

SPARKHOUSE

BY

Sally Wainwright

STARRING

Sarah Smart, Joe McFadden, Alun Armstrong, Celia Imrie, Nicholas Farrell, Richard Armitage, Camilla Power

DIRECTED BY

Robin Sheppard

PRODUCED BY

Derek Wax

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Nicola Shindler (Red Production Company)

Mike Dormer (BBC)

Co-Produced by: Sally Wainwright

Director of Photography: Julian Court

Production Designer: John Collins

Costume Designer: Sue Hallas

Make-up Designer: Janita Doyle

Sound: Phil Smith

Composer: Tot Taylor

Editor: Chris Dickens

Script Executive: Noelle Morris

Created for BBC ONE by RED Production Company

Cast List

Carol Bolton	Sarah Smart
Andrew Lawton	Joe McFadden
Richard Bolton	Alun Armstrong
Kate Lawton	Celia Imrie
Paul Lawton	Nick Farrell
John Standing	Richard Armitage
Becky Lawton	Camilla Power
Older Lisa	Holly Grainger
Younger Lisa	April James
Sue	Siobhan Finneran
Connor	Nicky Evans
Tessa	Jessica Harris

Production Credits

Written by	Sally Wainwright
<i>Directed by</i>	<i>Robin Sheppard</i>
<i>Produced by</i>	<i>Derek Wax</i>
Executive Producers	Nicola Shindler (RED) Mike Dormer (BBC)
Co-Produced by	Sally Wainwright
Casting Director	Beverly Keogh
Director of Photography	Julian Court
Production Designer	John Collins
Costume Designer	Sue Hallas
Make-up Designer	Janita Doyle
Sound by	Phil Smith
Composer	Tot Taylor
Editor	Chris Dickens
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Introduction

'Oh God, it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!'
Wuthering Heights

Carol Bolton is feisty, passionate and reckless. Life has dealt her a raw deal. She lives in poverty-stricken Sparkhouse Farm with a drunken father, Richard, but she is determined to protect those closest to her – younger sister Lisa and her soul mate since childhood, Andrew Lawton. Andrew and Carol's love is not a teenage crush. Their passion is urgent, powerful, enormous, like the landscape they share; the raw energy of the wind, the awesome loneliness of the moors. Yet all of this is in danger of being destroyed when a Pandora's Box of secrets and lies is forced open.

"The themes are perennial," says *Sparkhouse* producer Derek Wax. "The battle between passionate love and economic necessity; following your heart, or doing something expedient, or socially desirable. These questions are the same in the 21st century as they were in the 19th," he argues. "This is a story that's been inspired by *Wuthering Heights*, but the plot isn't the same – what you do have is two characters who are completely in love and you get a sense of how intoxicating that can be."

Executive producer Nicola Shindler explains: "This is a fantastic, epic love story about two people who come from contrasting classes and cultures. Sally Wainwright came to us and said this was an idea she had always really, really wanted to write. Although it was inspired by *Wuthering Heights*, the parallels are not exact in any way. It is very much set in the Yorkshire Moors that she knows well. It's a good strong story and Sally's writing is original."

Gareth Neame, the BBC's Head of Independent Commissioning, says: "We were delighted when Red Productions and Sally Wainwright came to us with this idea. It's a tremendous tale: modern, engaging, romantic, tragic and - in the end - uplifting. We hope that this is just the beginning of a long relationship between Sally and the BBC."

"Carol is a character I've had in my head for a long time" explains Sally. "The rest of the story evolves around her, using *Wuthering Heights* as inspiration". Because Sally also wrote *At Home With The Braithwaites*, she had always had Sarah Smart – who plays Virginia in the series - in mind for the central character of Carol. "She inhabits the role of Carol totally," says Derek warmly. "The best acting happens in her eyes, without any sense that she is 'acting'."

"Carol has nothing of value in her life apart from her sister and her love for Andrew. She has no social or domestic status, yet she's brave, funny and strong. She's a real fighter and – when the chips are down – she'll fight for what she wants and the one, fantastic thing in her life is her love for Andrew. What she does is rooted in real passion."

The object of Carol's passion required a young actor with the power to grab the viewers' empathy, and the search ended with Joe McFadden. "For Andrew we needed someone who had to be strong, sexy and interesting enough to engage a character as strong as Carol, but have sensitivity and understand the sensitivity of romance," explains Nicola.

Derek Wax agrees: "There was a big casting session for Andrew and Joe just knocked us out, he was fantastically truthful. He also had this youthful energy and immediacy to be able to play an 18-year-old." Director Robin Sheppard observes "The first time I saw Joe and Sarah in a room together they were like two peas in a pod. There was chemistry, sparks between them and that's the most important thing to see on screen."

“We were also very lucky to get actors of the calibre of Celia Imrie and Nicholas Farrell as Andrew’s parents – and, on the other side of the valley, Alun Armstrong was our first choice as the violent and alcoholic father! He didn’t even come in for an audition,” Robin laughs, “we just knew he’d do it brilliantly.”

But the Yorkshire landscape was almost an equal cast-member in this three-parter. “The right location was crucial and we had to make some brave decisions,” Derek reveals. “This is an epic love story and to do justice to that we had to film in the middle of west Yorkshire in appalling conditions. We filmed the whole drama on location around Todmorden, Hebden Bridge and Saddleworth Moor and the landscape did feel wild, untrammelled and right for the story.” Robin explains “It was really important to keep everything real. West Yorkshire was where Sally imagined the story to take place so that’s where we shot it. We didn’t use any sets at all.”

“The setting’s not just a brooding, stunning backdrop to the story,” Derek insists. “It’s an expression of the explosive emotional landscape of Carol and Andrew’s world. They feel so connected to it, and to each other, but it can also erupt in unexpected ways.”

Yet even the inclement weather was not ‘real’ enough for the look needed to bring *Sparkhouse* to life. “We had to create *big* rain and lightening effects,” says Derek. “Plus some very ambitious stunts, fights, car smashes, burning houses and helicopter shots all on location, so we were very weather-dependent.”

“We had to be able to turn on a sixpence.” Nicola adds: “It’s important that locations are strong and identifiable, because that is what has created these people. You can actually see the two houses from each other; it’s not a cheat at all. But it was very difficult to film up there; weather-wise we had a lot of problems. Getting all the equipment up, travelling the distance from Manchester; all these things were very difficult but it was definitely worth it.”

The atmosphere had its effect on Derek too. “When you are actually in a valley, with fields of sheep and silence all around you, it’s seven o’clock in the evening – you can understand that complete connection to the landscape,” he explains. “It’s there in *Wuthering Heights*; it’s there in *Sparkhouse*.”

What leaps out from this emotional roller-coaster drama is the power of human emotion. “Anyone who has felt the overwhelming feeling of being in love at that age will engage completely with this story,” says Derek. “It is a wonderful, fresh, epic love story. It’s also about how the present is always in the grip of the past – we see three generations of a family and the impossible emotional pressures that people are under. You don’t often find stories like this on television these days.”

Sparkhouse – The Cast

Sarah Smart plays Carol Bolton

“You betrayed your own heart. Nothing could have parted us, nothing anybody could inflict on us. You’ve broken your own heart – and you’ve broken mine doing it!”

Wild, reckless, violent – and misunderstood. Carol Bolton’s emotional landscape matches her stark surroundings as she battles to hang on to the one thing that gives her life meaning. But Fate seems determined to keep her from her one true love.

“She’s full of life, she’s wild and feisty, but caring and loving,” says Sarah Smart, springing loyally to Carol’s defence. “She goes through so much heartache and trouble and has such a hard existence – but she just gets on with her life. She doesn’t feel sorry for herself and that’s what I really like about her. She’s cool and she does things on the spur of the moment - if it was me I would probably have done myself in within the first two minutes of the film!”

Sarah is best known to viewers as the wilful lesbian daughter in *At Home With The Braithwaites* - also written by *Sparkhouse* creator Sally Wainwright. “I was so excited when I was offered the role of Carol; she is so passionate and a great character to play.”

Sarah even took time out to research what life on a farm would be like. “I worked on a farm in Yorkshire and the weather was absolutely awful - hail and thunderstorms,” she laughs. “I had to go onto the moors to see the sheep and I thought, ‘This farming lark is really hard work - it’s going to be awful filming’. But the first day of shooting was sunny and nice and bright. Sadly though, it didn’t last very long! It started to rain and we did loads of night shoots, being drenched by rain machines and freezing to death. I went off the whole idea of agriculture!”

The problems with the stormy settings were more than made up for though – when Sarah was given the chance to take out all her aggression on a helpless car! “I had to smash up a Volvo with an axe – that was *really* good fun and I got all my frustrations out on that,” she grins happily. “All the cast and crew were really jealous - they all wanted a go. But I had to practice with a rubber axe until the very last minute – because we could only do one take.”

Praised by co-star Alun Armstrong for her feisty fighting spirit, Sarah admits that she did enjoy the odd punch-up. “I punched Joe (McFadden) a couple of times and it was fun learning how to do that,” she says. “Carol’s Dad is quite violent towards her, so we also had to do stunt fights. It was hard, because it was so emotional, but Alun Armstrong is such a good laugh and so great to work with. It was a very physical part, with all the farming and running around the moors, which was really tiring, but it really felt that you’d achieved something at the end of the day – it got the adrenaline going.”

Sarah admits that the part did take its toll on her. “It was so packed with emotion and passion, I had some really tearful times at the end of the day – I just needed to let it all out. Carol is one of those girls who doesn’t cry very much, so it was really hard to keep that all in. I tried not to dwell too much on each scene. I’d finish it, then go and have a laugh. That’s the best way.”

A less traumatic problem was the ins – and outs – of Carol’s hair. “I had to have hair extensions to make my hair long and flowing and farm-girlie, for the earlier scenes,” she explains. “At the beginning they took eight hours to put in.

“But, because it was shot out of sequence, I had to keep having them put in, then taken out for the scenes where I was supposed to be older. I loved the look though, so did my boyfriend – so I’m growing my hair now!”

The reflections of *Wuthering Heights* had echoes for Sarah – as did the influence of changed hairstyles! “I played Catherine Linton in a television version of *Wuthering Heights*,” she reveals. “I had to wear a big blonde curly wig that upstaged me a bit! So I knew the story and adored all that angst and romance.”

Joe McFadden plays Andrew Lawton

“Why can’t you understand? She’s part of me; I can’t breathe without her. I’d die; I’d shrivel up – I’m nothing without her!”

The roller-coaster love affair between doctor’s son Andrew Lawton and the wild and wilful Carol is passionate, turbulent and troubled. Her home may be within sight of his window but her lifestyle is worlds away.

“Carol brings excitement into his life,” says Joe McFadden simply. “I suppose you could say that she could be seen as a bad influence on him - she doesn’t come from the ‘right’ kind of family. But for him it is the perfect love. There he is, stuck in this boring, loveless house where his Mum and Dad have piled their affection onto Andrew. Because his parents are so unhappy they are relying on him to provide their happiness. It is a really tense household – and then he looks out of his window and he sees her house. But it’s not just rebellion against the family; it is a completely pure love. Everything in their being tells them that they are supposed to be together. It is just a coincidence that they live beside each other.

“It is such a shame that it goes so horrid so quickly. When he decides to make a real commitment to Carol – that’s when his parents decide to put a spanner in the works.” No one involved could possibly know that that spanner would wreak havoc through so many lives and bring such turmoil in its wake. “If they had stayed true to their love and not let outside factors interfere and pull them apart there wouldn’t have been so many brooding storm clouds ahead,” says Joe. “Andrew is a good person, but not as brave as he should be.”

The handsome actor shot to fame as Prentice McHoan, the lead in the BBC’s highly-acclaimed four-part drama *The Crow Road* and has since made his mark as the object of many a young girl’s affections! “I’ve not played that many villains, or dark characters,” he admits with a smile. “So it feels quite familiar for me to play a moral character, but I’ve never played anyone quite like Andrew before. I was looking back to being 18 and having the world at your feet and feeling that the possibilities are endless. I am very optimistic. I don’t think I’ve changed too much since I first came down from Glasgow and I’ve been very lucky - I’ve got the right scripts at the right time.”

Joe was overwhelmed by the setting for *Sparkhouse* and acknowledges the part that the landscape played on his performance. “Just to look out of the window from this ramshackle old cottage and see

the dramatic landscape it's impossible not to fall in love with it," he admits. "You just feel the power of the place and it works so well for this story, the heightened emotions; the love is the most profound, the violence is the most extreme and the countryside is the most dramatic. The characters are very connected to the landscape and Andrew has a very great love for where he's from. He goes off to university and it's only when he returns that he then realises how much he appreciates his roots in that place.

"Of course there is a resonance of *Wuthering Heights*; there is a similar dynamic between the families where Carol is working class and she's not 'good enough' for me. But people shouldn't watch it expecting *Wuthering Heights*," he stresses. "They are going to get something a lot more relevant and current that they can relate to."

Joe, who has also starred in *The Glass*, *Bumping The Odds*, *Dad Savage* and *Sex, Chips and Rock 'n' Roll* stayed in emotional roller-coaster territory for his next project - *The Trouble With Men and Women*. "It's a very profound, large subject!" he laughs. "It's about what happens when someone you love leaves you – and my character is quite winsome too. It's a largely improvised piece, with a low budget."

The rocky road of romance is one Joe has travelled on and off screen. "I used to think there was just one love for each of us and you had to somehow find them," he says wistfully. "I think everyone has one of those big loves that you look back on and think, 'What if?' But I think I'm a little less optimistic now, even though there is still that hope for most people that there is someone you're destined to be with. Touch wood I'm sure that there is at least one person for everyone," he says, adding with a grin, "if not a few...!"

Alun Armstrong plays Richard Bolton

Richard Bolton is brutal, domineering, drunken and feckless – a nightmare as a father. But, for Alun Armstrong, the challenge was to make him more than simply a figure to hate.

"Sometimes I think I should stop playing these parts, or people will begin to think I'm like that!" he laughs. "But because these characters are so extreme, I don't see any of myself in him. So it doesn't really touch on any difficult, psychological areas for me." He explains. "Sally Wainwright writes so well that you can picture the man very clearly, it's all in the text, the references to what's happened in the past are graphic and the dialogue is revealing and naturalistic. So it was easy to become this character – it was all there. You can't have any bad feeling about it because you find reasons as to why he behaves as he does."

The one problem Alun admits to is apprehension about coping with scenes where Richard is violent towards his daughter Carol, played by Sarah Smart. "What I thought would be a difficult part, just from a logistical point of view, was having to beat up little Sarah," he reveals. "But she's the best stage fighter I've ever worked with! She was incredibly brave, really co-ordinated – and just good at it."

He was just as lucky when it came to an unexpected close encounter with a flock of sheep! "I have to do a scene where I'm lying on the ground and it should have been a nice shot of the sheep running across the camera away from John as he ran towards me," Alun explains. "But they ran right over me. It looked far worse than it was, because I discovered they are quite dainty, balletic creatures and, as soon as they set their hooves on me, they took the weight on their other feet, so I didn't actually feel a thing. I was rather disappointed that they decided not to use that take!" he laughs.

One take Alun was not so sure about was a little more personal. “You see me sitting on the bog with my trousers down round my ankles,” he reveals. “It did make me think, ‘Is this any good for my image?’”

“But, once I got over the first embarrassment, it was okay. After all, the only thing you see is my knees. Even so, there is something very vulnerable about being seen in that position! More seriously though – sitting on the bog, playing a really horrible character - all these things would be difficult if you thought you were involved with something you weren’t proud of,” he says thoughtfully. “*Sparkhouse* is dramatically honest and lifelike, so it is worth playing the roles with unsavoury associations because the end justifies the means.”

Alun admits that, although his face is his fortune, he does tend to get cast in a certain way. “I’m a bit bald for romantic leads now,” he laughs. “But after *Sparkhouse* I did go on to play the polar opposite of Richard. I was in Andy Hamilton’s *Bedtime* with Sheila Hancock, Tim West and Kevin McNally. I play a widower with a difficult adolescent son who is sensitive and thoughtful and caring; a very upstanding, wholesome parent. In both cases it’s wonderful to act with young people who are so brilliant at that age and you can learn a lot from them too.”

In a long and distinguished career, Alun highlights playing in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* and *Death of a Salesman* in the theatre, the film *Strictly Sinatra*, *Goodbye Cruel World* and *This is Personal*, the *Hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper* on television. “I was also in the BBC’s *Messiah 2: Vengeance is Mine*, which is quite gory and graphic. But it was great fun, we had a ball making it – we laughed from beginning to end – as indeed we did on *Sparkhouse*. You often find that the more gruesome the situations you’re acting, the more fun people have to counterbalance the negativity of the characters.”

As a complete contrast to his recent roles, Alun decided to get away from it all – big time. “I’ve just been trekking in the high Andes with my wife and some friends,” he reveals. “It was difficult to sleep with the altitude, but gradually you adapt to it. The whole thing was quite a challenge, but a terrific experience. The views were stunning and the Andean people have a really fascinating culture. On top of that,” he adds with a grin, “you feel very fit at the end of it.”

Nicholas Farrell plays Paul Lawton

Can the end ever justify the means? That is the question Dr Paul Lawton has to ask himself as he wrestles with the guilt of his malicious interference between two young lovers. His excuse – one of them is his son and the other is a unruly child from the wrong side of the tracks.

“He could be viewed as Public Enemy Number One – the prime mover and instigator of what happens,” admits Nicholas Farrell. “But, on another level, I can relate to him as not an unreasonable man because, superficially, Carol *is* a real handful, from an appalling family. What he’s trying to do is what we all want to do, the best for our children. I think he’s in an incredibly unhappy marriage – the only reason they’re still together is that they have made one of those agreements that they’ll stay together for the child. Paul and his wife are so miserable they produce a really bad effect on one another. The scenes between Paul and Kate are not without humour, but it’s barbed and it’s at the expense of others.”

Nicholas has an interesting take on the differences – and, more importantly – the similarities between these two warring families. “They are both dysfunctional,” he argues. “One of them is what would be

classically looked on as the working class dysfunctional family with a child-abusing alcoholic parent. Yet, across the way, this middle class family has just as many difficult problems that they never articulate. There are so many like them where everything is suppressed and not talked about, whereas at least, across the valley, if there's a disagreement it is immediately articulated – albeit at 50 decibels, with pans flying across the room!"

Like the rest of the cast, Nicholas was more than happy to cope with all that the Yorkshire weather could throw at them – in the interests of the script. "Some of the night shoots were very windy and extremely wet – but perfect for what the scenes were about," he explains. "Nature and the rain machines going at us was pretty miserable, but you don't mind at all when it's going to help with the final look of the film. The location was stunning - climbing out onto the hills isn't anything like living in a town, or a little village even. These two young people were drawn to each other, not just because they were charmed by each other as children, but because they were escaping the grimness of their families."

Nicholas was seen recently in the series *The Jury* and *Bloody Sunday* and in the feature films *Charlotte Gray* and *Pearl Harbour*. He appeared with *Sparkhouse* co-star Celia Imrie in the acclaimed series *The Riff-Raff Element* and with Joe McFadden on *Sex Chips and Rock 'n' Roll*.

Celia Imrie plays Kate Lawton

Comfortably off, middle-class Kate Lawton seems to have it all – a beautiful converted farmhouse in a spectacular spot, a husband who is a doctor and a teenage son she adores. But appearances can lie.

"She's rather determinedly optimistic, and thinks everything is going to be all right- against all odds," explains Celia Imrie. "Kate's marriage is very up-hill and disintegrates before her eyes, which is sad. What keeps her going is Andrew, her son. She would do anything for him, to protect him; any mother will understand that."

Kate and her husband Paul are determined to put a stop to what they see as Andrew's unhealthy obsession with the 'unsuitable' Carol – the wild child farmer's daughter across the valley. But that determination is the only thing they share. Their relationship with each other is barbed and bitter.

"Luckily I knew Nick (Farrell) - who plays Paul – from *The Riff-Raff Element*," laughs Celia. "So I think we dared to be more horrible to each other! I don't know if I could have been quite so awful to someone I didn't know! But Kate is not just one thing and probably not the number you first think of. I suspect there will be a lot of people who understand her motives. What is clever about Sally Wainwright's writing is that your sympathies veer all over the place from one side to the other. I don't think any of the characters are unsympathetic for long; your feelings switch. They all behave abysmally sometimes and yet you understand the passion. They are all very passionate characters."

Celia has no qualms about playing a character who can be waspish and wilful. "It's terribly important to serve the story and try and leave your own ego out of it," she explains. "I grew to understand what she was fighting against. Laurence Olivier said you can't really play someone you don't like – and I really grew to like her. I think *Sparkhouse* is a brilliant story, with just whispers of *Wuthering Heights* because it's set in the same terrain. There are little things that make you think of the novel, but it is just so rich on its own. As an actor, if you're put in the setting where the story really is you don't have to imagine, because you're there and I think that's a fantastic leg-up. I couldn't possibly have imagined the extraordinary atmosphere of that part of the country on my own because I don't know the area - so it was fantastically important to shoot it all there."

Celia, who has recently celebrated her 50th birthday, has a seven year-old son, Angus, but is used to being cast rather differently. “All the children that I’ve had to play mothers to are all miles older than my own - I’m a late starter like my mother!” she grins. “But it does help being a mother to play someone like Kate. You know what that passionate, animal-like thing is when it comes to protecting your child. It’s completely understandable and jungle-like and she hasn’t got an awful lot else going except protecting her son.”

Still fondly remembered from the *Acorn Antiques* sketches with Victoria Wood, Celia was recently seen in the comedy feature film *Thunderpants*. “It was fantastic to have someone like Simon Callow in it,” she says, “and you can’t really be accused of taking yourself too seriously if you appear in a film about a boy who can’t stop farting!” Celia is currently working on *The Calendar Girls*, based on the real life story of Women’s Institute members who posed nude for a fund-raising calendar. “I’ve not done my nude scene yet and I’m slightly apprehensive,” she admits. “But then, I’m sure they were!”

Richard Armitage plays John Standring

Loyal, patient and hardworking, John Standring has been in love with Carol - the daughter of his brutal and violent boss – for years. But can his feelings ever be requited?

“John always hopes that she will grow to love him as their relationship changes over the years,” explains Richard Armitage. “He has an affection for her which I feel was based on a need for nurturing rather than on a sexual need. He is very protective of her because of the lack of love she has from her mother and the way her father treats her. But there is a simplicity to John; he doesn’t always understand all the nuances of what is going on around him. In some ways he is like an old man on the outside, but there is a real naivety about him - he’s a kind of ‘young fogie’,” laughs Richard. “He is completely inexperienced with women and incredibly nervous about any kind of sexual contact. Inside, he is just an inexperienced boy who can’t express himself very well. So it was really interesting to play when this big burly bloke finally opens up to show this vulnerable child inside.”

Richard was impressed with Sally Wainwright’s script and, although he was aware of the inspiration from *Wuthering Heights*, he believes *Sparkhouse* is totally unique. “The script is a fantastic read. I think it is just the essence of the characters of Cathy and Heathcliff that were taken from the story. Their journeys are very similar, but this is really nothing like the book.”

This year has been a busy one for Richard, who has just started work on the new series of *Cold Feet*. “I’m playing a character called Lee,” he explains. “He’s a lifeguard who has an affair with the Spanish Nanny. He’s not at all like me – I’ve had to spend the last month at the gym, although I did get pretty fit on the farm, playing John!” Fitness wasn’t a problem when Richard first left school in Leicestershire. “When I was 17 I was trying for musical theatre auditions but couldn’t work without an Equity card. So I went off to Budapest to join a circus! It was quite an experience,” he grins. “I worked with the Russian acrobats and even rode an elephant.” He went on to train at LAMDA and landed a two-line part in *Star Wars – The Phantom Menace*. “I was thrown in at the deep end, just after leaving drama school. But everything was on such a huge scale that nothing could ever phase me after that”

Richard recently appeared in *Spooks* and has also been seen in *Doctors* and *Casualty*.

The Production Team

Sally Wainwright – Writer

Sally Wainwright is one of television's finest writers of drama. Earlier this year she was nominated along with Andrew Davies and Stephen Poliakoff as best writer in the 2002 RTS awards.

Most recently known for her award-winning hit *At Home With The Braithwaites* starring Amanda Redman and Peter Davison, Sally also wrote three episodes of BBC ONE's BAFTA-nominated second series of *Playing The Field*. Between 1994 and 1997 she wrote over 50 episodes of *Coronation Street*.

Sparkhouse is Sally's first project for RED Production Company. She is also co-producer. She has worked closely with Robin Sheppard twice before on *Playing The Field* and *At Home With The Braithwaites*.

Sally developed the character of Carol Bolton with Sarah Smart in mind following Sarah's performance as Virginia Braithwaite. The connection to *Wuthering Heights* came later. She explains, "I liked the idea of a feisty woman at odds with the world. The violent nature of her character and the landscape reminded me of Heathcliff, and so the connection with *Wuthering Heights* came into play".

The fourth series of *At Home With The Braithwaites* for ITV1 has just begun filming in Leeds, and Sally is currently working on a brand new 6 x 1 hour drama for RED and BBC ONE.

Robin Sheppard – Director

This is the third time Robin Sheppard has worked with Sally Wainwright. She directed Sally's scripts for the second series of 'Playing the Field' (BAFTA NOMINATED), then the first three episodes of 'At Home with the Braithwaites' (RTS nominated). Robin was delighted to be asked to direct 'Sparkhouse' because it was a rare opportunity to realise a modern epic, set on location on the wilds of the Yorkshire Moors and was written specifically for Sarah Smart, who Robin also directed in 'At Home With the Braithwaites'.

Robin has also recently directed Jack Rosenthal's adaptation of the Kingsley Amis comic novel 'Lucky Jim' and is attached to two feature film scripts 'Love Junkies' and 'Numb'.

Derek Wax – Producer

The first drama Derek produced for RED Production Company was *Flesh and Blood*, written by Peter Bowker and directed by Julian Farino, due to air on BBC2 in September. Last year, he created

the BBC Choice series *Waiting for the Whistle*. For the series he directed and produced *The King and Us* by Peter Bowker, and produced *Staying Up* by Harry Pearson.

Before this, Derek worked as a script editor in BBC Drama Serials. Prior to this, he worked as a theatre director and producer. His many productions included *No Remission* at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, which led to nominations for Best Production and Best Director at the London Fringe Awards, *The Life of the World to Come* at the Almeida, *Games* at the Gate, Notting Hill, as well as productions in regional theatres.

After *Sparkhouse* Derek returns to LWT Drama, where he is developing projects with several writers including Kevin Elyot, Abi Morgan, Rowan Joffe and David Eldridge.

Nicola Shindler – Executive Producer

Nicola Shindler formed RED Production company in 1998 and in this short time has become one of the country's most acclaimed television producers of award winning drama.

In 1996 Nicola produced Granada Television's *Hillsborough*, written by Jimmy McGovern and directed by Charles McDougall. This drama-documentary won the following awards: BAFTA, RTS, Writers Guild, Munich Film Festival, BANFF, Press Guild, Japan TV Festival and South Bank.

Before this, Nicola worked as assistant producer on Emmy award winning, *Prime Suspect 5*, and she worked in a similar capacity, first as script editor and then assistant producer, on Peter Flannery's epic nine-part award-winning drama *Our Friends in the North*.

Nicola also worked as script editor on *Sin Bin* (BBC) by Catherine Johnson, *Degrees of Error* a four-part serial by Stephen Davis for the BBC, *Saigon Baby* by Guy Hibbert and the first series of Jimmy McGovern's ground-breaking series, *Cracker*.

Queer as Folk for Channel 4 was RED Production Company's first success, it was followed by *Love in the 21st Century* also for Channel 4. Nicola then went on to produce and executive produce another series of *Queer as Folk* (C4), *Clocking Off* (BBC), *Having It Off* (BBC), *Linda Green* (BBC) and *Bob & Rose* (ITV), picking up numerous television awards along the way.

Nicola's current projects include *Sparkhouse* (BBC), *The Second Coming* (ITV), *Burn It* (BBC) and brand new series of *Clocking Off* and *Linda Green* both for the BBC.

RED PRODUCTION COMPANY

Nicola Shindler set up Red Production Company in January 1998 to work with writers on modern, innovative and entertaining dramas. Red first went into production in spring 1998 on Russell T Davies' eight part serial *Queer as Folk* for Channel 4. Transmitted in January 1999 it was followed immediately by *Love In The 21st Century*, devised by Catherine Johnson, six stories about sex, love and relationships. Always looking for new writers, Red set up a script competition with Channel 4 called *Northern Soul*, which unearthed a number of now commissioned writers.

In 2000 Red transmitted the first six part series of highly acclaimed drama, *Clocking Off* by Paul Abbott for BBC ONE and *Queer As Folk 2*, a two-hour finale.

The seven-part *Clocking Off II* began transmission in March 2001 and *Clocking Off III* transmitted on BBC ONE in January 2002, once again to rave reviews. The fourth series has just gone into production, for transmission later this year. *Linda Green*, a ten-part comedy drama by Paul Abbott and starring Liza Tarbuck transmitted on BBC ONE in Autumn 2001 and has also gone into production with a second series.

Now You See Her, a 90 minute single for Sky One starring Amanda Holden was transmitted in September 2001. *Bob & Rose*, a six part romantic comedy by Russell T Davies for ITV, began in September 2001 starring Alan Davies and Lesley Sharp as a gay man and a straight woman who fall in love. *Bob & Rose* collected Best Comedy and Best Actress in a Comedy (Jessica Stevenson) awards at The British Comedy Awards 2002.

RED have recently gone into production with a brand new 10 part drama for the BBC, starring Lisa Faulkner, Kieran O'Brien and Melanie Brown called *Burn It* and a controversial new drama, *The Second Coming*, based on the idea that the Son of God has returned to earth will transmit on ITV1 later this year.