love. DFG makes me so incredibly proud to be me and to be part of the LGBTQ+ community."

Well said, Sophie. Now roll on Different For Girls: The Whole Story with all its twists, turns, romance, raunch and good old-fashioned lesbian drama. **👏**

Catch Different For Girls: The Whole Story on the subscription channel, Lesbian Box Office, from Monday 9 July. A special screening with a cast Q&A takes place at the Curzon Mayfair cinema, London on Friday 6 July. Tickets are available at lesbianboxoffice.co.uk.

