



Stars get ready to rock the boat

It's 4am in Venice, and Rupert Graves is flying through the canals on a water taxi.

He's on his way back to the hotel after a night shoot and there are no other boats – and certainly no tourists – around.

That's the memory the *Sherlock* star, 57, recalls vividly when asked for his favourite moment from shooting *Sky Atlantic* series *Riviera*.

"It was jaw-droppingly beautiful," gushes the actor, who was born in Weston-super-Mare.

"Sitting on set in Venice – which was lit beautifully – in the best clothes I've ever worn in my life, was a real personal highlight."

Graves joins the cast of the thrilling drama for its third series, playing the charismatic and charming Gabriel Hirsch, who starts working with the lead character, Georgina, played by Julia Stiles.

A year has passed since the explosive finale of the second series and, now known as Georgina Ryland, she has abandoned the cursed *Riviera* and has started her life over again.

"Gabriel offers her a job that proves to be more of an adventure and she can't resist it, so they go off to Venice to recover a stolen Picasso and that's quickly wrapped up into an international conspiracy that takes them to Argentina," teases New Yorker Stiles, 39. "But first

BY GEORGIA HUMPHREYS

they find themselves back in St Tropez, and Georgina runs headfirst into Nico Eltham and then Daphne Eltham.

"And because that is a very interwoven community of wealthy families that know everything about each other, her plan to get away from her past is going to prove very challenging."

So, what made Graves – also known for films such as *Maurice*, *A Room With A View*, and *V For Vendetta* – want to take on



this telly role? He says: "I'd never seen a show about the super-wealthy that was done in this way, which I found interesting because I found it dreamy and quite hallucinogenic."

"Not aspirational, but if you aspire to be like these people, good luck to you!"

"I found it dysfunctional and interesting. And I found the mystery of who Georgina is, and why she does what she does, really, really involving. So yeah, it was that really – and getting to work with Julia too."

Stiles notes there are certainly a lot more shows on our screens now that are "female-driven, or at least with female main characters", compared to when she started out acting, aged 12.

"I remember when I signed on for the first season of *Riviera*, I thought, 'Hmmm this is interesting' because there was Irina, who was the matriarch, and then there was Adriana, the younger ingenue, and I felt I fell sort of in the middle," continues the actress, who is best known for teen favourite films, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Save The Last Dance*.

"I thought 'OK, as the lead, they're not going to know what to do with me, because I'm in between the sex object and the maternal character', which are previously normal tropes for a female character."

"And I've been so pleasantly surprised at how rich and intriguing Georgina has become as a character."

"And so, I'm pleasantly surprised that

I've had the opportunity to work on a show where I play a character that is really surprising and reckless and doesn't make the right decisions all the time. It's been very rewarding."

Stiles also worked as executive producer on this latest series.

She confides she "never really had aspirations to be a producer, or have a credit as such".

"But because *Riviera* is very collaborative and there's a very specific way that we film, and oftentimes, rewrites were coming in at the last minute, I feel a responsibility to this show and the other actors and the audience to make it as good as we can," she reasons.

"So I wanted to be an executive producer in order to just see the scripts earlier."

She agrees it's been liberating to have more of an input than she has had with past projects she's worked on as an actress.

"It's a responsibility but it's also very, very stimulating too. There's an expression 'hit your mark in bark', which refers to an actor just coming on set and taking direction and saying their lines and doing as they're told."

"And I feel like I have such an investment in this show. I don't take for granted that the producers and writers are receptive and open to my input because I think there are some TV shows where even the lead actor is put in their