

About Life in the East End of London

F: Basically, the soap opera is about life in the East End London, that is, the Cockney way of life but that isn't the most important thing about the programme; that isn't the reason for its success. The reason for its success is it deals with social problem that other soap operas have never dealt with before. I mean our aim isn't to shock but it's just that we can't, we believe that we couldn't do a realistic situation drama about the East End without incorporating topics like drugs, homosexuality, divorce, adultery, all those things that other soap operas have only skimmed on ...

M: Prison ...

F: ... Very nicely ...

M: .. prison and breaking the law ...

F: Prison, nervous breakdowns -- I mean it's not just all gloom and doom ... There is a lot of humor and there is a lot of love and warmth in the programme as well; so really if anyone says what is *EastEnders* about? It's not about Cockneys, I mean, because the situations that we deal with are characteristic of a lot of inner city communities all over Britain, and I'm sure, in other cities in the world. But it's just that we cover them with an edge on how a Cockney and how a Cockney community reacts and deals with those problems.

M: What part do you play?

F: I play a girl called Michelle Fowler; well no, Michelle Holloway to start with, she was in a family. She lived in the same house with her mother and father, and her grandmother. The son ran away and then the mother had another baby and then she got pregnant by the local landlord — this is Michelle got pregnant, not my mom — by the landlord of the local pub, which nobody knows about; no one knows who the father is -- that was the big storyline in the first year. And after she had the baby she married a local lad who she'd known for a few years.

M: Is she at all like you?

F: Um, she speaks like me, that's where it ends. No she's not at all like me; I mean my circumstances are ... if I hadn't gone into acting there probably would have been more similarities but because my life is changed and my circumstances have changed so much over the past couple of years. The only similarities between me and Michelle is our accent.

M: Do you like her?

F: Yeah I like her. I think she's very brave, very courageous to have the baby and very strong to keep the consequences of everyone knowing who the father was, which would just be so

catastrophic ...

M: Catastrophic or something ...

F: I'm such a good speaker! Yeah, catastrophic or something or other; so she's got the strength to keep such a big secret with her and she believes that she'll keep it with her for the rest of her life.

Questions:

1. What type of programme are they talking about?
2. What is the reason for the success of the programme?
3. Who is the woman being interviewed?
4. What was the big storyline in the first year?
5. Why does the woman say Michelle is very brave?

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