

1883

magazine

Allan
Mustafa
wearing
UNIQLO

**ACTOR,
WRITER, AND
COMEDIAN
ALLAN 'SEAPA'
MUSTAFA IS A
MAN WITH
MANY STRINGS
TO HIS BOW.**

allan

PHOTOGRAPHY CONNOR HARRIS STYLIST KIT SWANN

MUSTAFA

Some could say that Allan had sheer luck on his side or fell into his career in the entertainment industry but that certainly wouldn't be the case for the in-demand actor and writer. It takes guts, and courage to start any creative project in the first place and that's what he and his friends did via YouTube in 2010. A few years later, with help from a production company, what began as small characters or "funny voices," as Mustafa puts it, became the creative incubator for what would become *People Just Do Nothing*.

The BBC mockumentary spawned numerous seasons, a feature film, took home a BAFTA Award in 2017, and gained a cult following and many famous fans. This show, which revolved around a struggling group of MCs and their failing pirate radio station, Kurupt FM, has been cemented into British comedy culture. And that's not only down to the combined team effort but also due to Allan's sharp wit and on-point comedic timing.

The Londoner has proven to extend his versatility beyond *People Just Do Nothing*. He's the co-creator of the crime-comedy show *The Curse*, sharing his passion for food and different cultures through the long-form documentary web series *Taste Cadets*, and appearing in numerous projects.

He's even taken Kurupt FM on the road for packed-out live shows. Yes, he genuinely is an MC and grew up with a love of garage music.



Most recently, you can watch Allan as the deeply insecure, mid-30s personal trainer, Andy, in the second season of BBC Three's sitcom, *Peacock*. This brilliant show, with its stellar cast, pokes fun at toxic masculinity and various modern-day topics. You can see Andy try to navigate 'wokeness', fitness influencers, and amusing moments. Interestingly, under its comedic camouflage, *Peacock* subtly tackles the nuances of ageing, friendship, romance, and finding yourself. So don't box in Mustafa, he

may just surprise you.

For his 1883 Magazine cover, Allan Mustafa sits down with 1883's Cameron Poole after an energetic shoot in London, to discuss season two of *Peacock*, the tenth anniversary of *People Just Do Nothing*, performing at Glastonbury, and more.

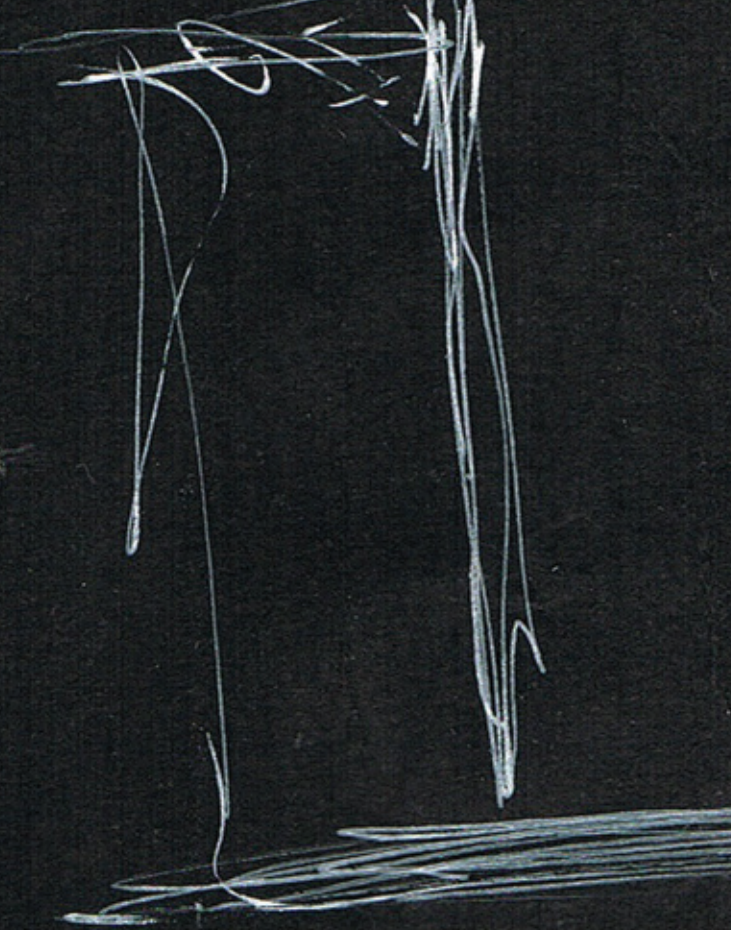



Suit, shirt, vest UNIQLO jewellery Allan's own

Hi Allan, thanks for speaking with 1883 Magazine. Season two of *Peacock* is out now. How fun was it to make the second season, as not only did you get to work with some of your longtime collaborators such as Steve Stamp, Ben Murray, and more, but the second season was renewed with six episodes instead of three so there was more scope to add to the character. Yeah, for sure, it was. The first series, like you said, was three episodes and it felt like it was just finding its legs. It felt really nice going into season two, when we were creating and developing it, we knew so much more about the characters and there was so much scope for the world outside the gym, not just in it. We could introduce new characters as well, it was really fun to make and shoot.

The show tackles ageing, toxic masculinity and personal insecurities in some hilarious ways, for Andy, they are manifested in his rivalry with the younger and fitter, PT, Jay, his desperation for a committed relationship, finding out he has a below-average level of testosterone or wanting to be liked by the influencer PT, Cara. With Andy's storyline, what do you find most relatable or impactful in addressing these societal issues and why? I think the series was sort of written around what was happening to all of us, a group of boys, in our lives. With ageing, we're coming into our late thirties and things changing around us. One of our writers, Ben Murray, had a kid around the process of starting to write *Peacock*. So that's why it touches on being a new parent in the modern age as well. The character of Andy, his whole thing is that he lived in a world where it was all about aesthetics, how he looked, and suddenly now he is older, it's a new world and he's having to navigate through that. He's actually really sweet and insecure but has always lived in that toxic masculine world. Now, he's learning what this new world means, it's kind of the same way where you'd watch one of those old 80s films where a caveman appears in New York's Times Square and has to navigate around [laughs].

It kind of feels like that sometimes. It's something we can all relate to. It's wearing a certain mask and pretending to be someone and feeling insecure and feeling like you are not enough. It's in all of us, you know, in more subtle ways but it is fun to explore those things. The whole thing of using certain topics, like trying to blow up on social media or mental health, it felt nice to poke fun at the sort of things that can feel a bit insincere in modern times.





In both seasons, whether it's trying drugs for the first time, starting his own PT business or just trying to be more himself when dating, Andy has tried to push himself out of his comfort zone, so with that in mind, when is one moment in your own life that you did the same? I guess every day in what I'm doing now. Like even today, I'm getting styled in clothes that I wouldn't usually put together, learning about different things, and just planting myself in front of the camera and pretending to be a model. They are things, if I hadn't been through all the things I've been through in the industry, it would be so daunting and I would overthink every single moment. Even becoming an actor in that sort of sense was like that.

Shirt, vest, trousers,
jumper and boxers UNIQLO
jewellery Allan's own

When we started People Just Do Nothing, it started as a YouTube thing with just our friends, the first time we had to walk on a proper set, there was a minimum of 30 people you don't know, that are like adults in your mind even though you're 24-years-old [laughs]. It was really daunting, we had to be quite vulnerable and throw ourselves into it.

Acting, for me, it's a super vulnerable thing, even if it's comedy. As you're testing things out, your choices, testing your improv, jokes, and you're putting yourself out there to potentially fail. You have to have trust in everyone around you, so every day in what I do, I get that feeling.

When you mentioned how People Just Do Nothing started on YouTube, you were all just best friends, enjoying making something together. I can imagine it is a bit scary when all of a sudden there's wider interest and this project becomes this far bigger thing... The stakes are higher as well. There never used to be any stakes and then suddenly it's like 'this has to be good', or 'this has to be like this', or 'this needs to be good' and there are eyes on it.

But the fact is, it couldn't have gone better in terms of you all having the right people involved, you helped support each other and push forward, it was really lovely. That's right, we helped each other, exactly that.

Krupt FM is performing a huge headline show at Brixton Academy on September 28, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of People Just Do Nothing. I think it's fair to say the mockumentary transformed all of your careers and has become a real main staple of British comedy culture. Would you mind telling me about when the idea for People Just Do Nothing was originally conceived as a YouTube series and how you felt when it got picked up for a full series? The whole idea was just conceived off the back of me and Hugo [Chegwin] doing these sort of little characters in his bedroom, prank calling people and just filming each other for ourselves.

Then to develop it, we told Steve [Stamp] about this idea that we had and then he chipped into it. It became this thing that was based on all of our collective experiences. Like heavily being into the garage scene, through DJing or MCing on pirate radio or whatever. So that's

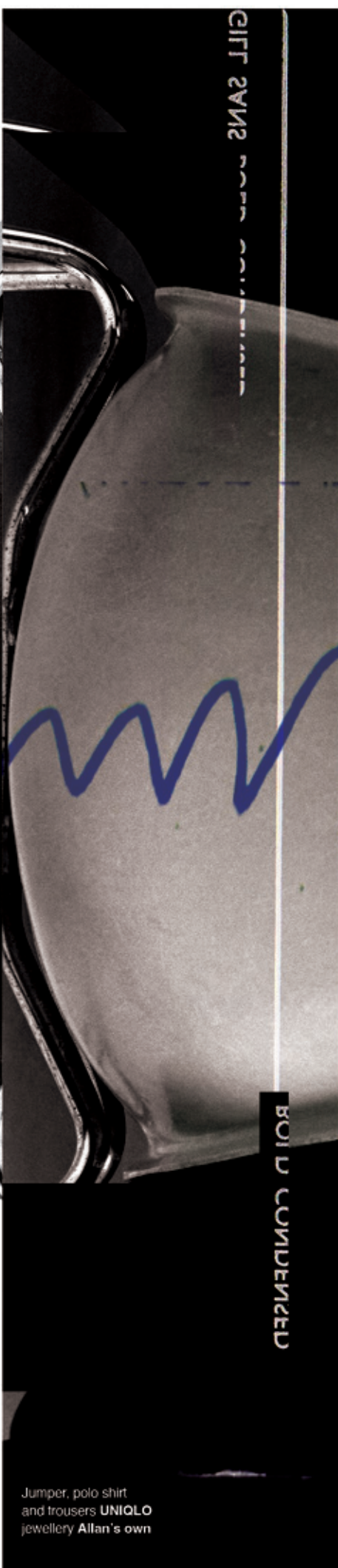
how the idea was conceived.

We used to make it for ourselves, like you said, having six of you there where you are all best friends and can lean on each other, you don't really care what anyone else thinks in that sense. You've only got that luxury when you've got people who you trust around you. It's a little support network in that sense. So you can be blind to everything on the outside and just create something that

hopefully is good, I think it was.

I mean, not at the time [laughs], there was something in it at the time. We filmed for 14 hours a day and edited it down to eight to 12 minutes. It then got picked up by Roughcut Productions, which is owned by Ash Atalla who made The Office. We're huge fans of The Office, obviously. It was a massive inspiration for what we did.

When we first found out it was being picked up, we found out we were getting a pilot and if that pilot did well we would then get a series. So that was an amazing moment like 'oh wow, we're getting on the telly? What's a pilot?' Then very quickly, it's a lot of hard work. Learning how to write on the job, 12 drafts in seven months, the pilot then comes through and you're like 'that's the end of that then, I guess, no one is going to pick it up'. In between every series, it was like seven or eight months until they told us we have a new series. So you would always think 'it's back to the call centre, then' so we never had that feeling. I think the first time we really felt it was winning the BAFTA. Not that it matters. We didn't set out to create a show to win awards, voted for by people that had nothing to do with us and weren't part of our world [laughs]. But it showed that it was something. Like you said now, it's cemented in UK comedy culture, it showed that 'okay, maybe this can be something'. It didn't show that we were there, but it showed maybe we can be...



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Jumper, polo shirt
and trousers UNIQLO
jewellery Allan's own

It was a milestone.
Yeah, and at that
point, we got a
double commission
for two seasons, so
we could chill and
know we have some
work now, and that
was when we felt it,
around series three
and four.



Jumper, shirt and tshirt UNIQLO, trainers stylist's own jewellery Allan's own

Speaking of the big performance in September, Kurupt FM needs to bring out Post Malone and Craig David on the night, thoughts? [Laughs] Yeah! I can't say anything but there have been some talks, I can't say who. There will be some special guests for sure. We've got p-rallel, Saint Ludo, and G33, they are all amazing DJs on before us. So it's just going to have that great party, rave atmosphere. When we come out, we've got some very special guests that we shall not mention.

Tell me about your experience of Glastonbury this year, Kurupt FM performing at the festival must have felt quite surreal?

It was amazing, to be fair, we've performed seven times now [at Glastonbury], so I've only ever been to perform. I've always stayed there after as a punter. Glasto isn't for the money, it's not the biggest payday, you do it because you love Glasto which we do. It's a way to get us and our pals in and have a good time. It is such a special place. On top of that, being able to be on a stage and perform you sort of forget as you're happy enough just being there. Then you're like 'oh wait, I've got to go on stage'. It was the Thursday at the Glade Stage, so a lot of the other tents were closed.

So it meant that 30,000 people were there, it was insane. It is such a special feeling even being able to be inside there, let alone perform on top of that, it's like the icing on the cake, man. On the Saturday, I lost my voice at the second gig as I was there for three days, I literally lost my voice on stage. That's the beauty of Glastonbury, it took my voice, it took my breath away [laughs].

So worth it. It was worth it, yeah [laughs].

As a big foodie, where would you like to take Taste Cadets next? You've already explored London, Glasgow, Vietnam, Mexico City, Korea and a few other places - so where to next?

What's the goal? I want Taste Cadets to be, this has always been the plan for it, to be a long-form documentary, in the same vein as an Anthony Bourdain doc. The reason we made it ourselves was to prove the concept really. We had a little following, we started it just for fun, but we've always had that in mind. We always thought, we'll start an Instagram, make a YouTube, and then see where we can take it, to eventually make a full-blown series and long-form content. We've had many discussions with people about it but they've always wanted it to be a different idea from what I wanted it to be - i.e. 'how about it's you and a comedian'...



Shirt, t-shirt and jeans UNIQLO jewellery Allan's own

You shouldn't have to give up your creative vision, and clearly from the content that you've been putting out, people have been reacting really well to it. You love your friends who are a part of Taste Cadets and you've been able to introduce them to the world, you shouldn't have to potentially replace them. Exactly, that's it! It's about showing the experience of me and two of my pals, learning about other cultures using food as a vehicle and putting it out there as content for people. That's what we enjoy doing with it and wherever we can take it... we'll see.

Going back to Peacock, it's great how the show comments on social media and influencers because we all know social media is fake and in the grand scheme of things doesn't matter. But given that you've built a platform on social media thanks to your own personal career, what have been the positives and negatives of having this platform for yourself? That's a good question, it is something we love and hate. The reason we chose that sort of world and topics to poke fun at in Peacock was because we see what it is like in the real world. The fake side of social media is not what we want to be, and not how I want to use it. Even though there is a time and place for everything but if you think about it, the only reason I am here is because of social media because we [People Just Do Nothing] started on YouTube and now I'm using Instagram and YouTube for Taste Cadets and for myself to promote anything I do. So they are useful tools and social media is amazing for anything that is honest. If people have an honest talent, hobby or craft they want to show, I think it is great. It's an amazing place for people to connect. It's just when it becomes something that is inauthentic I think that is something I can't stand and don't want anything to do with. It is a constant love and hate thing for sure.



What would you personally love to see Andy get up to for a third season of Peacock? I'd definitely love to see more of his relationship with the mandem, I'd love to see more of them as well. We always imagine that there would be a stag do episode and Andy would be the best man at a wedding. But it wouldn't be his wedding of course, as no one would put up with him. Just seeing Andy making it all about himself and getting really obsessed and neurotic about being the best man and making the best stag do, perhaps going to his favourite ski resort as well. I'd love to see that for sure.

Fingers crossed season three gets green-lit. Thank you!

Finally, you mentioned in a recent interview, that if you do a "big movie", you'd love to be in a Marvel film, is there a certain franchise or character you'd be up for taking on? Or even if it's not Marvel, is there anything you would love to try your hand at next? Did I say that? [laughs]. Batman, I want to be Batman one day. I think I just said that if someone asked me if I only want to make comedies and I was like 'I'd do something in a Marvel film obviously'. What was I watching the other day... have you ever seen *La Haine*?

I haven't. It's a French film, like a social-political-commentary set in the hood in 90s Paris. I'd like to play in something like that. But I can't speak French [laughs]. A different version maybe. But definitely, I want to play loads of things, try loads of things, and sharpen those blades and have fun with it.

Season two of *Peacock* is out now and available to stream on BBC iPlayer.
Follow Allan Mustafa at @seapa220

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