"TO PLAY SOMEONE I IDOLISED IS AMAZING!"

ALEX Rider makes his TV debut this week with a brand-new series on Amazon Prime Video. We chatted to Otto Farrant, who plays Alex, the teenage spy and star of the Alex Rider books written by Anthony Horowitz.

Hi Otto! What can you tell us about your new show, *Alex Rider*?

Alex Rider is about a teenage boy whose uncle dies unexpectedly, and suddenly he is thrown into a world of espionage. He has to save the world while grieving for his uncle. But it's also a story about friendship and conquering your demons and forgiveness too. And it's epic and action-packed! Hopefully everyone will love it.

What's so exciting about getting to play Alex?

I read the books from when I was nine years old and I loved them. And if I felt that, I know that millions of people around the world also felt that. So, I know how much love for the books and the character there is out there. And the only thing that I can do is do my best to live up to the expectations. The books have sold over 19 million copies in 33 languages – it's insane. So, to play someone that I idolised as a kid is amazing.

What have you enjoyed the most about playing this role?

The thing that struck me when I read the books is how well Anthony writes tension and action. In all the books, the most enjoyable bits for me are when Alex has really got to dig deep and save the world because things are really against him. He's amazing at getting out of those situations. So, the most exciting thing when I got this was to be able to put that on screen and really feel those emotions.

What do you love about Alex?

I think I love the character because he is so relatable. He could be anyone. He could be a friend of mine. He could've been me. It's just about the circumstances that he's put in, and the people that he's surrounded by. He's someone who's complicated and has had a complicated upbringing. He's been trained all his life by his uncle to be a spy, without knowing. And then he's a victim of circumstance, in that his parents died when he was younger, and now his uncle's dead. It's not easy, and he has to really dig deep to find the courage to save the world, to defeat his own demons. That's why he's so iconic, because he encourages us to see a side of ourselves that is steely and resilient [tough].

You do lots of stunts as Alex. Which one have you enjoyed the most?

One day on a snowy mountain in Romania, they strapped me to a rig, which was tied to a snow bike. The snow bike just went, and suddenly I was flying about on this thing going down the mountain. I just had to do lots of reaction shots. There were people chasing me with guns on other snow bikes, and I just had to keep my balance and also react to what was going on around me. It was really fun. I think what you're going to find with *Alex Rider* is that there are going to be some amazing stunt sequences, but it's also going to have real depth within the characters to show these are real people and how they go through these experiences.

What did you do to prepare for the role?

I did a lot of physical training. I started by building a routine where I was exercising two days on and then one day off. And the kind of exercise I was doing was krav maga, which is an Israeli self-defence training programme. It's all about efficiency. You can only use it if you're being attacked or your life is threatened. It's about getting out of that situation in the most efficient way. The other stuff that I did was climbing. I've got really into bouldering, which is my newfound passion. I just go and climb walls for three hours straight – sometimes on my own, sometimes with an instructor. It's like solving a puzzle in your head while doing physical exercise, which for me relates to the character so much. It's a really good way of relaxing my brain, but also doing a bit of character work. I'm ready for action now. Always ready for action!

GLOSSARY

circumstances – Events or situations affecting something

debut – First show

efficiency – Doing something effectively

espionage – Spy, detective and investigation work

idolised – Adored or worshipped

krav maga – Israeli self-defence training programme

resilient – Strong and can bounce back

BIG INTERVIEW

1. Identify the people and/or characters.

Alex Rider	A well-known and successful author
Otto Farrant	A fictional teenage spy who is the main character in a series of books
Anthony Horowitz	An actor who will play the role of Alex Rider in a new TV series

2. What is the TV series *Alex Rider* about? (Top tip: look up the word **espionage** in the glossary)

3. Why is Otto so excited to play Alex Rider?

4. Find **five** words that Otto Farrant uses to describe Alex.

5. Otto believes audience expectations of the TV series will be very high. Explain why he believes this.

6a. Explain why Otto thinks **climbing** was a great way to prepare for playing Alex Rider.
6b. As well as climbing, what else did Otto do to prepare for playing Alex?

7a. What is the headline for this article?
7b. Which effect does the journalist use to create this headline?

- A twist on a famous phrase
- A quote from the interview
- Rhyming of words
- Alliteration of sounds

8a. Would you like to watch the *Alex Rider* TV series? Explain why/why not.
8b. Who is this programme suitable for and why?

9. Otto says the programme "is going to have real depth within the characters". What do you think he means?

10. When Otto was younger, he enjoyed reading the *Alex Rider* books and he idolised the main character, Alex. Think about some of your favourite all-time books or cartoons and the most interesting characters in them.

If you were an actor, which of these book characters would you most like to play in a TV series or film and why?

If I were an actor, I'd like to be ...	
Character:	
Book:	
Describe the character (looks, habits, personality etc):	
Explain the reasons you would like to play this character in a TV show or film:	

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