

English transcript of Fifi Garfield's interview with Raabia Hussain and Mia Ward on 13th December 2017

- based on live voiceovers by Darren Townsend-Handscomb, Karen Newby and Tara Asher

Fifi	<p>Hello Facebook. Sorry about earlier; we had a technical hitch, so we've gone back to the beginning; we'll start again. So if you're watching, please click "Like" or "Love", so we know that you're watching us.</p> <p>And also, just to let you know we've got a voiceover - we have three interpreters - two of them are women, but unfortunately the one who's voicing for me is a man. He's going to try and sound like a woman, though! Oh, the interpreter's gone red. Was his woman's voice good? Well you can comment about whether it was or not!</p> <p>So, make sure you crank your sound up if you're hearing, hard of hearing or whatever. Obviously, we're deaf people using sign language. There will be a transcript available later this evening or tomorrow, depending on how long it takes. I'm just checking there will be a script later. Tomorrow or sometime after?</p> <p>OK, so I'm here to interview these two. If I can just introduce myself, I'm Fifi and we're at BSLBT's office in London. BSLBT has been hard at work this year, with a lot of productions, so it's going to be really exciting to look at those. So if I can introduce, this is Mia.</p>
Mia	Hello!
Fifi	<p>And she's one of the stars of Up For It? and has been recently filming for a sci-fi film called Reverberations, which will be going out in 2018.</p> <p>And then we have Raabia who works for SignPost. She's been working behind the scenes, filming – Life...?</p>
Raabia	Life Stories with Alex Duguid.
Fifi	And also you've been involved in Up For It? as well.
Raabia	Yes. I was briefly involved in Up For It? , with Danny's Skits.
Fifi	<p>Yes, Danny's Skits, the boy who's a comedian, she was involved in filming him. So, we're going to be reviewing 2017 and their involvement, what it's been like, what the experience has been like for them. Of course, if you have any questions please comment and I'll ask your questions later.</p> <p>So both of you, could you tell me... in 2017, what have you been involved in and what's been memorable for you?</p>
Mia	Do you want to go first?
Raabia	I don't mind, you go first. OK.

Mia	Well really, 2016 was the beginning for me, the first scenes of Up For It? and still feels like part of 2017, it's completely changed the course of my life. Before, I was a cleaner, which I did enjoy, but now I'm determined, after the past two years, to go off into the career that I would like to pursue. I've enjoyed this whole year, it's been such a brilliant year for me.
Fifi	I remember when you were in Up For It? Series 1! When I first met you, you were so naïve - look at you now, what a difference.
Mia	Thank you, you really mentored me very well.
Fifi	Great. And you, Raabia?
Raabia	Well for me, 2017 has been a really busy and unique year. I've been working as a technical production specialist with SignPost, so doing the in-vision sign language production there. Back in July, I finished my first degree at the Film School in Leeds.
Fifi	(Clapping) Oh, well done.
Raabia	And I've been working a lot behind the scenes, with lots of opportunities from the BSL Zone .
Fifi	Oh, that's really good. So, for your degree, were you with hearing students - did you have an interpreter? How did you manage on the degree programme?
Raabia	At university, I worked with interpreters. It went very well. I didn't have to make the bookings for myself, somebody else undertook that for me, so I've had the proper amount of access, which was really important for me. Everything went really well with my degree. If I hadn't had that level of access, it would have been much more problematic.
Fifi	And did you get on well with the other students?
Raabia	I did. I remember when I first began, I arranged some deaf awareness training with my fellow students and we established some kind of basic communication. My peers learned some fingerspelling and they really helped me a lot.
Fifi	And you taught deaf awareness? Or, you brought somebody in?
Raabia	We brought somebody in, that's right.
Fifi	Excellent, excellent. So in 2017, I was involved in Up For It? as well.
Mia	Yes, you came with us didn't you?
Fifi	I filmed in the Up For It? studio. I did some behind the scenes work too, and some photography. I worked on Small World as well. So, the three of us have had quite a lot of experiences. So what's your favourite memory then - which programme? You were telling me about Reverberations . Tell me more about that.

Mia	Well unfortunately I can't give too much away. It's a sci-fi drama. I can talk about the cast and behind the scenes. It was a really valuable experience, especially as I used to be involved in the performing arts; I studied it for a year in college. I did enjoy it, but it was in a hearing environment, and it didn't really fit me; I wanted to be in a BSL environment. So I went off and started being a cleaner. Then, I saw an advert for a presenter on Facebook, out of the blue! That was the first time I was thrown in front of the camera - I was always on stage before - but being in front of the camera was a marvellous experience. The cast and the crew were so supportive, it was really an intensive week.
Fifi	So, had you previously thought about acting or did it happen by chance?
Mia	I was always obsessed with becoming an actress while growing up. I was always on stage, at the front of the line to be in the plays at school. I've been involved in Shakespeare, we performed all over and went to the House of Lords twice, so I'm really passionate about the arts. And then after that I wasn't really prepared to break into the mainstream performing arts world. I didn't really enjoy performing with hearing people due to the difficulties in communication. I didn't feel I could express my story, and unfortunately for financial reasons, after college, I went off to work. I always dreamed about acting but I never thought it would come true.
Fifi	Great, and how about you, Raabia?
Raabia	Well for me, growing up I just loved films. I was quite obsessive, watching films and television, and I was always very curious about how these things were created - you know, what went on behind the scenes before it reached the TV screen. So I became interested in production and I began to learn a bit about filming and editing. I looked into TV and film and that kind of industry and decided I had a passion for that. I really wanted to get involved. So I began learning a bit more; I did media at college and filmmaking at university and then I was offered a job at SignPost, so I feel like I'm following my dream. I'm at the beginning of my journey.
Fifi	So have you directed any films so far? Tell us about that.
Raabia	Yes, I directed my first short film back in 2012. That was September 11th , for the Zoom programme.
Fifi	Yes, that was the one.
Raabia	Yes, Zoom , a BSL Zone scheme. That was my first short film. I wrote the story and I directed it.
Mia	Wow.
Fifi	And was that hard?
Raabia	Finally, I felt I had achieved one of my dreams, and it was a great learning curve as well. It only served to enhance my passion for this industry, and at the same time I began looking for further opportunities so I could build up my skills.

Fifi	And how about you, have you directed?
Mia	No, not yet, but you never know, one day! One day yes, maybe you could teach me?
Raabia	I'd be happy to.
Fifi	Both of you seem really positive. Is there anything that you've experienced in the way of challenges and how have you overcome those? Does anything come to mind from the past year?
Raabia	Er well, I'd say that for me it was working with children, because with children, there are certain legal implications. You have to make sure that there's a chaperone with the child at all times, to protect the child and to protect the cast and crew. There's also limitations in terms of lone working time, so children can work for up to 5 hours in a day - that raises some limitations when it comes to filming. Also, children get very excited, they can get distracted. You have to find a way of keeping calm and focussed and you have to think about their education as well if they're taking a 5 hour day out of education; that can be challenging.
Fifi	Most directors say never work with children or animals, but Mia did both in Up For It?! Animals and children! So what was that like then?
Mia	Yes, very challenging but really good fun. The children are just full of energy and they really inspired us all and kept us going, because Up For It?! 's core focus is the children. The dog was more difficult because we had to train it to do tricks and the trainer would give the dog treats, but more treats the dog got given, the more hyper it became and it couldn't sit still!
Fifi	So it's just obsessing about food the whole time, yes?
Mia	Yes. Once it came and sat on me and another time it farted in Nadeem's face.
Fifi	Oh dear.
Mia	I'll never forget that, in series one.
Fifi	Was that recorded?
Mia	No unfortunately.
Fifi	Oh what a shame.
Mia	No, we were just sitting in between takes. I was gutted it wasn't filmed! The dog was really good with its marks; it's stuff like working out who'll go first; will we follow the dog, or will the dog follow us? I love dogs, and I feel I'm doing the best job working with children and animals, but it is challenging.
Fifi	So when you were doing Up For It?! did you have to film take after take, or was it one take and that was wrap? If you had to keep on filming, why was that?

Mia	At first there was a lot more freedom. We weren't given a script because that would mean we were influenced by the English and it was our first time presenting, so they didn't want to put too much pressure on us. Camilla Arnold, who was the director of the first series, told us the structure of what she had in mind. She'd say, "I'd like you to mention X Y and Z". It was much more informal, much more relaxed, and if we missed things, we'd need to go again, go for another take. But obviously it took a lot of time and we had to do a lot of filming. We were very lucky that we were relaxed enough, it looked good and we moved on. The second series was very different; there was a script, and I had to learn it...
Fifi	Can I clarify that? The first and second series were different? So you had no script in the first one and in the second you had scripts?
Mia	Yes.
Fifi	OK, so the second one, you had to follow the script?
Mia	Yes.
Fifi	In what way, what's the difference?
Mia	Well it was the polar opposite. I've worked with a script before when I was being a character but presenting information is a very different style of work. Brian Duffy was really supportive and made sure that the translation was of an appropriate level for a TV presenter. There were some things we needed to re-take; I might not have been happy, or they might not have been happy. It was a lovely crew to work with and I was really happy to soldier on, because we all had the same goal, we didn't want to make mistakes. There was a lot more preparation required.
Fifi	So one more question for you, so you've been involved in presenting Up For It? and then in Reverberations you're acting, what's the difference for you?
Mia	Yeah, they're completely different, completely different careers. Before, when I acted, I knew what I was doing and then when I came into presenting I had no idea what I was doing! I was really lucky that the three of us, myself, Nadeem and Rosie were given a week of training on how to work in front of the camera and how to work as a team, which was really useful. And then I went back into acting, I felt like I really had to put my old cap on and get back into acting techniques. It was different because with being a presenter you are being yourself, it's natural, whereas when you're acting, you're somebody else; you are adopting a character. So it's quite surreal. The biggest challenge with Up For It? was remembering to look down the lens of the camera and sometimes with Reverberations I wasn't allowed to look at the camera, so we had to re-take.
Fifi	You mean, for the film?
Mia	No, when I presented Up For It? .
Fifi	So you couldn't look at the camera?

Mia	Sometimes. I mean, like when we were on location – remember we went horse riding? I was meant to be looking off into the distance, but my gaze just naturally came back to the camera. In Reverberations , we never looked at the camera lens and I just pretended the camera wasn't there. I think I found that quite easy because I just blocked it off completely throughout the whole week, whereas with Up For It? , sometimes you ignore it, sometimes it's there, sometimes it's not. It's a really good challenge.
Fifi	And Raabia, obviously you're behind the camera. How do you instruct presenters and actors how to change the way they're acting? Do you have a concept of how you want them to be? How do you tell them about it?
Raabia	For Up For It?
Fifi	Just anything that you've worked on; September 11th , for example. How did you direct the actors to be the way you want them to be?
Raabia	My strategy was to devise the script first of all. I then came up with a storyboard so I had a visual conceptual system. Then I had dialogue with the actors and I tried to express my intention, so we came up with a kind of collaborative viewpoint as to how things would come together when we were actually filming. It really is important to work together, because otherwise there may be conflict. It ensures that things go more smoothly. And they might have some ideas they come up with themselves in terms of the way their character might behave, too.
Fifi	The relationship is so important. I think it's important that there are good vibes between a director and the actors, because that does come across to the camera. Did you enjoy that? You haven't actually acted or presented yourself, haven't you, in front of the camera?
Raabia	I've never been in front of the camera, no, I'm always behind the lens.
Fifi	Is that where you prefer to be?
Raabia	I prefer it, yes.
Fifi	And have you worked behind the camera, Mia?
Mia	I've never worked behind the camera but I would love to have a go and see what it would be like to try and make my vision become reality.
Fifi	[To viewers] I hope you're enjoying watching us and you're enjoying your cups of tea! If you've got any questions, we're going to start asking them soon; they're already there up on the board, so I'm going to start asking questions now. A question for you, Mia, from Ellie Scott: so how did you feel about Up For It? did you enjoy being part of that?
Mia	Oh hello Ellie. I absolutely really did enjoy Up For It? . It was a good group, a good cast and crew, and there's a wonderful atmosphere on set. Everybody's working towards the same goal, so yes, there was chemistry amongst the team; we really clicked and it was a really good time.

Fifi	And for Mia again, this is one from Danny Murphy: so it's the same question but for Reverberations : how did you get involved in that?
Mia	Hello Danny. I really enjoyed Reverberations . I could talk all day about Reverberations , but unfortunately I'm not allowed to tell you anything! I really enjoyed it, I loved it. It was fantastic and was the first acting project I've been involved in like that. Samuel Dore is a brilliant director, he really made me up my acting game and I thoroughly enjoyed it the whole way through.
Fifi	And how long did it take to film that?
Mia	One week – six days. It was filmed in Milton Keynes.
Fifi	And how long is it, an hour or half an hour?
Mia	I think the film is 27 minutes.
Fifi	We'll look forward to watching that next year. OK then, now there's a question for Raabia from, I can't read it, sorry, is it Nasir? I think it's Nasir, am I correct? So when is your feature film going to be out? Are you making a feature film?
Raabia	Ah no, I haven't made a feature yet, no. But I have something that I have on hold which I'm hoping to make in the future.
Fifi	Oh please make sure you do that!
Mia	Yes, please do!
Fifi	Don't put it on hold, get it out there!
Raabia	It will happen, I'm sure!
Fifi	I think people would be really interested, and certainly, as they say, September 11th was emotional viewing. I'm really sorry, I can't read your writing! Elvis? So it's Elvis says that you are a fantastic photographer as well. Thank you, I didn't know about that. Thank you for that, Elvis!
Raabia	That's right, I love photography. I love taking photographs when I'm travelling, I love looking at different cultures, food and fashion and photographing that because you can tell a story that way. You have that with film too, and I love it. I've got an Instagram account and I put my photos on that.
Fifi	Fantastic. Digital or film?
Raabia	Digital.
Fifi	Oh digital, OK. I must have a look at your photographs on Instagram. What's your Instagram handle? Can you let people know?
Raabia	You can follow me at raabia.hussain
Fifi	I shall make a note of that later.

Mia	Me too.
Fifi	Oh keep your questions coming. There's another question. So lots of people are saying "hi" to both of you.
Mia/Raabia	Hello! (waving)
Fifi	And here's one from Sahera. I believe that you are the first Deaf Asian Muslim female filmmaker. The first, is that right? So what would your advice be to other BAME girls and women who want to do as you've done and be successful the way you have?
Raabia	Well that's quite a big question. I would say yes, I am the first Deaf and Asian filmmaker.
Fifi	Fantastic, well done!
Mia	Hooray!
Raabia	<p>And you know, there are a number of barriers that we have to face in terms of culture in our society, where it's not really believed that media is a "woman's job". My family have supported me a lot, though, because media's my dream.</p> <p>So my advice to young people is; no matter what your background is, whether you're black or white or Asian; you need to follow your hearts. Ignore people and don't let them put you down. Show them what you're made of!</p> <p>September 11th was my first film and it had global recognition. I did that because I believed in myself - you can too - believe in yourselves. Anything can happen!</p>
Fifi	Absolutely right. I remember when I left school, a careers officer asked what I wanted to do. And I said, in fact, I can't remember what I said. Oh, a photographer or something. And they said no, why don't you work in an office? I didn't want to work in an office, but they thought it would be easier for me to find a job in one. I thought "no way", and luckily I wasn't just going to let them dictate what I could do, otherwise I wouldn't be here interviewing you two now. So I followed my heart, as Raabia says.
Mia	You're an amazing role model!
Fifi	<p>... Any more questions?</p> <p>OK, for Mia, from Nicky Summers: how did you start being an actress in BSL Zone? How did that come about?</p>
Mia	Oh, the power of Facebook! I saw an advert out of the blue; Ashley was looking for new presenters for Up For It? I saw it but I wasn't really sure, so I put that aside. Then I spoke to my family and they said "go for it" and the rest, as they say, is history.
Fifi	So your family and friends, or was it just your family who said "go for it"?

Mia	Yes my family said I should go for it, it was something different. I like diversity, I think it's the spice of life. So it was because I saw the opportunity on Facebook and grabbed it.
Fifi	Tell us more, what was the process then? So how did you join? What happened?
Mia	<p>Well I had to send a video of me doing some presenting, so I got my sister to film me, then sent it off and a couple of days later I was invited to an audition. I wasn't really expecting to get through to that stage. I went into a room full of girls and we were all auditioning in pairs. That was to see whether or not we worked well as part of a presenting duo. We were given different tasks like we had to present a "make", we had to present some news information and then there was a hot seat interview. So I went through the audition - I thought I did alright - I was so nervous.</p> <p>Then I was called back for a third audition with Nadeem and Rosie, although it was Nadeem's first audition, and then they wanted to see what the chemistry was like between us, simply by playing table tennis together! I can remember we just couldn't stop laughing and I feel that we just clicked and it felt right, and then after that, I remember the three of us really hoped that we would all get picked and we did.</p>
Fifi	And you were successful. So keep your eye out BSL Zone's , Facebook page because you never know when they might be doing more casting. OK, so any more questions? So this is a question to all of us from Sarah: is there any chance there's going to be an Up For It? Series 3? I don't know.
All	We have no idea, maybe next year?
Fifi	<p>So we'll have to ask BSL Zone that – they're saying who knows, wait and see! Next year, keep your fingers crossed. It depends, I guess, on the audience. You've got to contact them and say "We want a series 3", keep letting them know.</p> <p>So are there any things that you'd like to talk about?</p> <p>So Raabia, you worked with Danny on Up For It? - was it easy to work with him or hard? Did you get on well and was he funny? How did that go?</p>
Raabia	Well the first time I met Danny, Danny Murphy, we just clicked very, very quickly. He's a deaf young man, he's a boy ...
Fifi	He's successful too.
Raabia	Yes, and so articulate. He signs beautifully; his language is so natural. So it just felt right. We worked together very, very well. We had mutual respect, confidence, obviously there were certain distractions! He was excitable and just wanted to do more and more and more filming and we had to kind of keep him in check because, you know, we had legal limitations, as I said earlier. And we don't want to place ourselves in the position of breaching the law and so, you know, we had to send him home for a break sometimes and he just wanted to carry on working. It was a brilliant experience. I really enjoyed working with him.

Fifi	So with Danny, in Up For It? was it his own material or did you give him the script and he had to work with that?
Raabia	BSL Zone gave us some themes.
Fifi	So like ... can you give me an example?
Raabia	So ... football. So I had to do some research in relation to those themes and came up with the script, sort of a comedic script. We'd then offer that to Danny and allow him to look through it and to have a think about how he might change it suit his character, because it had to match him, like I said earlier, it's really important that the presenter feels comfortable with the material they're given, otherwise it just won't flow. So he made his own changes and we had discussions and we agreed on what we were both happy with and then we went for a rehearsal and it was amazing!
Fifi	That's fab. We have some more questions; this one's for Mia from Maisie Sly.
Mia	Hello Maisie.
Fifi	I so want to meet you, I'm always watching Up For It? !
Mia	Oh!! Thank you so much!
Fifi	And one for Raabia from Suma Begum: what's been your favourite short film that you've worked on to date?
Raabia	Well I can't choose a favourite, they're all my favourites! What about you, Fifi?
Fifi	I'm not really involved in the making films, I'm usually part of the crew.
Raabia	Which is your new favourite?
Fifi	<p>And I've been in a variety of crews, I tend to get on so well with all crews, to be honest. We always have a good laugh. You have to work well together because, you know, for one or two weeks, you're with them the whole time, so you have to be able to get on. I want to enjoy my work with them! And actually, so far, it's been fantastic. I love working in TV production. The crews, the lighting, the food, tea breaks, the luxury lunches where you can eat as much as you want, sometimes too much.</p> <p>I've also worked on Small World recently – I think that was the last thing I've done for BSLBT. That was fantastic, working with Louis. A great team. I really enjoyed that. I'm looking forward to watching it on TV! It's brilliant!</p> <p>We have some more questions now. Again, from Raabia, from Ioas Khan: I'm really proud of you and I really appreciate what you've achieved, including with your photography, why haven't you considered publishing your photography more widely?</p> <p>She has got it on Instagram already.</p>
Raabia	Yes, I've got many photos on Instagram, yes, that's right.

Fifi	So you can follow her. Do you want to say your Instagram name again?
Raabia	Yes it's raabia.hussain, follow me and say hi.
Fifi	So when you've finished here and check Instagram, it'll have rocketed!
Raabia	Yes, I'll reply to everyone.
Fifi	OK, if you've got any more questions, we've got time for you. So when you're thinking about the future, what are your dreams? What would you like to achieve more of? It is about more films or ...
Raabia	I have a dream that I'd like to make the first British feature film made by a Deaf Muslim woman. So that's my dream. I want to show the world that Deaf people can do this, we are capable of making feature length films, regardless of our hearing status; deafness is not a barrier. We have eyes, we're visual people, we're very creative and we're able to acquire the skills necessary.
Fifi	So your dream is to create a full length feature film, is that a comedy, a horror, a documentary..?
Raabia	Well I began working on a script. It's a drama with Deaf characters; I don't think I can say much more than that.
Fifi	So are you working on ... are you in the process of ...
Raabia	I am, hopefully!
Fifi	Oh, watch this space! So I need to keep in contact with you and check how you're going on. Make sure you don't give up.
Raabia	I won't give up, so hopefully once it's produced ...
Fifi	Mia, what's next for you?
Mia	Well in January I'm going to BDA Youth's drama camp, which will be in Norway, to have some training. I've got some acting workshops coming up in March, so I've got quite a lot of plans.
Fifi	So ... oh training workshops, fantastic.
Mia	Yes, I'm going to go on a learning journey next year.
Fifi	Brilliant, brilliant. We've got time for one more question, so this is from Adiba Hussain.
Mia	Hello.
Fifi	So what's your next aim?

Mia	I'm not sure, I just really want to take as many opportunities as I can and have a go at a variety of roles. I don't really have one track that I want to go down. I think I'd get a bit bored, to be honest. I'm on my journey and I appreciate every twist and turn. If I had any ideas, perhaps it's coming up with my own programme, who knows?
Fifi	Wow, so many people are commenting on Facebook that they want to see your film, Raabia, in the future. So you have to keep your promise now.
Raabia	I'm promising you right now, I'm going to make it happen. So keep your eyes peeled.
Mia	Pinky promise?
Fifi	OK, she's pinky promised! Right, well that's all we've got time for, I'm afraid. We're already over time. So, I've just got a little bit more information for you. We've got a Christmas drama called 12 Days - that's going to be out on Thursday 21 st December, Christmas Day and Boxing Day - you can find out more information on our website. So enjoy watching the Christmas drama! That's all we've got time for.
All	Byeee!
Fifi	And thank you for watching!