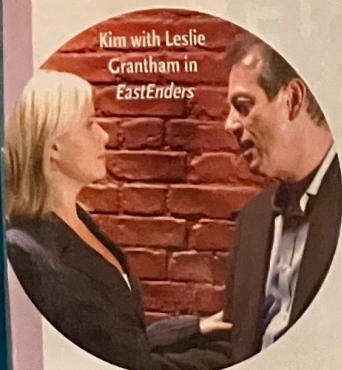


LIFE & LEISURE

LIFESTYLE

ENTER THE CHILL-OUT ZONE

Kim with Leslie Grantham in *EastEnders*



Starring in *EastEnders* can be a tough job. Thank goodness actress Kim Medcalf knows how to escape

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***EastEnders*, Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, BBC1**

As Sam Mitchell finds herself embroiled in her brother Phil's wrongdoings in

EastEnders this week, the one thing she needs more than ever is some TLC. Well, she should take a leaf out of actress Kim Medcalf's book. Playing Sam may bring with it thrills and spills but Kim, 29, knows how to switch off when filming stops.

'Travelling, and going to beautiful countries with lovely beaches, is my favourite way to relax. I had a holiday in the Caribbean recently, which was great. It's just so relaxing to lie there with a cocktail, a good book and a wonderful view. I'm a typical Sagittarius in that travelling is my passion – if I have any time off, that's what I like to do.

'I love nothing more than reading to relax – it's the ultimate form of escapism. I loved reading *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* by J K Rowling. I think the Harry

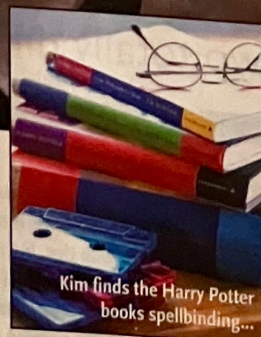
Potter books are great because they're pure fantasy. I've got quite varied taste, though – I like Marion Keyes, who writes girly books, and I've just read *The Cutting Room* by Louise Welsh, which is a thriller about an auctioneer who finds a set of scary photos. It's unusual and really well written.

'I'm certainly not a

complete bookworm, though. Going out for a drink with friends for a good gossip always makes me feel good. I still have a group of school and college friends I keep in touch with. I completed a law degree before deciding that I wanted to act; then I went to drama school.

'Funnily enough, a few of my fellow law students have also changed course since – one ditched law for interior design! I really love just getting together with my mates – sometimes one of us will have a barbecue or sometimes we go away somewhere for weekends in the country, such as the Cotswolds.

'A day at a really nice spa having beauty treatments is the ultimate luxury, too. I especially love the Berkeley Hotel in London, which has a health spa on the top floor. It has a wonderful swimming pool with a roof that can be rolled back in the hot weather. I have various treatments, depending on what I feel like, but I particularly enjoy aromatherapy



Kim finds the Harry Potter books spellbinding...

body massages and facials – and then I try to get some of the practical stuff done like manicures and pedicures!

'Finally, if I want something really uplifting, I head to theatreland. Musicals are fabulous. I've recently seen *Chicago* and *My Fair Lady*. Both

of them were superb.

'I love singing and one day it would be fabulous to do a musical. But I'm not sure I could do *Chicago*, as you need to have so much stamina!

JANE DIMOND



...while a facial is the ultimate luxury

Away from Albert Square and her character Sam Mitchell, Kim Medcalf's looking lovely and relaxed



Fantasy island: A holiday in the Caribbean was the perfect way for Kim to get away from it all