

= EastEnders : E20 =

EastEnders : E20 (sometimes just E20) is a British Internet soap opera , which began airing on 8 January 2010 . A spin @-@ off from the established BBC soap EastEnders , it is set in EastEnders ' regular setting of Albert Square , a Victorian square in the fictional borough of Walford , in the East End of London . Each series follows a group of teenage characters : Zsa Zsa Carter (Emer Kenny) , Leon Small (Sam Attwater) , Fatboy (Ricky Norwood) and Mercy Olubunmi (Bunmi Mojekwu) in series 1 ; Asher Levi (Heshima Thompson) and his brother Sol (Tosin Cole) , Naz Mehmet (Emaa Hussen) , and Stevie Dickinson (Amanda Fairbank @-@ Hynes) in series 2 ; and Ava Bourne (Sophie Colquhoun) , Donnie Lester (Samuel Benta) and Faith Olubunmi (Modupe Adeyeye) in series 3 . The show 's title comes from Walford 's fictional London postcode district , E20 . The four characters from series 1 also appear in EastEnders , as well as Faith from series 3 .

EastEnders : E20 originally aired as part of the main show 's 25th anniversary celebrations . It was devised in a bid to develop and nurture new talent , including writers , actors , composers and remixers , and target a younger audience , as well as to attempt to drive more people onto the Internet . The series was the idea of executive producers Diederick Santer , who wanted a show where regular EastEnders characters would be in the background , and John Yorke , who wanted to improve the portrayal of teenagers in EastEnders and to get younger people writing for it .

The show 's writers , all newcomers aged between 17 and 22 , were selected through a writing competition , and created the series at a BBC summer school . The theme tune was also selected through a competition , promoted on BBC Radio 1 . The show primarily operates as a standalone series but also cross @-@ references storylines of the main soap , and features cameo appearances from several of the regular characters from EastEnders . The episodes are between three and 16 minutes each in length and are available via EastEnders ' official website . Omnibus editions were also available on BBC iPlayer , BBC Red Button and , from April 2010 , BBC Three .

= = Conception and development = =

EastEnders : E20 was conceived by executive producer Diederick Santer as part of EastEnders ' 25th anniversary celebrations . Described as the " naughty little brother or sister to the main show " , it was devised in a bid to target younger viewers and to develop and nurture new talent . Executive producer John Yorke , who oversaw the show , and is also controller of BBC drama production and new talent , said " Fundamentally the whole idea of the show is it 's a training ground for new talent , be that acting , writing , composing , remixing , everything . The fact is because it 's online , we can take risks . " Nevertheless , the makers said they knew they had to get it right because " the eyes of the World Wide Web would be watching . "

Santer conceived the idea of a " parallel universe show " with new characters , where the regular characters are in the background . Yorke sought to improve the portrayal of teenagers in EastEnders and to get younger people writing for it . The ideas came together and EastEnders : E20 was created in what Yorke described as " one of the quickest periods from idea to screen I've ever known . " Regarding the decision to create an online drama , Yorke said , " People don 't watch television at fixed times anymore , they use iPlayer [to] get it at their convenience and so it made sense to make a programme that [viewers] can specifically get at their convenience . " The show 's producer , Deborah Sathé , added , " Technology is changing and it 's changing really quickly and I think it 's really appropriate that the BBC is leading the way in offering online content . " The first series was commissioned by multi @-@ platform commissioning executive Rosie Allimonos .

Another incentive for the show was to get more people to use the Internet . Sathé stated that it was an opportunity for younger people to bring the older members of their families onto the internet , and Yorke hoped that it would bring people onto the internet who had not used it before . Simon Nelson , BBC Vision controller of multiplatform and portfolio , said that this was an opportunity for the BBC to develop its expertise in drama production by exploiting the creative potential of the Internet to create a new online drama where few have succeeded . EastEnders : E20 primarily operates as a standalone series but also cross @-@ references storylines of the main soap . According to Santer ,

the series also explores the stories of the soap 's anonymous bystanders . He said , " There are always other people [in EastEnders] milling round the market and houses that we never go into . There are four or five parallels you could do . It will be nice to see well @-@ known characters through strangers ' eyes . Ian Beale may show up and he is just a strange , irritating man . Or they might ask : ' Who is that moody girl in the market ? ' And it will be Stacey Slater . "

= = = Series 2 = = =

The second series was announced on 8 April 2010 , brought back by Santer 's successor , Bryan Kirkwood and commissioned by Sarah Clay . Nelson explained " We had no hesitation in commissioning another series , something which will delight the 17 @, @ 000 fans who 've been calling for more episodes on the E20 Facebook page . " Script producer Peter Mattessi promised that the second series would take the characters to darker , scarier and more unattractive parts of their personalities , writer Muge Ahmet said it would be sexier , and Sathe stated there would be big secrets , while writer Alex Oates said that the show and the writers had grown up a lot since the first series . The Daily Star newspaper reported that the second series would be more controversial than the first , including scenes of drug dealing and violence .

With the return of the series , Sathe explained that some of the show 's writers had already worked with the EastEnders team on storylines for the characters they had created , and hoped this would continue as the E20 brand develops , and that the show would become a " junior version " of the BBC Writers Academy . Series 2 sees the introduction of street dance to the series to give it an " authentic East End flavour of youth " . The episodes were made all the same length following complaints about the length of episodes in the first series and the decision to show the series on BBC Three . Social networking site Twitter was also used to introduce teasers , with four of the characters having their own profiles .

= = = Series 3 = = =

A third series was announced on 27 September 2010 , commissioned by BBC Learning , as part of a new BBC strategy to provide learning opportunities for all audiences . Saul Nassé , Controller of Learning , said , " I want to use BBC programmes that are known and loved by audiences that can serve as springboards for learning . [...] We 'll be enlisting the help of the BBC 's best talent to maximise the reach of our output , " and Sathe commented , " We are thrilled with the success of the first two series and have already started to storyline the third . Be prepared for a few familiar faces , a couple of new ones and a lot of fireworks . " It was confirmed that Learning would fund the third series and work with young people to develop storylines " that bring to life subjects in the Personal , Social , Health Education (PSHE) curriculum such as bullying or peer pressure . " A regional schools tour was organised to tie in with the launch of the series , with pupils writing short scenes based on scenarios tying in with the PSHE curriculum , which were performed , filmed and edited . Sarah Miller , BBC Learning commissioner and executive producer of series 3 , explained : " The schools tour was a terrific opportunity to deliver powerful face @-@ to @-@ face workshops , giving students and teachers the opportunity to develop key media production skills and to get behind the scenes of a top BBC drama . "

= = Production = =

The show is produced by television newcomer Deborah Sathe . The production process for series 1 took about six months , from commissioning to the final cut . Yorke stated that , " Television takes a notoriously long time to make and one of the joys of doing this online is that it 's been incredibly quick , about a quarter of the time it would take a normal show to get off the ground . It 's smaller , it 's easier to do and also there 's a collective will for it to succeed . "

= = = Writing = = =

The first series was written by a team of 13 writers from London aged between 17 and 22 who responded to a writing competition and attended a summer school in August 2009 as part of the BBC 's new talent initiative , where they created the entire series . The summer school took place over four weeks , with the first two weeks in Theatre Royal Stratford East and the last two at the BBC centre at Elstree Studios . The writers did not know they would be writing a spin @-@ off to EastEnders until they arrived . The writers , including Florence Vincent , Alex Oates , Kashman Harris and Emer Kenny , also wrote the ten episodes of series 2 . They are from various parts of London , which Sathe said was " brilliant " as they represent different parts of life in London , and they have grown up with the Internet as a native medium . Santer stated that the writers created a new Walford , calling it a " fresh perspective on a British classic . " The writers were given a day to travel around East London to listen to people talking to get ideas . Sathe commented : " We created some brilliant scenes from the eavesdropping stuff . " After the summer school , the writers were commissioned to write the 12 episodes of series 1 . Some of the scripts were allowed by be changed by the actors if they thought lines were not authentic , such as the use of London street slang . Sathe considered the use of slang to be a highlight of the series , calling it her proudest moment . Storylining and character creation for series 2 started in January 2010 . The third series used mostly different writers to the first two . Each potential writer had to send in a monologue for a character they would like to see on television and the production team chose their favourites . The writers were then asked to write a scene between their character and one of the established EastEnders characters . Following this , the writers were interviewed and the most promising fifteen were selected . Kenny returned as a writer for series 3 and was joined by several of the young EastEnders cast members : Arinze Kene (Connor Stanley) , Himesh Patel (Tamwar Masood) and Charlie G Hawkins (Darren Miller) .

= = = Filming = = =

EastEnders : E20 is filmed on the same set as EastEnders , using three handheld cameras to give it a more " edgy " feel compared to EastEnders , which is filmed with cameras on tripods . Director Michael Keillor stated that although using handheld cameras is normally easier , the fact it was shot with a multiple @-@ camera setup made it more challenging and created problems for the lighting and props teams as nobody knew exactly where the camera would be . Keillor said it was a " particularly tough day " when filming a party scene in a flat , as normally walls of the set would be removed but all the walls were left in to make it look more realistic , meaning the crew overheated . Series 1 was filmed over ten days with approximately 120 minutes of television being shot . Each of the first series ' 12 episodes are between three and 16 minutes in length . The second series features 10 episodes averaging 14 minutes each , which was due to complaints from viewers about the length of some of the episodes in series 1 . Series 3 was scheduled to begin filming on 8 May 2011 , lasting for four weeks .

= = = Music = = =

Unlike EastEnders , E20 uses incidental music , which Scott Matthewman of The Stage said makes it feel like an episode of Hollyoaks , a Channel 4 soap opera targeted at a teen audience . A remix of the EastEnders theme tune was created for the series , with members of the public submitting remixes in a competition held on the BBC website . The competition opened on 11 November 2009 and was officially launched on 13 November by Annie Mac on her BBC Radio 1 show . More than 250 entries were submitted . They were reduced to four and judged by Sathe , Santer , Keillor , original theme tune composer Simon May , and BBC Radio 1Xtra 's DJ Ace . The winner , 21 @-@ year @-@ old Carl Darling , was announced on 4 December 2009 . He said " I was very excited to hear that my track was chosen by such an eclectic judging panel . And to spend time in the BBC studios and walking around the Square was phenomenal . I have grown up hearing Simon May 's original theme tune and watching Albert Square and the iconic Queen Vic , so I feel very privileged

to be a part of EastEnders : E20 history ! " Darling explained that he wanted to keep all the " essential features " of the original theme , but to make a grimy drum and bass version .

Additionally producers worked with BBC Introducing to give unsigned bands and musicians the chance to have their music used on the series 2 soundtrack , and grime music producer Aiden " S.K.I.T.Z Beatz " Hogarth was appointed music director and composer , having been unable to take the role for series 1 . He said " For E20 I will be providing all the best and what 's current from the underground and mainstream music scene and instead of having the music playing out of stereos and stalls , we 've taken the step to compose and source music as a soundtrack . Something seasoned EastEnders fans may not be familiar with . I honestly think that the viewers are ready for a refreshing and brand new take on how music direction for this show and others like it should be done . "

= = Casting = =

Casting of the new characters for series 1 was announced on 25 November 2009 . Open auditions were held at Theatre Royal Stratford East , followed by recalls until the possible actors were reduced to eight and then four . Yorke described it as a " painful process " and they had difficulty finding someone to play Zsa Zsa Carter . Emer Kenny was cast in the role whilst writing the second episode . Yorke said " She was so good that we suddenly went , ' It 's her ! ' " Kenny said , " I 'm really thrilled to have been given the opportunity to both write for and act in a show connected with such an iconic drama as EastEnders . Kids these days use their laptops more than their televisions , so it 's really exciting to be a part of a project that 's taking drama online and connecting with these viewers . " To prepare for the role , Kenny had to disguise her " posh " accent , saying that when the director asked her what she would do about her voice , she travelled around the East End to listen to the way people spoke .

On his casting in the role of Fatboy , television newcomer Ricky Norwood said , " It 's an honour to now be a part of [the] show . I am born and bred in the East End [so] it feels like a homecoming . " Norwood adapted his own use of slang into the character to " try and bring it and from a true place . " Bunmi Mojekwu , who plays Mercy Olubunmi , commented " I feel so blessed to be part of EastEnders : E20 . My first day on set was just crazy . I was on Albert Square ? a dream come true ? I 'm enjoying every second . " Sam Attwater , who previously appeared in five episodes of Hollyoaks , was cast as boxer Leon Small . On his casting , he commented , " It 's a great privilege to be working with such great actors and on such an established show . It 's an amazing opportunity and I 'm really enjoying tackling a character like Leon who has so much going on , " He prepared for the role by attending a gym , as the character has a lot of topless scenes . He said : " As soon as I heard that I was straight down the gym . Lots of crunches . Everyone said don 't worry about it , but every time I did one of those scenes I had to watch it back and see how it looked because there will be 10 million people watching it . I want to be on the best form . "

The cast for series 2 were announced on 29 July 2010 . Heshima Thompson and Tosin Cole were cast as brothers Asher and Sol Levi . Cole , who has previously starred in a modern adaptation of Shakespeare 's Julius Caesar , said , " It 's a privilege to work on something so big but so different . Everyone is fantastic to work with . I 'm really excited . " Thompson , who has appeared in The Bill and Spooks , stated " It 's a great project to be a part of and I get to dance so this is going to be fun . " Emaa Hussen was cast as Naz Mehmet , her first professional acting role , on which she commented : " it 's a really exciting place to start my career . I 'm from East London and a big fan of EastEnders , which is one of the reasons I wanted to do the show . " Finally , Amanda Fairbank @-@ Hynes , who appeared in An Education , said of her casting as Stevie Dickinson , " It all happened so quickly but I 'm really excited to be working on EastEnders . It 's an amazing group of people and they are great to work with . " Additionally , Hollyoaks actress Roxanne McKee , and dance acts Flawless and Avant Garde also make appearances . Flawless were asked to appear in the show by Sathe , who has previously worked with Marlon Wallen from the troupe .

= = Broadcasting = =

Each of the first series ' episodes were made available on varying days of the week at 8.30pm via EastEnders ' official website , starting on 8 January 2010 and ending on 25 January 2010 . The series was also available in three omnibus shows on BBC iPlayer and via BBC Red Button after the EastEnders omnibus aired on BBC One . The first omnibus , comprising episodes 1 ? 4 , was available for one week from 17 January . The second omnibus was available for one week from 24 January , containing episodes 5 ? 8 . Episodes 9 ? 12 were available as an omnibus from 31 January 2010 . Additionally , the series was re @-@ edited into three 30 @-@ minute editions and shown weekly on BBC Three from 23 April 2010 .

The second series began on 7 September 2010 , with two episodes being made available weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays , excluding episode 2 , which was available on a Wednesday . The series comprises 10 episodes in total of around 14 minutes each , and was also screened in five omnibus editions on BBC Three on Monday nights . Series 3 comprises 15 episodes of around 10 minutes each . Extra footage , such as video blogs and behind @-@ the @-@ scenes clips , is also available online . All episodes from all three series remain available to view on the BBC website .

= = Characters = =

Each series features new teenage characters who move to Walford , as well as cameos from existing characters from the main show . The characters are described as sixth form students trying to escape from " family problems and crises of their own making " . Series 1 follows Zsa Zsa , Fatboy , Mercy and Leon , who move into 89b George Street in Walford . Leon , Fatboy and Zsa Zsa also appeared briefly in EastEnders in January 2010 before EastEnders : E20 started , and returned as regular characters when EastEnders : E20 ended . It was later announced that due to positive reaction to the character , Mercy would also join EastEnders later in 2010 . Series 2 follows brothers Sol and Asher , plus Naz and Stevie . Sathe said there was a " good chance " that they would also appear in EastEnders at some point . Zsa Zsa , Mercy and Leon also have cameo appearances in series 2 , and Fatboy has a recurring role . Series 3 follows newcomers Ava , Donnie and Faith , Mercy 's sister . Donnie 's younger sister , Riley , also appears along with Richard , a care worker . Naz and Sol also make a cameo appearance . Fatboy continues his recurring role , along with Mercy and Faith 's grandmother Grace Olubunmi , and regular EastEnders character Zainab Masood .

= = Reception = =

= = Viewership and critical reception = =

Between 8 and 21 January 2010 , EastEnders : E20 material available via the EastEnders website and BBC iPlayer , including episodes , behind the scenes videos and extra content , received 1 @. @ 7 million views . By 19 February 2010 , the episodes had 2 @. @ 8 million views with additional content pushing the total to 3 @. @ 3 million . Santer was reported to be " knocked out " by the figures , saying : " For our little side project , something that started life as an experiment , to go so big is very exciting . I 'm delighted in particular that the 13 young London writers who wrote the series have reached such an audience with their first professional work . " EastEnders : E20 's official Facebook fan page grew in membership from 100 to 5000 in a matter of hours after the spin @-@ off started , and as of 19 February 2010 , had over 16 @, @ 000 fans . Yorke said that due to the popularity of the first series , they hoped to make further spin @-@ offs . The first BBC Three omnibus edition on 23 April 2010 received 302 @, @ 000 viewers and a 1 @. @ 4 % audience share according to overnight figures. by 13 October 2011 , series 3 had gained viewing figures across both BBC Online and BBC Three of 1 @. @ 2 million viewers , and a 50 % increase in its online audience since it launched on 20 September 2011 . Sathe commented : " I am thrilled to see E20 has sustained its position as a front @-@ runner in online drama . " Grace Dent of The Guardian

described the series as " rather brilliant " , while Patrick Smith of The Daily Telegraph called it " vibrant " and Tony Stewart of the Daily Mirror called Zsa Zsa an " impressive " character . However , website Watch With Mothers gave a negative review of the show , saying " there ? s no need for it . " After the first episode of series 2 was available , Scott Matthewman from The Stage said " while it 's good to have more black and minority ethnic characters in the Square , by concentrating on a very narrow age range of characters it 'll make it all the harder for any new blood to effectively mesh into the full show . "

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

In 2010 , EastEnders : E20 was shortlisted for a Banff World Television Festival award in the Original Online Programs category . In April 2011 , the show was nominated for a Webby Award in the Drama category . Sathe commented on this : " I am so proud of what we have achieved with EastEnders : E20 , and to be nominated for a Webby proves how far the series has come . " The show went on to win the award , on which Yorke stated , " To win such a prestigious award is a huge honour for all the team ? and proof that the EastEnders brand is as brave and innovatory as it was when it first started , a quarter of a century ago . " In December 2011 , Sathe won the Creative Innovation Award at the Women in TV & Film Awards for her work on E20 .

In 2012 , Benta received a Screen Nation Awards nomination in the Emerging Talent category for his role as Donnie , while Adeyeye received a special mention for her role as Faith . The same year , the series was nominated in the Best Soap category at the Virgin Media TV Awards .