News and gossip from the world of entertainment by Alistair Foster

West End

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Tale of the city: Kierston Wareing stars in 100 Streets with Gemma Arterton and Idris Elba, below. Right: Wareing in the movie

It's great to be playing somebody normal, says ex-EastEnder Kierston

EX-EASTENDER Kierston Wareing says everyone in London will be able to relate to her new movie 100 Streets, which features a cross-section of life in the capital.

Wareing, who played Max Branning's wife Kirsty in the BBC soap, appears alongside Gemma Arterton and Idris Elba — with whom she starred in Luther — in the multi-stranded ensemble drama. Produced by Elba, it follows interlinked characters as they deal with a series of personal crises.

The actress, who has been acclaimed for performances as damaged characters, said it was a relief to be playing against type. She plays the wife of a taxi driver, with the couple trying to adopt.

She said: "The film shows high society, the ghetto and a slice of normality.

"We cross paths, but without necessarily knowing it. I'm playing someone who is very normal, which makes a change for me.

"Everyone has their problems no matter where you're from. I have been fortunate enough to mix with all sides of life, and I think viewers will be able to relate to everyone in the movie."

Bafta-nominated Wareing, 38, did not have an easy path into acting after suffering bullying at school and says she never takes her work for granted. She added: "I am always thinking, where is the next job coming from? A job's a job and you've got a mortgage to pay.

"I would be a liar to say this profession isn't difficult. If I'd known anyone in this business it would have been easier [to get advice]. But my family didn't have any of that. All the experience I had was from my drama school at my local school in Essex. I just thought, where there's a will there's a way."

Wareing is eyeing up her next film role: "I would love to play someone who is mentally ill or psychotic, but at the other end of the spectrum I'd love to do a romcom."

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Comedy chameleon makes a welcome return

REVIEW

CATHERINE TATE
Eventim Apollo, W6
★★★★☆

BRUCE DESSAU

IT IS nine years since The Catherine Tate Show was a regular television fixture, but judging by the cheers that greeted this live version one would have thought it was in this week's schedules. Character after character was welcomed like a close friend, underlining how much they still resonate.

From the opening skit featuring Tate as inappropriate flirty nurse Bernie to the closing smoke machine spectacular in which foulmouthed Nan, pictured, also ended up in hospital — well, it keeps the props bill down — there were huge laughs as Tate reminded fans that she is a true comedy chameleon. One moment chatterbox secretary, the next Shakespearean diva with a Frankie Howerd fixation.

The first half concluded with the return of surly teen Lauren, who playfully delivered a rapid fire "Yeah but no but yeah," a wry reference to BBC Breakfast recently confusing the definitive delinquent with Little Britain's Vicky Pollard. Her stroppy circus-style knife-throwing sequence left fans wanting more.

After the interval it was time for other familiar favourites, from deeply-closeted Derek to Tate's unashamedly politically incorrect interpreter mangling various languages. At times the wordplay-heavy production, directed by Sean Foley, felt overscripted, but a few fluffed lines added refreshing spontaneity to proceedings as the star improvised to regain her composure.

Effective support came from regulars Mathew Horne and Niky Wardley and writer/performer Brett Goldstein. As with television sketch shows there were lows alongside highs, but lots of easy gags, including cheeky swipes at Paul Hollywood ("I'll give him a soggy bottom") and Ed Balls ("what a great fat lump") kept things moving.

If a few scenes lacked decent pay-offs the belly laughs far outweighed the troughs. The finale, with Nan going on a brilliant expletive-fuelled walkabout, proved, if proof was needed, that there is clearly life in Tate's gallery of grotesques.

■ Tonight (0844 844 0444, ticketmaster.co.uk)