



## Coming in 2024 – ‘Just 14’ The Movie

You’re nearly 14, a massive Aston Villa fan and sharing a bedroom with your older Wolves supporting brother. Life in the Midlands in 1980 should be fun, but when all your hopes hang on a Saturday afternoon score line, there’s too much left to chance. For Jonathan Stadler, he’s trying to navigate his way safely through school and home life – and failing miserably. He can’t even love his football team in peace. Tuning in his lucky radio to hear if Villa can win or if he’s confined to misery for the rest of the weekend and then further torment on Monday at school. Jonathan leans heavily on his Grandad for comfort and support to help him through.

At school, with his gang of local football team fans starting to become distracted by girls, Jonathan is trying hard to focus on what really matters – The Villa – but the world around him seems intent on interfering. ‘Just 14’ instantly transports us back to the time when happiness was dictated by simple league tables and who was *Top of the Pops*.

*Grange Hill* was more like therapy than television, with Tucker, Benny, Alan and Tricia the on-screen version of Jonathan’s friends – Jonathan’s gang even had their own Tucker. For Jonathan, Gripper Stebson’s shoes were filled by bully Kenny Bellingham. While Bellingham worked hard to make life a living hell for Jonathan in school, his brother Mark was his rival at home. Filled with disdain for Jonathan’s love of Villa – and any notion that his lucky radio was indeed lucky – Wolves’ fan, Mark, fuelled the sibling rivalry that often bubbled over into family life.

It wasn’t all bad, though. When you need an opponent for Subbuteo to add a frisson of excitement to a family holiday, Mark would do just fine. There was a bond between the two that was strengthened by their footballing rivalries.

In ‘Just 14’, we meet Jonathan on the cusp of something else. Still trying to hang on to his childhood innocence for dear life but having to face up to the reality of how the world really works, join Jonathan as he discovers that change is coming. Jonathan exists in a world divided; people perching on the edge of their sofas to find out who shot JR while still coming to terms with the shooting of John Lennon.

The early 80s were tough – Great Britain wasn’t, well, great. Unless you counted winning the Eurovision Song Contest as a major achievement (and we did). Margaret Thatcher ruled Britannia and, as in Jonathan’s life, change was on the way, but it was clear that things were going to get worse before they got better.

'Just 14' is exactly what the world has been waiting for. The indie film that sets the rollercoaster 80/81 Aston Villa season against a backdrop of chips in newspaper, *Roy of the Rovers* comic strips and a soundtrack of pop, punk and New Wave. With nothing to protect him from the cruel world around him but his best mates (and Grandad) – and they haven't much of a clue what's going on – share Jonathan's journey as he trips from a football-fantastic Saturday to suffering love and loss. 'Just 14' takes us back in time to the days before digital and instant communications. A time when football results, romantic chats and bad news wasn't just a click away.

This coming-of-age film brings together the humour of 'Fever Pitch', the endless longing of 'Gregory's Girl' and 'Bend It Like Beckham's football fanaticism to transport us back to a time when we could trust our friends, know our enemies and life was good – not 'Walking on Sunshine' good, but it sparkled with possibilities. Get to know Jonathan as he experiences the pull of first love challenging his true love for his Villa in the race for the title. He's also learning how to get through the day without getting beaten up, while his innocence only serves to expose his still-soft underbelly. With the chirp of electronic games beginning to infiltrate everyday life, let's go back to the 1980s and see how the world works when you're 'Just 14'.