

For Nicole Faraday, *Bad Girls* was life-changing, and not just because her role as Snowball Merriman in the iconic ITV prison drama was her “big break”.

“When I was growing up, I didn’t feel like it was a possibility to be in a lesbian relationship, even though I was attracted to women and I fell in love with women,” she tells me when we meet for a waterside coffee on a glorious sunny day in London’s St Katharine Docks. “Being in *Bad Girls* – a few of the cast are gay and there’s lots of gay storylines – made me feel like, ‘Actually this is a possibility. I could live my life like this.’”

As a Larkhall superfan, I’m thrilled to be spending time with Nicole and she doesn’t disappoint, looking every inch the glamourpuss with her flowing maxi dress and trademark blonde locks. She has the deep but dulcet tones of someone trained in the art of musical theatre, and a delightfully filthy laugh. She’s also strikingly honest, describing her adolescence growing up in a “sleepy seaside town” with a “very middle-class” family. “I didn’t really know anyone that was gay. In my head I always thought, ‘One day I’ll meet a nice man, get married, have kids and live in a nice house’”. But like so many of us, myself included, *Bad Girls*, with its abundance of sapphic storylines, was a defining moment in her coming out journey.

After she left the show in 2003, Nicole had a three-year relationship with a woman, followed by a succession of romances with both women and men. She’s currently coupled up and “slowly but surely moving in” with her new partner, Lauren. “Now I’m fine about saying, ‘I’m in a lesbian relationship and I’m bisexual’. It doesn’t phase me a jot, the idea that I might spend the rest of my life with a woman. But in the past I was always worried what my family and friends would think. But they’ve been so supportive and they really, really love Lauren – Lolly, I call her.” Was Lauren a *Bad Girls* devotee before they got together? “No, she’s Australian,” explains Nicole, before admitting, “I forced her to watch it! I think she thought Snowball was... yeah, sexy. It’s always sexy being a baddie,” she chuckles knowingly.

She confesses that this is the first interview in which she’s opened up about her bisexuality. “Not for any reason other than no one’s ever asked! I think it’s all very fluid. Your souls meet.” She then sounds off about the challenges that can come with being bi. “Not only do you get stupid straight men going, ‘Can I watch?’ or not taking it seriously like, ‘Oh yeah? You need a cock,’ all that horrible, hideous stuff, but you also get people within the gay community that are like, ‘Make your mind up’ or ‘You’re just greedy.’”

What about professionally? Has she faced any prejudice within her working life? “Actually no, and I know some people are unlucky, but having trained in musical theatre and with the kind of jobs I’ve done, I haven’t had any reason to hide who I am. If I’m with a girl I’ll say, ‘This is my girlfriend’, if I’m with a boy I’ll say, ‘This is my boyfriend.’”


Our conversation turns back to *Bad Girls*, a

subject we’re both passionate about. “At the time it was probably the best job to get as an actress – female run company, all female cast, really strong characters. It felt like you were part of something special. I’d done bits like the lap dancer, token girlfriend, token bimbo, and it was the first time I’d been given a really juicy, meaty role. God, I wish I hadn’t hanged myself in it! I was gutted when they killed me off. It’s all a lie when people say, ‘It was a mutual decision.’”

She needn’t have fretted, as her standout performance as Snowball led to more acting jobs, including the coveted role of “ultimate *Bad Girl*” Shell Dockley in *Bad Girls The Musical*. I ask who she thinks would win *Top Dog* if Shell and Snowball went head-to-head and she gives the question the serious consideration it deserves. “Well, Snowball’s much more intelligent than Shell, but then Shell would go headlong into something and not think about the consequences... I’d like to think Snowball because she was my original character and she’s very clever and manipulative.”

Nicole’s built a career playing bombshells and baddies on stage and screen, from songbird Eva Cassidy and movie star Marilyn Monroe in the *West End* – “You can’t really beat the feeling of there being a larger-than-life-size picture of you dressed as Marilyn Monroe coming out of the smoke on Shaftesbury Avenue” – to the Wicked Queen in the panto version of *Snow White*. It’s a part she’s already played seven times, with her eighth lined up this Christmas. So what’s the secret to portraying a convincing villainess? “My evil eyebrows.” She demonstrates by wriggling her perfectly plucked brows and it’s clear why she’s so regularly cast as the sinister temptress.

Nicole began performing at an early age. “I was probably a nightmare! My first leading role was Princess Lotus Blossom in *Aladdin* when I was 12 years old. My sister was my flower girl. ‘Why am I the flower girl?’ ‘Cos you are! Shut up!’ A lot of people grow out of it and realise that they need to get a proper job. I just never did.” A gifted singer, she’s gigged everywhere from the Royal Albert Hall (“I stood in the wings thinking, ‘Why do I do this to myself?’”) to the Ella International Lesbian Festival in Mallorca. “It was set up by a girl I was at boarding school with. She was probably, well, not my first love, but my first female interest, as it were. It was before I really realised what I was.”

She’s playing yet another femme fatale in the soon-to-be-released dark comedy film *Ask The Cheat*, starring alongside Martin Trenaman of *The Inbetweeners* fame and Nick Moran. “I play a school teacher who finds out her husband’s cheating on her with someone half her age. She takes revenge and gets one of the male sixth formers to help. We kidnap my husband and do terrible things to him. Yes, I am playing evil again. Don’t know why they thought of me for the role,” she titters. “I’m nice really!” 

“At the time it was probably the best job to get as an actress”

PHOTO: TEN SIX EIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY



Femme Fatale

BAD GIRLS
STAR
NICOLE FARADAY
TALKS TO ROXY
BOURDILLON
ABOUT
BOMBSHELLS
AND BISEXUALITY