

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Name: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel **00:00:00:17**

But despite somebody living with MND, they're fit, they can't move. The brain is working at a completely normal level. Um, and that's the thing that people who have been in touch with me from the MND community have said "this storyline has really helped people to understand that I don't need to be talked down to".

Peter **00:00:26:11**

I've met a lot of people now living with MND and they never lose their sense of humour. That's one of the things that shines through and I'm glad we were...I'm so glad we were able to portray that. Because it's life, you know, you laugh through the adversity you face and as humans, that's how we deal with it, as well. So yeah, and I'm glad. And Corrie are great at that, they're great at putting the humour in.

Liam **00:00:48:07**

Welcome to PrideCast. This is a podcast about all things LGBTQ+ brought to you by ITV. During the show, we chat about being proud to be the LGBTQ+ today. We speak to people from across the community to find out where they are on their journey and where they're headed. We'll also keep you updated on the latest LGBTQ+ news and the things that matter to you. This is the ITV PrideCast.

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Liam

00:01:20:00

Hi everyone and welcome to the latest ITV PrideCast. Joining me on the show this time round is Coronation Street actors Peter Ash and Daniel Brocklebank. Well, the focus of much of our conversation is about the soap gearing up to show the very sad death of Peter's character, Paul, who's been living with motor neurone disease for the past 18 months or so. During that time, viewers have seen Paul's mobility and eventually his speech deteriorate to the point where he has to rely on Daniel's character, his husband Billy, to become his carer along with other family members as well. Now, of course, awareness of motor neurone disease has increased over recent times, especially due to the story of rugby league player Rob Burrow, who along with his family and his close friend Kevin Sinfield, have raised millions of pounds for MND charities. Sadly, Rob passed away in June of this year but through the work of his loved ones and of course the storyline in Coronation Street, work can continue to raise those vital funds needed to support all those affected by this cruel disease. Well, joining me to co-host this episode is AJ Dean, who is a publicity and engagement manager for ITV in the North, and she works closely with the teams at Emmerdale and Coronation Street. Well, earlier this year, AJ was one of my guests on the podcast where she discussed the part she played in helping to set up the ITV Pride network. So do have a listen back to her episode if you haven't done so already. But before that, here's the latest ITV PrideCast with Corrie's Billy and Paul, aka Daniel Brocklebank and Peter Ash.

Liam

00:03:20:20

Daniel Brocklebank and Peter Ash, thank you so much for joining me on the ITV PrideCast. I'm going to start off by saying what a roller coaster of a ride you two have been on over the last few years. And funnily enough, I was doing a bit of research last night, and the thing that gobsmeaked me the most actually was I read Dan that you join Corrie in 2014, which just...

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Daniel **00:03:50:01**

Yeah, 10 years. I have no grey hair when I started on Corrie. So this is a visual depiction of what, ten years in Weatherfield does to you.

Peter **00:03:59:02**

Well you didn't have a beard when I started.

Liam **00:04:02:11**

I was like Billy's been in the soap for ten years? That's mental. And then Peter as well, like 2018. Is that right? That's, I think, when you joined.

Peter **00:04:11:05**

Um, yeah. Yeah, my initial few episodes, um, I was literally just supposed to be David Platt cellmate for three eps. Um, I think that was, ah, about May 2018, I want to say. So it's been about six years in total, really, from when I first started.

Liam **00:04:30:15**

It is mad that is, because that time is just flown by really, hasn't it?

Peter **00:04:34:19**

Yeah. I think it goes even quicker for us, don't it, Dan? I mean...

Daniel **00:04:39:03**

It does. I think because we're always shooting like a season ahead of where the rest of the world is. So we're already now in, we're already wearing winter coats and, you know, prepping for Christmas.

Peter **00:04:49:21**

Christmas decs are going up, are't they?

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Daniel

00:04:50:14

Yeah, yeah. So we're always a season ahead. So by the time we finish shooting Christmas, everybody else starts celebrating it. So you've had six months of Christmas.

Liam

00:05:00:15

You can tell us what it's going to be like Christmas coming up then. And so but no, I mean, you know, as I mentioned there, roller coaster ride of a journey for you both. And of course, we're coming up to, um, you know, very, very sad kind of end to a storyline that you've been on recently. And, um, just to kind of chat about that, actually. Peter, especially when the writers came to you about this storyline about MND and Paul was going to be going through this disease, what was your first reaction to that?

Peter

00:05:37:14

Um, a bit of a shock, really. I mean, I as well personally knew next to nothing about MND when the storyline was originally pitched. Um, obviously I was told that it was something that meant he would eventually lose his life, Paul. So yeah, I knew it was something that was terminal. Um, but yeah, it just meant a lot of kind of research. And once I looked into it, um, I realised it was going to be quite a challenge, really. And then, uh, found out that Dan, um, knew a lot about it through his personal connections. So he was able to, you know, share a lot of light on that. And, um, yeah, it was just realising that it was going to be a challenge. And, you know, especially if we wanted to do it right, which obviously we did. And, um, yeah, quite a lot of pressure, but also quite exciting, really, to be trusted with this massive storyline.

AJ

00:06:38:05

But can I just ask, because obviously I'm here with you all, but when you got told that and you knew that, that it was final and you were going to have to say a final farewell to the cobbles at some point, how did that feel for you?

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Peter

00:06:50:04

Oh, um. Oh, totally mixed emotions. I mean, obviously be sad to leave. I've had a great time on Corrie. I've met the best people. And so yeah, sad in that regard. But also, like I said, quite exciting to be involved in this and to be able to, you know, do some good through it as well.

Liam

00:07:10:20

Yeah. Gosh. I mean as well for you, Dan, I suppose like your role within this. It really shows not just the person who is actually physically dealing with this illness, but the people who are around those people as well, you know, the loved ones. And gosh, I mean, the kind of emotional turmoil on yourself there, that as an actor, that must take a lot, really, I imagine.

Daniel

00:07:36:04

Yes. I think, uh, the role of a carer of somebody with MND, it's, you know, it is quite an intense one because obviously eventually the person that you're caring for becomes totally incapable of doing anything for themselves. And then ultimately sort of, you know, even communication between you becomes very difficult. Um, so yeah, it has been emotional. I mean, luckily, you know, Pete and I have had the most wonderful time working together. And as much as it's been, um, gruelling and we have spent about two years crying at each other, whether it's rehearsing stuff in the green room before we even get on the floor, we're already in tears or reading the scripts at home in tears and texting each other and going, "oh my God, have you just read? Because I can't bear to read the other half of it. I've only just finished half of it, I can't." So we've, you know, we work together very well and we enjoy each other's company a lot. So that's helped with the journey a little bit that we've been able to find sort of solace in each other and, and have a giggle in between uh, the sort of the, you know, the magnitude of what we've been playing.

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AJ

00:08:50:08

I have to say, I have found Dan in the green room in tears before now, and I think that was on-- The worst one was the last day when Peter, you were leaving and he was in the green room and was already in a terrible state.

AJ

00:09:02:04

Liam, I'm not sure if you're aware, Dan has...his, um, involvement in MND previously has obviously shaped a lot of what goes on. Dan what is your involvement? I know you've spoken about it before.

Daniel

00:09:15:04

Um, 23 years ago, my grandfather died of motor neurone disease. Um, back then, I think it was sort of harder for them to diagnose. So we'd been caring for him for two years, not knowing what he had. He was only diagnosed a week before he died. Um, and so for the last 23 years, I've been working with the MND Association, raising funds. Um, after about ten years of working with them, they asked if I'd be a patron for the charity. Um, and about 4 or 5 years ago, they asked if I would be an ambassador for the charity. So when we, Pete and I, were called to say that this is what the storyline was, because I think we were the only two cast that were initially told that this is where Paul and Billy's journey was going to go. And I asked Verity, who phoned me, uh, who's our assistant producer or actual producer on some of the episodes that we've done recently, uh, if this was to do with my involvement with MND or the MND Association? And she said "what's your involvement?" So they had no idea. So it was a complete coincidence that this sort of storyline ended up at our feet. Um, but as Pete said, you know, because of my involvement with the charity for the last two decades, it is a subject that I'm quite knowledgeable of, um, but also very passionate about. So I'm really glad that the sort of universe decided to deliver it to us because I think if it had been given to any other people in the cast, I would have been like, "oh, hang on, they didn't get that right", or "that never happened" or, you know. But our team, our research team, our writing team, have done an incredible job in

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terms of displaying what the illness is, how it affects not only the person with it, but the people that surround the person that is living with it. Um, and it's been incredibly accurate. There've been many, many, many times throughout the sort of two years that we've been playing this storyline that I've read the scripts and thought, "yeah, I remember that." Or "I remember when my grandfather went through that or something very similar". So in a weird way, it's been, uh, cathartic in some ways, but also really lovely to almost be able to commemorate not just my grandfather, but the hundreds of people and their families that I've known that have been affected by MND over the last 20 or so years. Um, and obviously then Pete and I subsequently have done a huge amount of fundraising in the last sort of 18 months for MND, raising money and awareness and everything else. And I think alongside our storyline, um, the likes of Rob Burrow, Doddie Weir, there've been some very high profile MND cases and those people have been brave enough to share their stories publicly. Um, and I would say that in the last two years, I think I've seen more awareness raised for MND than I've seen in the last two decades, um, which has been phenomenal. And for us to be a part of that has been, you know, really special.

AJ

00:12:37:19

Obviously, um, Rob Burrows, you just mentioned there. Lindsey and Rob were parts of your story, so to speak, and have been here and spoken to you near the beginning of the storyline.

Daniel

00:12:51:12

It was sort of a year ago April, I think they came down to the set, which is when Pete and I first met them. Uh, and then in the course of that sort of 18 months, we've done a few fundraisers with and for, um, the Rob Burrow Foundation and the MND Association that Rob and Lindsey and the kids have attended.

AJ

00:13:15:08

I was saying to Liam just before, I think, Liam, these guys have done so much charity stuff for the Association over this time I don't know when they've had time to do the show.

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Liam

00:13:24:05

Well, I mean what an incredible thing to kind of raise the profile of, because you know this and Dan, you'll know first hand there from what you were saying, that this disease just does rob people of their... of everything, doesn't it? And those around them. And I thought, Peter, the way that you have played it, that, you know, I thought to myself the not only the physical toll on your body because you're seeing...you know, it's obviously a physical illness. You see how it affects the body, but also that emotional toll on you. I, you know, I imagine you must have gone home after scenes some evenings and just been drained basically of energy.

Peter

00:14:02:05

Yeah, I'd say drained is probably the exact word I was going to use. Yeah. I mean, there's some times where we'd be in all week, all day all week. You know, it's 12 hour days when you're in from beginning to end. And that was the whole week doing really heavy scenes. Yeah it does. You know, although it's not real, you are kind...of you still...the emotions are still real and you still kind of like you say, you're still putting your body through the physical kind of side of it. So yeah, it was exhausting. But like, I mean, so worthwhile as well to be doing this and you know, the physical is part and parcel of it really. You know, especially as someone who, you know, grew up doing theatre as well, that's part of the enjoyment of the role and enjoyment is always... I always find that a really strange word to use when talking about this storyline, but um, but yeah, no, it's it's just been incredible. And the responses to it have been amazing and made it all the worthwhile. Yeah.

AJ

00:15:04:08

And you did manage to put some humour in recently. I think the scene when Kirk was, um...Now, considering there is no movement other than eyes and things, you even managed to get that across. And that made me laugh.

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Peter

00:15:17:09

Yeah well, that's the thing. I mean, you know, I've met a lot of people now living with MND, and they and they never lose their sense of humour. That's one of the things that shines through. And I'm glad we were...I'm so glad we were able to portray that because that's, it's life. You know, you laugh through the adversity you face. And as humans, that's how we deal with it as well. So, um. Yeah, no, I'm glad. And Corrie are great at that. They're great at putting the humour in.

Daniel

00:15:43:04

I think what's been really special about the way that we've been able to tell this story is to really show people that despite somebody living with MND, they're fit, they can't move. The brain is working at a completely normal level. Um, and that's the thing that people who have been in touch with me from the MND community have said "this storyline has really helped people to understand that I don't need to be talked down to, I don't have to have slow 'hellooooo'." It's, you know, I've seen this so many times with people who don't understand the illness, talk to them as if their brain is as debilitated as their physicality. And it must be so frustrating to be trapped in a body that doesn't work when your brain is working, you know, on an entirely normal level. Um, and I think that's what we've been able to really show. And like Pete said, because the brain is functioning in, you know, at 100%, that sense of humour, the twinkle in the eye, you know, that never leaves. And it's despite the gravity of the illness. It's one of the most positive communities to be around. You know, when we go to these events, they are so much fun, despite what we're there to raise money and awareness for. We were playing bowls last weekend or the weekend before for an MND charity, and there's a chap there called Ian who every time you've met... I wish I'd have met him pre-MND because like his energy now is infectious. Yeah I can't imagine what he'd have been like beforehand he just climbed three mountains over the summer in a special -

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Peter

00:17:37:06

I was gonna say that, yeah.

Daniel

00:17:37:22

-adapted wheelchair. I mean this chap is incredible and his sense of humour is...I mean he's filthy. He's absolutely brilliant.

Liam

00:17:50:12

I was just going to say that with that kind of example, it just shows you the strength of the human character, doesn't it really? And I mean, like you say, they're the humorous sides that, you know, are so, so important for not just the person but also those around that person as well. And, you know, I think to myself, I mean, you know, Paul's family, I mean, the wacky family that you have Peter in the soap, I mean, you know, Bernie is your mother, Gemma and the kids, you know, there's no there's no wonder that you wouldn't have humour in those scenes because of those characters that are alongside you.

Peter

00:18:26:10

No, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. Like I say, I think Corrie have always been great at getting the humour. And I mean, we watched... we had a preview of the last episode and we were just realising, like we knew it was going to be sad, but we didn't quite realise how many laughs were actually in there as well. Um, in that final episode. So it's, um, yeah, it's a real testament to the writers. It really is.

AJ

00:18:52:04

The weird thing was the other week I saw Peter running down the back stairs from the green room, and obviously I've been on the show a long time and been in telly forever. And just for very blip in my mind, I was like, oh yeah, of course he can run down the stairs", but that's just watching you on screen, because if I, if that's happening to me, good grief.

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Liam

00:19:11:02

But I think that's a really great point there actually, because I suppose, Peter, you've had to get used to the chair and like, you know, even like the, the technology that allows you to speak, you know, that's that's something that, um, yeah, another form of acting that you've had to take on really.

Peter

00:19:26:17

Yeah, absolutely. Um, yeah. Getting to grips with all that, um, you know, the chair and the technology of the eye gaze, which is incredible. And we did all that for real. You know, we did it. We logged my actual voice. Well, I read the book as Paul, but, you know, we did it for real. So everything you were hearing from that machine was as it would be for real. Um, and yeah, that technology is incredible. It's amazing what they can do now, you know, to give, you know, that kind of electronic voice your own personality. I think that helps so much. And obviously, not everyone gets to voice the bank in time, which is really sad. Um, but I'm glad we were able to, you know, show the the leaps and bounds that the technology has come along.

Liam

00:20:13:00

But it just made me think actually, of, um, it's a scene, uh, I think it's about two weeks ago, was it? It was an hour episode of basically just you both and it brought up a lot of, um, you know, I suppose dilemmas that we face in society now in terms of anyone who's in this condition, you know, should they have the right to kind of determine when they do, you know, when they do end their life? And of course, that was a focus point in the episode that you were both in there. And how was that to film? Because, I mean, I remember sitting there and I came out of it and I felt absolutely devastated and, you know, the emotional toll I felt. Like what you guys must have felt-- must have been, you know, 100 times worse. But, what was that like to film because it looked so harrowing really?

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Daniel

00:21:01:22

Well, I mean, from the moment we were given the scripts, uh, to read, Pete and I, you know, spoke and I think we knew very early on that it was a really special episode. Um, then we had a read through with our director and our writer and again, that sort of reinforced how special it was going to be. Obviously, it was a slightly different way of shooting, um, because we had Paul's internal thoughts, which was brilliant. It displayed so clearly what it must be like to be trapped in a body that can't verbally communicate any longer. Um, so we had to shoot slightly differently to how we would normally shoot: one with Pete vocalising it so I knew the timing of how he was going to sort of eventually perform the dialogue once it was laid over as a voiceover to give him enough time to get that out before I was interjecting with my dialogue. So obviously that changed my cues in certain takes. I had Pete's actual dialogue as my cue, and in other takes they weren't there. So then I had to try and remember the scene without Pete's lines in it. So we shot 2 or 3 different ways to enable them to edit it together to produce what was eventually on screen, but it didn't feel like shooting Corrie at all.

Peter

00:22:36:07

No it was strange.

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Daniel

00:22:38:04

Yeah because we were, you know, it was pretty much just Pete and I for two weeks. I mean, obviously there were other characters interjecting in a few scenes that were outside of the flat, but once we were into the flat, up until Chesney and the quads arrive, it's just us. And I don't know about you, Pete, but the day that we finished shooting it and we were wiped. I mean, I guess because for a month after we finished it, because the amount of learning, the amount of dialogue, you know, on a busy episode, an hour long episode, I would say maybe ten scenes is quite busy within that hour. Pete and I had something like 28 scenes in that episode, and they were worthy. There was, you know, monologue after monologue after monologue, um, a lot of which, regrettably, ended up on the cutting room floor because each half an hour episode ran 12 minutes over in length. So we lost 24 minutes of footage, which when I watched it, I was like, "I spent three weeks learning that!"

AJ

00:23:39:05

"It didn't even make it into the ep. Oh my God!"

Daniel

00:23:42:14

But the day that we finished shooting it, we finished and then went off and had some lunch and came back to the same set to start on the next block.

Peter

00:23:50:23

Yeah, yeah.

Daniel

00:23:52:07

All of a sudden it was like, "oh". Even though we were on the same set, you know, it was like, "oh, we're back filming Corrie again". All of a sudden it felt like we were back just doing normal Corrie. But it was a totally wonderful experience. I feel very privileged that they trusted us with such a huge part of the storytelling.

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Peter

00:24:14:03

Oh yeah. Yeah. Really, really special episode. Probably like the...probably the bit of work I think I'm most proud of, that episode, absolutely.

Daniel

00:24:22:16

I think so.

AJ

00:24:24:17

We actually, we've just done a panel in Edinburgh at the Edinburgh TV Festival and that shot the opening shot and the dancing. And then when you realise we used it in that it's a new iconic kind of thing for continuing drama. So we had to give an old shot and a new shot to this panel. And that's the one we use. And I think it's important because it's taking -- storyline aside now. No disrespect to the storyline, but shooting that way. And was it Vicky Thomas?

Daniel

00:24:52:17

Yeah.

Peter

00:24:53:12

Yeah. That whole sequence at the beginning we filmed it on a special camera, didn't we, Dan? I'm right in saying that? Yeah, the whole thing was incredible. We went to a huge studio. I mean, much bigger than the ones we work in every day. It was an incredible day's filming, that. It was, um. Yeah, great fun. And that's why I think it looks...those bits especially look, you know, amazing.

AJ

00:25:17:09

And that's also the one that Ali's our Head of Press. And she was crying in the press office, and I just walked out because I couldn't watch it with her. And again, we work here and we deal with these stories all the time. But yeah, an amazing, um, episode. And so very pleased to include it in that panel, um, which was run by the BBC.

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Liam

00:25:36:15

Well, you know, I've got to say, I mean, when I watch that and, you know, for anyone that hasn't seen that episode yet, I really recommend it. Not only is it, you know, really heartfelt, but the production values, like you were just saying there, were just superb. And I mean, the cinematic really. The, you know, the dance scenes, bookends of the episode were just phenomenal and the music as well, like just, in some ways it reminded me that this illness does not define the individual. You know, this person who is there that has their loves and you know, the people that they love, the music they love. All those things. And it just it's a really great way of reminding the viewer that this is a normal person, really.

AJ

00:26:22:13

And we got to use one of the greatest tracks that some of us haven't heard for a while, which we don't do very often with commercial music in the show, but it just enhanced it all to perfection, I think.

Liam

00:26:34:16

So with the episode that we've got coming up, then the kind of the end of the road for Paul, really, really sad, I imagine, to film that. How do you feel now that it's done? Because you were saying to me before actually that you filmed that like two months ago. So it must feel like, you know, life is, you know, outside of the street has moved on so much for you. But you're revisiting of course.

Peter

00:26:59:01

No. Yeah. Really strange. Like we forgot I think a lot of the episode. So it was, it was lovely to see it and um, and. Yeah. But then obviously Dan and the rest of them, they've been carrying on, they've been filming almost every day since then. So I'm really looking forward to seeing to seeing all that and seeing the aftermath of...

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Daniel **00:27:17:22**
Your funeral's beautiful.

Peter **00:27:19:10**
Yeah, I can't wait for that!

Daniel **00:27:22:16**
It's been I mean, I think with those final scenes, sort of final scenes, we filmed everything chronologically, almost in story order. So Pete's last scene was actually Paul's last scene. You know. Um, so for those of us, you know, you've got Billy and Bernie and Gemma and some are grieving Paul. But then there's me and Jane and Harriet Dolly grieving losing Pete. You know, um, because we've been very fortunate with our little TV family, where we all do get on incredibly well and see each other and speak to each other, you know, a lot outside of work, which you don't always get, not just at Corrie, but in any cast. You know, you can't always get on famously with the people that you're sort of put together with. Um, but we do. And so to be losing Pete has honestly, I mean, and I said this to Pete that never in all the 31 years that I've been doing this for a living have I ever felt such grief at losing my buddy, my teammate, my... I mean, genuinely, the sadness, the episodes that are sort of post Paul's passing, you know, what you're watching is real grief on my part. Like it's I'm not faking those tears. I was like "oh Pete! Oh he's gone!" Like 'my Pete's missing!' It was like losing an arm, you know.

Peter **00:28:52:06**
Oh bless you.

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Daniel

00:28:53:04

Um, and so I think for those of us that have then had to continue the story afterwards, we'd almost sort of geared ourselves up, this entire storyline geared ourselves up for the moment that Paul passes. But then, of course, we all realize that we're like, oh, we've still got months of our characters dealing with the fact that Paul has passed. So it was like climbing this huge mountain and going 'Oh yeah, there we...Oh no! We've still got...I've still got months of crying", you know. Um, so it's yeah, it's been a, it has been an emotional loss losing Paul and losing Pete. I mean thankfully, obviously, as you can see, he's still here. So we can still grab the occasional pint together and you know, and have a catch up. But it's not the same as having him by my side five days a week.

Peter

00:29:48:21

I miss you guys too, man. Yeah I do, I do. I'm enjoying the lie-ins. But I miss you guys.

AJ

00:29:55:07

Jane who plays Bernie was in costume. I was talking to her the other day and she just come out of another crying scene and she was saying the same thing. It's just, you know, they've got to carry on and you've gone. But they do miss you genuinely.

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Liam

00:30:08:01

Well, with that, of course, you know, what was really, really, I suppose very poignant about this storyline is, you know, we've seen in the media, of course, about the ordeal that the Burrow family have gone through and the passing of Rob in June this year. And I suppose we only as the public, we only see the public facing side of that, if that makes sense? But with your storyline we've been taken in physically into the home and seen, you know, what the day to day is like. And those struggles that, you know, the cameras obviously don't normally see when it comes to a person who is actually going through this in real life. And I suppose in many ways that's really a fantastic thing about soap isn't it? But it really drives home what people are actually really going through in their lives.

Daniel

00:30:57:17

Yes. And I think it's been incredibly important for us to show that, I mean, not just from, you know, because obviously we don't get to choose in how the story is displayed. You know, we get our scripts and Pete and I just have to perform what's on the page. But I think the writers and storyline is their level of research into, uh, the intricacies of somebody's life and those affected around that person with MND have been spot on. Even so much as I mean, and this was Pete's idea and it was a great idea, there was a small cutaway in the hourlong episode where I lift Pete or Paul, Billy lifts Paul out of a chair and moves him onto the sofa. And, you know, even to show those, you know, with showing the storylines about how Billy's back was out and, you know, but we'd never actually seen why. You know, how physical Billy was having to be with Paul. To move him, to dress him, to wash him to, you know. So it was important for us to be able to really show how ugly this disease is and how debilitating it is. And therefore how difficult it is for not only the people living with the illness, but those around them that have to care for them as well.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

AJ

00:32:21:21

And it also gave us a chance to do something we've never done before with some interstitials that for the MND Association, which you voiced, didn't you Dan?

Daniel

00:32:31:15

I did, I did. In fact I've just done a couple more, uh, yesterday for them for the next round of commercials. Honestly, I mean, in the ten years that I've been on the show, I've never seen Corrie or ITV get behind a charity in the way that they have done with the MND Association. And as somebody that has been working closely with the association for the past two decades, it has felt... I felt so proud of not just this storyline, but how how the network has got behind it. And because I'm in constant contact with the association, I'm - you know, well, both Pete and I are now - to hear what it's actually doing for the charity and for people living with MND and their families, it's been phenomenal. I've been so thrilled that ITV have got behind it in the way that they have. We do issue-led stories, you know, all the time. And up until this point, and you'll tell me if I'm wrong AJ, but as far as I was aware, Corrie or ITV were never necessarily allowed to affiliate themselves with a particular charity because, you know, they have to be, you know, politically neutral. They have to be, you know, all of these sort of, you know, things. So I'd never seen ITV commit themselves to an association in this way. I don't know why or how that's changed but...

AJ

00:34:01:15

We have because obviously we're involved with charities, with all our storylines that are issue-led. So we work with various charities on them to make sure they're advising us, and we're getting things correct and things are done properly. This one, it did move on a little. And I'm not sure the intricacies of why we were allowed to do it now. The MND Association were involved and we did... effectively it's not a commercial, I think it's interstitial, the right word for it, that Roberta Flack was used and Roberta Flack actually has MND, which I didn't know till this year.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel

00:34:33:19

Yeah, which is why she allowed them to use her track.

AJ

00:34:37:01

And it just showed a real family dealing with the situation. And I think the line used was the love is still inside, which is what you were talking about both before. You know, the physicality of the person is gone, but the love for them and the love with them for the family around them. And it's the 30/40 seconds of the few we've done are a really hard watch. But it's taking your story, the story that we've done in the show, out into the real world. Um, not the same as Lindsey and Rob, obviously, which is a wider story that's known. Just portraying a family in a house exactly the same as we've done in the show. But they're real, and it was very powerful, and hopefully we'll be able to do it again in the future. I mean, we always said the stories have got to be... they can be a issue-led stories, but we don't preach. The story has to follow the beats of what Coronation Street is. We don't sit there and suddenly think, "oh, let's do this, you know, next week" and "let's do this". It has to be an organic and natural thing which it has been, but to sort of to enhance it and be able to do that this time round was phenomenal. And we do write papers on the social conscience and the effects of the things that we do on the public social conscience. We haven't done it with this storyline yet in any detail, but I know for a fact the figures that will come in around it will be off the charts, and that's a blessing. We've talked about this before Liam I think, it's a blessing for the show to be able to do and to get it right, which in this case, I think more than right. And a lot of that is due, a majority of it is due, to the two people on this call

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Liam

00:36:10:09

100% there. And the legacy that you leave there by just putting the thoughts in people's minds. I think, you know, the next time they see someone who might be out and about with their family, who might be in a similar wheelchair, they'll think, "oh, that person's most likely got MND" and, you know, maybe stop and chat to them or even look at them as the human being that they are, rather than just a person who is, you know, so unwell in that wheelchair really which what an incredible legacy.

Daniel

00:36:38:20

I just hope that we've been able to educate people. It's on average, there's around 5000 people living with it in the UK at any one time. So 1 in 300 people diagnosed. And they say around, you know, it's the same amount of people a day diagnosed, the same amount of people a day die with it. So the figure never really changes. And a lot of people have asked me recently, "do you think, you know, there's more people getting it now than there used to be?" And I said, "no, there isn't. It's just that more people know what it is, more people are aware of it, you know?" Um, and so I think, you know, we have been able to bring that awareness and to educate people as to what it is and what it does. A lot of the MND community haven't been able to watch what we've done because they've said it's far too close to home. But then on the other side of it, a lot of them have, and they're thrilled that we're doing it. Even the people that aren't watching it are thrilled that we're doing it. It's just that they can't, you know, it's a bit too close to home to watch.

AJ

00:37:44:18

I think in those figures as well, I'd like to say at this point, because I don't know who knows, Jason Crossley - Jay - our colleague, we lost him to MND a few years ago. He was a very active part of ITV Pride and Pride from the moment we brought it in on Coronation Street and we still talk about him. He went through reasonably rapidly, actually. We lost him quite quickly.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel

00:38:06:14

It was eight months from diagnosis. Yeah.

AJ

00:38:09:10

Which was a shocker for everybody around. But yeah, Jay, if you were seeing this and knowing what had been done, I can imagine and I'm sure his sister is still in touch with people and is doing, some of this is for him as well, because he was a very special man.

Daniel

00:38:24:03

Yeah. Of course, of course.

Liam

00:38:26:04

Gosh, eight months. That's unbelievable, isn't it, really? And that's the dreadful thing about this. I was reading about Rob Burrow and that he was diagnosed in 2019 and, you know, over the space of five years that it just robbed him of everything. And I thought the way that, you know, you guys and this is I think testament to the writers, is really that in many ways it's so important not to rush a story. Because actually seeing the incremental developments of this thing really, you know, makes it realistic, doesn't it? And I thought you did that perfectly, really.

Peter

00:39:01:22

Well, I mean, we were very lucky in the fact that we were able to play it out in pretty much real time. So, um, you know, we were able to take our time with it. And I'm, you know, I agree. I'm so glad they didn't rush it. There was never an end date set, like when we started the storyline. It was just when he, you know, when it was going to be right for the story and everything. And I think we touched on pretty much everything that, you know, I think personally I would like them to touch on in terms of, you know, someone living with MND, and their family.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel **00:39:32:10**

60% of people diagnosed die within the first 18 months. So that was the choice, I think, from from our writers'/producers' perspective, because obviously we do have soap time. You don't want to string something out too long because you don't want an audience to become disengaged, but then you don't want to rush it because you don't want to discredit the issue that you're trying to cover. But I think they made the right decision in sort of playing this out in real time. If we'd have been doing this in a movie, you'd have seen, you know, various stages, but cut three months apart in terms of story. But as Pete said, because we've played this out in real time, the audience has really got to see each stage in quite minute detail.

Liam **00:40:23:18**

One of the things I always remember actually, this must be last year some time. And it was really visible about Paul's having MND was during pride. And there was the um, there was the pride episode and and Paul fell over and-

Peter **00:40:40:23**

Oh, yes.

Liam **00:40:41:20**

I remember thinking, "oh gosh", you know, it was such a happy episode. And then that happened. And it just reminds you of these situations that will occur at any time. And I just thought that, I don't know, that always sticks in my mind. It was just a really great depiction, I thought, of this disease.

Peter **00:41:01:08**

Yeah. No, I remember actually, yeah. That was when he still had the cane and, you know, he was struggling with his leg. And, um, that was probably when it was toughest physically for me to do. Um, obviously it got a bit easier when Paul was in the chair.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel

00:41:14:17

It was really easy once he didn't have to speak at all because I had all the words!

Peter

00:41:20:24

Haha! Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, yeah. But again, like getting to grips with the eye gaze, which is incredible technology, as I've said before, but the actual getting used to using it was quite tricky. But then again, because we played in real time, Paul was finding it tricky to begin with and you know, by the end he was a dab hand on it which which people are. Like, you should see the speed some of the people with MND can knock out a sentence or something like that. It's like with anything, with practice you get better at it I guess.

Liam

00:41:54:08

Oh no, incredible. And I was going to say there just to bring it back to an LGBTQ+ issue because of course, that's the podcast that we do here. Um, what I really liked about it is that you're a gay couple and there's no real mention of it, you being a gay couple in terms of this illness, which I loved because I just thought it shows that anybody can get this disease. It can happen to anybody. There was no big you know, I really felt watching this whole storyline that it just shows that in terms of an LGBT+ issue in nature, how far we've moved and progressed, and actually it doesn't feel like it's a big thing. Like, you know, I thought you played it perfectly and you just saw actually this storyline was about a really loving couple who have had this absolute horrible ordeal happen to them. And, you know, like anyone, you're dealing with it in the way that you can.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel

00:42:47:19

Yeah. I mean, the disease is indiscriminate. You know, it can happen to children and adults alike. It's rarer, thankfully, in kids. But it happens. I think the fact that Billy and Paul are a gay couple, like you said, it doesn't really make any difference. I mean, obviously, we had our wedding intertwined within the storyline, which was beautiful, to be able to be part of the first ever same-sex successful wedding. We had three failed lesbian ones before then. Um, but to have a successful union put on the show was really special to be part of and I think made even more poignant by the fact of what else the characters were also dealing with at the time. But I think it's hopefully nowadays we're getting to a point where, you know I mean, for me, as a gay man, my sexuality is such a tiny, insignificant part of me. There's so many more interesting things about me, that I don't even think of as being part of...That's not part of my personality. I mean, do straight people wander around shouting that they're straight? No, they don't, because it's such a small part of them, you know? So for me, I love the fact that they've always written Billy and Paul's relationship as just two people in love. They're not banging a drum. I mean, actually, there's been a couple of occasions where...do you remember when we did the skinny dipping episode?

Peter

00:44:22:09

How could I forget?

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Daniel

00:44:24:20

And they were, Billy and Paul, were taking a picnic down to sit on the jetty by the lake. The art department came over with a gay...a bag that was like a pride flag for me. And I went, "what? What's that?" They went, "well, you know". I said, "I don't want that". They said, "but you're a gay couple." I went "Everybody knows that. I'd just like a Hessian bag, please. We don't need to be wearing rainbow colours to be constantly shoving it in 'these characters are gay, they're gay'. You know, it's it's it's unnecessary. It's 2024. I've been doing pride since 1996. And I've seen a huge progression in that time. And I really don't feel that we have to continually remind the audience that these guys are a couple. I think just the fact that we're in every bloody scene together is enough."

Liam

00:45:14:20

Aw, really incredible storyline, incredible acting. And just thank you for doing what you've done. Because you put this storyline on, you know, given it such a profile and I know Dan for you, it's got extra poignancy with your grandfather having MND as well. So, you know, a testament to you there to kind of, I suppose, relive that really, you know that time. So yeah. Thank you for everything you've done, both. And just before we go, um, Pete, what's coming up next? Can we ask you what you've got next in the pipeline? Are you taking a bit of time off or are you back in...?

Peter

00:45:50:20

I'm off enjoying those lie-ins. Yeah, yeah. Uh, and see what happens next. I'm doing a bit of panto at Christmas, which is, you know, you've got to do a bit of that.

AJ

00:45:57:20

You've got a row of seats.

Daniel

00:45:59:09

I've bought a whole row of seats and whoever gets them, I'm going to get pictures, T-shirts with Pete's face on it and we're all going to sit front row.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Liam **00:46:06:01**
Haha! Amazing. Amazing.

Peter **00:46:08:08**
I'll be throwing the sweets your way.

AJ **00:46:11:14**
Before then, on Monday obviously you're going to break everybody's heart. So the whole of Britain that I can just imagine what social media will be like on Monday. But I know that you'll break everybody's hearts in a very beautiful way before you go to panto and Dan starts throwing things at you from the front row.

Peter **00:46:26:18**
Oh, yeah. Yes.

Liam **00:46:29:03**
Just to clarify, then Monday night, that's when the episode comes on. What time are we looking at?

Daniel **00:46:35:01**
8 p.m.

Peter **00:46:35:17**
Usual.

Liam **00:46:36:05**
And then obviously people can catch up on ITVX of course if they don't see it on the telly box at that time. But no, thank you so much for doing what you've done. Thanks for joining us on the PrideCast. And yeah, all the very best for the future both Dan the street and also Pete, whatever you get up to next with panto as well coming up.

Daniel **00:46:54:10**
Thank you.

Clip: Pridecast w/ Billy and Paul transcript.mp3

Peter

00:46:55:09

Thanks for having us, yeah!

Liam

00:47:04:07

Well what a terrific episode there chatting with Peter Ash and Daniel Brocklebank about their incredible storyline on Coronation Street about motor neurone disease. And a huge thank you, of course, to AJ Dean for co-hosting alongside me, and for also helping to organize this episode of the PrideCast. Now, if you have been affected by any of the issues that have been raised in this episode, then do go over to itv.com/advice for more information, and you can also find out more about the charity that Dan, Pete and AJ mentioned, the Motor Neurone Disease Association by going to MNDassociation.org. And a reminder, if you're looking to meet fellow members of the LGBTQ+ community, there's plenty of ways that you can do that. If you work for ITV, why not join the ITV Pride network if you haven't done so already? Thanks again for listening to this edition of the ITV PrideCast. I hope you can tune in for the next episode.