

**PRESS RELEASE – EMBARGOED 9:00AM WEDNESDAY
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**CASTING REVEALED FOR SECOND OUTING OF 5's
PLAY FOR TODAY STRAND**

IMAGERY CAN BE DOWNLOADED [HERE](#)

Daniel Mays, Joel Fry and Amit Shah to star in Wild

Archie Panjabi, Paul Kaye to star in The Quiet Hour

Phyllis Logan, Max Harwood, Kathryn Drysdale, Kacey Ainsworth and Angus Imrie to star in Village Idiot

Antonio Aakeel and Ellora Torchia to star in Closing Time (w/t)

Johnny Vegas and Kalli Tant to star in The Nine O'Clock Trot

Oliver Nelson, Dylan Hughes, and Matilda Flower to star in The Castle

London, Wednesday 6th May 2026: Following the announcement of the next wave of films for the *Play for Today* strand, 5 today confirms the cast starring in the six brand-new one-off films.

Daniel Mays (*Line of Duty, A Thousand Blows, The Thursday Murder Club*), **Joel Fry** (*Alice and Steve, Inside No. 9, Paddington in Peru*) and **Amit Shah** (*Murder Before Evensong, Happy Valley, Mr Bates Vs The Post Office*) will star in **Wild**; a survival dramedy set in the breath-taking yet unforgiving Scottish Highlands. Lou (Mays), Dev (Shah), and Alistair (Fry), three old friends clinging to their annual wild camping tradition, begin with banter, nostalgia, and amateur vlogging, but soon unravel into a battle of egos, secrets, and survival when they get lost, food runs short, and friendships fracture. At once funny, poignant, and unsettling, *Wild* explores the line between adventure and recklessness, and how toxic masculinity has become a huge part of the epidemic decline in men's mental health. It's written by **Lewis Wren** and directed by **BRICK**.

The Quiet Hour is a gripping, intimate drama led by **Archie Panjabi** (*Hijack, Doctor Who, Under the Bridge*) and **Paul Kaye** (*Small Prophets, The Woman in Cabin 10, The Hack*), set over the course of one relentless night shift in an NHS hospital. Panjabi stars as Riya, an overworked nurse battling exhaustion,

guilt, and the ghosts of past mistakes, while Kaye delivers a powerful turn as Fred, a combative amputee whose presence becomes one of the night's most volatile challenges. As Riya grapples with a collapsing system, an understaffed ward, and a stream of emergencies — from dying patients to a medical error that nearly costs a life — her professional composure begins to fracture. Haunted by a past she can't quite escape and the growing distance from her teenage daughter, Riya's night spirals into a raw reckoning with compassion, burnout, and the quiet heroism that holds the health service together. **Directed by Margo Roe and written by Sarah Louise Madden.**

Village Idiot is a sharp, heartfelt comedy led by **Phyllis Logan** (*Murder Most Puzzling, Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale, A Taste for Murder*) and **Max Harwood** (*Black Mirror, Everybody's Talking About Jamie, Stranger Things: The First Shadow*), with **Angus Imrie** (*The Road Trip, The Crown, Fleabag*), **Kacey Ainsworth** (*Grantchester, Lynn + Lucy, Sliced, The Madame Blanc Mysteries*) and **Kathryn Drysdale** (*Small Prophets, Bridgerton, The Windsors*) also starring.

Logan plays Barbara, a ferociously stubborn English grandmother who literally chains herself to her beloved cottage when it's threatened with demolition by High Speed train developers. Harwood stars as Peter, the company's smooth, painfully polite liaison dispatched to remove her - only to discover she's also his estranged grandmother. What follows is a gloriously awkward battle of wills: Barbara's weaponised stubbornness and talent for public protest versus Peter's frantic attempts to keep his corporate career (and dignity) intact. As their standoff snowballs into a small-town circus of press, protestors, and well-meaning locals, both are forced to reckon with what "home" really means — and whether blood ties can survive locked gates, padlocks, and a very watchful village. Witty, warm, and sharply observed, *Village Idiot* captures rural England on the brink of change, balancing laugh-out-loud comedy with genuine emotional punch. **Written by Samson Hawkins and directed by Rhys Aaron Lewis.**

Closing Time (w/t) follows Mo; played by **Antonio Aakeel** (*Slow Horses, Sherlock & Daughter*) a gifted migrant working in his uncle's kebab shop. Mo has always kept his culinary ambitions hidden until, during a late night of service, he meets Laila played by **Ellora Torchia** (*House of the Dragon, Ali & Ava, Midsommar*), a thoughtful lawyer trapped in a stagnant engagement. Their chance encounter begins a passionate affair built on late-night conversations and cooking sessions. As Laila encourages Mo to pursue his dreams despite his pending visa renewal, he challenges her to confront the life she's settled for. **Written by Mina Barber and directed by Dan Sloan.**

The Nine O'Clock Trot is a darkly comic, emotionally resonant drama starring **Johnny Vegas** (*Benidorm, Home from Home, Red Dwarf*) and **Kalli Tant** (*Inside No.9, The Responder, The Gathering*), this film follows Annie (Tant), a recent graduate who has spent six months caring full-time for her grandfather. Isolated, unemployed and broke, Annie is left reeling when he dies — and facing a funeral bill she cannot afford. With no family support and nowhere to turn, she keeps his death a secret, refusing a council public health funeral she finds unbearable. Desperate to give him a proper send-off, Annie turns to the local parish priest, only to become entangled with Father Adam (Vegas), a troubled man facing his own reckoning. What begins as an act of love spirals rapidly out of control, forcing Annie to confront just how far she's willing to go. Honest, warm and darkly funny, the film explores grief, social care, and the unseen weight of caring - and the extraordinary lengths we go to for those we love.

Written by Joe McNally and directed by Harry Machray.

The Castle follows three siblings left to fend for themselves after their mother suddenly disappears. Connor, Jamie, and Mia; played by **Oliver Nelson** (*After the Flood, The Gathering*), **Dylan Hughes** (*Death by Lightning, Ludwig, Maternal*) and **Matilda Flower** (*Trying, Christmas at Plumhill Manor*) try to keep their lives afloat, transforming their suburban house into a makeshift fortress as they wait for her return. Told through the eyes of wildly imaginative middle-brother Connor, *The Castle* traces fraying sibling relationships, survival strategies, and the grand stories children tell each other to feel safe. A tender, soulful story about growing up too soon, and rescuing yourself before it's too late. **Written by Jack Bradfield and directed by Emma Turner.**

Paul Testar, Commissioning Editor, 5 commented: *"The response to the first Play for Today films last year was hugely encouraging, and this new line-up builds brilliantly on that success. We've brought together an incredible cast - from some of the UK's most respected screen talent to exciting new voices, reflecting both the ambition and the diversity of the strand. I couldn't be more excited to see these stories brought to life."*

The strand remains a key pillar of 5's commitment to nurturing new creative voices and providing opportunities for people from low-income backgrounds to break into the feature film and television industry. Each film places emerging talent at the centre of its writing, directing, and production teams.

Following a successful first run that delivered first credits for new writers, first-time directors and early-career crew, this new wave further cements *Play for Today* as a launchpad for the next generation of British talent and 5 as a major home of original British drama. The new films continue to

open doors for talent traditionally under-represented in the industry. Across the strand, writers and directors are making their broadcast debuts, while crews are drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds and supported to progress on set.

At Liverpool-based LA Productions, this commitment has translated into opportunities at every level. Building on series one, they have supported a returning first-time director, delivered broadcast debuts for two additional directors and three new local writers, and enabled crew members to step up into more senior roles. A group of trainees - many of whom had never worked on a shoot before - were also given their first on-set experience.

Meanwhile, Vertigo Films' contribution reflects the strand's focus on first-time access, with 86% of its crew coming from low-income backgrounds and all participating writers and directors making their broadcast debut.

In an industry where access remains one of the greatest barriers to entry, *Play for Today* is helping to reshape the talent pipeline, placing new voices at the centre of its creative vision and ensuring the stories on screen reflect a broader range of lived experiences.

Wild, The Quiet Hour and Village Idiot are produced by Meeshan Saxena for Vertigo Films and **Closing Time (w/t), The Nine O'Clock Trot and The Castle** are produced by Donna Molloy and Executive Produced by Colin McKeown for LA Productions.

The films are set to launch later this year on 5.

ENDS

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About 5:

5 is the home of award-winning content from the UK's third largest commercial PSB, a culmination of the creative transformation of Channel 5 over more than a decade. 5 is part of the Paramount Global family of brands.

Through a mix of live TV channels and bingeable boxsets, the free-to-air service allows UK audiences to watch or stream the breadth of programming from Channel 5 – including Milkshake!, its dedicated preschool brand – and a wide selection from the wider Paramount family of brands, including BET, CBS, Comedy Central, MTV, Paramount+ and more.

In keeping with its PSB remit, 5 tells the story of modern Britain by reflecting the lives of people across the UK, featuring well-known faces and fresh new talent. Its programme roster spans original UK drama, premium factual, true crime, science, news & current affairs and kids' content, which continue to attract critical acclaim.

Recent wins include BAFTA Television and RTS Awards for the documentary *White Nanny, Black Child* in 2024, along with a BAFTA nomination for *Endurance Race to the Pole*. Factual hit *The Yorkshire Vet* and the broadcaster's series on air fryers also won RTS Yorkshire awards, while Michael Palin received the Radio Times Special Judges Award for his Channel 5 documentaries.

About Vertigo Films:

Vertigo Films has produced and distributed over 50 feature films—including critical hits like *Monsters and Bronson*, Oscar-nominated *Ajami*, and UK box office No.1s *StreetDance 3D* and *The Sweeney*—as well as over 100 hours of high-end TV for major platforms such as Sky, Amazon, and Paramount+.

Renowned for discovering and launching new talent, Vertigo has given early breaks to names like Tom Hardy, Gareth Edwards, Vanessa Kirby, Sofia Boutella, and Issa Lopez. Alongside its prolific production work, Vertigo co-founded key industry ventures including Vertigo Releasing, Protagonist Pictures, and VFX firms Post Republic and Automatik, gaining deep expertise in marketing, international sales, post-production, and visual effects.

In 2022, Federation Studios acquired a majority stake in Vertigo to expand their global premium content slate.

About LA Productions:

LA Productions is a multi award winning, (BAFTA, Emmy, Pre Italia, Rose of Montreux etc.) independent film & TV production company based in the north of Liverpool creating broadcast quality drama and/or broadcast related projects for all UK TV channels. Founded in 2000 by industry stalwart Colin McKeown, and strong collaboration from his long term producer Donna Molloy, the business offers a complete 'script to screen service' including all post production and has built a solid reputation for delivering cost effective high quality drama. LA Productions has been prolific in producing drama series for all broadcast channels, the most well known

works include "Moving On" which ran for 13 series, "Broken" starring Sean Bean, and most recently "Granite Harbour" and "Unforgivable". From inception the business has produced a high proportion of its projects in Liverpool supporting the indigenous TV and film industry of the area with inward investment into the local economy and the sponsoring of local talent. LA has its own post facility, LA Post, handling post production on all in-house projects but also undertakes 3rd party post production work and hires out facilities to other external companies. LA Factual, was established to house and produce new factual content and programmes, and has now gone on to win three consecutive RTS awards for best Factual programmes for BBC Series "The Nail Bar Boys" and More4 Series "Ricky, Sue and a Trip or Two", and most recently Channel 4's "Merseyside Detectives: The Murders of Ashley and Olivia".