

Folk heroes:
Nathan (Charlie
Hunnam), Stuart
(Aidan Gillen), and
Vince (Craig Kelly)



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t e l e v i s i o n

That's all, *Folk*

Russell T. Davies's gay series *Queer as Folk* took British TV by storm. But the show is still MIA in the United States, and the spin-off never happened. Is it curtains for Stu and Nathan? **By Michael Giltz**

If you're wondering why *Queer as Folk*—the groundbreaking British TV drama—still hasn't been broadcast anywhere in the United States even as its sequel heads to video in the United Kingdom, join the club. That's exactly what the show's creator, Russell T. Davies, is wondering as well.

"I'm not supposed to talk about this, but I don't care," says the 36-year-old writer, who set the series in his current hometown, Manchester, England, but is now sitting at Balans restaurant in London. He pauses for a moment, thinking, and then rushes ahead. "No, I really *don't* care. The moment it came out it was op-

tioned by an American gay channel that hasn't launched yet called C1TV.

"Showtime's got the right to make a new [American version], and I hear that they're going to start filming this summer," Davies continues. "But the rights to show the original were bought by this group in Miami, and it cannot be released on video or DVD in the States until [C1TV has broadcast it]."

"You can certainly run that quote," C1TV managing partner Darren Mankovich says of Davies's rant, "but I can't confirm or deny anything [about the *Queer as Folk* deal]." According to Mankovich, the Miami-based C1TV is a start-up network that plans to offer programming via "multiple distribution strategies for cable and satellite," although no firm outlets have yet been ►

announced. So when and where *Queer as Folk* might surface on U.S. television or video remains hazy. "That's driving everyone crazy," says Davies. "Strangely enough, and by complete accident, I think that's one of the things that's making it even more of a cult."

The original eight-episode miniseries from 1999 is far from just a cult in the United Kingdom. It was Channel Four's second-highest-rated series (behind *E.R.*), the video release was the channel's best-selling video ever, and there are two separate U.K. sound track albums. But the massive attention the first episodes garnered meant that the sequel—two one-hour episodes that aired on Channel Four in February a week apart—would almost inevitably disappoint.

"So many people hated it," says Davies, talking about the show's most dedicated U.K. fans. "We got letters in the office saying, 'His *hair* has changed.' They were too close to it."

Critical reaction, however, "was staggeringly better," says Davies, who's as unassuming as a 6-foot 6-inch Welshman can be. He talks just as enthusiastically about his early work in children's TV (a series about computer geeks starring a 16-year-old Kate Winslet) and the notoriously bad soap *Revelations*.

But *Queer as Folk* is still a passion for Davies. A torrid soap, the series centers on sweet, hapless 29-year-old Vince, who pines for his best pal, Stuart; 15-year-old Nathan, who also burns for Stu (and allows Stu to seduce him in the series' steamy first episode); and bad boy Stuart, who's turning 30, looking for the next shag, and thinking he has it all together—yet didn't even come out to his parents until the sequel.

Despite the ego-boosting attention all the actors got, filming the final two hours went swimmingly, although Davies admits they were a bit worried about 19-year-old Charlie Hunnam, who plays controversy-magnet Nathan. Hunnam had, after all, gone to America, been courted by everyone, and even met Madonna.

"I was almost slightly dreading him coming back," says Davies. "But [the attention] just humbled him and made him grow up. He'd gone and studied acting in greater detail than he'd ever done before. And I think it showed. His performance was a thousand times stronger in the sequel. I love him for that



because I would have been too busy going to parties and getting pissed and doing cocaine and things like that at that age. He's very clever. 's got success written all over him. No success; that's

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"He's got success written all over him": Hunnam as Nathan, and with fellow *Queer* leads



not the right word. *Special*." Indeed, Hunnam's name has joined Leonardo DiCaprio's among those bandied about to play teenage Darth Vader in *Star Wars: Episode II*, scheduled to begin filming this summer.

Everything has not gone so swimmingly for Davies. Take his parents, for example. They always took pride in his TV work, and when Davies wrote for *The Grand*, a sort of *Upstairs, Downstairs* set in a hotel, his mum could bask in the appreciative comments of her friends. But during the initial run of *Queer as Folk*, as she celebrated her 70th birthday, some people stayed away from her party because they thought Davies might be there.

"Worse, I gave her a tape of the first episode [before it aired]," remembers Davies. "She

gave it back to me and said, 'This is pornography.'" (His parents have since made peace with the show, he notes.)

More recently, Davies hit a brick wall with Channel Four. He had worked on a much-ballyhooed *Queer as Folk* spin-off called *Misfits*, charting out some 20 episodes and writing the first two. "I can write some rubbish," he says, "but these were fab." Davies says Channel Four, astonishingly, took a pass.

"We'll never really know what happened," he says. "I was livid. But now I'm really, really happy because there's closure. To be honest, I'm glad it's over." ■

Giltz also contributes to the New York Post and Entertainment Weekly.



Find more on *Queer as Folk*, its sound tracks, and links to related Internet sites at www.advocate.com