

ISY SUTTIE

and her search for The Actual One.



WORDS: NATALIE BEECH

Isy Suttie's career has been one of perpetual box-ticking. The musician-cum-comedian-cum-actress-cum-author's rise to fame has seen her master almost every aspect of show business, yet her book *The Actual One* shows her struggle to master growing up.

"The book is about a moment I had in my late twenties when I felt very suddenly that all my mates wanted different things from me. I felt like they were all growing up without me."

The gradual approach of adulthood in a stereotypical sense – finding 'the one', getting married, having children, settling down – was something Suttie actively avoided. Instead, she took a road less travelled. A road that involved doing sambuca on a rope swing, riding a table down a ski slope and a genderless hamster called Paul.

These stories have made up *The Actual One*, a book tour/show that looks to be a lot more exciting than your average reading and signing in Waterstones. Suttie describes creating the show: "I start with a song or a story that seems central to the theme of the show and just expand from that, previewing with copious notes and ditching lots of stuff. But this show was different as I already had the book, so I picked the bits of the book I thought would work best on stage and expanded them."

Suttie has been on the comedy scene for over a decade now, but her role as Dobby on *Peep Show* put her into the spotlight in a way she hadn't experienced before. The iconic

character captured audiences, becoming instantly recognisable to comedy fans, but such a part can be hard to break away from. Suttie, however, brushes this off with little alarm.

"Because I've always done a mix of stuff I don't tend to think about how I'm perceived too much, as I'm always onto the next thing. It was such a brilliant, iconic show to be involved in."

Lesser-known is her professional work as a musician, something which has always fed into her shows, including a score written for *Marat/Sade* at Arcola Theatre in 2001.

Her range of talents has meant she's never short of creativity, and having a baby with partner and fellow comedian Elis James hasn't slowed her down. *The Actual One* had a run at the esteemed Soho Theatre over August, a move that sees her shying away from the Fringe this year and staying closer to home. Is she warming up to 'adulthood'? Has *The Actual One* been her coming-of-age story?

"Not really, because I'm going to write a second book so I only concentrated on a few years and there's no 'happy ending' where I meet Elis and get pregnant and so on. I didn't want it to be that sort of book."

Instead the book celebrates female friendship and the ambiguity of your twenties, offering an honest take on the quest for 'the one', the pressures to find them and the difficulty of doing so. Her recent podcasts *The Things We Do For Love* and *Love Letters* also explore this on-going theme of love, and more specifically our mistakes and thwarted attempts to achieve it.

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"I have always felt drawn to it, I suppose because relationships can bring out the best and worst in people – often both simultaneously – so you are often looking at people's traits by examining their relationships."

The Actual One is coming to *The Cookie* this September, not a far-stretch from the comedian's hometown of Matlock in Derby, a place she still feels a deep connection to.

"I can't imagine having grown up anywhere else. Growing up in a small town made me get to know local characters, which has definitely influenced my writing."

Returning to Leicester offers Suttie more than just a good comedy audience: "Leicester is great – we used to go out in Leicester and Derby when I was growing up, and the audiences are always lovely."

Finally, would she ever consider moving back?

"Possibly, but I've ended up with a Welsh guy so I'd have to persuade him!"

Isy brings *The Actual One* to *The Cookie* on 22nd September.