

BBC Worldwide Press Office

BBC Worldwide Australia

Level 5, 6 Eden Park Drive, Macquarie Park NSW 2113

9 January 2012

DOUBLE THE TROUBLE IN ALBERT SQUARE

EastEnders fans are in for a treat as UKTV begins screening double episodes of the popular soap every Monday to Thursday night from January 23rd at 6.30pm, bringing the Australian transmission closer to the British broadcast.

Set in the fictional borough of Walford in the East End of London, the ups and downs of the lives of the residents of Albert Square - not to mention the dodgy deals, thwarted romances, kidnapped babies and occasional murder - have been keeping UKTV viewers hooked on the show since the channel launched in 1996. Now Australian fans won't have to wait as long for the latest twists and turns to hit their screens as the catch-up episodes will continue until mid April when the programme is running just one month behind the UK.

Deirdre Brennan, Director of Television, BBC Worldwide Australia said: "EastEnders is our number one show. I'm delighted to be able to give our soap savvy fans a double-helping from the Square as we close the gap on the UK. With Mandy's unlikely romance with Ian, Tyler's determined attempts to woo Whitney and mayhem at the Moon's there's plenty for them to enjoy."

A brand new dedicated fansite (www.bbcaustralia.com/eastenders) will launch to coincide with the double eps. Fans will be able to view catch-up and preview clips of the latest eps plus special behind-the-scenes interviews and have opportunities to interact with other EastEnders fans.

ENDS**For more information, please contact:**

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Everything you need to know about EastEnders



Want to know what life in London's East End is really like? Then take a trip to Albert Square in the Borough of Walford where family comes before all else, where gossip spreads at the speed of light and where marriages rarely last longer than most summer vacations.

EastEnders is one of the UK's favourite soap operas. It began in 1985 and has since won a host of awards and been one of the top rated programmes on British TV. It was first shown in Australia on ABC between 1987 and 1991 before re-emerging on UKTV when the channel launched in August 1996. It is the number one show on the channel.

Albert Square is a TV set, in Hertfordshire (24 km from London) but it's based on an actual Square in London's East End. With its Victorian terraced houses, bustling street market and population of colourful characters, it looks and feels just like the real thing.

It's a place where relationships, community and family matter most and where women rule the roost. East End matriarchs have dominated the soap and the current Queen of them all is Pat Evans – she's the one with the very big earrings.

It's also incredibly unsafe. Pedestrians have been killed by cars in the narrow streets, buildings have burned to the ground and murder is not uncommon. Plus, some of the residents are not to be trusted!

Fortunately, you can watch it all play out from a safe distance. So, come and meet the key characters and find out a bit more about Albert Square.

Who's who in Walford:



Phil Mitchell – He's been in prison, struggled with alcoholism and a drug addiction, but he's clean for now. He's the original East End tough guy who will readily use violence to solve an argument. It's best to be nice to him because he owns half the Square. The biggest problem in his life right now is his son Ben who has just come home after a spell in prison.



Ben Mitchell – Don't be fooled by his prison sentence - Ben's not the tough nut that Phil would like him to be. From an early age he's loved dancing, show tunes and Lady Gaga. UK viewers weren't surprised to discover that he's gay, but Phil certainly will be when the truth comes out.



Eddie Moon – Despite being a pensioner, Eddie has a way with women. He's crazy about Carol Jackson, but **Vanessa Gold**, who is a vision of perfection in cream, is currently trying to worm her way into his affections because Eddie's twisted son **Michael Moon** is paying her to. It's all part of a crazy plan to bring him down as Michael still blames Eddie for his mum's death.



Alfie Moon – A 'cheeky chappie' who adores his wife Kat. However, she cheated on him and the trust has gone from their relationship. Michael Moon is the father of Kat's baby, but Alfie is bringing him up as his own. On the surface, they look like a happy family, but the cracks are starting to show.



Kat Moon – Alfie's wife who always manages to paint on a smile, even when her life is falling apart – which it does quite often. She's an over-protective mum to Tommy – whom she mistakenly thought had died when he was 'swapped' with another baby.



Tyler Moon – Eddie's bed-hopping youngest son wants to prove himself to his dad and impress Whitney, the only girl in the vicinity who has kept his interest for more than five minutes.



Whitney Dean – A troubled teen living in Walford with her step family the Jacksons. She's had a tough start in life – her step mum **Bianca Jackson's** partner Tony sexually abused her from the age of 12. She got mixed up with a nasty pimp and is currently trying to piece her life back together.



Mandy Salter – She was a teenage tearaway when she left the soap 17 years ago and returns wanting to put down some roots. She hasn't changed a jot. Life's a fight for survival and she always puts herself first. She has her sights set on **Ian Beale** a single dad who has been in Albert Square since the show started.



Masood Ahmed – An affable postman who was besotted with his wife Zainab – until they moved to Walford and problems set in. They are currently estranged, thanks to the evil, scheming Dr Yusef – Zainab's ex fiancé whom she left for Masood.



Zainab Masood – It's all about keeping up with the Patel's and projecting the right image for Zainab, even when it costs her Muslim family dear. She is currently falling under Yusef's spell.



Yusef Khan– A pantomime baddie who is the Square's respected GP. We know he's trying to manipulate Zainab, but at the moment, we don't quite know why.



Syed Masood - Zainab and Masood's eldest son, who outraged his parents when he ditched his wife, announced he was gay and moved in with Christian over the road.



Amira Masood – Syed's jilted wife and mother of his daughter Yasmin. She left the Square without telling Syed she was pregnant and now she's back, she wants to wrench him from Christian's clutches.



Dot Branning – Chain-smoking Christian who takes in waifs and strays. She's married to Jim Branning who is in a care home following a stroke. Dot has recently made-up with her estranged sister Rose.



Max Branning – A serial cheat whom you can't help liking. He isn't around at the moment, having been told by partner Tanya that their relationship is over. He's going to be back soon and his return will be well worth watching.



Tanya Jessop (was Mrs. Branning) This is what you might call an on/off relationship) – Max’s long-suffering wife who once buried him in a coffin, in the woods to teach him a lesson. She has cancer, but doesn’t want anyone to know. She finished things with Max because she didn’t want his pity.



Lauren Branning – Max and Tanya’s eldest once tried to run Max over for cheating on Tanya. She’s fiercely loyal to her mum and for a while, will be the only person in the Square to know she has cancer.



Abi Branning – Self assured youngest Branning daughter who has no idea that her mum is sick, but is wondering why she’s behaving so strangely.



Jack Branning – Max’s brother. Used to be a cop and has three children by various mothers. He’s Amy Mitchell’s dad – she was conceived after a one-night stand with **Roxy Mitchell**.



Carol Jackson nee Branning – Max’s sister. Dependable, but can’t resist a handsome fella.



Janine Malloy - She killed a husband, almost finished off another and has the morals of an alley cat. She’s recently come in to a lot of money, so she’s buying as much of the Square as she can and is using her new found power to make all those who have mocked her suffer.



Pat Evans – The step mum that Janine loves to hate. In years gone by, Pat was a prostitute and admits that she was a bad mum to her grown-up sons. She wears bright colours and enormous earrings. You’ll spot her coming a mile off.

Where to go for all the action:

The Queen Vic – Punters in this pub are either rowing or enjoying a good knees up. The Vic has burned down and been the location for several grisly murders. It's run by Kat and Alfie Moon.

Shirley's – The Square's greasy spoon café which Phil recently bought as a gift for his partner Shirley. Offers traditional café food – bacon sandwiches, buns and lots of gossip. Just don't expect service with a smile.

The Argee Bargee – Indian restaurant, which has been the scene for many first dates and spectacular fallouts.

The Mini Mart – Owned by Patrick Trueman, the Mini Mart isn't just a corner shop – it's a place where you're likely to hear snippets of all the latest gossip over the cereal boxes.

The Launderette – Staffed by Dot Branning and Heather Trott, the launderette is often the place residents choose for a quiet heart-to-heart in-between washing cycles.

R&R – The local nightclub where dodgy deals and illicit encounters take place in the gloom.

The way they speak

Most of the residents of Albert Square speak Cockney. They drop their 'H's' say 'ain't' instead of 'isn't' and they have their own slang – called Cockney rhyming slang. Here's a few useful words you might hear in Walford:

- Apples and pears – stairs
- Barnet fair – hair
- Butchers hook – look
- Ruby Murray –curry
- Dog and bone - phone

For more information about Cockney, go to: <http://www.cockneyrhymingslang.co.uk/>