

PEOPLE

calam mc, entrepreneur

WHEN YOUR mum comes from Lambeth Walk, your dad comes from Peckham and you grow up in Decima Street SE1, you have a very good chance of becoming a football hooligan, which is exactly what happened to Calum McNab. Not the knife-wielding thuggish type who causes mayhem at football grounds, but a Fila-wearing Jack-the-lad running riot across our cinema screens in British blockbusters Football Factory and The Firm... writes Michael Holland.

The boy Calum had no plans to be an actor, always thinking he would join the family scaffolding business, but after excelling at music and drama at school he decided to join Bright Sparks theatre school in Streatham. This place focussed on musical theatre,

which was not what Calum wanted to do so when he heard about the Miskin Theatre in Dartford he quickly signed up. At the time, among the teachers there were Neil Maskell and Frank Harper, two of the country's most well known actors, and in his class was Gemma Arterton.

A lot of people rise to the top

through skill, hard work and being in the right place at the right time; Calum has his own good luck story: 'Neil and Frank were doing The Football Factory and the casting director came down to Miskin looking for extras... She saw my rehearsal for a play we were doing and said that I should meet Nick Love, the film's director... When I

met him and auditioned he told me he was going to put me in his film.' The part he got was as Raff, one of the two youngsters drawn in to the world of violence. 'That was my foot in the door, really,' he says between sips of his tea. Calum did not allow himself to be carried away with this lucky break but went back to finish college and get his diploma, using his filming experience as part of the coursework.

He talks kindly of those who helped when he was setting out (Frank Harper, Neil Maskell, Roland Manookian), who suggested agents and offered advice. 'Cos I didn't know nuffink about the film world,' he remembers. 'I was lucky to meet those people who had a similar background to me and understood me and my situation.'

As his classmates applied for places in the big drama academies Calum felt he had an edge after being in such a successful film and decided to go for an acting career without a degree. 'All their plans were, after three years get an agent and get work, but I had an agent and the opportunity to get work now,' he tells me. 'I got a part straight away in The Bill, then a part in a drama with Julie Walters, and a few little parts in movies and TV, and it was alright for a few years.'

What happened next, though, was a falling out with his agent, which led to Calum taking time out from acting and taking a job as an estate agent. 'But I really enjoyed it, I was selling houses and absolutely smashing it!' he laughs. Obviously his acting skills came into play as he became the top seller and was

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highly prized by the area manager who offered him more and more money to stay, but after a year Calum had made up his mind to go back to acting.

It was while on holiday that a call came through from Nick Love who wanted him to be in his film, The Firm. From then on he has been working pretty regularly.

Calum McNab looks younger than his 27 years, which is very handy in films. He is very sociable - which held him in good stead when selling property - he has an easy smile and says hello to several people in the pub we met in, and I wasn't sure if he knew them or was just being nice, as all those I have spoken to who know him say what a nice young man he is. A credit to his roots, Calum is a season ticket holder at Millwall.

He has some great anecdotes from his working life, relating tales of Dudley Sutton rapping on set, and stories from the set of Rock & Chips (the early days of Del Boy and Rodney Trotter where he played Roy Slater). He talks of the privilege of working with such legends as Bob Hoskins and being taken to Royal Ascot by Rita Tushingham and Jenny Agutter. 'What I've found,' he begins, 'is that the bigger the profile of the actor, the nicer they are... Bob Hoskins was f**king lovely!'

Calum has just worked with the above four people on Outside Bet, the semi-autobiographical tale of Walworth writer Mark Baxter, adapted from his book The Mumper, and says that his time filming was 'Brilliant!'. I asked why.

'The cast was great, the script was good, a really nice director (Sacha Bennett), and because it was coming from a really heart-warming story,' he recalls. 'And everyone on set got on with each other.' He took the part, he says, 'because it's a positive story about working-class people.' Plus, of course, because of the role - Calum plays the lead.

Outside Bet was released on April 27th.

On the firm



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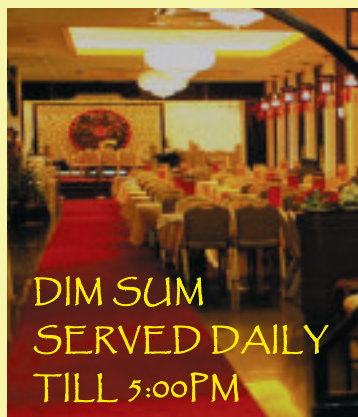
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