

Neil Gaiman has a new TV series: "It goes places you wouldn't expect television to go"

Likely Stories is a series of twisted one-offs - but it's nothing like *Tales of the Unexpected*.

BY MORGAN JEFFERY 25/05/2016



ULF ANDERSEN



"I had friends of mine saying, 'Ah, so they're going to do something like *Tales of the Unexpected*?' but it's not that," Neil Gaiman tells **Digital Spy**. "The mood would be much more cheerful and rollicking - and there's nothing about this that rollicks!"

Neil Gaiman's Likely Stories is a new series of twisted one-off plays - based on four of the award-winning author's stories, it'll air in two acts on Thursday nights on Sky

Arts.

"I wanted to see something that I was proud of on-screen..." Gaiman explains, "and I'd started feeling like we should be able to get there."

It was Sally Woodward Gentle - most recently executive producer on ITV's drama hit *The Durrells* - who convinced Gaiman to allow his stories to be adapted, with screenwriter Kevin Lehane working with *20,000 Days on Earth* filmmakers Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard to bring the project to the screen.



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"What I wound up saying to Sally was, 'Here's 60 short stories that aren't under option... pick four!' - and she and Kevin and Iain and Jane came back with their list of four... which surprised the f**k out of me," Gaiman confesses.

"They were all really dark. With my work, you have the dark stuff, but you also have the adventurous stuff and you have the funny stuff and you have the goofy stuff and you have the unclassifiable stuff..."

"But these are all dark stories about loneliness, weirdly sexually f**ked-up stories. They go to places that you wouldn't expect TV to go.

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"You're never sure quite how dark they're gonna go... and some of them go very dark, and some of them don't go as dark, but it's the performances that linger. One of the things that's lovely about them is that in this era of major CGI and special effects and so forth... here, the special effect is the acting."

The four stories reshaped for television are 'Foreign Parts' - a creeping tale of body horror, the odd and haunting 'Feeders and Eaters', chilling ghost story 'Closing Time' and the tragic romance of 'Looking for the Girl'.

"I think 'Foreign Parts' was the one that surprised me the most," Gaiman admits. "Because when I wrote it, it was very much about being in London in 1984 and the lack of personal connection..."

"Now it gets to be about today's weirdly insulated generation, about being in a world in which you can Tinder and you can text and you can Twitter, but you can't touch... and what does that mean?"

Gaiman concludes that while all four stories are very different, they all paint a picture of the person he was when he wrote them - a younger man who "had no idea who he was".

"I knew that I wanted to be something - and I knew I wasn't that thing yet," he recalls. "That is absolutely your 20s - all of the ingredients are there, but you don't know what kind of dish you are... and I think that bleeds through in all of these stories."

***Neil Gaiman's Likely Stories* begins on Thursday (May 26) at 9pm on Sky Arts.**

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