

= AJ Ahmed =

Amjad Jahangir " AJ " Ahmed is a fictional character from the BBC soap opera EastEnders , played by Phaldut Sharma . The character made his first on @-@ screen appearance in the 4458th episode , which was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on 9 July 2012 . Sharma filmed his final scenes before Christmas 2013 and the character 's final episode was broadcast on 10 January 2014 , being the 4783th episode .

AJ is an extension to the established Masood family , the younger brother of established character Masood Ahmed (Nitin Ganatra) . He is disliked by Masood 's wife Zainab (Nina Wadia) , but brings out a previously unseen fun side to his brother . AJ is portrayed as a mechanic who is cheeky , fun @-@ loving , irresponsible , annoying and spontaneous , though he makes decisions by flipping a coin . He has received mixed comments from critics , with Ally Ross from The Sun calling him " supposedly funny " and wanting him to " piss off " , Laura White from Inside Soap saying he is " the perfect tonic for a family almost constantly dogged with crisis " , and Anthony D. Langford from AfterElton.com praising the character but wondering if the writers knew what to do with him . His storylines have since included a feud with Derek Branning (Jamie Foreman) , divorcing his wife Aliyah Ahmed (Ann Wenn) and lending support to Masood through financial problems and his breakup with Zainab .

= = Storylines = =

After his arrival in Walford , AJ 's brother Masood (Nitin Ganatra) makes sure he avoids his ex @-@ wife Zainab (Nina Wadia) , because she dislikes him . AJ proves to be a bad influence on Masood when they damage Derek Branning 's (Jamie Foreman) car with a shopping trolley and AJ is punched by Derek . AJ discovers that Masood and Zainab are divorced and later tells Masood he came to Walford because his wife Aliyah (Ann Wenn) has left him . After Masood inspires AJ with his reunion with Zainab , AJ leaves to reconcile with his own wife . He returns a few weeks later saying that he and Aliyah are divorcing . Zainab contacts Aliyah to try to get her to take AJ back , and AJ says that Aliyah had an affair . Aliyah drops off AJ 's belongings and reveals that there was no affair . AJ then explains that he left Aliyah because she wants children and he does not . AJ moves in with Masood and his family . Zainab dislikes his laziness and she becomes annoyed when he brings Roxy Mitchell (Rita Simons) back after a drunken evening . Roxy stays the night but makes it clear that it was a one @-@ off .

AJ gets a job from Phil Mitchell (Steve McFadden) as a mechanic to help the family with their financial problems . He selfishly takes money from the family to buy a motorbike , but then sells it to help pay the mortgage . When Zainab says she will stop interfering in people 's lives , AJ uses the opportunity to annoy her . AJ and Aliyah receive their decree nisi . When Zainab has a job interview , AJ tells the interviewer she has short @-@ term memory loss . However , when he apologises via a Post @-@ It note , she returns the apology . AJ supports Masood when his relationship with Zainab ends . When AJ has to look after Masood 's young son Kamil Masood (Arian Chikhliia) , he admits that he is not good with children , and was scared when Aliyah wanted one , because he feels he cannot look after himself properly , let alone a child . However , he bonds well with his nephew . AJ is offered a job as an assistant manager at a garage in Birmingham . Although he initially wants to turn down the position , he eventually accepts the job offer . Shortly before he leaves Walford , AJ learns that his mother has died . Masood is angry with AJ when he explains that he cannot attend their mother 's funeral . AJ then leaves for Birmingham .

= = Character creation and development = =

= = = Casting and introduction = = =

Sharma was recommended for the part of AJ by Nitin Ganatra (Masood) after the character was

described to him , because producers wanted AJ and Masood to be funny together . The two actors had previously performed in comedy together in short film The Drop , Channel 4 's Meet the Magoons and a programme called To Eat with Your Fingers , so Ganatra thought Sharma would be perfect for the role and he was the first person he thought of . Ganatra and the producers went through ideas of how a brother would affect Masood and what their relationship would be . Ganatra explained that he thought Masood only had one brother until he was told about AJ . When Sharma and Ganatra performed a scene together at Sharma 's audition , the dialogue came so naturally to them that producers thought they were improvising , but , as Ganatra explained , they " know each other 's style [and] have all these shortcuts . It 's like having a real brother . " Sharma was offered the part immediately after his interview . Sharma added in March 2013 : " I 've known Nitin for years and he really lobbied for me to get the role of AJ , and as soon as I finished my audition the producers offered me the part and asked if I wanted a cup of tea , to which I replied , ' Yes please , I 've waited 20 years for that cup of tea ' , but it 's been really nice to just jump onto a set with someone I 've already bonded with ? it 's like having a pre @-@ built family to bounce off . " He had also previously worked with his co @-@ stars Nina Wadia (Zainab) and Marc Elliott (Syed Masood) , so felt it was " cool " and " familiar " to work with them . Sharma revealed in an interview with Inside Soap that his own mother always thought he should play Masood 's brother after watching EastEnders for many years . The first scene Sharma filmed was with Ganatra on the set outside The Queen Victoria public house , and he found it " really surreal " .

The character and Sharma 's casting were announced on 1 June 2012 . It was reported that AJ arrives in Albert Square hoping to reconnect with Masood and build bridges with his family , then AJ gets himself and Masood in trouble , so Masood wonders if AJ is running away from something . Sharma said " I think it 's a really fun , colourful and lively part and I can 't wait to see where it goes ! " Speaking of AJ 's arrival , Ganatra said that he felt " very confident , happy and excited about having a new character to play against " , especially a new member of the family , " because the Masoods are always about family . " AJ first appears in the episode originally broadcast in the UK on 9 July 2012 , which is EastEnders ' 4458th episode .

= = = Characterisation = = =

AJ is a mechanic , who is described as a chancer who " never misses an opportunity for excitement . " He is characterised as a free @-@ spirited , fun @-@ loving and carefree rebel , who does not always realise how his spontaneity affects other people . He is described as cheeky , irresponsible , a bad influence , a joker , a charmer and a talker . It is said that he does not plan or do what people expect of him , is fun to be around and could be running away from life . A writer for the BBC said that he lives " like there 's no tomorrow " , and makes decisions based on the results of a coin flip . The coin , described as " lucky " , is inspired by the Bollywood film Sholay , in which two friends make decisions based on the flip of a coin , though one friend does not know that both sides of the coin are the same . Ganatra stated in an interview on This Morning that he did not think that the two sides of AJ 's coin were the same . Sharma described AJ as " the clown who loves to play " and " a little bit of a hippy " , saying " he 's got a real wheeler @-@ dealer , Del Boy aspect to his character . " He has twice compared AJ to a puppy dog , because he is nice but annoying , and he is fun but a nuisance . Sharma , who was brought up in Newport , said that " the charm , humour and personality " of Welsh people he knew helped him to create the character of AJ .

Laura Morgan from All About Soap called AJ " mischievous " , and the magazine also called him " bothersome " and " crazy " . Nathan Bevan from Western Mail has called him " gregarious " , an " aggro @-@ magnet " , a " trouble @-@ magnet " , " wise @-@ cracking " and " wheeler @-@ dealing " . He has also been called " flighty " , a " tearaway " , " naughty " and " good @-@ for @-@ nothing " .

= = = Role within the Masood family = = =

AJ is a member of the Pakistani Masood family , headed by Masood Ahmed , played by Ganatra .

Masood is married to Wadia 's character , Zainab Masood (though at the time of AJ 's arrival they are divorced and planning to remarry) , and they live with their children Syed Masood (Elliott) , Tamwar Masood (Himesh Patel) and Kamil Masood (Arian Chikhlia) . Masood and AJ also have an older brother , Inzamam Ahmed (Paul Bhattacharjee) . AJ is younger than Masood . AJ has been called " the black sheep " of the family and " a delinquent uncle " .

AJ and Masood had lost touch for three years prior to AJ 's arrival , and had fallen out because of an argument between Zainab and AJ 's wife Aliyah , said to be that Aliyah once made an obscene comment to her . AJ was described as " the polar opposite to his control freak sister @-@ in @-@ law [Zainab] " , and it was said that " sparks [would] fly in the Masood household as the battle lines are drawn [between them] . " Zainab thinks AJ is reckless and she has little time for him . Ganatra said that there is tension between AJ and Zainab , and although Zainab does not necessarily dislike AJ , she does not like that AJ gets Masood into trouble , and Zainab 's hatred for Aliyah does not help . Inside Soap called Zainab AJ 's arch rival and Jaci Stephen from the Daily Mail said AJ 's arrival was " Something else not to put a smile on Zainab 's face " though made it an " exciting week " for Masood .

AJ brings out a different side to Masood , which Ganatra said could " upset the status quo " . He said that AJ was brought in " to stir up Masood 's life , and that has exciting prospects " , and they would " get up to all sorts of shenanigans . " Presenter Kate Thornton , when interviewing Ganatra , said AJ was a " playmate " for Masood , while Wadia said that AJ brings the comedy back to Masood . Inside Soap 's Kate White called AJ " a world away from family man Masood " , while Soaplife said AJ is " not a good influence but he sure puts a smile on [Masood 's] face and a new spring in his step . " Daniel Kilkelly from Digital Spy said that AJ 's influence on Masood is " infectious " . AJ 's arrival allows people to see what Masood was like before he married Zainab , as all that was known about him to that point was his life with her . Ganatra stated : " So by opening this door , you get to see what Masood was like in his childhood and as a teenager . Masood did have a naughty streak ? he was in a band with his brother , and they got up to mischief . Masood [...] has been put on the straight and narrow [since] . But prior to that , he was a teenager like any other ? getting into trouble , and that was in cahoots with his brother AJ ! " Ganatra said that , as British Asians , Masood and AJ grew up going to clubs and getting into trouble with girls . Now , Masood sees AJ as somebody with " no responsibilities , no children and no stress of having to provide for a family " and as AJ suffers marital problems , is feeling lonely and has no children , Ganatra said " they want each other 's lives , which is quite a nice dynamic to play . " He added that " AJ would love the stability of a family life like Masood 's , while Masood would love to pack his bags , get drunk and perhaps end up in a stranger 's bed . I 'm interested to see him bring out Masood 's naughty streak ? and where that could take them ... " AJ is accepting of Syed 's homosexuality and his relationship with Christian Clarke (John Partridge) .

Sharma said that AJ would be an " unlikely saviour " for the Masood family when they find themselves in financial trouble . Although he called AJ the " family rebel " , he said that the character is " doing what he can to help out with the money problems [because] when the going gets tough , AJ will step in to help his loved ones ? and while he will probably never take the conventional route , he 'll always get something sorted out in the end . " He gets a job , and then helps to lift the family 's spirits by organising a fireworks display , on which Sharma said , " AJ is just trying to help out his family in his own , dysfunctional way . " In November 2012 , Zainab makes a promise never to interfere in people 's lives , so AJ decides to use the opportunity to test her . Sharma explained : " He is ready to test her promise to the limits ! AJ knows exactly how to push all of Zainab 's buttons , and now he 's going to take full advantage of the fact that she won 't let herself be the control freak she normally likes to be ! " Jane Simon from the Daily Mirror said AJ is " thoroughly enjoying " testing Zainab 's new policy .

= = = Relationship with other characters = = =

In AJ 's first episode , he makes an enemy of Derek Branning when he and Masood crash a shopping trolley into his car . An insider said that AJ should be worried , explaining : " AJ is a bit of a

talker and tries to blag his way out of the situation but that just makes things even worse . Derek is quick to rough him up a little to make him realise he 's not to be messed with . The confrontation really shocks AJ but he 's not going to be pushed around by some bullying bloke he 's just met . " The Daily Star said that " Derek is the one person AJ really shouldn 't make into an enemy " , while interviewer Phillip Schofield stated : " If you knock the wing mirror off Derek 's Jag you are in for trouble . "

On 11 September 2012 , it was reported that AJ would seduce Roxy Mitchell and they would spend the night together in Masood and Zainab 's house after an evening of drinking . At the time , it was unknown if it would be a one @-@ off or if a longer relationship would start . An insider from EastEnders told Inside Soap that Roxy and AJ are both looking for fun and they " hit it off " because she loves " a man who can make her laugh and AJ definitely ticks that box . " They added that they have " great chemistry " but said that as Roxy is sidetracked by another man , " AJ will have to fight for her affections " if he wants her . An insider also told the Daily Star that the two " can 't keep their hands off each other " and " Roxy is more than up for it . " They added that " Zainab would go mental if she knew what they were up to under her roof and it remains to be seen whether they can get away with it . Roxy is the last person who Zainab would want AJ to hook up with . [...] Even Masood could not defend his brother this time as he had been pretty disrespectful . " Digital Spy also noted chemistry between AJ and Roxy , saying they " clearly enjoy each other 's company " . Tony Stewart from the Daily Mirror said the relationship between Roxy and AJ is " played for laughs " , contrasting with Roxy 's relationship with Michael Moon (Steve John Shepherd) .

Inside Soap expected AJ to be paired up with Denise Fox (Diane Parish) , but actor Ricky Norwood , who plays Fatboy , spoke about his character 's rivalry with AJ over her in an interview with the magazine . He said , " There 's a little bit of rivalry building up between [them] . Fatboy can tell that AJ likes Denise . But at [a party] , AJ puts a [song] on for Denise , and it 's just totally wrong . [...] Fatboy takes over and [...] it gets a big response . " Inside Soap said that AJ does not know what makes Denise tick , while Sharma said " Denise isn 't a big fan of AJ at the moment ! " In 2013 , Inside Soap said they expected to see AJ paired with Bianca Jackson (Patsy Palmer) , saying , " He 's been trying his luck for some time , and surely there 's only so long Bianca can fend off AJ . If nothing else , he 'd be lots of fun around her kids , as AJ isn 't the most mature fella in Albert Square . " Vicky Prior from the Metro also hoped to see AJ find romance with Bianca .

= = = Departure = = =

On 24 September 2013 , it was announced that AJ , along with three other characters ? Kirsty Branning (Kierston Wareing) , Poppy Meadow (Rachel Bright) and Carl White (Daniel Coonan) ? had been axed from the series by the new executive producer Dominic Treadwell @-@ Collins . It was reported that Treadwell @-@ Collins was " determined to get EastEnders back to its best " and a spokesperson confirmed the departures . Reports said that it was hoped the move would increase ratings , and a show source added that " [Treadwell @-@ Collins] didn 't feel the characters who are leaving fit with the direction he is taking the show so he quickly decided to write them out . He has only been in a month but he is already making big changes . He knows what he wants for EastEnders and is putting plans in place quickly . " Sharma filmed his final scenes before Christmas 2013 and the character 's final appearance was on 10 January 2014 .

= = Reception = =

Upon AJ 's arrival , Ally Ross of The Sun said : " New arrivals have included [...] Masood 's supposedly funny and long @-@ lost brother AJ , who made the fatal mistake of arriving with the line : ' Do I look like a comedian ? ' No . You look like David Baddiel . Now kindly piss off " . Kay Ribeiro from Heat said , " We like new boy AJ . Not only is he a laugh [...] but he 's providing light relief during [Masood] and [Zainab] 's split , which is making us sad . " Laura Morgan from All About Soap hoped that AJ would become a permanent character after his initial appearances . In October 2012 , Allison Jones from Inside Soap said , " AJ has proved the perfect tonic for a family

almost constantly dogged with crisis [and] his tenacious ability to wind up Zainab never fails to entertain ! AJ may have only been in Walford for a few months , but it already feels as if we 've known him for ages . " She also called Sharma and Ganatra , " a killer on @-@ screen pairing " . Nathan Bevan from Welsh newspaper Western Mail praised Sharma 's role in EastEnders , naming him as one of " 50 things you should look forward to in Wales " in 2013 , saying , " Anyone who injects a little sunshine into the ' Chekhov with a covered market ' drudgery of EastEnders should be automatically given an Outstanding Contribution to Broadcasting Award in our book . So well done Newport 's very own Phaldut Sharma who , since arriving in Walford as Masood Ahmed 's gregarious but aggro @-@ magnet brother AJ , has helped break up the unrelenting , bicker @-@ filled misery of Albert Square . " Bevan later said that Sharma has " shaken up the residents of Walford as the wise @-@ cracking , wheeler @-@ dealing AJ Ahmed " , adding , " He 's the gregarious , trouble @-@ magnet who 's brought some much needed sunshine to the sombre , squabble @-@ filled soapiness of Albert Square . " Anthony D. Langford from AfterElton.com said AJ was a " find " but thought the writers might not be sure what to do with the character . Vicky Prior from the Metro said AJ " has lit up the square with his gently laddish behaviour . "

After AJ and Derek fight in August 2012 , Emma Roberts from MSN Entertainment said it was one of the best fights of 2012 , scoring it 5 out of 5 and saying , " This is how soap fights should always be done ! It was like Walford turned into the wild west . " A writer from MSN TV said that AJ 's drunken kiss with Roxy was one of EastEnders ' 20 worst storylines of 2012 , asked if it was serious and said that it was only made a " little bit believable " because they were both drunk . In the episode broadcast on 2 November 2012 , AJ helps his family stand up to Danny Pennant (Gary Lucy) . Claire Crick from All About Soap called AJ the " highlight " of the episode , saying , " we never thought we 'd say this , but he 's really quite funny ! We loved how he rallied the family together to stand up to Danny " . AJ , who undertakes self @-@ defence classes in a storyline , was used as an example by a spokesperson for the show when EastEnders and other British soap operas were criticised in a study of 830 scenes over two weeks , made by Liverpool John Moores University Business School , who said that exercise was only shown or mentioned on four occasions .

Sharma has received two award nominations for his role of AJ : a British Soap Award for Sexiest Male , and an Inside Soap Award for Funniest Male , both in 2013 . He was not shortlisted for either award . After his departure was announced , James Lowe from All About Soap opined that he , and the other three characters cut from the show at the same time , were " the right people to go " . Yahoo ! TV UK said they were " a little bit disappointed " about AJ 's departure , because he " has been good value . "