

JESSICA BARDEN

Glass invites you to meet rising star Jessica Barden, best known for her break-out role in cult Brit series *The End of the F*cking World* ↓

ACTING UP

Before talking with Jessica Barden over the phone – she is based in LA and I am in the UK – I spent an hour scrolling through her Instagram enthralled and a little jealous. She has one of those Instagram pages that have so much entertainment value, in the best way possible – from her dancing to *Mr Brightside* in self-isolation to glossy photographs in one of her many Gucci dresses. A perfect blend of normality and Hollywood glamour, the 27-year-old actor expresses a uniquely British sense of humour that many northerners will relate to. I am currently writing this in my hometown of East Riding of Yorkshire, less than an hour's drive from where Barden grew up in Wetherby.

Barden tells me that there are many similarities between village life and her new residence in LA, saying, “I feel people are very family-orientated here and you have your own areas that you go to, and you have your friendship groups. Also, Los Angeles is a place

where people really enjoy living, in the same way as where I grew up. They have their core group of people and they don't want to leave because they enjoy living there so much.” To add to her sense of home from home she says she relates “a lot more to the friends that I have in LA than I ever did with some of the people I met in London”.

It would be fair to say that Barden's big break as an actress was her leading role as Alyssa in the cult E4 series, *The End of the F*cking World*. The darkly comic story of a 17-year-old self-diagnosed psychopath (played by Alex Lawther) and his relationship with his rebellious classmate Alyssa, the series follows the two across the UK as they try to dodge the law. Inspired by American 1970s dramas and playfully exploring the lovers-on-the-run trope, the series quickly captured a super-loyal cult following and wrapped up its second at the end of last year.

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• Writer
EMMA HART

• Photographer
MARK SQUIRES

• Dress LOEWE
Earring MOUNSER STUDIO



• Dress VERSACE
Earrings NATIA x LAKO at TATA-LA.COM



The show in particular excited a lot of interest from British teenagers, surprising considering its sense of vintage American nostalgia. Talking about the show's teenage appeal, Barden describes how it manages to convey the "complete jubilation and terror of being 17 and doing something for the first time". She adds, "It represents the struggle of not really knowing what you are supposed to do with all these

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• Jumpsuit SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO
Earring MOUNSER STUDIO
Sunglasses GEORGE KEBURIA at TATA-LA.COM

feelings all the time. We all feel so strongly when we are a teenager because suddenly you are given more freedom and you are constantly hit with all these experiences all of the time. You don't really have the life experience to know what feeling is real and what thought is real and what you are supposed to act on." Not surprisingly, there has been great demand for a third season, which Barden tells me is a possibility, "I would love to do a third series, and I know Alex [Lawther] would love to as well. We still have a group chat with Charlie [Forsman], the writer, most days and I know that we would all love to work with each other again. I think that the show is kind of paused for now but I don't think that anybody sees it as a definitive ending."

However, the bad news for fans is that they might have to wait a little while, as Barden explains, "The age that me and Alex are at means it may be more interesting if we try and do something in five years' time. And we would love to do that." If you need help to understand Barden's character, there is no better way to summarise Alyssa as complicated but unapologetically herself. It is one the actor

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finds a particularly special connection with, “She is like my best friend. She has also been the character that I have played for the longest and it did feel like such a gift to go back and play a character again; it was something that I have never experienced before. It made me feel freer than in any other role because you feel like you know this person more. I have to say that playing Alyssa changed my life and has given me a really colourful career, which I am so grateful for. I will always love Alyssa.”

This year, Barden played the lead role of Winona in Kelly Oxford’s directorial debut, *Pink Skies Ahead*, the story of a woman with an anxiety disorder who drops out of college. Unfortunately, as with many independent films this year, the release has been delayed due to the coronavirus virus. It had been scheduled to have its world premiere at the South by Southwest Festival in Austin, Texas, in March. However, the film will still be considered for awards through the jury selection.

Barden describes to me how playing a role that touches on mental illness has brought her closer to understanding her own experiences with anxiety. “[It shows you] that there isn’t a certain type of person that has it. It is super normal. Whether or not you know it, you’re going through it at the time ... it is just something that our brains do. It is kind of reinforcing in people that it isn’t something to be ashamed about. It isn’t something that you need to let spiral in your brain and it doesn’t need to hold you back from doing things.”

Talking openly about the issues she has faced in Hollywood and beyond, Barden also shared her experiences of misogyny on set. Her advice to fellow female actors is that they don’t have to put up with it, “The best thing to do is just to take a breath and understand that you don’t have to explain yourself to anybody. You don’t have to be in that situation, you don’t have to explain the way it is making you feel at the time. You have every right to take a breath and asked to be excused from the situation.”

While this looks to be an incredibly exciting year for Barden in terms of her career, she tells me she has her sights set much further down the line, to her sixtieth birthday in fact. “Hopefully I am going to be able to look forward to being an actor at 60. I can’t wait for that, thinking of all the different roles I could play at all the different ages. I genuinely hope to get to do all of those things” ●

EMMA HART

• Choker, top, skirt GUCCI
Earrings ELOSHOI at TATA-LA.COM



Stylist DEBORAH FERGUSON
Make up MAI QUYNH at THE WALL GROUP
Hair DRITAN VUSHAJ
at FORWARD ARTISTS using SACHAJUAN
Talent JESSICA BARDEN

• SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO