# Interview TV Guide

Forty Years Later, Lesley-Anne Down Looks Back on Upstairs, Downstairs

Upstairs, Downstairs fever is raging once again! Already seen by an audience of one billion in over 70 countries, the landmark British soap opera (1971-75) is coming back in an eagerly awaited PBS sequel April 10, with Jean Marsh still in the role of the deliciously officious Rose. What's more, the original series has just been released on DVD in a fabulous 40th anniversary edition (available at acornonline.com). The collector set includes all five seasons, over 25 hours of never-before-seen features, episode commentaries, cast interviews (both vintage and new) and an alternate ending to the series pilot. TV Guide Magazine spoke with one of the original's greatest stars,Lesley-Anne Down, now best known as the cougarific Jackie M on The Bold and the Beautiful. Back then she played the dazzling Lady Georgina Worsely. And, man, does Down have wild memories of her time at 165 Eaton Place!

TV Guide Magazine: You joined Upstairs, Downstairs two years into its run when it was the hottest thing going. Did you think you'd died and gone to heaven?

Lesley-Anne Down: Oh, yes! When I walked onto the set for the first time I could hardly breathe. I was so in awe because I was such a big fan. Everybody was! We'd all gone crazy for the show.

TV Guide Magazine: What did your friends think about your lucky break? Were they crazy-jealous?

Lesley-Anne Down: Not really. My parents were very thrilled. But at the time I was hanging out with a very intellectual group of people, so the reverse was true. I was living with a guy called Bruce Robinson, who went on to write the film The Killing Fields among other things. He and I were together for 10 years. He was marvelous and probably the smartest guy on the planet, certainly the most hypochondrical and, I'm sure he would admit, a raging alcoholic. Anyway, all of his friends — ourfriends — were so much older than me, and we all lived together in a big house and they were all quite anti-establishment. So, no, they weren't excited about my doing Upstairs, Downstairs. In fact, they thought I'd sold out by taking the job.

TV Guide Magazine: You became world-famous as Georgina but, word is, you were working for chump change. Fact or fiction?

Lesley-Anne Down: The pay was truly horrendous! I was making only 300 pounds per episode on the hottest show in the world! Bruce wasn't working at the time. We were living above the first-ever punk shop. Every morning, we'd come down and say, "Oh, hello Johnny!" — meaning Johnny Rotten. "Oh, hello Sid!" — Sid Vicious, of course. I had been doing all these crapola Hammer House of Horror movies up to that point and we had no money, so Bruce and I wrote a porno story for a magazine, and that brought in at least 15 pounds. And then I went and earned 100 pounds for the afternoon dubbing a French porno movie into English — all the while playing Lady Georgina. It was so insane!

TV Guide Magazine: Could that have been a career-ender if word got out? Wouldn't the British public have been horrified?

Lesley-Anne Down: [Laughs] Oh, probably not. I am embarrassed to say that wasn't the first time sex, drugs and rock 'n roll — and poverty — got in the way. Previous to that, Kirk Douglas' son Peter Douglas talked me into doing some nude photos. I hated the idea so much that, as the shooting day got closer, I kept eating and eating and put on 20 pounds. [Laughs] Granola was not my friend! So there were all of these vaguely nude photos of me floating about looking vaguely chubby. There's nothing sexual about them at all. I don't want to be a young woman in the acting business ever again. I don't know what it's like for them today but, back then, it sucked. You did what men wanted you to do.

TV Guide Magazine: Jean Marsh, who co-created Upstairs Downstairs, spearheaded the upcoming sequel. What are your thoughts about it?

Lesley-Anne Down: It's such a brilliant idea and I'm so envious! I love Jean very much. She's a smart cookie, a funny cookie, and obviously a very talented cookie. It's like she's gone back to this embryonic stage of her great life and it's all happening for her all over again. Please, please let me get into my seventies like that and have my life go in such an intensely important and wonderful circle! I know Jean is enjoying this. And goddamn, she better!

TV Guide Magazine: Didn't you also have a chance to do a sequel at one point?

Lesley-Anne Down: On our last day of shooting Upstairs, Downstairs — which ended with Georgina's wedding — the producer John Hawkesworth suddenly said to me, "We don't want the series to finish. We want you and Anthony Andrews [Georgina's husband Lord Stockbridge] to continue the story in a whole new series." Having always been addicted to the show, I remember thinking, "No! If we do this new series everyone will be asking, 'Where's Mrs. Bridges?' 'Where's Rose?' 'Where's everyone we love?'" And I just didn't think that was alright. People would have been so disappointed. Maybe it was a mistake that I turned it down. But I don't think so.

TV Guide Magazine: Many of your biggest hits have been sudsy — Upstairs, Downstairs,North and South and now The Bold and the Beautiful.

Lesley-Anne Down: I love the form. And I love B&B! Prior to playing Jackie, I had done [the NBC daytime soap]Sunset Beach for Aaron Spelling and when that ended after three years I prayed and prayed — I'm a very religious person — saying, "Dear God, I want a soap opera." [Laughs] There are not a lot of actors out there who pray to God for that! These days the young ones are all looking for a big break because you're not going to get famous on a soap. But for somebody my age — which is 57 — this is an absolute gift. I've been there, done that, darling, so for me this is brilliant. And I will do everything required. I will dye my hair blond, work out like a fiend, drench myself in self-tanner, have my face stretched. I'm only vain about one thing — my arms. I'll do anything as long as my arms are covered. [Laughs] And, hey, if things don't work out, I can always go back to dubbing French porn. I'm really good at it, actually!

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