

"Clique, Series 2"

Press Pack

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The second series of Jess Brittain's seductive, university-set psychological thriller ***Clique*** (6 x 45') will air weekly from Saturday 10th November on BBC Three.

Synnove Karlsen (Holly), Sophia Brown (Louise) and Rachel Hurd-Wood (Rachel) return for another gripping series exploring the power of friendship between intensely smart, complicated and ambitious young people on the cusp of an ever-enticing but dangerous adult world.

In the first series Holly (Synnove Karlsen) found herself drawn to a group of alluring, confident but troubled young women whereas the second series will see her encounter a radically different clique: a band of brothers.

Living in a house share with Louise (Sophia Brown) and some younger students, Holly is trying to put the past behind her. Nonetheless, she finds herself the subject of intense attention from those around her - from fellow students keen to hear about the events of last year but also from a close-knit, smart and magnetic set of young men.

Led by charismatic, good-looking Jack, the boys' clique is a group of freewheeling renegades. When they become embroiled in a campus-wide scandal, Holly is torn between the kinship she feels with them and the unnerving sense that something darker is at play. Do the clique boys represent the provocative fight-back response of fed-up youth, or are their politics hiding a more personal, insidious danger?

Holly will soon find herself caught between two camps. And from within the secure unit where she ended the first series, psychopath Rachel (Rachel Hurd-Wood) is still keeping her obsessive gaze on Holly.

Joining the cast are an ensemble of upcoming Scottish and English talent including Leo Suter as Jack (*Victoria*, *Bad Education*), Barney Harris as Barney (*Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, *The Hollow Crown*), Imogen King as Rayna (*Darkest Hour*), Stuart Campbell as Fraser (*Outlander*), Izuka Hoyle as Dani (*Mary, Queen of Scots*) and newcomers and recent graduates Jyuddah Jaymes (playing Aubrey) and Nicholas Nunn (playing Calum).

Also new to the series are Madeleine Worrall (*The Legend of Tarzan*, *Paddington*) and winner of the 2016 Edinburgh Comedy Award Richard Gadd (*Against the Law*).

Jess Brittain, writer, creator and executive producer of ***Clique***, says: "It's great to have the opportunity to return to the world of ***Clique*** to tell another story. I love writing for new and exciting young actors and can't think of a better place than BBC Three to do that."

Damian Kavanagh, Controller, BBC Three, says: "Series one of ***Clique*** created an enticing world for the BBC Three audience and we're very pleased that it is returning. It continues our tradition of working with and growing new acting and writing talent and we're looking forward to introducing more stars of the future via the second series."

Gaynor Holmes, Commissioning Executive, BBC Drama Commissioning, says: "We're delighted to see ***Clique*** returning to Edinburgh with our extraordinarily talented cast, joined this year by some very exciting Scottish newcomers. We can't wait to see them bring Jess's magnificently bold and thrilling scripts to life."

Tom Sherry, BBC Studios Executive Producer, says: "Jess has delivered an intensely charged thriller, with deeply seductive characters. We have a fabulous cast and everyone involved can't wait to share the results."

Clique (6 x 45') is a Balloon Entertainment and BBC Studios drama for BBC Three. Following the UK premiere, US co-producer POP will premiere in the US. Executive Producers are Bryan Elsley, Jess Brittain and Dave Evans for Balloon, Tom Sherry for BBC Studios and Gaynor Holmes for BBC, Series Producer is Neil Duncan. The series will be distributed by all3media International, Balloon Entertainment's international partner. ***Clique*** was re-commissioned by Piers Wenger, Controller of BBC Drama and Damian Kavanagh, Controller of BBC Three.

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Episodic Synopses

Episode 1

Holly is back for her second year of university, living with her friend Louise and two new younger students – Rayna and Fraser. Rayna and Fraser are enthralled by Holly and her part in exposing the corruption at Solasta last year. However Holly finds their unwanted attention uncomfortable and just wants to keep her distance and move on.

Holly meets a group of boys who aren't afraid to challenge their university peers and call out figures of authority. She finds herself drawn towards this new clique, led by the enigmatic Jack. There is something strange and dangerous about them that attracts and repels her in equal measure.

But a shocking event will make it impossible for Holly to stay in the shadows.

Episode 2

Holly is shocked after the brutal attack. The boys close ranks as blame is placed at their door and Holly and Jack's new relationship is tested.

Louise finds a place to fight for what she believes at activist group Women Rise and meets charismatic politician Agnes Reid, who has a personal connection to events. Meanwhile, the boys find themselves ever more entwined with Twitcher, the alternative media organisation led by Ben Howard.

Holly finds herself caught between both groups in her search for the truth. When she asks for help from an old friend, is she heading into more danger?

Episode 3

With Rayna missing, Holly finds herself desperate to discover the truth of that night.

When the university acts to punish the boys and expels Jack on the basis of an accusation, they go to town on the Dean of Students finding he has some skeletons in his own closet. Unable to ignore corruption, Holly finds herself running with the boys – but are they mischievous or dangerous?

Louise starts to question the beliefs she's defended so hard. Is everything Rayna's told Holly true? Is Agnes hiding more than corruption? While everyone wrestles with their version of the truth, the events of that night on the beach take an awful toll.

Episode 4

The university campus is reeling from shocking news.

With new evidence, Holly and Jack come together in search of the person who could hold the key to the mystery of the night on the beach. Rayna buckles under the weight of her actions and finally the awful truth of Freshers Night comes to light.

Ben sets his sights on Agnes Reid (Madeline Worrall). As the election approaches, it's Twitcher vs Forward with a furious Jack as Ben's perfect weapon.

Rachel finds new ways to reach into lives beyond the secure unit and Louise finds herself hot on the trail of a very dangerous secret.

Episode 5

With the police moving slowly, Holly decides to take matters into her own hands – seeking retribution from those she believes are responsible and advice from old friends. But as she gets closer to the truth, Holly realises that she will have to take matters into her own hands.

Jack is haunted by doubts about his own innocence in events. Ben tries to help but only Jack's family know the truth about his demons.

Holly's mission becomes chillingly clear and before long, a familiar face will join her for a reckoning.

Episode 6

Holly wrestles with her dark side as she attempts to mete out her own form of justice. And with Rachel alongside her, nothing is certain.

Back in the city, Ben organises a March for Men – aiming a mob of angry young men at a predictable target. Barney and Aubrey find themselves on opposite sides of the battle.

Agnes starts to question her parenting but the damage is already done. As everyone draws together, the rotten truths at the hearts of families, friendships and relationships will be dragged out into the light with explosive consequences for all.

Character Breakdowns



Holly (Synnove Karlsen)

Holly is trying to put the past behind her, hiding behind a carefully crafted façade of 'normal' student life. Living with Louise, Rayna and Fraser has offered Holly a ready-made friendship group and the easy security she thought she needed. But Holly is struggling to connect, and when Jack and his colourful clique smash into her world, Holly can't help but be intrigued. What starts as a flirtation with their libertarian values quickly descends into something darker when a campus-wide scandal hits both her friends at home and the boys she is so drawn to. Once again, it falls upon Holly to seek out the truth, whatever the cost. As Holly steps deeper into a web of lies she is forced to admit her attempts at being a 'normal' student were never going to be successful. She is powerless against her need to find the truth. And always, lurking in the background of Holly's life and mind, is Rachel – Holly's best friend and greatest fear. Bound together by their childhood, Holly knows that Rachel is possibly the only person who truly understands her. But what does it mean when a psychopath can read you better than anyone?

Rachel (Rachel Hurd-Wood)



Rachel has been enjoying an uncharacteristic period of quiet obedience from the secure unit she was placed in after the events of series one. But Rachel is a psychopath and bored, ready for her next adventure. As always, her focus is on Holly - the only person she believes is like her. So far she has been unsuccessful in making Holly truly understand that, but when Holly starts to visit her again, Rachel can see something in her eyes - the suggestion that Holly is ready to connect again. No one is better than Rachel at finding out what people are hiding – so the opportunity to work alongside Holly in the wake of a terrible event is all that Rachel has been waiting for. But as events unfold we will be reminded that Rachel's true aims have never been about uncovering corruption or putting things right in the world.



Louise (Sophia Brown)

Louise's world came crashing down last year when Holly uncovered the truth about Solasta and the clique. She has rebuilt with typical Louise-excellence – a new course, new housemates and a new approach to life. Only one thing is missing – the close friendship with Holly she knows they both crave and need. Holly has been hard to get close to and that fact is quickly exacerbated when they have fundamentally different responses to a terrible event that strikes at the heart of their world. But as events develop, Louise is forced to confront her own assumptions of what happened and follow Holly into the fray. Her cleverness, warmth and effortless leadership skills make Louise formidable.

Jack (Leo Suter)



Jack is a natural alpha – his leadership of the clique effortless, without a plan, just kind of inevitable. He's magnetic – physically and in personality – garrulous, mischievous and, in the right light, pretty dangerous. He's pretty built too – the series opening with him crushing it at the gym. Under that, Jack's quite damaged but he's made himself anew since leaving home. Calum and he are as close as siblings and both Barney and Aubrey idolize him. Meeting Holly and the gathering storm of events that that kicks off will knock him off his axis.



Calum (Nicholas Nunn)

Calum seems to know what people are thinking before they do. Charming with a dry wit, Calum can convert whomever he's talking to, to whatever he's talking about. He's clever and canny, protective of Jack – who he's as close to in the elemental way of a sibling - and at first very suspicious of Holly while also presenting as perhaps the friendliest of the clique.



Barney (Barney Harris)

Barney seems as though he should be wearing a tux and debating market capital over port with his public school contemporaries, but he's dissatisfied with the passiveness of all that 'hoorah henry' stuff. Instead, along with Jack and the boys, he's aligned himself with Ben's website and the kind of reactionary politics that might have his forebears turning in their graves.



Aubrey (Jyuddah Jaymes)

Aubrey is an American international student and tech genius who's barely been to a lecture all term but could probably work at Google if he wanted. Aubrey's gay and casually promiscuous. He's loyal to Jack and the boys and at first a little spiky with Holly's attempts to step into their world. As things darken however, Aubrey will find that his love of provocation is not enough to keep him on side with the growing right-wing nature of Ben's website.



Rayna (Imogen King)

Rayna is a young, keen student activist – living with Holly, Louise and Fraser and running the campus group Women Rise. She's young and beautiful and openly sexual but also harbours a desire to be the focus of things and an unhealthy interest in Holly and the events of the past series. She sees Holly as a big sister figure but Holly couldn't be less interested – finding Rayna's puppyishness exhausting.



Fraser (Stuart Campbell)

Fraser is a white knight figure, a guy who has aligned himself to feminist group Women Rise in an attempt to do something good that the world can see. Living with Holly, Louise and Rayna, he's eager and enthusiastic about the cause but mostly, he's a bit in love with Rayna.



Agnes (Madeline Worrall)

Agnes Reid is a fiercely ambitious MSP about to launch a new left-wing party with her as its figurehead. She's got the backing of large parts of Edinburgh's liberal elite (including the university administration) and she's very keen to show willing to the younger generation in the hopes of winning their support in the election. Agnes' image is down-to-earth, say it as it is, single mother, self-made woman.



Ben (Richard Gadd)

Ben Howard was a computer science lecturer at the top of his game, building a cult following around him before he found himself on the wrong side of the university administration. It's there that he met the boys' clique and they've stayed loyal to him – Barney even funding his new media enterprise: a news and entertainment company with a focus on digital media website and a leaning to the alt-right that will become more pronounced as the series goes on.

Q & A with writer, creator & *Clique* executive producer Jess Brittain

*** Can you describe *Clique* for us?**

"***Clique*** series 2 remains a show about being an uncertain but ambitious young woman in an increasingly disorienting world, and the complexity of the female friendships that are central to that experience. It's also about the grey areas of life at the moment – what we think, what we think we should think, what we should stand for and what we should fight against. Holly is the personification of all these questions – caught between her innate morality and her more human fallibility. I've tried again to take what I think is a fairly common insecurity and conflict in young women and hang it out to be thought about. I maintain that university is absolutely terrifying! So the thriller stakes, whilst obviously heightened, reflect the intensity of feeling a lot of people have during that time."

*** Series 1 focused on female friendship and in series 2 there's a band of brothers that Holly finds herself pitted against. Tell us about that shift?**

"The shift to a male clique came out of watching and listening to some of the things that have happened in our country and in the States over the past couple of years. I think there has been such an upsurge of tribalism - between more traditionally left and more traditionally right approaches – but also between men and women. I'd noticed a kind of educated, progressive type of young man who was becoming frustrated with the narrative being told. Perhaps becoming a little less likely to listen, a little less likely to advocate. Obviously we are all aware of the scary, militant, misogynist version of this type of man – but I wanted to try to get under the skin of the more complex version. Young men who are standing for free speech, the questioning of authority, men's rights. What happens when these men are put under scrutiny? I knew that the free-speaking, free-thinking side of these characters would be massively appealing to Holly. The tension between her feminism and her desire to push her own boundaries was something that was very interesting to me."

*** What was your inspiration for the series?**

"The inspiration for the series always starts from conversations I'm having with myself and with friends and family. It's very difficult to interrogate or question concepts publicly at the moment. I think that's because women are pushing for real and decisive change – something I'm fully behind – and there's a feeling that complicating the facts could hinder that fight. But

drama's job is to hang around in the muckier, less sure areas. Sometimes depicting difficult things makes you realise how much you disagree with them.

I also wanted to push the character of Holly out further. She struggled with her darker side in the first series – something which I think is true of all of us, whether the darkness is real or just something we worry is real. But to see her embrace that darkness, to turn to it as a possible answer to her problems is something I was really excited to depict."

*** Tell us about the characters?**

"As with the first series, new characters usually start from friends or acquaintances and then go on a process of becoming something entirely different in the writing and then again in the performances. The clique drew from guys I knew at university, and from reading around in places like Reddit. Ben Howard was born out of watching clips of some free-speech supporting academics. There was one in particular that I remember thinking was talking a lot of sense. But as I watched on I began to realise how subtly warped and dangerous the person was behind the highly educated articulacy. Agnes Reid is similarly born out of a mixture of professional women in positions of power. Because there are fewer of them, we cling onto them to advocate for our rights and speak to our concerns. But of course, not all women are alike. Not all women share opinions or intentions. It seems like a madly obvious and reductive thing to say, but it's something I think is sometimes lost.

Obviously I was massively excited to have Holly, Rachel and Louise back for the second series. The concept of Rachel being out as a psychopath, no longer needing to cover who she is was a lot of fun. Louise was a character I loved in the first series but was woefully under explored. I was excited to allow more space for her."

*** The themes in series 2 feel very topical and relevant to what's going on in the world today. Was that topicality and relevance important to you and why?**

"Being topical is not something I set out to do. I have no answers to the difficult questions young people come up against in today's world. Most of the time I feel confused, worried and a little scared about the things that are happening! I sit down and write and usually that ends up being coloured by the things that are going on around me. When I was 19 it was shamefully easy to ignore some of the bigger questions. I don't think that luxury exists for young people anymore. ***Clique*** never sets out to make a fundamental point about anything,

simply because I realise the stuff going on in my head is contradictory, ever-changing, sometimes under-informed, sometimes over. But I think that's true of a lot of people– so if

Clique makes you think about something, or talk about it with someone else – then that's a happy bonus to what is essentially me trying to make a show that's enjoyable and interesting to watch."

*** Some of the storylines in the series are quite controversial. What are your reasons behind wanting to tackle such subjects?**

"***Clique*** is a psychological thriller and as such, nothing is ever quite as it seems. There will definitely be moments in the series that will shock people – I'm not desperate to cause controversy but I do want to keep telling stories about three-dimensional characters who are capable of doing good, bad and terrible things with a multitude of motivations. I think it's important to take drama to some very grey, very uncomfortable areas if we want it to get under the skin of anything, to be anything more than a well-meaning declaration of values.

But ***Clique***'s not a political treatise, it's an unfolding drama and I hope people will stick around for the twists and hairpin turns the story takes and the amazing, layered performances from our incredible cast that have brought it to life."

*** How long was it from concept to filming?**

"Series 2 was not a quick re-commission. There's an argument that the first series is a closed story – so a second series needed to essentially be a reset. It took a little while for me to come down to a story I wanted to tell. Once we were green-lit though, the process moved terrifyingly quickly. From first, vague ideas to it being released will be about a year."

*** What do you hope the audience will take away from the show?**

I just hope people enjoy it. I'm not trying to leave the audience with any kind of message – it's more about my confusion and fears than my surety and confidence. I hope people will enjoy seeing the next part of Holly's journey – her new friendship with Louise, and finally the realisation of the Holly-Rachel double act. Holly and Rachel are the central relationship and their story is a two-series arc."

***How did you start your journey to become a writer?**

“I studied English Lit at University for no better reason than I liked reading. I realised after a Creative Writing module that writing was probably what I wanted to do but, again, was slightly directionless in that aim. I come from a family of screenwriters who were writing Skins at the time and my Dad put my Uni creative writing piece in with the samples being considered for a Skins tie-in novel. Whilst researching the novel in the Skins Writers Room I failed to sit quietly and listen and the producer Neil Duncan noticed some potential. It was probably just about the only Writers Room at the time where clueless, green writers had a safe space to learn how to write a screenplay with close but non-prescriptive support. I was very, very lucky to have been part of it.

As a side note – Neil Duncan (Producer) gave me my very first screenwriting job on *Skins*. It was also Neil who commissioned a pilot episode of ***Clique*** whilst working at BBC Scotland, and now he has produced the second series. It’s been great to come full circle with him. I think working with people who get you is very important.”

*** You wrote for Skins. Did that whet your appetite for writing - for TV in particular?**

“Definitely. I think a lot of us look back on that Writers Room now and realise how lucky we were. *Skins* was a show completely dedicated to its young writers. They trusted us to tell our stories and encouraged us to write from our own lives (the problems, the things that pissed us off and the things which made us excited). That's a lesson I definitely took with me.”

*** Do you have any advice for writers making their way and wanting to write for TV?**

“Don't try to be perfect in your writing. Don't plan a script to death. If you're writing about something that fires you up, it'll show - regardless of whether your structure is perfect or your action sequence makes total sense. And don't be afraid to give yourself time to think and let ideas swirl around without writing. Sometimes you do your best work walking to the shop or hanging out your washing.

Don’t let it consume your personal life or threaten your mental health, because it can do both! Other than that, I’d say that no advice is ever going to be completely right! I’m not sure there is a correct or best way to be a writer. If there is I’d love someone to let me know.”

