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FEATURE

What's On



Film choice
Hanna (Film4, 9pm)
Action thriller, with Saoirse Ronan, Cate Blanchett and Eric Bana. A former CIA man raises his daughter in remote Finland as an assassin. At 16 she is sent to carry out her one intended mission, but she is pursued by a CIA operative with a link to her past.

Revving up for the return of gentle comedy

Six weeks before Tom Hollander filmed the third series of *Rev*, he looked like an altogether different man.

Uncomfortably tubby and with his shirt buttons threatening to burst open at any given moment, Hollander had piled on the pounds to play the late Swansea-born poet Dylan Thomas for a one-off BBC Two film *A Poet In New York*, which details Thomas's last few months.

Perched on a pew in the pretty St Leonard's Church in East London where *Rev* is filmed, Hollander is looking healthier, but today, his weight gain is still fresh in mind.

"I thought, 'I mustn't get diabetes', because I've got to put [the weight] on quickly and then take it off again very quickly, because we were about to do the third series of *Rev*," explains the 46-year-old.

"I had to stuff my face for six weeks, which isn't as fun as it sounds. If anyone fantasises about being able to eat whatever you want without impunity, you can't."

"After about 48 hours of it, you're full, you feel sick, you have night sweats and you go to the loo at all sorts of odd times of the day."

"Anyway, we suffer for our art in showbiz, as is well documented."

The show follows conflicted Reverend Adam Smallbone, who has transferred from a rural parish to the inner-city church of St Saviour's in East London, with his long-suffering wife Alex (Olivia Colman).

The third series follows them as new parents, adjusting to life with a baby daughter, which means their home is once again awash with parishioners.

"Adam is, I think, an enthusiastic (if slightly hopeless) parent," says Hollander.

"We discovered that vicars' babies sort of become parish babies. Everyone feels the baby is theirs so there are even more people coming round to the vicarage, attempting to

As gentle BBC Two comedy *Rev* returns tonight for a third series, co-creator and leading man Tom Hollander tells

KEELEY BOLGER about unexpected requests for blessings, writing his first episode and piling on the pounds to play poet Dylan Thomas.

babysit or feed the baby, and annoying Alex."

Hollander, who's appeared in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise and the big screen adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, has noticed people have stopped mistaking him for an actual man of the cloth, as they did when the show first hit the airwaves.

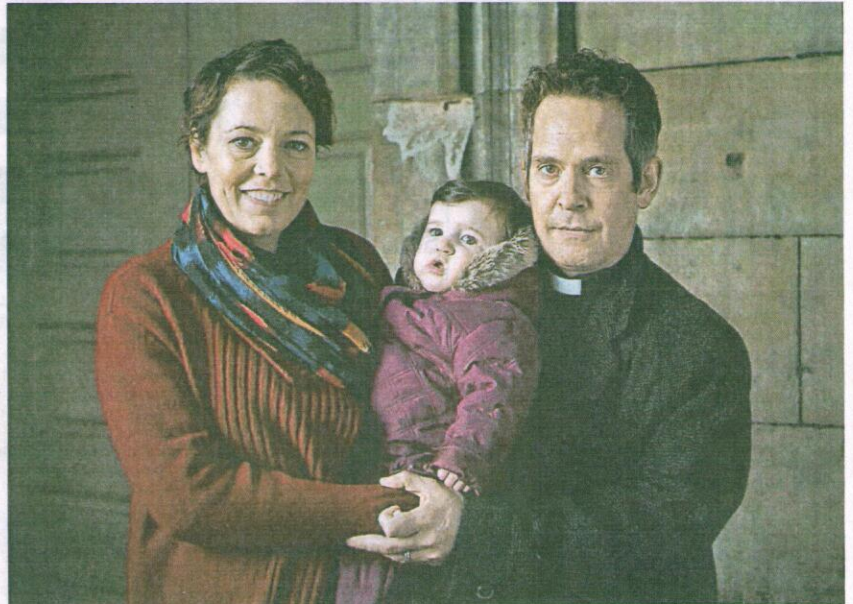
"If I'm wearing the dog collar, people don't think I'm a real vicar, they go, 'There's Rev'," says the diminutive actor (he's 5ft 5in) who regularly meets up with five or six vicars who advise on the show.

"When we did the first series, if I was in costume on the street, people would assume I was a vicar, naturally enough."

This meant that "once or twice, outside pubs, very drunk people" asked for the actor to bless them.

The holy requests might have stopped, but the continued popularity of the show means actors are queuing up to take part.

This series will feature guest appearances from Vicki Pepperdine, Joanna Scanlan, Kayvan Novak, as well as the return of Adam's nemesis, Roland Wise, played by



■ Above, (L-R) Alex (Olivia Colman), Baby Katie, Adam (Tom Hollander). Below, Tom Hollander, at the Orange British Academy of Film Awards, at The Royal Opera House, London. Picture: PHIL FISK AND PA

Hugh Bonneville. Hollander co-created the series with writer friend James Wood, but this time round, he's taken on the challenge of writing his first solo episode.

"It was thrilling," explains the actor, who wrote episode three alone.

"But I found it embarrassing when we were shooting, because the lines that we had to say didn't feel like lines at all."

As far as the future's concerned, he is happy to be cast in other people's projects too.

"It's now probably possible [to have more of a creative role] but I also do just want to act," says Hollander, who chooses his words carefully. You know...traditional acting. Someone's written a marvellous script and the director wants you to play the part and you do it, that's route one.

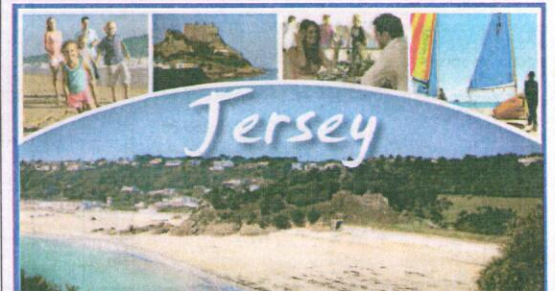
"It's quite a strain writing something and also acting in it. It's much easier to just turn up, learn the lines and say them."

Despite the additional pressure of writing an episode, Hollander enjoys having such a big role in forming the series, which he describes as like "putting on an old cardigan."

"The most fulfilling thing about doing *Rev* has been having a creative role in it," he says gingerly.

"That's what drew me to the project and the fact that it's been a success and something people seem to love has all been hugely fulfilling. I feel very fortunate and it's something I couldn't possibly have expected."

■ **Rev returns to BBC Two tonight. A Poet In New York will air on BBC Two in May.**



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2★ Norfolk Hotel	HB	£499	£529	£539
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