



JON E. LEWIS & PENNY STEMPEL

CULT TV

THE COMEDIES

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JON E. LEWIS AND PENNY STEMPEL



BAY
BOOKS



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CONTENTS



User's Guide 8



Introduction 9



Entries from A to Z 12



Acknowledgments 245



Index 246



Jon E. Lewis is a writer and a critic. He has written for *Time Out* and the *Independent*, and is the author of numerous books on popular culture, including the bestselling *Cult TV*. His other books include several *Mammoth Book of... Anthologies* and the forthcoming encyclopedic *Ultimate TV Guide*.

Penny Stempel has worked in film and television as both a director and a producer, and lectures in Media Studies. She was TV critic of *Venue* magazine and is the coauthor of the forthcoming *Ultimate TV Guide*.



2nd German: (with some menace) A prawn cocktail...

Basil: Oh, yes Eva Prawn... and Goebbels too, he's another one I can hardly remember at all.

1st German: And *ein* ickled herring!

Basil: Herman Goering, yes, yes... and von Ribbentrop, that was another one...

1st German: And four cold meat salads, please.

Basil: Certainly, well, I'll just get your *hors d'oeuvres*... *hors d'oeuvres* vich must be obeyed at all times without question... Sorry! Sorry!

Polly: Mr. Fawcety, will you please call your wife immediately?

Basil: I can't, I've got too much to do. Listen... (*he whispers through his teeth*) Don't mention the war... I mentioned it once, but I think I got away with it...

Basil: What's the matter?

2nd German: It's alright.

Basil: Is there something wrong?

2nd German: Will you stop talking about the war?

Basil: Me? You started it!

2nd German: We did not start it.

Basil: Yes you did, you invaded Poland...



KEY TO ENTRY CREDITS

1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

7 **8** **9**

THE BLACK ADDER

UK 1983-9, 24 x 30m, 1 x 45m, 1 x 15m, col BBC1.
BBC TV. US tx 1990 Syndicated.

10 → **CR** Richard Curtis, Rowan Atkinson. **PR** John Lloyd.
DR Martin Shardlow, Mandie Fletcher, Richard Boden. **WR** Richard Curtis, Rowan Atkinson, Ben Elton. **MUS** Howard Goodall. **CAST** Edmund Blackadder

12 → Rowan Atkinson Baldrick Tony Robinson. Video **11** **13**

11 **13**

A cycle of sitcoms which began with the crude *The Black Adder*, concerning the medieval exploits of the venomous young aristocrat Edmund Blackadder, and rose through *Black Adder II* (set in Elizabethan times) and *Blackadder the Third* (Regency period) to *Blackadder Goes Forth*.

1 Country of origin

2 Year(s) on air

3 Number of episodes

4 Program length

5 Color or black and white

6 Broadcast channel in country of origin

7 Production company/companies

8 Air date(s) in secondary country

9 Broadcast channel in secondary country

10 **CR:** creator(s), **EXEC PR:** executive producer(s),
PR: producer(s), **DR:** director(s), **WR:** writer(s),
MUS: composer(s)

11 Character(s)**12** Actor(s)/Actress(es)**13** Video availability

INTRODUCTION

And now for something completely different... In its 27th June 1923 edition, *The Times* of London carried a small ad: "Seeing by wireless. Inventor of apparatus wishes to hear from someone who will assist (not financially) in making working model. Write Box S. 686." The inventor behind the box was John Logie Baird who, three years later, demonstrated "television" for the first time. Ten years later, Baird, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and EMI-Marconi founded the world's first regular "high-definition" television service. The TV Age had begun.

They had the technology. Only one problem remained – what to put on Baird's tube of delight? Initially, the BBC – under the high-minded rule of Lord Reith – concentrated on news and "worthy" programs, but gradually it began to dawn on even

the walls of the Corporation that man and woman cannot live on seriousness alone – they need to enjoy themselves. Even better, they need to partake of that peculiarly human activity: laughter. In the USA, the situation was different for the simple reason that commercial TV stations, desperate to seek out the mass audience, had aimed for the audience's funny bone from the start.

But UK or USA, the first comedies to arrive on TV were derived from three fountainheads – radio (with some shows, such as *Amos 'n' Andy* transferring to the new medium almost intact), film, and, especially, music hall/vaudeville acts. The new TV audience wanted funny sights a-plenty and got them in such "vaudeo" slapstick programs as Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theatre* and *The Abbott and Costello Show*. Audience desire for high visual content also ensured that the initial TV situation comedies – humorous shows involving recurring characters in a defined setting – also traded heavily on pratfalls and physical comedy.

The greatest hit of the 1950s, *I Love Lucy*, being

Oh, Mr. Grant...

perhaps the exemplar. (Of the first wave of TV comedy, *The Jack Benny Show* was the odd program out, since it depended on Benny's verbal wit, but at the same time it was absolutely typical in that it was built around a star personality). Since people get the TV they deserve, the fifties and early sixties saw a rash of cozy sitcoms, invariably centered on the family: *Bachelor Father*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Andy Griffith Show*. The "Hi Honey, I'm Home" show, as the family sitcom became dubbed, was less dominant in Britain, however, where postwar disillusion set in early, and a distinctly black vein of sitcom humor emerged in *Hancock's Half-Hour* in 1956, to be continued by that show's principal writers, Alan Galton and Ray Simpson, in *Steptoe and Son* in 1962. The other main form of TV humor, the vaudeville-derived skit-and-gag show, also took an early turn away from complacency in Britain, first with ex-Goon Michael Bentine's *It's a Square World*, then with the political satire of *That Was The Week That Was*. As the sixties rocked and rebelled, so did the airwaves, with such topical, even directly political, shows as *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* becoming megahits. Unconcerned with politics, but deeply subverting the rules of TV comedy, was 1969's surrealistic and anarchic *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. One of a handful of programs to move the boundaries of TV humor, *Python* even dropped such traditional joke elements as the punch line (Graham Chapman's colonel arriving midsketch to proclaim that "this sketch is becoming too silly – stop it"), and was always busy in the use of *ostranie*

Schwing!

– the drawing of attention to artifice – for humorous effect, routinely parodying other shows and the portentousness of BBC announcements, replacing the latter with fakes ("Now on BBC television, a choice of viewing. On BBC2, a discussion on censorship between the Bishop of Woolwich and a nude man. And on BBC1, me telling you this").

TV comedy innovation continued into the early 70s with *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (the first hit comedy featuring a woman who was single by choice) and the antiwar ethos of *M*A*S*H*. By mid-decade, however, the pendulum had swung back to domestic conservatism, a trend reinforced in America by the introduction of 8:00–9:00P.M. "family viewing" and a reaction to the realism of such comedies as *All In the Family* (the US take on *Till Death Us Do Part*). In Britain, it was the age of *The Good Life* and a comedy orbit that hardly moved outside suburbia. Of course, *The Good Life* was funny, but most of the comedy shows that issued forth from the TV production companies were not, their tired titles (*Holding the Fort*, *Thicker Than Water*) a Brobdingnagian clue to their equally tired content.

Then in 1982 came *The Young Ones*, a sitcom that pushed the boundaries of convention (surrealist interludes, rock bands performing midshow), taste (lashings of cartoon violence), and inaugurated the coming of alternative comedy, a wave of non-racist/sexist humor which would continue through *The Comic Strip*, *Red Dwarf*, and

Saturday Live/Friday Night Live, a show which (like its US original) took one stream of TV comedy back to its fountainhead: the theater stand-up. *Vic Reeves' Big Night Out* only confirmed the fact.

As the eighties progressed into the nineties, so it became obvious that TV humor was splitting its sides, so to speak, to form many trends. The small screen is often but a mirror to the faces that looked into it. And those who looked into the small screen in the nineties were atomized, divorced, and dy\$functional, with the kids viewing in one room and their parent(s) in another.

Did we laugh? You bet your bottom dollar. The whole family might not gather around the glowing tube to watch the same show (well they do in the USA if it's *Seinfeld*), but television – especially television comedy – is what family remnants talk about, peer groups talk about, and what strangers find to talk about. It's the glue which binds whole portions of society together.

Titter ye not



And here's the funny thing. The most fashionable form of the late-nineties sitcom, the goofy singles show (*Ellen*, *Seinfeld*) is just as much a traditional family sitcom – if you care to look at it – as those of the Eisenhower fifties. Relatives have simply been replaced by a family of friends, *Friends* itself being a case in point. The inalienable truth of the sitcom is that no single person must face things alone. The same might go for life itself.

Of the thousands of pure comedy shows that have been produced, a select number have reached an exalted status. These are the shows whose catchphrases are repeated in the schoolyard, whose characters become peer and national institutions, whose fans organize viewing parties and weep tears of sadness when their time on the tube is ended (until resurrected for immortality on satellite and cable). These are the cult comedies. Leaf through the following pages for the full monty on everything from *Abbott and Costello* to *The Young Ones*. A catalog of the series and the stars who entranced the viewing world for fifty years is there for the reading.

And the laughing.

THE ABBOTT AND COSTELLO SHOW

USA 1952–3, 52 x 30m, bw Syndicated. TCA Corp.

CR Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. **PR** Pat Costello, Alex Gottlieb. **DR** Jean Yarborough. **WR** Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, Clyde Bruckman. **CAST** Bud Abbott himself Lou Costello himself Sid Fields himself Hillary Brooke herself Mike the Cop Gordon Jones Stinky Joe Besser Mr. Bacciagalupe Joe Kirk.

With their Hollywood career in decline, slapstick stars Bud Abbott (born William Abbott) and Lou Costello (Louis Cristillo) tested the new medium of TV, first as hosts of *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, then with this half-hour sitcom for syndication. The storyline – such as it was – had the duo as unemployed, apartment-sharing actors constantly concocting schemes to make easy money or dodge bills, particularly the rent owed to landlord Mr. Fields. Usually, however, episodes unraveled into a collection of unrelated jokes and antics, almost all of them recycled directly from Abbott and Costello's old movies.

Audiences lapped it up. Endlessly rerun, the show became one of the most successful in the history of syndicated TV, doing much to fill the coffers of Costello – the short, funny one – who owned the show.

Also seen was Costello's girlfriend Hillary; a bullying tenant called Stinky (always dressed in the clothes of a little boy); Mike the Cop; and Abbott and Costello's pet chimp, Bingo. Towards the end of the series, there was a perceptible rise in quality, as director Jean Yarborough insisted on tighter plots,

and a new gag writer, Clyde Bruckman, was drafted in, Abbott and Costello having used up their own patented stock of humor. In 1966 a cartoon version of *Abbott and Costello* was syndicated by Hanna-Barbera. Abbott provided his own voice, but that of Costello (who had died in 1959 at the age of fifty-two) was supplied by Stan Irwin.

ABSOLUTELY

UK 1989–93, 24 x 30m, col C4. *Absolutely Productions.*

PR David Tyler, Alan Nixon. **DR** Various, including Graham C. Williams. **WR** Morwenna Banks, Jack Docherty, Moray Hunter, Gordon Kennedy, John Sparkes. **CAST** Morwenna Banks, Jack Docherty, Moray Hunter, Gordon Kennedy, John Sparkes.

Anarchic sketch show, dubbed the >Monty Python of latter televisual times, courtesy of the Scottish school of alternative comedy. Although it ran the gamut of skit-program possibilities, from animation (*à la Python*) to spoofed-up songs, its particular pleasure was its regular gallery of invented characters: Little Girl, rabid nationalist McGlashen, the Stoneybridge town council, melodious Mr. Muzak, geekish Calum Gilhooley, disaster-prone DIY expert Denzil, and scatological Frank Hovis (these last two creations performed by lone Welsh team member John Sparkes – Hovis being an expert in the curing of chapped anuses). The characters Donald McDiarmid and George McDiarmid even enjoyed their own spin-off series, *mr don and mr george*. Most of the *Absolutely*

performers moved ever up the showbiz ladder, though Gordon Kennedy progressed downwards to co-host Britain's *National Lottery Live*.

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS

UK 1992–6, 20 x 30m, col BBC2/BBC1. BBC TV.
US tx 1994 Comedy Central.

CR Jennifer Saunders. **PR** Jon Plowman, Janice Thomas. **DR** Bob Spiers. **WR** Jennifer Saunders.
MUS Julie Driscoll and Adrian Edmondson ("This Wheel's on Fire" theme vocals; lyrics by Bob Dylan and Rick Danko). **CAST** Edina Monsoon Jennifer Saunders Patsy Stone Joanna Lumley Saffron Monsoon Julia Sawalha Mother June Whitfield Bubble Jane Horrocks. Video BBC.

Hugely popular sitcom set in the trendy world of the nineties fashion industry, developed from a >French and Saunders sketch in which Jennifer Saunders played a baseball-capped parent berated by her conservative daughter (Dawn French) for playing hip-hop too loudly. For the series, Saunders took the part of Edina Monsoon (rumored to reference Saunders's sometime press agent Lynne Franks) a late-thirtysomething sixties leftover with her own PR/fashion business, who behaved badly (drugs, Bollinger champagne, cigarettes, men, fashion-following) with bouffanted pal Patsy

(Joanna Lumley, *New Avengers*, *Sapphire and Steel*), a *Cosmo*-type fashion writer. Looking on aghast at the antics of the two "dahlings" were Edina's sensible daughter Saffron (Julia Sawalha from *Press Gang*) and her mother (played by MOR comic actress June Whitfield, >Terry and June). Bubbles (Royal Shakespeare Company actress Jane Horrocks) was Edina's vacant press agent. Also seen was Adrian Edmondson (>Comic Strip, >Bottom, and Saunders's real-life husband) as restaurant critic Hamish. Direction was by veteran Bob Spiers (whose résumé constitutes a virtual TV's Greatest Hits catalog, including segments of >Dad's Army, >The Goodies, >Are You Being Served?), and comedian Ruby Wax (>Girls on Top) served as script editor.

Saunders's first solo project after her years with *The Comic Strip*, *Girls on Top*, and *French and Saunders*, the politically incorrect, slay-every-sacred-nineties-cow (dieting, cosmetic surgery, crystals) *Ab Fab* was an immediate hit, securing two BAFTAs for its first season (Best Comedy, and Best Light Entertainment Performer for Lumley's turn as the alcoholic, nymphomaniacal Patsy) and BBC2's highest ratings for 1992. Although performances continued to be of high caliber, the second series, aired on BBC1, was short on comedy, long on guest appearances (Germaine Greer, Suzi Quatro, Lulu even) and Edina's spouting of "Darling!", though the episode in which the kitchen at 34 Claremont Avenue, London, burned down ("Birth") had its moments, as Edina tried to dress for the occasion (Edina to schoolgirl Saffron: "It's OK for you, you've got a uniform to wear") and restyle the room with the "Irish Crofter's Look." A third and final series

Oh, sweetie



marked a return to form, by which time *Ab Fab* had become a huge seller around the world, being screened in, among other countries, South Africa, Iceland, Australia, and Poland. A rapturous response in the USA led to Roseanne Barr buying the rights for a stateside version, which floundered when the ABC network wanted to remove the characters' drunkenness and swearing. "Oh, sweetie..."

A one-off *Ab Fab* special was released in 1996, in which Edina and Patsy contemplated the setting up of a cable TV station, but got distracted by a chance to hit the slopes at Val d'Isère.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

USA 1964–6, 64 x 30m, bw ABC. Filmways. UK tx 1966–8 ITV.

CR Charles Addams, David Levy. **EXEC PR** David Levy. **PR** David Levy, Nat Perrin. **DR** Various, including Sidney Lanfield, Nat Perrin, Sidney Soklon, Jerry Hopper, Arthur Hiller, Jean Yarbrough. **WR** Various, including Hannibal Coons, Preston Ward, George Tibbles, Carol Henning, Jameson Brewer, Harry Winkler, Keith Fowler, Phil Leslie. **MUS** Vic Mizzy. **CAST** Morticia Frump Addams Carolyn Jones Gomez Addams John Astin Uncle Fester Frump Jackie Coogan Lurch/Thing Ted Cassidy Grandmama Addams Blossom Rock Pugsley Addams Ken Weatherwax Wednesday Addams Lisa Loring Cousin Itt Felix Silla (voice: Tony Magro). Video Polygram.

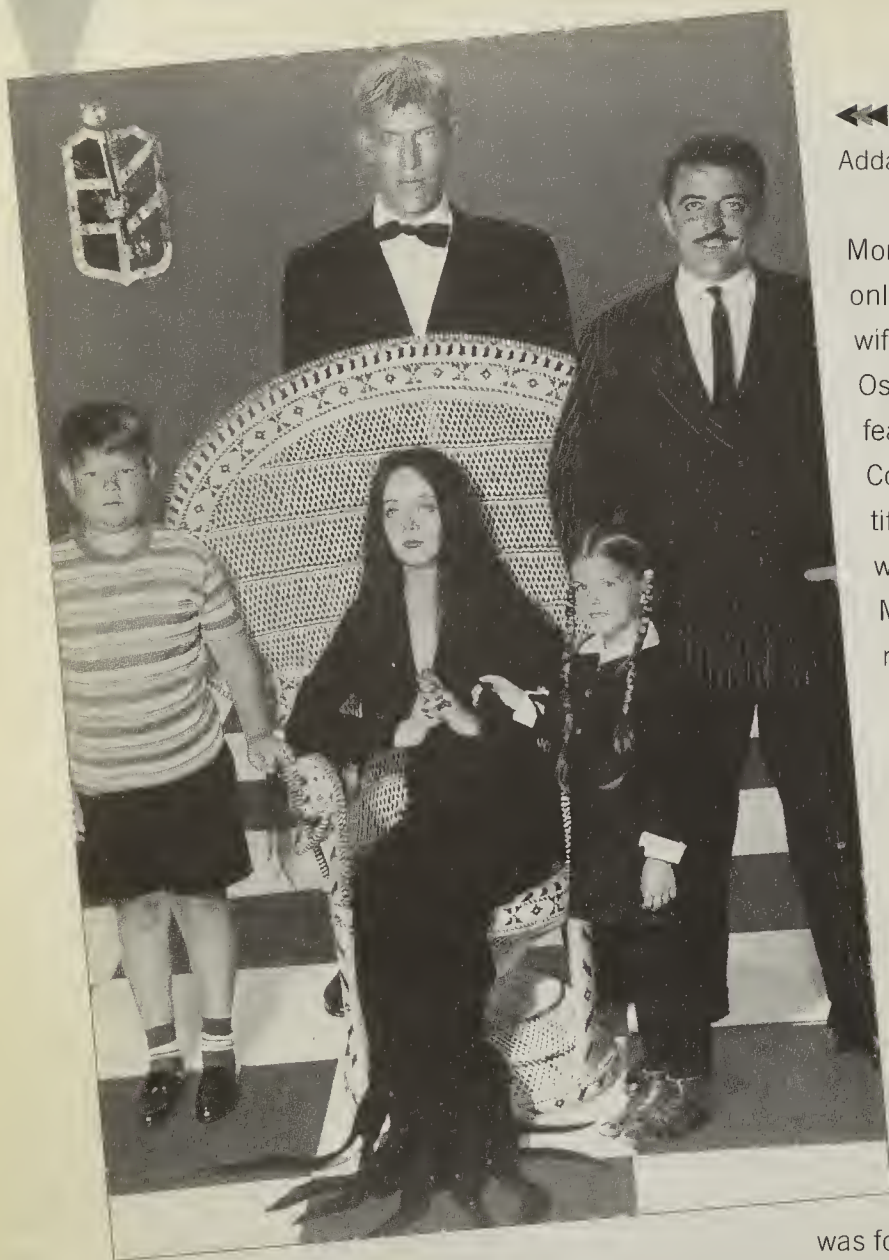
» *They're creepy and they're kooky, their life is kinda spooky...* «

Spoof freak show, adapted from Charles Addams' famous *New Yorker* cartoons. Heads of the eponymous and "altogether ookie" family were Latino lawyer Gomez (seldom seen without a gangster suit and Castro-sized cigar) and his tantalizing black-haired wife Morticia. Their ramshackle mansion on North Cemetery Ridge was filled with strange *objets d'art* and *du mort* (including a stuffed fish with a protruding human leg), and inhabited by ghoulish, bald-headed Uncle Fester (who lit lightbulbs by placing them in his mouth); haggish Grandmama; and Gomez and Morticia's perverse spawn, daughter Wednesday and son Pugsley. Household tasks were performed by the gaunt family retainer, Lurch ("You rang?"), and the disembodied hand-in-a-box, Thing. Making up the distended Addams family was hirsute Cousin Itt. Episodes began with a somber family group adding percussive finger snaps to the show's theme tune.

Much of the appeal of *The Addams Family* lay in the simmering sexual attraction between Gomez and Morticia, and, as with rival CBS show *The Munsters*, in its black-comic inversion of normality. Thus Morticia snipped the blooms off stalks before arranging flowers in a vase, thrilled with her

You rang?

«« « "Oh, sweetie..." Joanna Lumley and Jennifer Saunders yet again indulge in a spot of shopping in Absolutely Fabulous.



◀◀ The “altogether ookie” members of The Addams Family.

Morticia went to a name Hollywood actress. The only one to apply was Carolyn Jones (sometime wife of TV mega-producer Aaron Spelling), an Oscar nominee for a supporting role in the 1956 feature *Bachelor Party*. Former child star Jackie Coogan (who had played, at the age of four, the title role in Charlie Chaplin's 1921 film *The Kid*) was cast as Fester.

Moderately successful in its initial ABC run, ranking twenty-third in the Nielsen ratings, *The Addams Family* proved durable enough to spawn a 1973 Hanna-Barbera animated version, broadcast on NBC, in which the Addams Family roamed America in a creepy camper (the voice cast included a young Jodie Foster as Pugsley), and a 1977 reunion TVM, *Hallowe'en with the New Addams Family*. A feature film *The Addams Family*, starring Anjelica Huston and Raul Julia, was a huge box office success for Paramount Pictures in 1991, taking a first weekend gross of \$24.1 million. It in turn was followed by *Addams Family Values*, 1993, and a 1998 TVM, *Addams Family Reunion*.

husband to the thought of torture (to please Gomez, she drilled his teeth until she hit the nerve), and sent Pugsley to a psychiatrist when she saw him help an old woman across the road.

The outlandishness of *The Addams Family* made it the virtual TV definition of the breaking sixties counterculture. To ensure a wide audience, however, a nervous ABC insisted that the part of

As if to prove you can't keep a good freak show down, in 1992 Hanna-Barbera reanimated *The Addams Family* as a Saturday morning serial for ABC network. Of the original cast, only John Astin (also >*I'm Dickens, He's Fenster*; *Operation Petticoat*; *Tazmania*; and director of segments on such TV shows as *CHiPS* and *Macmillan and Wife*) lent his voice.

THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET

USA 1952–66, 435 x 25m, bw/col ABC. ABC/Stage 5.

CR Ozzie Nelson. **PR** Ozzie Nelson, Robert Angus, Bill Lewis, Leo Penn. **DR** Various, including Ozzie Nelson, Leo Penn. **WR** Various, including Ozzie Nelson. **CAST** Ozzie Nelson himself Harriet Hilliard Nelson herself Eric “Ricky” Nelson himself Dave Nelson himself Kris Nelson (Ricky’s wife) herself June Nelson (Dave’s wife) herself “Thorn” Thornberry Don DeFore Joe Randolph Lyle Talbot Clara Randolph Mary Jane Croft Darby Parley Baer Doc Williams Frank Cady Wally Skip Young.

Long-running family sitcom, the gimmick of which was that the principal actors were, er, a family themselves. They were: middle-class bandleader Ozzie Nelson, his wife (and band chanteuse) Harriet, and their sons Ricky and David. By the end of the run, Ricky (who had gone from a boyish eleven to a husband of twenty-five) had parlayed his small-screen career into one as a fifties rock’n’roller, aided by a 1957 episode in which he sang Fats Domino’s “I’m Walkin’.” This, with a B-side of “A Teenager’s Romance,” became a million-seller. Like a number of other classic fifties sitcoms, *Ozzie and Harriet* began life on the radio, while its route to TV land was eased by a 1951 feature film entitled *Here Come the Nelsons*. In 1973, the Nelson parents returned with a sequel to the TV *Adventures* in which they took in two college girls as boarders and surrogate daughters. It was called, with no great originality, *Ozzie’s Girls*.

THE ADVENTURES OF PETE AND PETE

USA 1993–6, Approx 30 x 1/10/30m, col Nickelodeon. Nickelodeon.

CR Will McRobb and Chris Viscardi. **DR** Katherine Dieckman, Alison MacLean. **WR** Will McRobb and Chris Viscardi. **MUS** Polaris (theme), Miracle Legion et al. **CAST** Little Pete Wrigley Danny Tamberelli Big Pete Wrigley/Narrator Mike Maronna Mom (Joyce Wrigley) Judy Grafe Dad (Don Wrigley) Hardy Rawls Ellen Hickle Alison Fanelli Artie Toby Huss Mr. Mecklenberg Iggy Pop. Video Nickelodeon.

Sitcom chronicling the excellent – if plain odd – misadventures of two brothers (both named Pete) and their friends in Westville, USA. Knowingly heavy on music and celebrities (guests included rapper LL Cool J; rockers Michael Stipe from REM and Iggy Pop; and actors Bebe “*Cheers*” Neuwirth and Steve “*Reservoir Dogs*” Buscemi), the *Adventures* started as one-minute promos for the Nickelodeon cable channel, before becoming specials, and then a weekly series. Also seen was Mom (who had a metal plate in her head, useful as a radio antenna), the relatively normal Dad, older Pete’s friend Ellen, and Artie, the Strongest Man in the World.

Classic episodes included “The Burping Room” (in which, after excessive belching, younger Pete is forced by Dad to conduct all belching in a specially designed room), “X-Ray Man” (in which younger Pete gets X-ray vision, forcing Ellen to wear a lead smock), “What We Did on our Summer Vacation,” and “Staremaster.”

THE ADVENTURES OF TUGBOAT ANNIE

Canada 39 x 30m, bw. *Normandie*. US tx 1957
Syndicated. UK tx 1958 ITV.

PR Anthony Veiller. **CAST** Annie Brennan *Minerva Urecal* Captain Horatio Bullwinkle *Walter Sande* Murdoch McArdle *Stan Francis*.

Much-publicized but short-lived TV exercise in screwball comedy, featuring Minerva Urecal as widow Annie Brennan, foghorn-voiced skipper of the *Narcissus*, a tug based in the Pacific Northwest of America. Brennan's main preoccupation was one-upwomanship over rival skipper Horatio Bullwinkle but, in standard sex-comedy fashion, circumstances invariably required the antagonists to misadventure together.

The character of Tugboat Annie first appeared in the short stories of Norman Reilly Raine, before progressing to cinema in 1933 to be played by Marie Dressler (opposite Wallace Beery's drunken Bullwinkle). Although the Canadian company *Normandie* bought the TV rights in 1954, casting and technical problems quagmired the production and the series did not air until 1957. Sometimes aired as *Tugboat Annie*.

A. J. WENTWORTH, BA

UK 1982, 6 x 25m, col ITV. *Thames TV*.

PR Michael Mills. **DR** Michael Mills. **WR** Basil Boothroyd. **CAST** A. J. Wentworth, BA *Arthur Lowe* Matron *Marion Mathie* Reverend R. G. Saunders

(Headmaster) *Harry Andrews* Rawlinson *Ronnie Stevens* Mason *Marcus Evans*.

The last screen work of narcoleptic actor Arthur Lowe (*Coronation Street*, *Pardon the Expression*, >*Dad's Army*, *Potter*), in which he played a pompous but benign math teacher at a 1940s prep school, Burgrove. Obsessed with the honor of the school, Wentworth was also frequently preoccupied by such diverting details as the rising cost of pen nibs, the tactics of archenemy Matron and the antics of Form 3A, particularly the dreaded mason. Adapted by Basil Boothroyd from the short stories of *Punch* writer H. F. Ellis.

ALAS SMITH AND JONES

UK 1982–7, 43+ x 30m, 1 x 60m, col BBC2. *A Talkback Production*.

CR Mel Smith, Griff Rhys Jones. **PR** Martin Shardlow, John Kilby, Jimmy Mulville, Jamie Rix, **DR** Various, including Robin Carr, John Kilby. **WR** Various, including Mel Smith, Griff Rhys Jones, Clive Anderson, Jimmy Mulville, Rory McGrath, Rob Grant, Doug Naylor, Colin Bostock-Smith. **CAST** Mel Smith, Griff Rhys Jones, Clive Mantle.

Originally the half of >*Not the Nine O'Clock News* that no one could name, Mel Smith (son of a betting shop owner) and Griff Rhys Jones (son of a doctor) spun their friendship into a double-act skit show that became a mainstay of BBC comedy in the 1980s. Their sketches, head-to-head chats between a continually bemused Jones and a know-it-all



Well then, where is this woman when you're...?

Don't know, might be anywhere... probably shopping.



Smith, were minimalist classics (if lifted unacknowledged from >*Not Only... But Also*), as was their sperm donor routine ("Well then, where is this woman when you're...?" / "Don't know, might be anywhere... probably shopping"). A 1988 Christmas special was released as *Alas Sage and Onion*.

In 1988 the duo produced *The World According to Smith and Jones* for LWT, returning to the BBC for *Smith and Jones in Small Doses* and *Smith and Jones* (BBC1 1990–5). Although the latter was in the same format as *Alas*, it tilted increasingly at alternative comedy's usual suspects – police, politicians, TV ads (this despite the fact that Smith and Jones' own TV production company made many of them) – and quality declined. An attempt to revive *Alas* itself was made in 1998.

Over the years, those to be found toiling in the Smith and Jones' backroom have included Rob Grant and Doug Naylor (>*Red Dwarf*), and Clive Anderson (*Whose Line Is It Anyway?*).

ALEXEI SAYLE'S STUFF

UK 1988–91, 18 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

PR Marcus Mortimer, Jon Plowman. **DR** Marcus Mortimer, Bob Spiers. **WR** Various, including Alexei Sayle, Andrew Marshall, David Renwick. **CAST** Alexei Sayle, Angus Deayton, Tony Millan, Felicity Montagu, Harriet Thorpe, Jan Raven.

After an ill-conceived sojourn (alongside Chris Tarrant and Lenny Henry) on ITV's lamentably crude *OTT* show, bulbous Jewish comic Alexei Sayle developed in the direction of alternative comedy TV via guest appearances on >*The Young Ones* and >*The Comic Strip Presents*, notably the latter's film segment "Didn't You Kill My Brother?" This solo show, created by Sayle, followed, mixing mock-reflective monologues with parodies of TV itself (à la nearly every other late-eighties sketch series). But *Stuff* also had an edge of wry observational absurdism – sample: a nationwide film critics' strike, with the Army called in to pen all columns, even providing an emergency Barry Norman – that garnered plaudits and the 1989 Emmy Award for Best Foreign Comedy Show. It was followed by the *All-New Alexei Sayle Show* (two series for BBC2) which, title aside, was more of the same *Stuff*. Those aiding and abetting Sayle on-screen included Angus Deayton (>*KYTV*, >*One Foot in the Grave*, *Have I Got News for You*) and Jan Raven.

ALF

USA 1986–96, 102 x 30m, 2 x 60m, col NBC.
Lorimar. UK tx 1987– ITV.

CR Paul Fusco, Tom Patchett. **EXEC PR** Bernie Brillstein, Tom Patchett. **PR** Tom Patchett. **DR** Various, including Paul Bonerz, Nancy Heydorn, Tom Patchett, Paul Fusco, Tony Csiki. **WR** Various, including Paul Fusco, Tom Patchett, Bob and Howard Bendetson. **CAST** Willie Tanner Max Wright Kate Tanner Anne Schedeen Lynn Tanner Andrea Elson Brian Tanner Benji Gregory Trevor Ochmonek

John LaMotta Raquel Ochmonek Liz Sheridan Eric Tanner Charles Nickerson Neal Tanner J. M. J. Bullock Dorothy Halligan Anne Meara.

In which a small, hairy, 229-year old Alien Life Form (hence the title) called Gordon Shumway from planet Melmac crashes his spaceship through the garage roof of archetypal suburban American family, the Tanners. Unlike fellow alien abbreviation ET, ALF stayed, moved in with the Tanners – whom he then proceeded mercilessly to satirize. It might be complained that the device of employing an extraterrestrial lodger to comment on human foibles is almost as old as TV sitcom time, dating back to >*My Favorite Martian* (via >*Mork and Mindy*), but *ALF* did it to biting funny effect. Numerous episodes also related ALF's evasion of the government's Alien Task Force and his various unpleasant hobbies, prime among them cat-snacking (to the standard fast exit of the Tanner's pet feline). Sometime magician Paul Fusco, the show's creator, provided the puppet ALF with his voice, while three-foot-tall Michu Meszaros donned fur for the walkabout scenes. Selling to over fifty countries around the world, the show spun off a 1987 cartoon prequel (detailing Shumway's life on Melmac, produced by Bernie Brillstein, Andy Heyward and future kiddie showmeister Haim Saban) and a merchandizing bonanza. There was also a big-screen version, *ALF: The Movie*.

ALF's spaceship, for those who care to know, was a Phlegm 220 model.

» **ALF: "I've got dandruff older than your country."**



Kiss my grits

ALICE

USA 1976–85, 209 x 30m, col CBS. Warner TV. UK tx 1984–6 C4.

CR Robert Gretchell. **EXEC PR** Bob Carroll Jr., Madelyn Davis. **PR** Various, including David Suskind, William P. D'Angelo, Ray Allen, Harvey Bullock. **MUS** Linda Lavin ("There's a New Girl in Town" theme vocals). **CAST** Alice Hyatt Linda Lavin Mel Sharples Vic Tayback Flo Castleberry Polly Holiday Vera Gorman Beth Howland Tommy Hyatt Alfred Lutler/Philip Mikeon Belle Du Pre Dianne Ladd Chloe Ruth Buzzi Earl Hicks Dave Madden.

This spin-off from the 1974 movie *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More* (directed by Martin Scorsese) starred Linda Lavin (formerly >*Barney Miller*) as the singing single mom of the title who heads towards a new life in California, only to become stranded en route as a waitress at Mel's Diner in Phoenix Arizona. Also busing tables was diffident Vera and big-mouthed Flo ("Kiss my grits"), the latter eventually moving off to Houston and a sitcom of her own, *Flo*. To offset the loss of Flo, waitress Belle was added to the cast, the character being played by Dianne Ladd, who, confusingly, had portrayed the character of Flo in the movie version. The show was a solid top ten hit for much of its run, its success due in large measure to the coterie of regular characters at Mel's, who became so intimately known that to watch an episode was like a trip to the neighborhood hostelry.

ALL GAS AND GAITERS

UK 1967–71, 32 x 30m, bw BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Edwin Apps and Pauline Devaney. **PR** Stuart Allen, John Howard Davies. **WR** Edwin Apps and Pauline Devaney. **CAST** Reverend Mervyn Noot Derek Nimmo Bishop William Mervyn Archdeacon Robertson Hare Dean Ernest Clark/John Barron.

Much-loved British sixties “charactercom” which trespassed on previously hallowed ground by poking (affectionate) fun at the clergy. Derived from a *Comedy Playhouse* presentation, “The Bishop Rides Again,” it featured a trio of incompetent incumbents – the Bishop, the Archdeacon, the Chaplain Noot – of fictitious St. Ogg’s Cathedral, who were the bane of the severely unamused Dean. Derek Nimmo took his verbose, bumbling, be-cassocked character on to *Oh Brother!* and its sequel *Oh Father!*

Created by the husband-and-wife writing team of Edwin Apps and Pauline Devaney.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

USA 1971–91, 160 x 30m, col CBS. Tandem Productions/Yorkin-Lear. UK tx 1971–5 BBC1/BBC2.

CR Norman Lear, Bud Yorkin. **PR** Norman Lear. **DR** Various, including John Rich, Michael Ross, Paul Bogart. **WR** Various, including Norman Lear. **MUS** Strouse and Adams (“Those Were the Days”



▲▲ The main cast of *All in the Family*, CBS's remake of *Till Death Us Do Part*.

theme lyrics and music), Carroll O'Connor and Jean Stapleton (theme vocals). **CAST** Archie Bunker Carroll O'Connor Edith Bunker Jean Stapleton Gloria Stivic Sally Struthers Mike Stivic Rob Reiner Joey Jason and Justin Draeger Lionel Jefferson Mike Evan Louise Jefferson Isabel Sanford Henry Jefferson Mel Stewart George Jefferson Sherman Hemsley Irene Lorenzo Betty Garrett Frank Lorenzo Vincent Gadenia Barney Hefner Allan Melvin Teresa Betancourt Liz Torres Stephanie Mills Danielle Brisebois Harry Snowden Jason Wingreen Murray Klein Martin Balsam Veronica Rooney Anne Meara Mr. Van Ransseleer Bill Quinn.

Transplantation of British sitcom *>Till Death Us Do Part* from London to Queens, New York. Initially developed for ABC (who rejected two pilots), the show was eventually taken up by CBS, whose president, Robert Wood, was consciously seeking a small-screen package that reflected the controversies of contemporary American society.

All in the Family had them in droves, as well as an abrasive style completely at odds with the synthetic “Hi, Honey, I’m home” television comedies of the time.

Like its British model, *All in the Family* was built on the clashes between a working-class bigot and his daughter and son-in-law: here dock foreman Archie Bunker of the Prendergast Tool and Die Company, determined offspring Gloria, and her Polish-American sociology student spouse, Mike Stivic (“Meathead”). Other targets of Bunker’s ire were his ethnic neighbors on Houser Street: the Italian Lorenzos, the black Jeffersons. Throughout, Bunker’s dim-witted wife Edith (“Dingbat”) long suffered.

For five consecutive years, *All in the Family* was the highest-rated series on US TV, garnering audiences of around 50 million per episode, winning the Outstanding Comedy Emmy in 1971, 1972, and 1973. It also spun off two other successful shows, *The Jeffersons* and *>Maude* (the latter based around Edith’s liberal cousin, played by a pre-*>Golden Girls* Bea Arthur). When *All in the Family* began to fade in the ratings, it was dramatically restructured, with Archie taking shares in a bar, Edith dying of a stroke (actress Jean Stapleton had tired of the part), and Gloria and Mike moving to California with son Joey. It opened the 1979–80

season as *Archie Bunker’s Place* and continued under this title until 1991, by which time “Bunker” had entered the American lexicon as a term for a blue-collar reactionary, Archie’s armchair – one of the icons of seventies TV – had been gifted to the Smithsonian, and *All in the Family* had decisively changed the course of US situation comedy towards realism and more mature themes. Actor Rob Reiner (son of comedian Carl, of *Caesar’s Hour* and *>The Dick Van Dyke Show* fame), meanwhile, left his meathead persona behind to direct such Hollywood movies as *This Is Spinal Tap* (also writer), *When Harry Met Sally*, and *A Few Good Men*.

‘ALLO, ‘ALLO

UK 1982–94, 86 x 30m, 1 x 60m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx 1987 Syndicated.

CR David Croft, Jeremy Lloyd. **PR** David Croft, Mike Stephens, John B. Hobbs. **DR** Various, including David Croft, Mike Stephens, Sue Longstaff. **WR** Various, including David Croft, Jeremy Lloyd, Paul Adam. **CAST** René Artois Gordon Kaye Edith Carmen Silvera Yvette Vicki Michelle Maria Francesca Gonshaw Lieutenant Gruber Guy Siner Mme Fanny Rose Hill Flying Officer Fairfax John D. Collins Flying Officer Carstairs Nicholas Frankau Colonel Von Strohm Richard Marner General Von Klinkerhoffen Hilary Minster Captain Hans Geering Sam Kelly Helga Kim Hartman M. Leclerc Jack Haig/ Derek Royle/Robin Parkinson Herr Otto Flick Richard Gibson/ David Janson Von Smallhausen

▶▶ René fraternizes with friend and foe in ‘Allo, ‘Allo.



John Louis Mansi Alfonse Kenneth Connor Crabtree
Arthur Bostrom Bertorelli Gavin Richards, Roger
Kitter Mimi le Bonque Sue Hodge.

Spoof version of stiff-upper-lip Second World War Resistance drama *Secret Army*, laden – like Croft and Lloyd’s earlier *>Are You Being Served?* – with slapstick, innuendo, and caricature. “Leesten very carefooly, I weel say zees ernly wernce...” Almost every episode of the farce, which was set in the occupied French town of Nouvion, had a cleavage joke (most famously Yvette’s attempt to sell ice cream in a vibrating truck), a scene in which café owner René was caught in flagrante delicto with a waitress by his grim-faced wife Edith, or a development in the convoluted saga of the priceless painting of “The Fallen Madonna with the Big Boobies.” Other running gags included René’s reluctance to help the Resistance, the fumbling attempts to use the secret radio hidden beneath his mother-in-law’s chamber pot, and the preposterous French of British secret agent Officer Crabtree (“Good moaning”).

Politically correct ‘Allo, ‘Allo was not, and unease over the material caused Jewish actor Sam Kelly, who played Wehrmacht officer Hans Geering, to refuse to say “Heil Hitler!,” substituting “Klomp!” instead. Yet accusations of racism were easily countered: in the small world of Nouvion absolutely everybody – French, Germans, British – was a pantomime joke. The final series bowed out with the war drawing to an end and naughty Nazis Colonel Von Strohm and Lieutenant Gruber heading for the Spanish border dressed as flamenco dancers. As with everything about ‘Allo, ‘Allo, it was done in the

Good moaning

worst possible taste, but to knockabout perfection.

Cocreators Croft and Lloyd have a string of TV credits between them. Actor-writer Jeremy Lloyd came up through the TV comedy mill on such shows as *>Dickie Henderson* and *>Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In* (in which he also appeared), before penning *Are You Being Served?* The TV credits of David Croft (son of musical comedy star Anne Croft) include *>Dad’s Army*, *>It Ain’t Half Hot, Mum*, and *>Hi-De-Hi!* Notable not least for his spotting and reuse of comic actors (Gordon Kaye had previously appeared in *Are You Being Served?* and *It Ain’t Half Hot, Mum*, while Carmen Silvera was Captain Mainwaring’s fling in an early episode of *Dad’s Army*), Croft is holder of British TV’s highest accolade, the Desmond Davies Award. In 1979 Croft was awarded the Order of the British Empire for services to the small screen.

AMOS’N’ANDY

USA 1951–5, 78 x 30m, bw CBS. CBS. UK tx 1954 BBC.

CR Freeman Gosden, Charles Correll. **PR** Freeman Gosden, Charles Correll. **DR** Various, including Charles Barton. **WR** Various, including Freeman Gosden, Charles Correll. **MUS** Gaetano Braga (“Angels Serenade” theme song). **CAST** Andrew Hogg Brown Spencer Williams, Jr. George “Kingfish” Stevens Tim Moore Amos Jones Alvin Childress

Sapphire Stevens *Ernestine Wade* Mama *Amanda Randolph* Algonquin J. Calhoun *Johnny Lee* Madame Queen *Lillian Randolph* Lightnin' *Horace Stewart (aka Nick O'Demus)*.

TV version of popular American radio series about a black Chicago conman, George "Kingfish" Stevens, and his endlessly gullible prey, Andy Brown ("the big dummy"). Both were members of a Freemasons-like organization, and any qualms on Brown's part were quieted by Kingfish's appeal to Lodge loyalty: "Holy mackerel [a catchline invented by a New Orleans DJ, and later to be recycled by Robin in *Batman*], Andy! We's all got to stick together in dis heah thing... remember, we is brothers in that great fraternity, the Mystic Knights of the Sea." The Amos of the title was actually a minor character, a hardworking philosophical driver for the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company who doubled as narrator. Also seen were Sapphire, Kingfish's wife; her mama; Andy's girlfriend Madame Queen; and Lightnin', the slow-moving Lodge janitor.

The series drew big audiences during its CBS run, and for a decade of reruns on local US stations. It ceased airing in 1966, not for want of viewers but because African-American groups, led by the NAACP, objected to its racist stereotyping of black people as "inferior, lazy, dumb, and dishonest." When Blatz Beer withdrew sponsorship and Kenya banned it, CBS responded to the protest by withdrawing *Amos'n'Andy* from sale. Produced by Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, the white actors who created and starred in the radio version (and who wore blackface for the small screen), the

show merits a mention in the annals of TV technology for being the first to be broadcast with a canned-laughter soundtrack.

THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW

USA 1960–8, 249 x 30m, bw/col CBS. Mayberry Productions.

PR Sheldon Leonard, Aaron Ruben. **DR** Various, including Richard Crenna, Earl Bellamy, Howard Morris, Bob Sweeney, Alan Rafkin. **MUS** Earle H. Hagen. **CAST** Andy Taylor Andy Griffith Opie Taylor Ronny Howard Aunt Bee Taylor Frances Bavier Barney Fife Don Knotts Ellie Walker Elinor Donahue Gomer Pyle Jim Nabors Clara Edwards Hope Summers Goober Pyle George Lindsey Floyd Lawson Howard McNear Howard Sprague Jack Dodson Otis Campbell Hal Smith. Video United American Video.

Feel-good countrified sitcom concerning small-town sheriff Andy Taylor of Mayberry, North Carolina. Since Mayberry was an almost crime-free place, Taylor's job mostly consisted of dispensing gentle philosophical advice to the oddball (but pleasantly oddball) townspeople and helping them with their problems. The inept, malaproping Barney Fife was Taylor's deputy (and cousin); other prominent Mayberry folk included Andy's son Opie; Andy's Aunt Bee; Gomer Pyle, the naïve pump boy

» Fly a quail through here and every one of them would point. «

at Wally's gasoline station; and the spaced-out barber, Floyd.

The show was spun off from an episode of *The Danny Thomas Show*, in which Thomas was arrested in a small North Carolina town, and ran for a phenomenal 249 episodes, its success (along with the similarly rustic *Beverly Hillbillies*) spawning a number of lookalikes. *The Andy Griffith Show* itself bore a spin-offspring: *Gomer Pyle, USMC*. Costar Don Knotts, meanwhile, earned his own variety slot in 1965, *The Don Knotts Show*. When Griffith himself left the series in a storyline which had him

▼▼ Another case for Mayberry's finest in hick sitcom
The Andy Griffith Show.



marrying schoolteacher Helen Crump and moving away, CBS concocted a successful successor in *Mayberry RFD* (1968–71), with Ken Berry in the lead as councilman Sam Jones. This was eventually axed when CBS, concerned about its audience demographics (which were skewed to the rural midwest and west of the USA), felled all shows “with trees.” Certainly *The Andy Griffith Show*'s sometimes rustic humor (e.g., Barney Fife: “Fly a quail through here and every one of them would point” – illustrating his assertion that all female guests at Mrs. Wiley's party were dogs) was not always to the taste of east coast sophisticates.

In syndication, *The Andy Griffith Show* was titled *Andy of Mayberry* (and has not been off the air since entering syndication a quarter of a century ago). A *New Andy Griffith Show* (1971), in which Griffith played the mayor of a small Southern town, lasted a single season, but a 1986 TV movie, reuniting the show's original cast, *Return to Mayberry*, was the highest-rated film on US TV for the 1985–6 season.

ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

UK 1972–84, 69 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx 1984–5 PBS.

CR Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft. **PR** David Croft.
DR David Croft, Jeremy Lloyd, Ray Butt, Bob Spiers, Bernard Thompson. **WR** Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft. **CAST** Mrs. Betty Slocombe Mollie Sugden Mr. Wilberforce Clayborne Humphries John Inman Captain Peacock Frank Thornton Mr. Grainger Arthur Brough

Mr. James Lucas *Trevor Bannister* Mr. Rumbold
Nicholas Smith Mr. Harman *Arthur English* Young
 Mr. Grace *Harold Bennett* Mr. Goldberg *Alfie Bass*
 Bert Spooner *Mike Berry* Mr. Tebbs *James Hayter*
 Miss Brahms *Wendy Richard*. Video *BBC*.

The doors of Grace Brothers department store first opened for business as part of BBC's *Comedy Playhouse*, launching the sales staff of Ladies and Gentlemen's Ready-to-Wear on an eleven-year career of bargain-basement jokes (customers stuck in lifts, double entendres such as "We'd like to complain about the state of our drawers – they're disgusting"). As with David Croft's earlier shows, which included *>Dad's Army* and *>Hi-De-Hi!*, the atmosphere was quaintly old-fashioned. John Inman's portrayal of campy, mincing menswear assistant Mr. Humphries, who volunteered to measure an inside leg with alacrity and a cry of "I'm free!" made him a household name. (Initially the target of protests by gay groups in the USA, Inman, a former window dresser for Austin Reed, eventually became a gay icon.) Also appearing were Wendy Richard (later Pauline Fowler in the soap *EastEnders*) as tottering blond Miss Brahms, Frank Thornton as pompous floorwalker Captain Peacock, Trevor Bannister as junior assistant Mr. Lucas, and Harold Bennett as the geriatric, dolly-bird-chasing owner, Young Mr. Grace ("You've all done very well"). It fell, though, to Mollie Sugden (*That's My Boy*, *My*

Husband and I) as the lacquered, lilac-eyeshadowed Mrs. Slocombe to deliver the show's most risqué lines, which involved the activities of her "pussy."

In America, the show had a successful run on PBS, although a US version entitled *Beane's of Boston* failed to attract customers. A film of *Are You Being Served?* was released by EMI in 1977, and three years later John Inman headed a 1980 Australian TV version for Lyle McCabe Productions.

In 1992 most of the characters from *Are You Being Served?* were revived by Croft and Lloyd for a spin-off, *Grace and Favour*, which set them in a rundown country hotel, Millstone Manor, bought by Young Mr. Grace with the store's pension fund. The humor, however, remained the same.

THE ARMY GAME

UK 1957–61, 157 x 30m, bw ITV. Granada TV.

CR Sid Colin. **PR** Peter Eton, Graeme McDonald.

DR Milo Lewis, Max Morgan-Witts, Gordon Flemyng, Graeme McDonald. **WR** Various, including Sid Colin, Lew Schwarz, Barry Took and Marty Feldman, John Antrobus, Larry Stephens. **MUS** Pat Napper (theme lyric). **CAST** Cpl. Springer Michael Medwin Pvt.

"Excused Boots" Bisley Alfie Bass Pvt. "Cupcake" Cook Norman Rossington/Keith Banks Pvt.

"Popeye" Popplewell Bernard Bresslaw Pvt.

"Professor" Hatchett Charles Hawtrey/Keith Smith Sgt. Major Bullimore William Hartnell Major Upshot-

Bagley Geoffrey Sumner/Jack Allen CSM Claude Snudge Bill Fraser Major Geoffrey Duckworth C. B.

Poultney Ernest "Moosh" Merryweather Mario Fabrizi Pvt. "Chubby" Catchpole Dick Emery.

I'm free

Phenomenally popular British sitcom, modeled on the 1956 film *Private's Progress*. Set in Hut 29 of Nether Hopping transit camp and surplus ordnance depot, it featured a group of peacetime conscripts determined to avoid every military duty, with Corporal Springer their Bilkoesque leader. Bellowing Sergeant Major Bullimore (geddit?) was charged with the maintenance of their discipline, while upper-class twit Major Upshot-Bagley was camp commandant. Mostly broadcast live, the show spawned a top five pop hit with its theme tune in 1958 and, in the same year, the spin-off movie *I Only Arsked*, after the catchphrase of dense Private "Popeye" Popplewell.

A slow drain of thespian talent – Charles Hawtrey, Bernard Bresslaw, William Hartnell (later to become *Dr. Who*), and Michael Medwin (later *>Shoestring*) were among the first to go – proved the show's undoing. Notable later players included Bill Fraser as CSM Claude Snudge ("I'll be leaving you now, sah!") and Dick Emery as Private "Chubby" Catchpole (whose stock line, "Hello, honky tonks," the actor took into his later solo show). Those working in the writers' room included Barry Took and Marty Feldman. When, in 1960, producer Peter Eton decided to transfer the characters of Bootsie and Snudge into another series, *Bootsie and Snudge in Civvy Street*, *The Army Game* was dismissed from the schedules. Thirty years later, its innocent, unsophisticated humor makes for dated viewing.

AT LAST THE 1948 SHOW

UK 1967, 12 x 30m, bw ITV. Rediffusion.

CR David Frost. **EXEC PR** David Frost. **DR** Ian Fordyce. **WR** Marty Feldman, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Tim Brooke-Taylor. **CAST** Marty Feldman, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Tim Brooke-Taylor, Aimi Macdonald, Mary Maude, Barry Cryer, Christine Rodgers.

Innovative gag-and-sketch show, derived from executive producer David Frost's *>Frost Report*. Taking its title from an in-program joke about how long indecisive TV executives had left the show on the shelves, *At Last the 1948 Show* brought together the madcap scribing and performing talents of (among others) John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Marty Feldman, and Tim Brooke-Taylor, with a result that was off-the-wall and anarchic, the only link between the bits being Aimi Macdonald's baby-voiced commentary. Classic skits included: an accident-prone John Cleese applying for life insurance; Tim Brooke-Taylor as a madman who believed he was a rabbit, only to be persuaded by unsympathetic psychiatrist Cleese that he was actually a dog; and Brooke-Taylor as a cowboy wishing to go the "pretty way" to Dead Man's Gulch. The final episode played out with a routine in which Brooke-Taylor, Cleese, Chapman, and Feldman tried to outdo each other in telling of the awful poverty of their upbringing.

In its surreal silliness, *At Last the 1948 Show* prefigured both *>Monty Python's Flying Circus* (to which Cleese and Chapman graduated, even taking some *At Last* jokes directly with them) and *>The*

**Hello,
honky tonks!**



Goodies (who would number among them Brooke-Taylor). One of the defining moments in the rise of the new wave of sixties comedians.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN, PET

UK 1983-6, 26 x 60m, col ITV. Witzend/Central TV.

CR Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais (from an idea by Franc Roddam). **EXEC PR** Allan McKeown.

DR Roger Bamford, Baz Taylor, Anthony Garner.

WR Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais, Bernie Cooper,

▲▲▲ Oz and Barry in deep water in Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais' *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. The show was brought to a premature end by the drink-and-drugs death of actor Gary Holton.

Francis Megahy. **MUS** Ian La Frenais, Joe Fagin ("That's Livin' Alright" theme). **CAST** Denis Tim Healy Neville Kevin Whately Oz Jimmy Nail Wayne Gary Holton Bomber Pat Roach Barry Timothy Spall Moxey Christopher Fairbank Dagmar Brigitte Khan Ulrich Peter Birch Magowan Michael Elphick Ally Fraser Bill Paterson Brenda Julia Tobin.

A show that could have been called > *The Likely Lads* go to Germany. Created, like that classic serial, by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais, *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* related the misadventures of three Geordies – philosophical Denis, anxious Neville, and slobbish Oz – obliged by local unemployment in Tyneside to seek work on a Düsseldorf building site. They were joined en route by cockney Casanova Wayne, Bristolian ex-boxer Bomber, boring brummie Barry, and pock-faced Liverpudlian arsonist Moxey. Although the series acutely reflected early eighties concerns about unemployment, it was ultimately a study in Britishness, with the confines of the Düsseldorf accommodation hut – in which most of the action took place – acting as a sort of comic intensifier. Its success (13.4 million viewers by February 1984) ingrained the *Auf Wiedersehen* characters in the UK psyche as few since > *Dad's Army*, with the bigoted, dirty underpants-wearing Oz (former nightclub singer and ex-convict Jimmy Nail) foremost among them. In the second season, “The Magnificent Seven” went to work, not exactly willingly, for Tyneside gangster Ally Fraser, first on his Derbyshire pile, then on his villa on Spain’s Costa del Crime. During filming, however, actor Gary Holton died of a drink-and-drugs cocktail, his demise removing a vital screen presence (despite some adroit use of a double, which made Wayne seemingly a part of every episode). In recognition of Holton’s contribution, the rest of the cast refused a third season, provisionally set in Moscow. Most, however, have since progressed to other things, with Spall (> *Frank Stubbs Promotes, Outside Edge*), Whately (*Inspector Morse*), Healy (*Boys from the Bush*,

Common as Muck), and Nail (*Spender, Crocodile Shoes*) now staples of the British small screen.

The series was based on an idea by expatriate bricklayer Franc Roddam. Among the classic episodes are: “The Girls They Left Behind” (in which Oz is accidentally transported back to England with a coachload of soccer fans); “Last Rites” (smuggling porn videos in a coffin – later cremated); “The Return of the Seven”; “Hasta La Vista” (a pathetic Oz bids goodbye to a son lost through his own negligence); “Quo Vadis” (the finale, with the gang pursued by Spanish coastguards to Morocco).

BACHELOR FATHER

USA 1957–62, 157 x 25m, bw CBS. Universal.

PR Everett Freeman, Robert Sparks, Harry Ackerman. **DR** Various, including Earl Bellamy, John Newland, Stanley Z Cherry, Greg Garrison. **MUS** Conrad Salinger, John Williams. **CAST** Bentley Gregg John Forsythe Kelly Gregg Noreen Corcoran Peter Tong Sammee Tong Ginger Farrell/Mitchell Bernadette Withers Howard Meechim Jimmy Boyd Cal Mitchell Del Moore Adelaide Mitchell Evelyn Scott Cousin Charlie Fong Victor Sen Yung Vickie (secretary) Alice Backus Kitty Devereaux (secretary) Shirley Mitchell Kitty Marsh Sue Anne Langdon Suzanne Collins (secretary) Jeanne Bal Connie (secretary) Sally Mansfield Warren Dawson Aaron Kincaid.

Smooth John Forsythe (aka John Lincoln Freund) starred as a Hollywood lawyer and ladies’ man who becomes guardian to his thirteen-

year-old orphaned niece. Typical storylines involved niece Kelly trying to find Uncle Bentley a wife, or his incompetence in teenager management. There was, of course, a lovable dog, too (Jasper). Asian houseboy Peter inscrutably (of course) kept the Gregg mansion functioning amid the mayhem.

Moderately likeable sitcom, one which established the single parent, actual or surrogate, as a sitcom staple (the unfortunate Vice President Dan Quayle's assertion that *>Murphy Brown* was a dangerously novel TV portrayal of single parenting thus being nearly forty years off the mark). Funnily enough, one episode of *Bachelor Father* featured an unknown Linda Evans in the guest cast, with whom Forsythe would later star (after stints on *The John Forsythe Hour* and as the voice of Charlie in *Charlie's Angels*) in *Dynasty*. Another notable tyro appearance was that of Mary Tyler Moore (*>The Mary Tyler Moore Show*) in the episodes, "Bentley and the Big Board" and "Bentley and the Combo."

BAGDAD CAFÉ

USA 1990–1, 15 x 30m, col CBS. Zeb Braun Productions/New World Television. UK tx 1991 C4.

EXEC PR Zev Braun, Mort Lachman. **DR** Various, including Paul Bogart. **WR** Mort Lachman, Sy Rosen. **MUS** Bob Telson ("Calling You" theme). **CAST** Brenda Whoopi Goldberg Jasmine Zweibel Jean Stapleton Junie Scott Lawrence Debbie Monica Calhoun Sal Cleavon Little Rudy James Gammon Dewey Kunkle Sam Whipple Sheriff Wayne Highsmith William Shockley.

Percy Adlon's 1988 German art house movie of the same name (but aka *Out of Rosenheim*), transmogrified into an American sitcom.

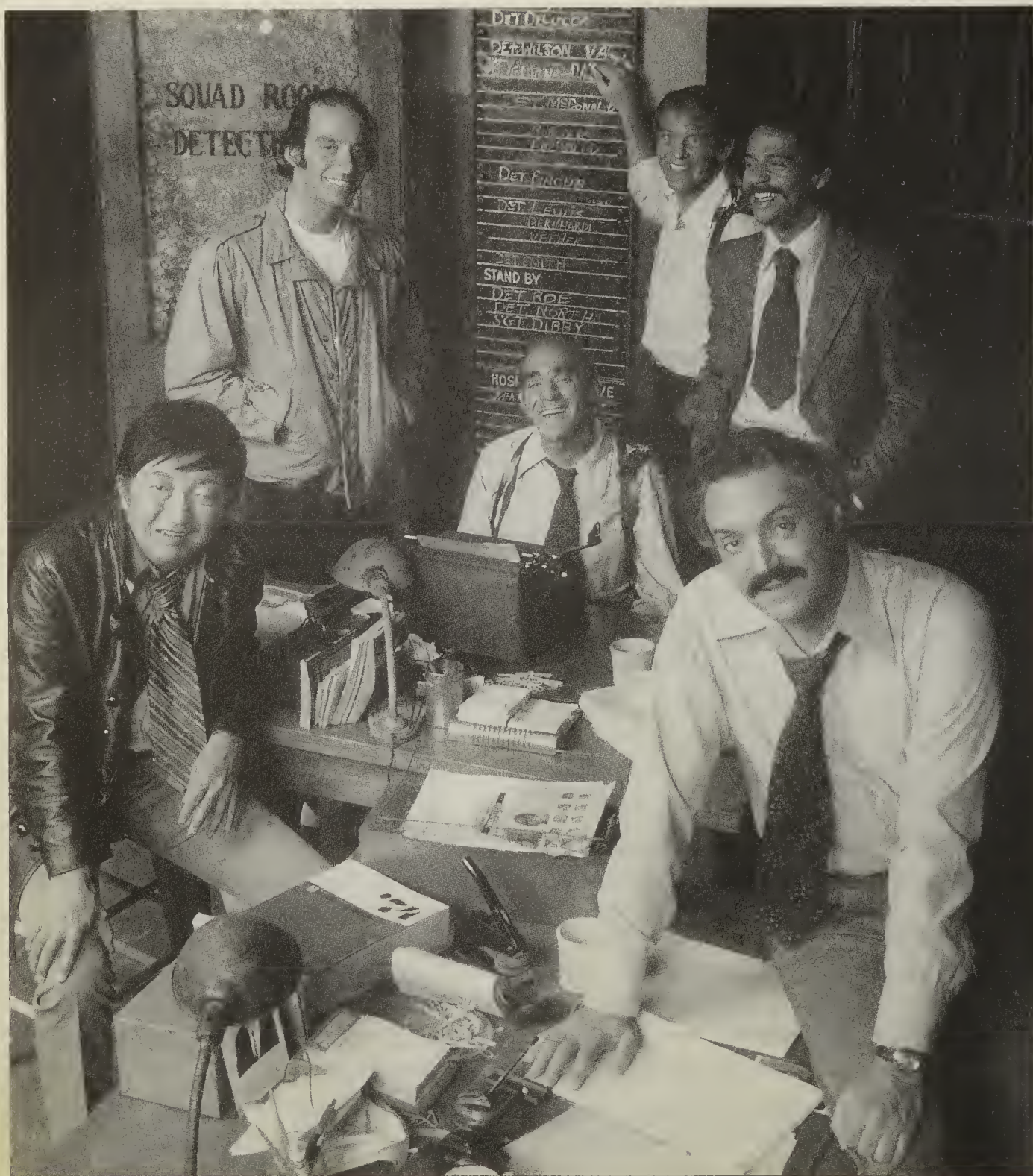
Ex-mortuary beautician Whoopi Goldberg portrayed Brenda, the cynical boss of a rundown diner-motel in the middle of California's Mojave Desert, whose employee list grew by one when warm-hearted fiftysomething tourist (triple Emmy-winner Jean Stapleton, Mrs. Archie Bunker in *>All in the Family*) signed on as maid after having abandoned her husband. The two women's chalk-and-cheese friendship was the main laughter dish of the show. Brenda's family – errant and usually absent husband Sal (Cleavon Little from *Blazing Saddles*), aspiring pianist and temporary diner cook son Junie, and troublesome teen daughter Debbie (Monica Calhoun reprising her movie role) – and diner regular Rudy also featured. When Junie quit to find his fortune in the second season, nervous Dewey Kunkle took over in the fleapit's kitchen.

A pilot episode, "Bagdad Café," was aired in March 1989.

BARNEY MILLER

USA 1975–82, 168 x 25m, col ABC. Columbia TV. UK tx 1982 ITV.

CR Danny Arnold, Theodore J. Flicker. **PR** Danny Arnold, Chris Hayward. **DR** Various, including John Rich, Tony Sheehan, Robert Day, Danny Arnold, Noam Pitlik, Theodore J. Flicker, Lee Bernhardt, Hal Linden. **WR** Various, including Danny Arnold, Chris Hayward, Reinhold Weege, Bob Colleary, Jordan Moffat, Nat Mauldin, Tony Sheehan, Jeff



Stein, Frank Dungan. **MUS** Jack Elliott, Ally Fergusson. **CAST** Capt. Barney Miller Hal Linden Det. Sgt. Phil Fish Abe Vigoda Det. Sgt. Chano Amenguale Gregory Sierra Det. Sgt. Stan Wojciehowicz Maxwell Gail Det. Sgt. Nick Yemena Jack Soo Det. Sgt. Ron Harris Ron Glass Insp. Frank Luger James Gregory Det. Sgt. Arthur Dietrich Steve Landesburg Off. Carl Levitt Ron Carey Elizabeth Miller Abby Dalton (pilot)/Barbara Barrie Det. Janice Wentworth Linda Lavin Lieut. Scanlon George Murdock Det. Maria Battista June Gable.

Eventually to be awarded the 1981 Emmy for Best Comedy, *Barney Miller* almost never got made. It had two strikes against it: it featured a Jewish policeman, which US network bosses considered “too ethnic”; and worse, its humor was sophisticated, and wilyly mocked such taboo prime-time subjects as homosexuality and teen pregnancy. Pestered by cocreators Danny Arnold (>*Bewitched*) and Theodore Flicker into a pilot, “The Life and Times of Barney Miller,” ABC then shelved the project, to near-audible sighs of relief. It was only resurrected to please hot director John Rich, whom ABC was desperate to recruit. Rich’s price was that ABC commission a season of a cop comedy made by his friend Danny Arnold – *Barney Miller*.

Shot on videotape instead of film (a parsimony insisted on by ABC), the show achieved its famed downbeat look by altering the lighting for each scene, as is done in moviemaking. Almost all the

action took place within a single set, the chaotic, rubbish-strewn squadroom of New York’s 12th Precinct (Greenwich Village). To play the varied parade of 12th Precinct cops, Arnold hired a fine ensemble cast, headed by Hal Linden (aka big band singer Harold Lipschitz) as the compassionate Barney Miller, and Abe Vigoda (Tessio in *The Godfather*) as the weak-bladdered Phil Fish, who was eventually spun off to his own show, *Fish*. Frequently, however, *Barney Miller* episodes were made good by the guest cast who acted the human flotsam and jetsam that passed through the station house: mad bombers, purse snatchers, prostitutes, teenage burglars, even a werewolf. All, no matter how deviant or disadvantaged, were treated with respect. Perhaps along with only >*M*A*S*H* and >*Taxi* for company, *Barney Miller* was one of the great statements of humanism in late seventies sitcom.

After eight seasons, the crew and cast decided to close the New York cop shop for the simple reason that they were running out of topics to deflate and wanted to bow out with artistic standards intact. In the last episode, a three-parter called “Landmark,” the station house was declared a site of historic significance (it had supposedly been the campaign HQ of Theodore Roosevelt), and the Twelfth was disbanded. The jail cell door and duty roster board used on the show were presented to the Smithsonian Institution, the director of which declared them to be “part of American culture.” And so they were.

In addition to the 1981 Comedy Emmy, *Barney Miller* also won a 1979 Comedy Writing Emmy for Bob Colleary’s “The Photographer.”

◀◀◀ Dismissed as “too ethnic” by network bosses, the Emmy-winning *Barney Miller* almost never got made.

BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD

USA 1993–7, Approx 186 x 10/30m, 1 x 60m, col
MTV. MTV Networks. UK tx 1993–7 MTV.

CR Mike Judge. **EXEC PR** Abby Terhule. **PR** Various, including John Andrews, Kristofer Brown, Christina Norman. **WR** Various, including Mike Judge, Sam Johnson, Chris Marcil, David Felton, Tracy Grandstaff, Joe Stillman, Chris Kreski, Glenn Eichler, Geoff Whelan. **CAST** (voices) Beavis/Butt-head/Tom Anderson/Principal McVicker Mike Judge Daria/Cassandra/Lolita Tracy Grandstaff Stewart Adam Welch Mr. Graham Guy Maxtone-Graham.

Beavis and Butt-head were two ugly, pubescent cartoon males variously regarded as “the first truly modern attempt at TV” (*Time*) or “the latest link in the Darwinian descent of the American adolescent” (*New York Times*). Moronically stupid, anally and genitally fixated, Beavis (Metallica T-shirt, extended lower jaw) and Butt-head (AC/DC T-shirt, short upper lip) spent half of their thirty-minute show critiquing pop videos, with a philosophy of aesthetics that was disarmingly simple: thrash metal (accompanied by the playing

» *“It’s just this funny awkward moment in life when you want to be supermacho and show everyone you’re not a kid any more. You wear serious, badass death-rock T-shirts, but you’ve got to put rubber bands on your braces.”*

MIKE JUDGE, BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD CREATOR

of frantic air guitar), “chicks” with “thingees,” and death were “cool.” Everything else “sucked.” They were particularly remorseless about the manhood of high-voiced heavy metal hopefuls (“wusses”), and cruelly pricked pop pretensions, once memorably claiming that singer Edie Brickell looked like she was “pinching a loaf.” The vaguest double entendre (“He said come...”) would set off a breathy stuttering chorus of “huh-huh, huh-huh, huh-huh.”

Away from the couch, the glue-sniffing duo wandered a parentless suburban wasteland of shopping malls and monster truck rallies, embarking on sordid adventures that sometimes proved controversial. Among other outrages, they deep-fried a rat, killed a grasshopper with a chainsaw, put a vomit-coated poodle in a washing machine, and sprayed MEGADETH on the side of a teacher’s house. In one episode they shot down an aircraft, but failed to call the emergency services after becoming distracted by a bout of flatulence. To no great surprise, the duo were soon targeted by morally concerned parents, whose campaign – led by Americans for Responsible Television – against *B&B* peaked in 1993, when the activities of a five-year-old pyromaniac were blamed on Beavis and

◀◀ *Huh-huh, huh-huh... Cartoon bad boys, Beavis and Butt-head.*



Butt-head's pronouncement that "Fire is cool."

Beavis & Butt-head was the creation of Mike Judge, an American born in Ecuador in 1963. A sometime musician and physics student at the University of California at San Diego, Judge based the characters of Beavis and Butt-head on "people I knew in junior high school and kids I just see everywhere," developing them for the small screen with the help of a \$300 animation kit. The humor of the show, which was written mostly by Judge and *National Lampoon* alumni Sam Johnson and Chris Marcil, had a noticeably subversive as well as puerile bent; in one episode, the metalheads did a school report on the *Challenger* disaster, destroying a toy rocket in science class, an act which tastelessly but effectively burlesqued government and NASA propaganda. Notable guest stars over the show's run included David Letterman, in the spoof segment "Late Night with Butt-head."

Although *B&B* sent up the MTV generation of "blank heads," the show ironically enough debuted on MTV's *Liquid Television* series in September 1992 with "Frog Baseball" (in which, as the title indicated, the boys used an amphibian instead of a ball). Beavis and Butt-head got their own show just three months later, with MTV rushing sixty-five episodes into production. Running conspicuously counter to MTV's self-conscious political correctness, *B&B* became the station's most popular show, earning over \$15 million in advertising revenue in 1994 alone. As is the way of all TV hits, the show eventually graduated to a major cinema feature – the 1996 *Beavis and Butt-head Do America* – the ultimate sign of cultural acceptance and commercial success. This was

followed by *Beavis and Butt-head 2: Another Movie* in 1998. There was also a TV spin-off in *>Daria*, featuring Beavis and Butt-head's sardonic classmate of that name. Mike Judge himself went on to more highbrow pastures with *>King of the Hill*.

THE BENNY HILL SHOW

UK 1969–89, 99 x 30m, col ITV. Thames TV. US tx 1979–82 Syndicated.

PR Various, including John Robbins, Mark Stuart, Dennis Kirkland, Keith Beckett, John Street.

DR Various, including John Robbins. **WR** Various, including Benny Hill. **MUS** Ronnie Aldrich Orchestra, *The Ladybirds* (theme vocals). **CAST** Benny Hill, plus others, including Henry McGee, Bob Todd, Felicity Buirski, Patricia Hayes, Nicholas Parsons, Bella Emberg.

The first British comedian to be made by the medium of TV, Alfred Hawthorne "Benny" Hill (born 1925, the son of a surgical appliance fitter) enjoyed years of fortune with the BBC before transferring his *The Benny Hill Show* to ITV in 1969, where it enjoyed even greater success. The eighteen seasons (plus numerous specials) were full of slapstick visual gags and corny jokes – and sexism. The standard model Hill skit invariably required Hill, whatever the persona assumed (from jittery bridegroom to woolly-chaps-wearing cowpoke), to be surrounded by scantily clad women. A trademark scene involved the lascivious comedian being pursued across the screen by a bevy of "Hill's Angels." Stock Hill characters

included Captain Fred Scuttle, the Firemen's Choir, and Professor Marvel. Henry McGee, Jack Wright (the small bald "slaphead") and Nicholas Parsons were among the most prominent of Hill's stooges. The show was canceled in 1989 after mounting criticism, although Hill continued making programs for overseas sale until his death in April 1992. In the USA, where Hill was one of the few British comedians to hit the jackpot, his shows developed a devoted audience following syndication in 1979.

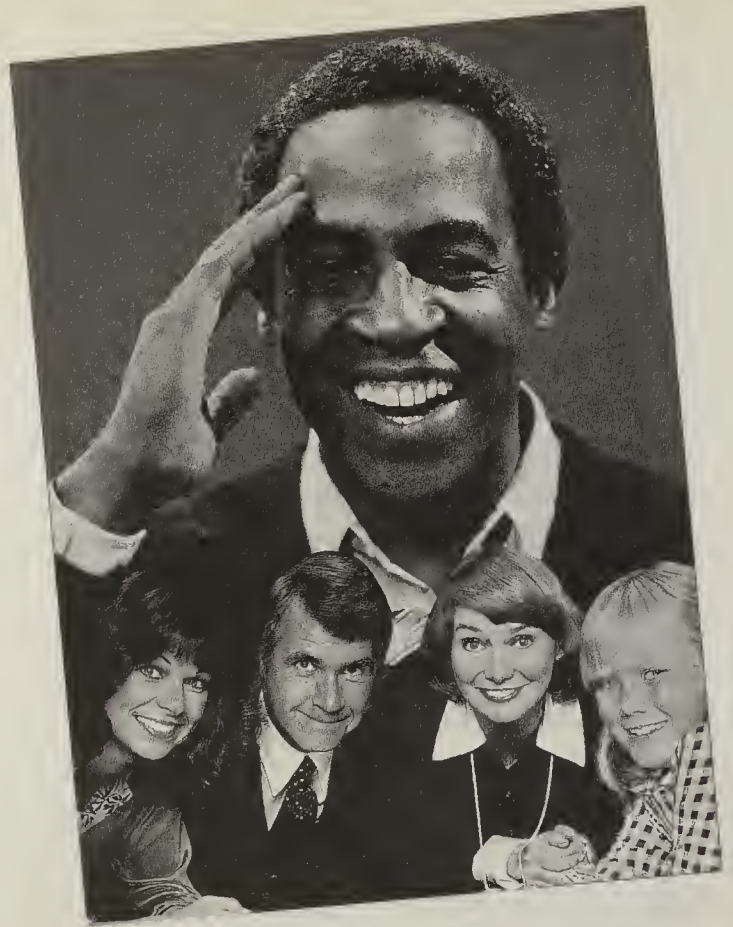
Though she might now wish to forget it, *>Frasier* star Jane Leeves was one of those who bared almost all as a Hill's Angel.

BENSON

USA 1979–86, 60 x 30m, col ABC. Witt Thomas Productions/Columbia Pictures TV. UK tx 1981–4 ITV.

CR Susan Harris, Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas. **EXEC PR** Rob Dames, Bob Fraser. **DR** Various, including John Rich, Peter Baldwin, Jay Sandrich, Bob Fraser, Hilton Smack. **WR** Various, including Susan Harris, Ron Silver. **CAST** Benson DuBois Robert Guillaume Governor James Gatling James Noble Katie Gatling Missy Gold Gretchen Kraus Inga Swenson Marcy Hill Caroline McWilliams James Taylor Lewis J. Stadlen Clayton Endicott III Rene Auberjonois.

A spin-off from *>Soap* in which the back-talking black butler Benson DuBois was sent to take charge of the household of widowed State Governor



▲▲ Robert Guillaume as the back-talking butler in Soap spin-off, Benson.

James Gatling. This was almost as lunatic an establishment as chez Tate. Aside from the incompetent Gatling, prominent residents included the governor's precocious daughter Katie, his secretary Marcy, the formidable – and incomprehensible – German housekeeper Gretchen Kraus, and aide John Taylor (later replaced as bag carrier by Clayton Endicott III, played by Rene Auberjonois, eventually to beam up to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* as Odo). Over the course of the sixty-plus episodes, Benson rose inexorably from lowly butting to become Lieutenant Governor, in the

ultimate episode even challenging Gatling for the governorship itself. In the process, actor Robert Guillaume became something of a role model for a generation of Afro-Americans. He first achieved fame as a star of the cult blaxploitation pic, *Superfly* TNT. After *Benson* he revisited the wackier edges of sitcomdom in the Californian police spoof, *Pacific Station*.

▼▼ Not at all at home on the range... the city-slicking Best family try life on the ol' frontier in BBC's spoof oater, *Best of the West*.

BEST OF THE WEST

USA 1981-2, 22 x 25m, col ABC. Weinberger-Daniels/PAR-TV.

CR Earl Pomerantz. **PR** Earl Pomerantz, James Burrows, Ronald E. Frazier, David Lloyd. **DR** Various, including Howard Storm, Stan Daniels, James Burrows. **MUS** Roger Steinman. **CAST** Sam Best Joel Higgins Elvira Best Carlene Watkins Daniel Best Meeno Beluce Parker Tillman Leonard Frey Jerome "Doc" Kullens Tom Ewell The Calico Kid Christopher Lloyd Lamont Devereux Andy Griffith.



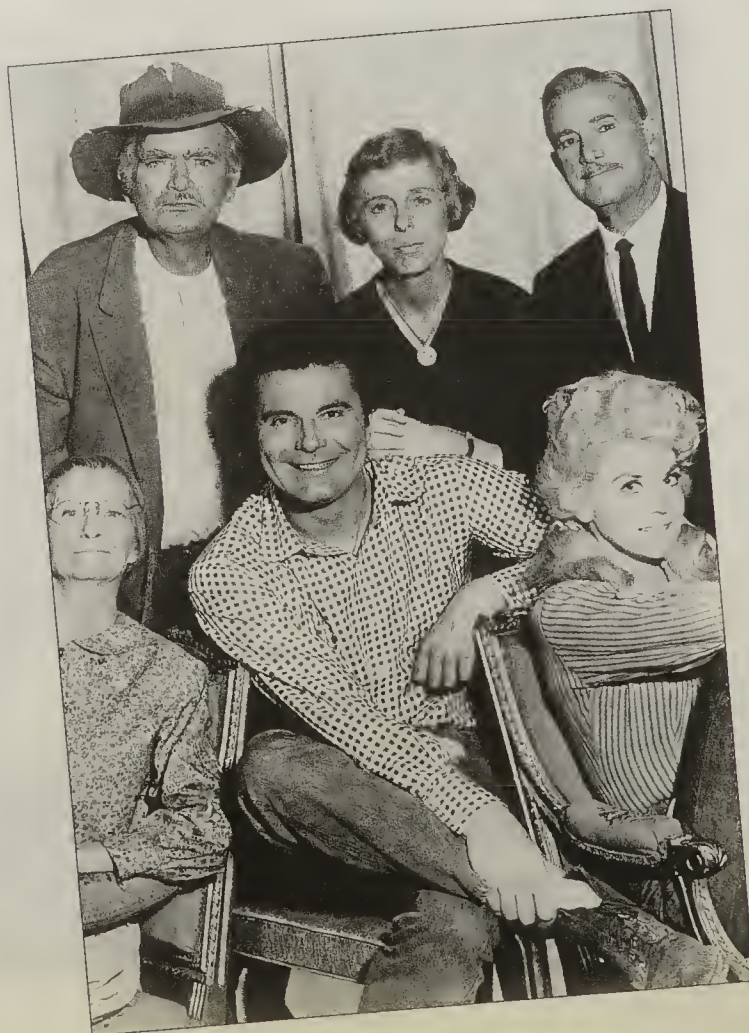
Spoof Western. After service in the Civil War, Sam Best heads west to the frontier town of Copper Creek, accompanied by refined southern belle wife Elvira and city-raised kid Daniel ("I want you to understand, Dad, I'm *never* going outside"). When Best accidentally defeats the local gunfighter, the Calico Kid (Christopher Lloyd, > *Taxi*, the *Back to the Future* movies), he is elected marshal and duly charged with keepin' law'n'order among the ultracaricatured townsfolk: alcoholic Doc Kullens, no-good saloon owner Parker Tillman, raucous mountain woman Laney Gibbs, and all.

THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES

USA 1962–71, 216 x 25m, bw/col CBS. Filmways Pictures. UK tx 1964–70 ITV.

CR Paul Henning. **EXEC PR** Martin Ransohoff. **PR** Paul Henning, Joseph DePew, Aaron Ruben, Al Simon, Mark Tuttle. **DR** Various, including Joseph de Pew, Richard Thorpe, Richard Whorf. **WR** Various, including Paul Henning. **MUS** Jerry Scoggins (theme), Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs. **CAST** Jed Clampett Buddy Ebsen Granny (Daisy Moses) Irene Ryan Elly May Clampett Donna Douglas Jethro Bodine Max Baer, Jr. Milburn Drysdale Raymond Bailey Margaret Drysdale Harriet MacGibbon Jane Hathaway Nancy Kulp Pearl Bodine Bea Benaderet Flo Shafer Kathleen Freeman Janet Treago Sharon Tate.

Classic US sitcom charting the adventures of the crazy Clampett family, who found oil on their backwoods Ozark ranch and then decamped to Beverly Hills in their boneshaker car to live the high life. Alas, the enterprise was doomed; although they bought every luxury that \$25 million could buy, they were not always sure what to do with them. Granny Clampett even had difficulty in differentiating the washer from the TV. The other members of the Clampett clan were level-headed patriarch Jed, dim-witted Cousin Jethro, and animal-loving Elly May, wearer of the tightest blue jeans west of the Ozarks. Elderly cousin Pearl Bodine was featured for the first



►► One of US TV's greatest sitcom hits, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was axed because its audience was too old and too rural.

BEWITCHED

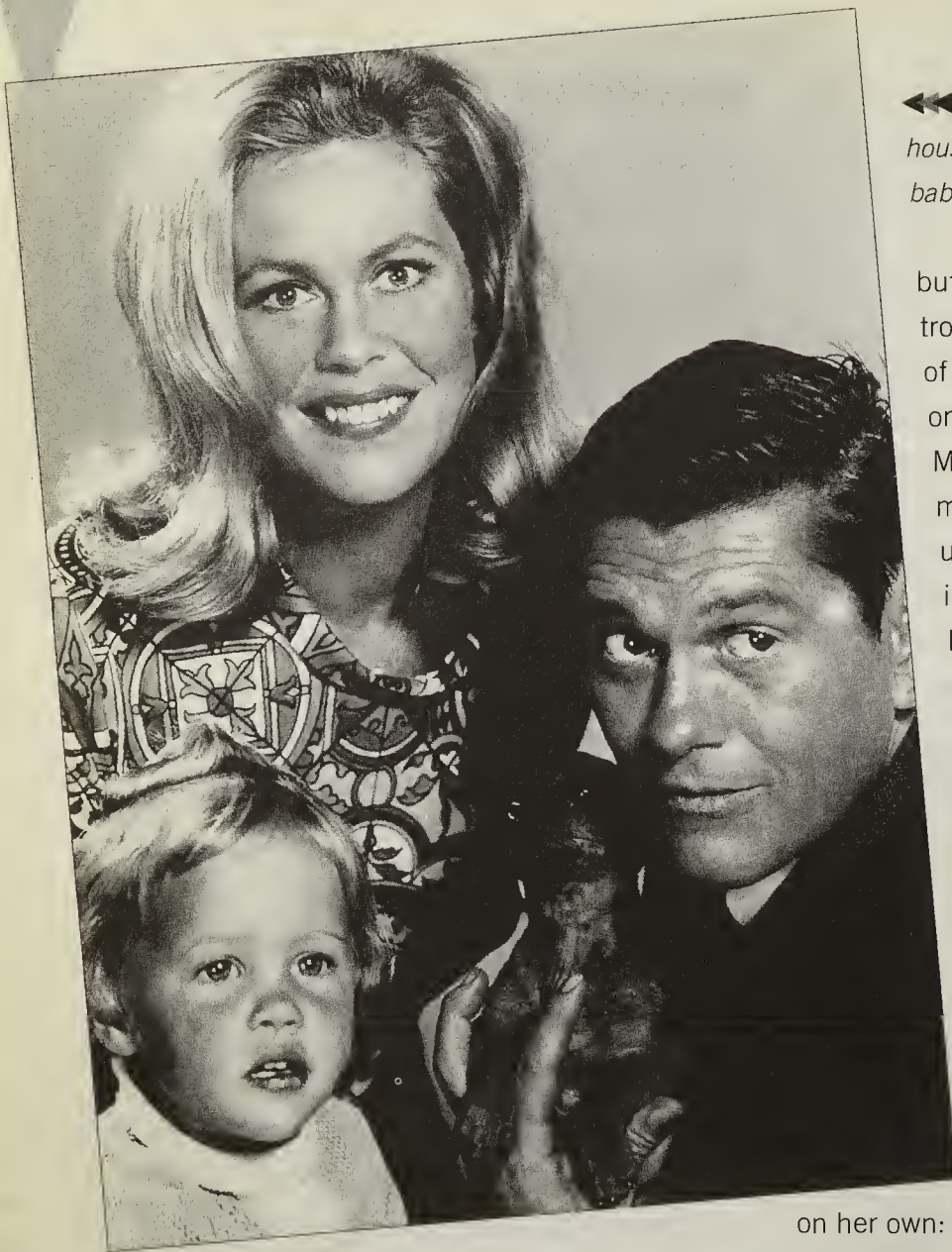
USA 1964–72, 254 x 30m, col ABC. Screen Gems.
UK tx 1964–72 BBC1.

CR Sol Saks. **EXEC PR** Harry Ackerman. **PR** William Asher. **DR** William Asher, Alan Rafkin, Sidney Miller, Ida Lupino, David McDearmon, Sherman Marks, Joseph Pevney, William D. Russell, E. W. Swackhamer, Howard Morris, Jerry Davis, R. Robert Rosenbaum, Alan Jay Factor, Paul Davis, Richard Kinon. **WR** Sol Saks, Barbara Avedon, Danny Arnold, Jerry Davis, Bernard Slade, Paul David and John L. Greene, Fred Freeman and Lawrence J. Cohen, Jack Sher, Roland Wolpert, Herman Groves, Tom and Frank Waldman, Earl Barrett, Richard and Mary Sale, Joanne Lee, Ken Englund, Richard Baer, Ted Snerdeman and Jane Klove, Ruth Brooks Flippen, Mort R. Lewis, Paul Wayne, Howard Leeds, Ron Friedman, Lee Erwin, James Henerson, Syd Zelinka, Doug Tibbles, David V. Robinson, Ed Jurist, David Braverman and Bob Marcus, Coslough Johnson, Jerry Devine and Izzy Elinson. **MUS** Howard Greenfield and Jack Keller (theme), Warren Barker. **CAST** Samantha Stephens/Serena Elizabeth Montgomery Darrin Stephens Dick York (1964–9)/ Dick Sargent (1969–72) Endora Agnes Moorehead Maurice Maurice Evans Larry Tate David White Louise Tate Irene Vernon (1964–6)/Kasey Rogers (1966–72) Tabitha Stephens Heide and Laura Gentry (1966)/Erin and Diane Murphy (1966–72) Adam Stephens David and Greg Lawrence Abner Kravitz George Tobias Gladys Kravitz Alice Pearce (1964–6)/ Sandra Gould (1966–72) Aunt Clara Marion Lorne Uncle Arthur Paul Lynde Esmeralda Alice Ghostley Dr. Bombay Bernard Fox. Video C-VIS/BMG.

few seasons, before being spun off to *>Petticoat Junction*. Also seen were the Clampetts' banker and next-door neighbor Milburn Drysdale, and his socially prominent wife Margaret. (In one ignominious, if classic, episode, her pampered poodle gave birth to pups fathered by Jed's old coondog, Duke.)

At the show's best, when scripts raised themselves to match performances, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was an attack on materialism; at its worst, it merely ridiculed rural folks. It was universally lambasted by critics, but became the fastest hit in US small-screen history, shooting to the top of the Nielsens within four months. It stayed there for nearly two years. Along with *>The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was responsible for inventing a new subgenre of TV humor, the "rustic sitcom." Later manifestations included *Petticoat Junction* and *>Green Acres*.

Buddy Ebsen, star of *Beverly Hillbillies* and former song-and-dance man, had previously featured in *Davy Crockett*, and later starred in detective show *Barnaby Jones*. Max Baer, Jr., who played Cousin Jethro, was the son of the former world heavyweight boxing champion, Max Baer. Actress Sharon Tate, later infamously to be murdered by the Charles Manson gang, appeared as Janet Treago, the bank secretary. In 1981, *Beverly Hillbillies* creator Paul Henning produced *The Return of the Beverly Hillbillies*, with Imogene Coca replacing the late Irene Ryan as Granny. A 1993 movie, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, based on the TV series, starred Dabney Coleman, Erica Eleniak (*Baywatch*), and Cloris Leachman. Penelope Spheeris directed Ian Bryce's production for 20th Century Fox.



Long-running sitcom starring Elizabeth Montgomery (daughter of Robert) as Samantha Stephens, a white witch who had only to twitch her nose cutely to get the dusting done. Dick York (later Dick Sargent) played her hapless, merely mortal husband Darrin, an accountant at New York ad agency McMann and Tate. To please hubbie, Samantha tried to curb her supernatural powers,

◀◀ With just a twitch of her nose she got the housework done... Samantha, Darrin, and baby Tabitha in the spellbinding *Bewitched*.

but invariably failed, causing big comic trouble for Darrin (and the bemusement of nosy neighbors the Kravitzes) before order was restored. Oscar nominee Agnes Moorehead took the role of Samantha's mean, meddlesome mother Endora, who used Darrin – or “Durwood,” as she insisted on calling him – as the butt of her ill humor, turning him variously into a goat, a donkey, or whatever took her fancy. Also seen was Sam's father Maurice, her Aunt Clara and Uncle Arthur, and Darrin's boss Larry Tate. There was also Sam's mischievous lookalike cousin, Serena (played by Montgomery). The population of show hexes increased by two when Sam gave birth to Tabitha and Adam, the former achieving the distinction of being the only offspring born to a sitcom mother to be given a series

on her own: *Tabitha* (1977–8), in which she starred as a young adult (played by Lisa Hartman) working for TV station KXLA.

Not all the stars of the show appeared before the

» *Bewitched, bewitched, you've got me in your spell. Bewitched, bewitched, you know your craft so well. Before I knew what you were doing I looked in your eyes. That brand of woo that you've been brewin' took me by surprise...*



camera. Much of *Bewitched*'s success – which was considerable, it being ABC's biggest hit up to that time – lay in the hands of special effects man Dick Albain. It was Albain who invented Samantha's "magic" self-operating vacuum cleaner and made objects fly around the rooms. (The first was a remote-controlled device, the latter achieved by a hidden network of wires.) Some effects were more prosaically achieved: Samantha's cleaning of the kitchen by witchcraft required Montgomery to raise her arms, say "whoosh," and stand stock still while the crew swept and dusted – the footage of them being edited out later.

Although it left the air in 1972, the show continues to be a staple filler of daytime programming the world over. Its politics seem uncomfortably dated, with Darrin's insistence on a "wife's place" being at home, but most else holds up well, particularly the performances of Moorehead and the demurely sexy Montgomery. A piece of TV magic. As it were.

Some *Bewitched* trivia: Montgomery was married to the show's producer-director, William Asher; a pre-celebrity Raquel Welch is to be seen as a stewardess in the 1964 episode, "Witch or Wife"; although the show was nominated for numerous Emmys, it only won two, a Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy award for Alice Pearce, and the same award for Marion Lorne; Tammy Grimes was originally slated to play Samantha, but turned it down for *The Tammy Grimes Show* – which lasted six months; the Stephens' address was 1164 Morning Glory Circle, Westport, Connecticut. Samantha and Darrin once appeared in *>The Flintstones*, as the Stone Age couple's new neighbors.

THE BLACK ADDER

UK 1983–9, 24 x 30m, 1 x 45m, 1 x 15m, col BBC1.
BBC TV. US tx 1990 Syndicated.

CR Richard Curtis, Rowan Atkinson. PR John Lloyd.
DR Martin Shardlow, Mandie Fletcher, Richard Boden. WR Richard Curtis, Rowan Atkinson, Ben Elton. MUS Howard Goodall. CAST Edmund Blackadder Rowan Atkinson Baldrick Tony Robinson. Video BBC TV.

A cycle of sitcoms which began with the crude *The Black Adder*, concerning the medieval exploits of the venomous young aristocrat Edmund Blackadder, and rose through *Black Adder II* (set in Elizabethan times) and *Blackadder the Third* (Regency period) to the sublime *Blackadder Goes Forth* (the First World War). Accompanying Blackadder (rubber-faced Rowan Atkinson from *>Not the Nine O'Clock News*) on his ophidian odyssey was foul-smelling retainer Baldrick (Tony Robinson, after Timothy Spall turned down the part), seemingly having "dung for brains."

When the first series emptied the BBC coffers, new head man Michael Grade reached for the axe, but writer Richard Curtis (*>Not the Nine O'Clock News*, later *>The Vicar of Dibley* and the movie *Four Weddings and a Funeral*) and new partner Ben Elton (from *>Friday Night Live*) produced, in veritable Blackadder professor-of-cunning fashion,

» ***Black Adder, Black Adder
He rides a pitch black steed
Black Adder, Black Adder
He's very bad indeed...*** «

scripts for a second series with all the expensive bits removed. Curtis and Elton also decided to trim back on the mugging and slapstick on which the premier season had relied, and instead nursed a wondrous mix of schoolboy japes ("The enemy is thinner on the ground opposite your trenches, Blackadder." "Could be my batman's socks, sir"), convoluted wordplay, historical parody, and

lampooning of exactly the sort of costume dramas the BBC itself loves to make.

Supporting the performances of Atkinson (later >*Mr Bean*, *The Thin Blue Line*), and Robinson

▼▼ *Edmund Blackadder and his faithful – if foul-smelling – retainer Baldrick in the Richard Curtis/Ben Elton sitcom, The Black Adder.*



(*Maid Marian and Her Merry Men*), who played their parts with rare sitcom verve and comic timing, was a regular cast of Tim McInnerny (Lord Percy in *The Black Adder* and *Black Adder II*, Captain Darling in *Blackadder Goes Forth*), Hugh Laurie (Prince Regent in *Blackadder the Third*, Lt. George Colthurst St. Barley in *Forth*), and Stephen Fry (Lord Melchett in *Black Adder II*, the General in *Forth*). Others who provided sterling thespian work included Patsy Byrne (Nursie in *II*) and Miranda Richardson (Queenie in *II*).

Two specials were also produced in 1988; *Blackadder: The Cavalier Years* (15 minutes, script by Curtis and Elton) and *Blackadder's Christmas Carol* (45 minutes, with Atkinson as Ebenezer Blackadder, script by Curtis and Elton). The series took its bow in 1989 with an uncompromisingly bleak anti-war scene in which Blackadder, by now a thoroughly subtle and sympathetic character, and his pals went "over the top" to assault German trenches on the western front in 1917. The eighties were not a great decade for the British sitcom – proved, not least, by declining viewing figures – but *Blackadder* was a shining peak of achievement.

The series episodes were: *The Black Adder*: The Foretelling/Born to be King/The Archbishop/The Queen of Spain's Beard/Witchsmeller Pursuivant/The Black Seal. *Black Adder II*: Bells/Head/Potato/Money/Beer/Chains. *Blackadder the Third*: Dish and Dishonesty/Ink and Incapability/Nob and Nobility/Sense and Senility/Amy and Amiability/Duel and Duality. *Blackadder Goes Forth*: Captain Cook/Corporal Punishment/Major Star/Private Plane/General Hospital/Goodbye.

BLESS THIS HOUSE

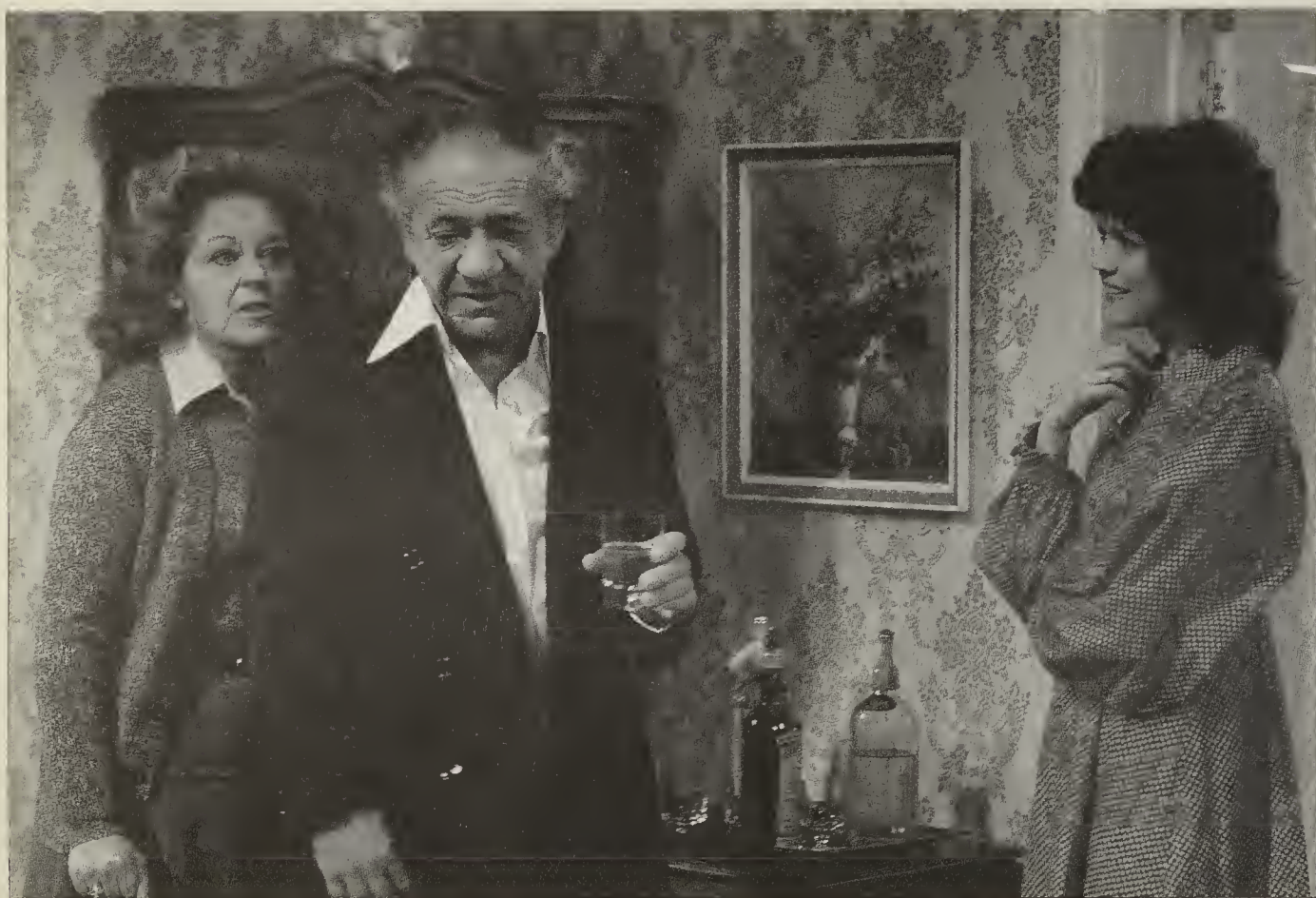
UK 1971–6, 65 x 30m, col ITV. Thames TV.

CR Vince Powell and Harry Driver. **PR** William G. Stewart. **DR** William G. Stewart. **WR** Various, including Vince Powell and Harry Driver, Carla Lane, Myra Taylor, Dave Freeman, Bernie Sharp, Adele Rose. **MUS** Geoff Love. **CAST** Sid Abbott Sid James Jean Abbott Diana Coupland Mike Abbott Robin Stewart Sally Abbott Sally Geeson Trevor Anthony Jackson Betty Patsy Rowlands.

Quintessential British domestic comedy of the seventies, the main themes of which were "The Generation Gap" (the title of the first episode) and the battle of the sexes. Sid Abbott was a sales rep for a stationery firm, a man who listed his pleasures alphabetically as "Ale, Birds, and Chelsea [football club]." He was much exasperated by his permissive, work-shy, ex-art college son Mike, and teenage schoolgirl daughter Sally (played by Sally Geeson, sister of movie actress Judy). Meanwhile, wife Jean long suffered. Their neighbors in Birch Avenue, Putney, London, were meddlesome Trevor and his nagging, caricature wife Betty.

The series, which topped the BARB ratings in 1973 and 1974, marked the last starring venture on the small screen of veteran alcoholic actor Sid James (>*George and the Dragon*, >*Hancock*, *Taxi*, *Citizen James*, >*Carry On Laughing*). Born Solly Cohen in South Africa in 1913, James died of a heart attack on 26 April 1976, allegedly caused by unrequited love for Barbara Windsor, his costar in the *Carry On* film cycle.

Created by Vince Powell and Harry Driver, and



▲▲ Veteran comic actor Sid James – star of the *Carry On* movies and possessor of the world's dirtiest laugh – in *Bless This House*.

produced by future host of *Fifteen to One* daytime quiz show, William G. Stewart. Carla Lane (later >*Liver Birds*, >*Butterflies*) cut her scripting teeth on the show.

A spin-off feature film was released by Peter Rogers Productions in 1972, directed by Gerald Thomas (of the *Carry On* movies) and with Terry Scott and June Whitfield (>*Terry and June*) as the Abbotts' new neighbors.

BLOSSOM

USA 1991–5, Approx 90 x 30m, col NBC. A Witt-Thomas Production/Buena Vista Pictures/Touchstone Television. UK tx 1991– C4.

CR Don Reo. **EXEC PR** Paul Witt, Tony Thomas, Don Reo, Judith D. Allison, Allan Katz, Gene Reynolds. **PR** Various, including Jonathan Schmock, Susan Seeger, Josh Goldstein, John Ziffren. **DR** Bill Bixby, Zane Busby, Gil Junger, Allan Katz, Ted Wass, John Whitesell. **WR** Various, including Judith D. Allison, Dan Cohen, Brian Herskowitz, Racelle Rosett Schaefer, Don Reo. **MUS** Frank Denson.

CAST Blossom Russo *Mayim Bialik* Nick Russo (father) *Ted Wass* Joseph Russo (brother) *Joey Lawrence* Anthony Russo (brother) *Michael Stoyanov* Vinnie *David Lascher* Six LeMeure *Jenna Van Oy*.

Touted as the sitcom successor to American eighties hits *>Cheers* and *>The Cosby Show*, *Blossom* related the growing-up misadventures of the eponymous teenage girl in an all-male (and totally dysfunctional) household. In the standard manner of TV shows with a mainly pre-adult audience, it tackled issues – sex, drugs, and first periods – with alacrity, even simultaneously. One classic episode found Blossom’s ambulance-driving, substance-abusing brother Anthony waking up after a drinking spree in Las Vegas to find himself married to a black girl he had no recollection of ever having met. Guest celebrities included TV sitcom legends Estelle Getty (*>Golden Girls*), Rhea Perlman (*>Cheers*), ALF (*>ALF*), and musicians Little Richard and Sonny Bono (these celebs usually appearing in Blossom’s fantasies to proffer comedic advice to her current problem). Show directors included Bill Bixby, better known for his before-the-camera appearance as Dr. Bruce Banner in *The Incredible Hulk*. A two-hour TV movie, *Blossom in Paris*, aired in 1993.

THE BOB NEWHART SHOW

USA 1972–8, 142 x 30m, col CBS. MTM.

CR David Davis, Lorenzo Music. **EXEC PR** David Davis, Lorenzo Music. **PR** Tom Patchett, Jay Tarses.

DR Various, including Peter Bonerz, Alan Myerson, Alan Rafkin, Dick Martin. **WR** Various, including David Davis, Lorenzo Music. **CAST** Robert Hartley Bob Newhart Emily Hartley Suzanne Pleshette Howard Borden Bill Daily Jerry Robinson Peter Bonerz Carol Kester Bondurant (secretary) Marcia Wallace Ellen Hartley Pat Finley Elliot Carlin Jack Riley Miss Larson Penny Marshall Mr. Gianelli Noam Pitlik Mrs. Bakerman Florida Friebus Margaret Hoover Patricia Smith Dr. Bernie Tupperman Larry Gelman Michelle Nardo Renee Lippin Mr. Peterson John Fiedler.

Comic raconteur Bob Newhart’s first TV series (also called *The Bob Newhart Show*), was a short-lived variety affair, 1961–2, that failed to showcase his talents. Assorted stints on other variety shows and in movies followed before *>The Mary Tyler Moore Show* staffers and former *>The Smothers Brothers* writers David Davis and Lorenzo Music tailored this sitcom concept (both Davis and Music had supplied Newhart with jokes for his radio and nightclub shows), in which Newhart played practicing Chicago psychologist Robert Hartley, whose patients and friends (notably bachelor orthodontist Jerry and airline pilot neighbor Howard) were a collection of basket cases. Accomplished at sorting out the problems of others, Hartley was less successful with his own, to the bemusement of his schoolteacher wife Emily.

After a slow start, the show performed strongly, reaching number twelve in the Nielsens for 1973–4. The success was not surprising; as the producers declared, their product had “class and charm and wit.” It also played directly to Newhart’s comic strengths: his precise comic timing, his famed

deadpan persona, and the low-key portrayal of the sane man surrounded by lovable zanies. However, despite its success, the show was always overshadowed by its stablemate, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and failed to win a single Emmy. *Newhart* directors included Dick Martin from *>Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* while Penny Marshall (later *>Laverne and Shirley*) made her first screen appearance in *Newhart*, later securing a regular role as Miss Larson.

Four years after the close of the show, Newhart returned in *Newhart* (1982–90), playing Dick Loudon, a writer of “how-to” books who moves to Vermont to restore and manage a colonial inn (and be the sane one amid the oddballs). The last episode ended with Newhart waking up next to Emily (Suzanne Pleshette), his wife from *The Bob Newhart Show*, to find that the Vermont interlude had been just a dream... It could only happen on TV.

Newhart has also starred in the comedies *Bob* (1992–3) and *George and Leo* (1997).

THE BOTTLE BOYS

UK 1984–5, 13 x 30m, col ITV. LWT.

CR Vince Powell. **PR** Stuart Allen. **DR** Stuart Allen.

WR Vince Powell. **CAST** Dave Deacon Robin Asquith Stan Evans Richard Davies Sharon Armstrong Eve Ferrett.

Lowbrow, high-innuendo escapades of an amorous milkman, Dave Deacon of Dawson's Dairy. Starred Robin Asquith from the trashy *Confessions of...* films.

BOTTOM

UK 1991–5, 18 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

CR Rik Mayall, Adrian Edmondson. **PR** Ed Bye. **DR** Ed Bye. **WR** Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson. **CAST** Richie Rich Rik Mayall Eddie Hitler Adrian Edmondson Spudgun Steven O'Donnell Dave Hedgehog Christopher Ryan Dick Head Lee Cornes. Video BBC.

Originally to be called *Your Bottom* (to allow viewers the tantalizing prospect of declaring, “I saw your bottom on TV last night”), *Bottom* was the story of two sex-starved bachelors who lived in an unsavory London apartment where, in time-honored TV comedy fashion, they sat and sniped at each other.

Conceived by, written by, and starring Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson, the show heavily reprised their *>The Young Ones* characters; Mayall's Richie Rich being sniveling and virginal, Edmondson's Eddie Hitler being headbangingly violent. If the characters were revivals, *Bottom* lacked the parent show's originality and surrealism. Its title did not lie; *Bottom* was the sitcom of scatology: farting, dirty socks, festering food, vomiting, vile male habits.

However, the show had its moments, mostly in the duo's woefully inadequate attempts to impress women (“I wish someone would sleep with me, I mean stay awake with me”). According to director Ed Bye, most of its devoted following were young empathizing males aged between fifteen and twenty.

Adrian Edmondson (husband of Jennifer Saunders from *>French and Saunders*, *>Absolutely Fabulous*) and Rik Mayall first performed together



▲▲ Their minds were on lower things... Richie (left), and Eddie try seducing a blond (Helen Lederer) in Bottom.

as 20th Century Coyote at Manchester University in 1976, before becoming regular performers together at London's Comedy Store. They have starred on television in > *The Comic Strip Presents*, > *Saturday Live*, and > *Filthy Rich and Catflap*. Mayall has also starred as odious politician Alan B'Stard in > *The New Statesman* and in the series of short dramas *Rik Mayall Presents*.

THE BRADY BUNCH

USA 1969-74, 117 x 25m, col ABC. Paramount TV.
UK tx 1970-3 ITV.

CR Sherwood Schwartz. **PR** Various, including Sherwood Schwartz, Howard Leeds. **DR** Various, including John Rich, Hal Cooper, David Alexander, Jack Arnold, Robert Reed, Lloyd Schwartz, Leslie H. Martinson, Jerry London, Earl Bellamy, Russ Mayberry, Oscar Rudolph. **WR** Various, including Sherwood Schwartz, Brad Radnitz, Ben Starr, Elroy Schwartz, Tam Spavia, Michael Morris, Skip

Webster, Harry Winkler. **MUS** *Frank de Vol*. **CAST** Mike Brady Robert Reed Carol Brady Florence Henderson Alice Nelson Ann B. Davis Marcia Brady Maureen McCormick Jan Brady Eve Plumb Cindy Brady Susan Olsen Greg Brady Barry Williams Peter Brady Christopher Knight Bobby Brady Mike Lookinland.

The last of the great “Hi, Honey, I’m home” domestic comedies, *The Brady Bunch* was the tale of two Los Angeles families, those of Mike and

Carol, amalgamated by marriage. Full of smiling, white-teethed children in hokey battles for the bathroom/phone, a shaggy dog (Tiger), and good-natured, ultrarespectable middle-class parents (Mike was an architect), it had a feel-good factor of 10. A five-year run followed. Typical storylines were Marcia having braces fitted, Greg trying out for the high school football team, girlfriend/boyfriend

▼▼ The last of the great Hi-honey-I’m-home sitcoms was ABC’s *The Brady Bunch*.



trouble, a camping trip to the Grand Canyon.

The show also spun off an animated *The Brady Kids*. The Bradys ("the family that won't go away") returned in a live-action sequel, *The Brady Bunch Hour* (1977), in which the Bradys became a TV variety act, then *The Brady Girls Get Married* (1981), then *The Brady Brides* (1981), and finally *The Bradys* (1990). By this time, collective madness had descended on the producers, for the last of these played like a soap opera, with Bobby Brady paralyzed in a car crash. Even the Bradys found that one somewhat difficult to smile at.

THE BRITTAS EMPIRE

UK 1991–7, 52 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Richard Fegen and Andrew Norriss. **PR** Mike Stephens. **DR** Various, including Mike Stephens, Christine Gernon. **WR** Various, including Richard Fegen and Andrew Norriss, Tony Millan and Mike Walling, Terry Kyan, Paul Smith, Ian Davidson, Peter Vincent. **CAST** Gordon Wellsley Brittas Chris Barrie Helen Brittas Pippa Haywood Laura Lancing Julia St. John Carole Parkinson Harriet Thorpe Colin Weatherby Michael Burns Tim Whistler Russell Porter Linda Perkins Jill Greenacre Gavin Featherleigh Tim Marriott Julie Judy Flynn Angie Andree Bernard Penny Bidmead Anouschka Menzies.

After playing the nerdish Rimmer in sci-fi spoof *>Red Dwarf*, Chris Barrie (formerly an assistant in the sports department at Harrods, and supplying such voices for *>Spitting Image* as Prince Charles and Ronald Reagan) played Gordon Brittas, the nerdish manager of Whitbury Newtown Leisure Center, in this sitcom from the team of Richard Fegen and Andrew Norriss (*Chance in A Million*, *The Labours of Erica*, *Ffizz*). Possessed by the jinx-touch, every improvement the pompous, whiney-voiced, over-zealous Brittas – the very TV exemplar of petty officialdom – planned for his personal fiefdom ended in comic disaster, usually of epic proportions. (In one episode, "The Assassin," his misguided endeavors filled an entire hospital intensive care unit, which, as his neurotic, pill-popping wife Helen was obliged to point out, was "a good score, even for Gordon.") Those working under Brittas included sensible assistant Laura, receptionist Carole, incompetent maintenance man (and Brittas idolizer) Colin Weatherby, secretary Julie, and the fitness/sports coaches Tim, Gavin, and Linda. Despite his megabumbling, Brittas was once appointed European Commissioner for Sport, before returning to the Center (motto: *Semper Omnibus Facultas*) for more mayhem. A spin-off series, *Get Fit with Brittas* (produced by Paul Reizin), was released in 1997.

In its positing of an incompetent in charge of others, *The Brittas Empire* mined a traditional vein of TV humor (e.g., *>Dad's Army* and *>Are You Being Served?*). Yet it also had an element of absurdism (Carole's keeping of her children in a cupboard behind the desk, Brittas's quasi-bionic

***Semper Omnibus
Facultas***

indestructibility, including his rebuilding by surgeons in Zurich), which gave it an appeal to younger viewers. At a stretch the show could also be viewed as a critique of the managerial class which expanded in the Thatcherite eighties. A show for the whole couch.

BUTTERFLIES

UK 1978–82, 36 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

CR Carla Lane. **PR** Gareth Gwenlan, Sydney Lotterby.

DR Various, including Mandie Fletcher, Gareth Gwenlan, John B. Hobbs. **WR** Carla Lane. **CAST** Ria Parkinson Wendy Craig Ben Parkinson Geoffrey Palmer Adam Parkinson Nicholas Lyndhurst Russell Parkinson Andrew Hall Leonard Dunn Bruce Montague Ruby (cleaner) Joyce Windsor Thomas Michael Ripper.

Carla Lane (>*The Liver Birds*) comedy in which bored, middle-class, midlife crisis-facing Ria Parkinson began to tire of her nineteen-year marriage to dentist Ben and motherdom to thankless teenage offspring Russell and Adam. A platonic but guilt-laden affair with smooth businessman Leonard followed. Meanwhile, the eternally depressive Ben (“I don’t like singing. I don’t do a lot of it because there isn’t much to sing

about”) added to his butterfly collection, and tried to instill in his “chick-crazy” sons, with their “groovy” talk and their Mini (with rooftop Union Jack), a sense of conformist duty.

Whimsical but also bleak, the show pushed at the edges of seventies domestic comedy, even containing voice-overs and an experimental dream sequence. BBC2’s highest-rated show for much of its run, it benefited from faultless performances, especially that of the lugubrious Geoffrey Palmer (>*The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*, >*Fairly Secret Army*, *Executive Stress*, *As Time Goes By*) as Ben, and an uncharacteristically soulful Wendy Craig (>*Not in Front of the Children* et al.) as Ria. Nicholas Lyndhurst, former children’s presenter of *Our Show*, soon parlayed his role as Adam into that of Rodney in >*Only Fools and Horses*. Farther down the cast list, Milton Johns and Wendy Williams did memorable turns as the Parkinsons’ timid neighbors, trapped on their driveway by the Parkinsons’ frantic vehicular goings-on.

The title theme was a reworking of the Dolly Parton song, “Love is Like a Butterfly.” The series was syndicated in the US, although a 1979 ABC pilot for an American version (with Jennifer Warren as Ria Parkinson) flunked.

CAR 54, WHERE ARE YOU?

USA 1961–3, 60 x 25m, bw NBC. Eupolis.

CR Nat Hiken. **PR** Nat Hiken. **DR** Nat Hiken, Stanley Prager. **WR** Various, including Nat Hiken. **CAST** Off. Gunther Toody Joe E. Ross Off. Francis Muldoon Fred Gwynne Lucille Toody Beatrice Pons Capt.

» ***I don’t like singing. I don’t do a lot of it because there isn’t much to sing about.*** «

Martin Block *Paul Reed* Off. Leo Schnauser *Al Lewis* Off. Anderson *Nipsey Russell* Off. O'Hara *Albert Henderson* Off. Kissel *Bruce Kirby*.

Nat Hiken's follow-up to *>The Phil Silvers Show* (aka *Bilko*) was a lunatic comedy about a pair of inept police officers who shared the patrol vehicle of the title. Set in the mythical New York 53rd Bronx Precinct, remarkably free from major felonies, it starred Fred Gwynne (an occasional *Bilko* guest actor) as the tall, dim Francis Muldoon and Joe E. Ross (Mess Sergeant Ritzik in *Bilko*) as his short and even dimmer partner, Gunther Toody. The close comedic connection between *Bilko* and *Car 54* was only emphasized by the presence of actress Beatrice Pons, who played Ross's nagging wife/foil in both. Shot on location, the show, despite some



gold-standard scripts, lasted only two seasons; it did, however, give Gwynne the exposure which secured his casting as Herman in *>The Munsters*. In this he was joined by fellow *Car 54* alumnus Al Lewis who played officer Schnauser.

A 1994 *Car 54* movie based on the series (which resurrected Lewis and Nipsey Russell from the original cast) isn't worth describing.

CAROLINE IN THE CITY

USA 1995–, 49 x 30m, col NBC. CBS Entertainment Productions/Barron:Pennette Productions/Three Sisters Entertainment. UK tx 1995– C4.

CR Fred Barron. **EXEC PR** Fred Barron, Marco Pennette, David Nichols. **PR** Faye Oshima Belyeu, Bill Prady, Billy Masters, Brian Hargrove, Jack Kenny, Lester Lewis. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, Will Mackenzie, Arlene Sanford, Joshua Baerwald, Tom Cheron, Pamela Fryman. **WR** Various, including Amy Cohen, Bill Prady, Ellen Idelson, Rob Lotterstein, Dottie Dartland, Fred Barron, Marco Pennette, Jennifer Glickman. **MUS** Jonathan Wolff. **CAST** Caroline Duffy Lea Thompson Del Cassidy Eric Lutes Richard Karinsky Malcolm Gets Annie Spadaro Amy Pietz Remo Tom La Grua Charlie Andrew Lauer.

The *Mary Tyler Moore Show* for the nineties. Lea Thompson (former ballet dancer and star of the *Back to the Future* movies) played Caroline Duffy, a

◀◀ Fred Gwynne (left), and Joe E. Ross in the lunatic cop comedy, *Car 54, Where Are You?*

well-groomed single working gal adrift in the metropolis (New York City). Although she was phenomenally successful as a newspaper cartoonist, her romantic life was a mess; in one sequence, she even resorted to throwing fruit on the street in an effort to meet men. There were, however, a couple of suitors, in the shapes of buffoonish ex-boyfriend Del and brooding cartoon colorist Richard (with whom it started to get serious). Annie was the mandatory comic next-door neighbor, incontinent with advice for Duffy on all aspects of dating. Still, no matter how tumultuous was la Duffy's existence, it all made good material for her weekly biographical comic strip, "Caroline in the City."

Savvy, slick, squeaky clean, and difficult to dislike, the show had an obvious appeal in the late-twentieth-century world of troubled singles. It even managed to knock *>Friends* from the top of the US ratings. One disconcerting habit was the introduction of characters from other sitcoms as guests; in one episode Chandler (Matthew Perry) from *>Friends* turned up in *Caroline*, and in another it was Niles (David Hyde Pierce) and Daphne (Jane Leeves) from *>Frasier*.

For the record, Duffy's cat was called Salty.

CARROTT'S LIB

UK 1982–4, 17 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

52

PR Paul Jackson, Geoff Posner. **WR** Various, including Jasper Carrott, Rob Grant and Doug Naylor, Duncan Campbell, Ian Hislop. **CAST** Jasper Carrott, Emma Thompson, Chris Barrie, Debby

Bishop, Steve Frost, Nick Wilton, Kay Stonham, Nick Maloney.

After a TV career remarkable only for its unremarkableness, Birmingham comic and folk singer Jasper Carrott (real name: Robert Davies) noticed that the comedic times were a-changin' and used the opportunity to reinvent himself as an alternative humorist in *Carrott's Lib*. Strange to say, it worked.

While *Carrott's Lib* included Carrott's stock-in-trade observational humor about everyday life, it also introduced bug-eyed diatribes (*Sun*-reading reactionaries coming in for particular ire) and sharp political satire (pinkish type). Between the rants and musings were sketches; the performers including such showbiz tyros as Emma Thompson and Chris Barrie (later *>Red Dwarf*, *>Brittas Empire*). Much of the material was self-penned, but Ian Hislop, Rob Grant, and Doug Naylor (the latter two soon to team up for *>Red Dwarf*) also contributed.

A follow-up series in 1987, *Carrott Confidential*, marked a failure of nerve, with Carrott relying on such gagmen of yesteryear as Barry Cryer for the titters, before Carrott refound the alternative vein in the 1990 *Canned Carrott*. With Carrott up on his high chair, most of the skitting fell to Steve Punt and Hugh Dennis of the *>Mary Whitehouse Experience*, but it was Carrott's running cop spoof with Robert Powell that endeared most, even becoming a show in its own right: *The Detectives*.

» ***That's the best
joke I know!*** «

“Hampton Court?”
“No, I always walk
like this.”

CARRY ON LAUGHING

UK 1975, 6 x 30m, col ITV. ATV.

CR Gerald Thomas. **EXEC PR** Peter Rogers. **PR** Gerald Thomas. **DR** Alan Tarrant. **WR** Various, including Lee Schwarz, Barry Cryer, Dick Vosburgh. **CAST** Various, including Barbara Windsor, Sid James, Jack Douglas, Bernard Bresslaw, Joan Sims, Kenneth Connor. Video ITC.

An attempt to transfer the *Carry On* film series to TV, with a series of specially written half-hour pieces, variously spoofs of TV shows (“And in My Lady’s Chamber” sent up period soap *Upstairs, Downstairs*) or historical romps (“Under the Round Table”). Where the latitude offered by small-screen production might have encouraged exploration, however, it only produced laziness. The jokes included such antediluvian specimen double entendres as “Anyone for a little crumpet?” and (even) “Hampton Court?”/“No, I always walk like this.”

Worth catching, though, for an appearance by thespian Simon Callow, playing a sailor in one of his earliest outings, is the episode “Orgy and Bess.”

Anyone for a
little crumpet?

CHEERS

USA 1982–93, 273 x 25m, 1 x 90m, col NBC. A
 Charles Burrows Charles Production/Paramount TV.
 UK tx 1983–93 C4.

CR Les Charles, Glen Charles, James Burrows.

EXEC PR Various, including James Burrows, Les Charles, Glen Charles. **PR** Various, including Ken Levine, Heide Perlman. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, Andy Ackerman, Tom Moore, John Ratzenberger. **WR** Various, including James Burrows, Les Charles, Glen Charles, Heide Perlman, Sam Simon, David Lee, Ken Levine, David Isaacs. **MUS** Judy Hart Angelo and Gary Portnoy (“Where Everybody Knows Your Name” theme).

CAST Sam Malone Ted Danson Diane Chambers Shelley Long Ernie “Coach” Pantuso Nicholas Colasanto Norm Petersen George Wendt Cliff Clavin John Ratzenberger Carla Tortelli/LeBec Rhea Perlman Frasier Crane Kelsey Grammer Woodrow Tiberius Boyd (“Woody”) Woody Harrelson Rebecca Howe Kirstie Alley Lilith Sternin Crane Bebe Neuwirth Eddie LeBec Jay Thomas Robin Colcord Roger Rees Kelly Gaines/Boyd Jackie Swanson Harry Gittes Harry Anderson John Allen Hill Keene Curtis Evan Drake Tom Skerritt. Video Columbia.

» **Sometimes you want to go**
Where everybody knows your name,
And they’re always glad you came,
You want to be where you can see,
Our troubles are all the same,
You want to go where everybody
knows your name...





▲▲▲ *Cliffie and Norm in the “barcom” Cheers, a hit till it quit.*

Set in the Boston bar of the title (est. 1895), this single-set show was one of the most popular and critically acclaimed comedies of recent decades. The regulars were: womanizing owner Sam “Mayday” Malone, a reformed alcoholic and one-time relief pitcher for the Red Sox; dense barman Ernie “Coach” Pantuso; promiscuous acid-tongued waitress Carla Tortelli (Rhea Perlman, wife of Danny De Vito and sister of *Cheers* producer Heide Perlman); corpulent barfly Norm (who always

entered to a holler of “NORM!”); prim English Lit graduate Diane; and anally retentive mailman Cliff Clavin, a veritable fountain of trivia. The storylines of the first seasons were dominated by Sam and Diane’s love/hate relationship; eventually she left him to marry pompous psychologist Frasier Crane. However, unable to forget Sam, she jilted Frasier and returned to busing tables at Cheers. Then Coach died (as had actor Nicholas Colasanto, who was also one of US TV’s principal directors). His place was taken by Woodrow Tiberius Boyd (“Woody”), a farmboy of frightening simpleness from Hanover, Indiana. At around the same time,

the dejected Frasier pulled up a stool at the bar, and later married the acerbic, night-creaturish Lilith (who once asked the bar where she could sleep, to which Carla replied memorably, "I've got an attic you can hang upside down in").

In 1987 Diane left the bar to write a novel, and a saddened Sam sold the business to a large corporation and set off to sail the world. But his yacht sank and he had to slink back to Cheers to beg a job off the new manager, gold-digging Rebecca Howe. Meanwhile, Carla married hockey player Eddie LeBec (who was subsequently killed in an ice rink accident) and had two more children, making her the mother of eight. Though Sam set out to seduce Rebecca, and she had to fight her attraction to him, she was ultimately more interested in rich corporate raider Robin Colcord – until he ended up in jail. Eventually Sam regained control of the bar, making the supercilious Rebecca *his* underling. Subsequent storylines included Woody's marriage to Kelly Gaines (an occasion which produced a rare *Cheers* episode in physical comedy), Lilith's sojourn with an eccentric scientist in an underground pod, the revelation that Sam wore a hairpiece, and the culmination of the bar's long rivalry with Gary's Old Time Tavern, when the *Cheers* gang finally got one over on the smug Gary.

Although it was replete with brilliant one-line gags, the wit of *Cheers* came from its characters, who were types but not stereotypes. "How's life in

the fast lane?" Sam asked Norm. "Don't ask me, Sammy," replied Norm, "I can't find the on-ramp." Such jokes were all the better for the fact that the characters were not portrayed with the cloying sentimentality of much sitcom; on the contrary, they were almost painfully inadequate. As conman Harry "The Hat" Gittes put it to the bar staff and patrons of Cheers: "How would we know we were winners if we didn't have you guys?" It is testament to the sublime quality of the show that only one of the main cast, Shelley Long, ever quit to do other things (although Danson, Alley, and Harrelson combined *Cheers* with active movie careers). The guest list included Christopher Lloyd, Fred Dryer (who he? – the actor originally slated to play Sam Malone), and John Cleese in an Emmy-winning performance as a deranged marriage guidance counsellor, Dr. Simon Finch-Royce, in the episode "Simon Says."

The final episode, "One for the Road" (in which Diane returned to the bar), aired in America in May 1993, gained an audience of 150 million, making it the most-watched show in TV history. It had also become the most expensive, costing \$65 million for twenty-six episodes. (Much of the cost went to cast salaries; Danson alone earned \$450,000 per episode.) *Cheers'* final tally of Emmy Awards was twenty-seven, just two fewer than the record held by *>The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

Among the classic episodes are: Simon Says/One for the Road/Coachie Makes Three/The Two Faces of Norm/Where Have All the Floorboards Gone?/Indoor Fun with Sammy and Robby/One Hugs, the Other Doesn't/Cliffie's Big Score/I Do, Adieu/Woody Interruptus/Showdown/Death Takes a Holiday on Ice/Grease/"I" On Sports.

NORM!

There were two spin-offs: the short-lived *The Tortellis* and the hugely successful *>Frasier*.

Cheers was created by *>Taxi* writers James Burrows, Les Charles, and Glen Charles. The *Cheers* bar is based on a real Boston tavern, the Bull and Finch.

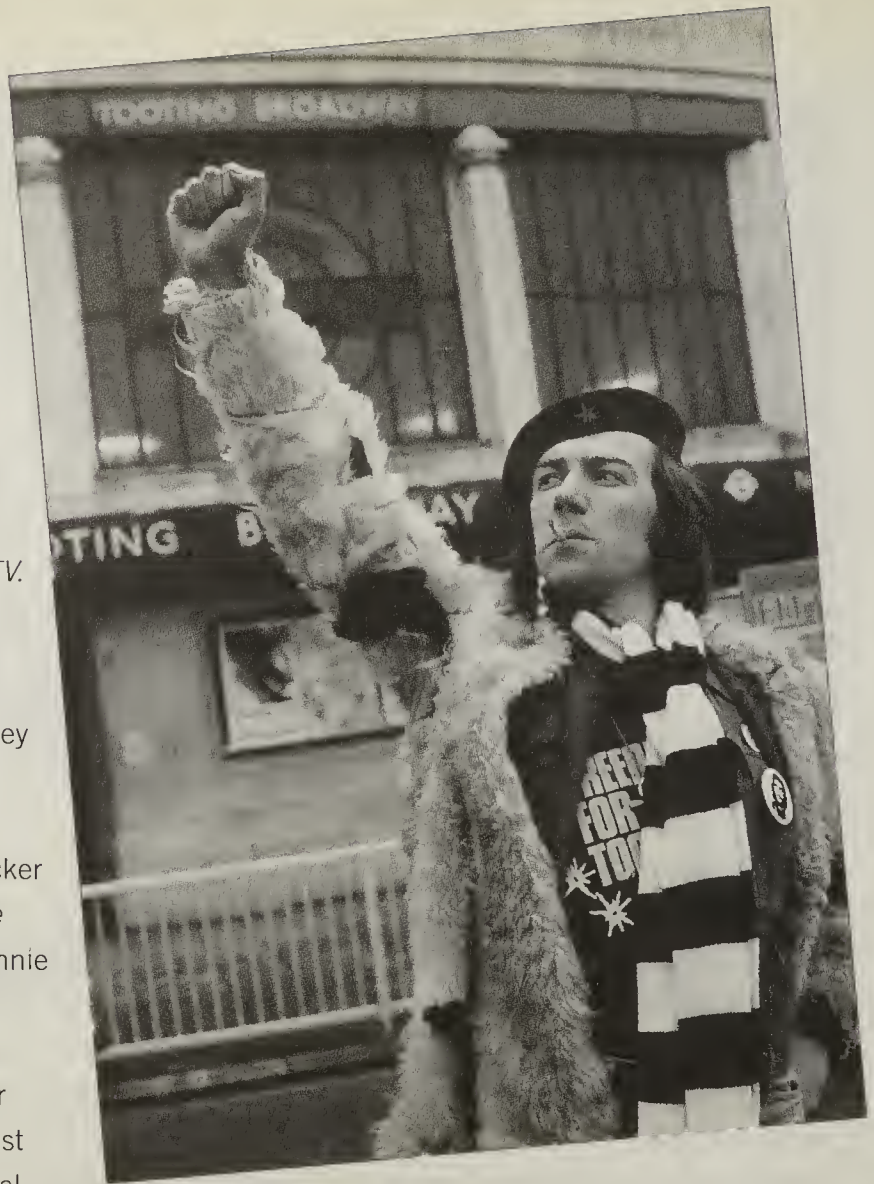
CITIZEN SMITH

UK 1977–80, 30 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR John Sullivan. PR Dennis Main Wilson.

DR Ray Butt. WR John Sullivan. CAST Walter Henry “Wolfie” Smith Robert Lindsay Shirley Cheryl Hall Ken Mills Mike Grady Charlie Johnson Peter Vaughan/Tony Steedman/Artro Morris Mrs. Johnson Hilda Braid Tucker Tony Millan Anthony “Speed” King George Sweeney Harry Fenning Stephen Greif Ronnie Lynch David Garfield. Video BBC.

Sitcom by sometime BBC scene-shifter John Sullivan that parodied the Marxist Left, in the shambolic shape of the fictional Tooting Popular Front. Leader of the suburban guerrilla army was busker Wolfie Smith (Robert Lindsay from *>Get Some In*), an Afghan-coated Che Guevara wannabe. Weedy Buddhist sidekick Ken, fecund Tucker, and greaser Speed filled out the ranks. Shirley was Wolfie’s long-suffering record shop girlfriend (played by Lindsay’s real-life wife, Cheryl Hall), whose conservative parents, Mr. Johnson (the frightening Peter Vaughan, later *>Porridge*, *Our Friends in the North*) and dim



▲▲▲ “Power to the people!” Robert Lindsay as Citizen Smith.

Mrs. J. – who constantly malaproposed “Wolfie” into “Foxie” – eventually became the top dogs, and Ken’s landlords.

A socialist Walter Mitty Wolfie may have been, but his occasional victories over the narrow-minded adult world made him one of seventies British comedy’s most engaging creations. His proselytizing

was also tempered by a bent to con artistry, the comic possibilities of which Sullivan magnified into his greatest creation, Del Boy Trotter of *>Only Fools and Horses*, which even took its title from a *Citizen Smith* episode.

Classic episodes are headed by "The Glorious Day" (season three), when Wolfie and comrades found an abandoned tank and decided to invade Parliament. Alas, their long-dreamed-of desire to stand the class enemy "up against the wall... bop-bop-bop" never came to fruition. Also: "The Party's Over," in which the TPF sabotaged the punch at a nob's bash; and "The Hostage," in which they mistakenly kidnapped local gangster Harry Fenning instead of the local MP.

The show was developed from a 1977 pilot, screened as part of *Comedy Special*.

"Power to the People!"

THE COMIC STRIP PRESENTS...

UK 1983-93, 21 x 45/60m, 15 x c30m, col
C4/BBC2. Filmworks/Comic Strip.

CR Peter Richardson. **EXEC PR** Michael White, Peter Richardson. **PR** Michael White, Lolli Kimpton, Nira Park. **DR** Various, including Peter Richardson, Keith Allen, Paul Bartell, Robbie Coltrane, Stephen Frears, Bob Spiers, Adrian Edmondson, Pete Richens. **WR** Various, including Peter Richardson, Pete Richens, Adrian Edmondson, Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders, Nigel Planer, Alexei Sayle, Pauline Melville, Roland Rivron, David Stafford, Barry Dennen, Robbie Coltrane, Morag Fullerton.

MUS Jeff Beck, Simon Brint, Kate Bush, Chrissie Hynde, Steve Nieve. **CAST** Peter Richardson, Adrian Edmondson, Rik Mayall, Nigel Planer, Jennifer Saunders, Dawn French, Alexei Sayle, Daniel Peacock, Keith Allen, Noshier Powell, Sara Stockridge, Gary Beadle, Doon Mackian, Robbie Coltrane.

The transfer to TV of Peter Richardson's Soho-based "The Comic Strip" club, as overseen by impresario Michael White. The first small-screen piece was "Five Go Mad in Dorset," aired on Channel 4's opening night in 1982, which ruthlessly spoofed Enid Blyton, and was finished to perfection with a cameo by soap star Ronald Allen (*Crossroads*) as dubious Uncle Quentin ("I'm a screaming homosexual, you little prigs"). Post-modernist parody proved the mainstay of the ensuing *Comic Strip* series, with targets ranging from the music industry ("The Bad News Tour") to TV ("The Bullshitters," a lampoon of the ultramacho crime show, *The Professionals*). Most favored of all, though, were film genres ("Slags," "A Fistful of Travellers' Cheques," "The Yob"), Richardson's preoccupation with cinema eventually leading to the *Comic Strip* apogee, "The Strike" (1988), an overly dramatic Hollywood-style version of the British 1984-5 miners' dispute, with Richardson as Al Pacino playing Arthur Scargill, and Jennifer Saunders as Meryl Streep playing Scargill's wife. Alexei Sayle was the committed leftist writer whose work was distorted for lucre. The faux Hollywood remakes continued in "GLC," with Robbie Coltrane as Charles Bronson playing Ken Livingstone, the Greater London Council leader.

By this time (1990), *The Comic Strip* had decamped from C4 to BBC2. Although Richardson and Co. would produce fifteen “films” for the Corporation, these tended to be reheats of previous themes. Few lodged in folkloric memory, apart from “The Crying Game,” the story of gay footballer Roy Brush and his hounding by *The Scum* newspaper. Yet as *The Comic Strip*’s own star waned, those of its individual members waxed large, in shows such as >*The Young Ones*, >*Alexei Sayle’s Stuff*, >*French and Saunders*, >*Bottom*, and a score more. Its own merit aside, *The Comic Strip* deserves notice in the cult TV annals for being the veritable fountainhead of small-screen British alternative comedy.

Stephen Frears (later *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *The Grifters*), quick-flic specialist Paul Bartell (*Death Race 2000*), and Richardson himself were among those sharing the director’s chair, with Richardson also helming *The Comic Strip*’s three cinematic releases, *The Supergrass* (1985), *Eat the Rich* (1987), and *The Pope Must Die* (1991).

In 1998 many of the cast were reunited for a special, in which four salesmen found themselves on a nightmare journey to a sales conference.

The episodes were: season 1: Five Go Mad in Dorset/War/The Beat Generation/Bad News Tour/Summer School; season 2: Five Go Mad on Mescaline/Dirty Movie/Susie/A Fistful of Travellers’ Cheques/Gino: Full Story and Pics/Eddie Monsoon, a Life/Slags/The Bullshitters: Roll Out the Gunbarrel; season 3: Consuela/Private Enterprise; season 4: The Strike/More Bad News/Mr. Jolly Lives Next Door/The Yob/Didn’t You Kill My Brother?/Funseekers; season 5: South Atlantic Raiders I/

South Atlantic Raiders II: Argie Bargie/GLC: The Carnage Continues/Oxford/Spaghetti Hoops/Les Dogs; season 6: Red Nose of Courage/The Crying Game/ Wild Turkey (Christmas 1992 special); season 7: Detectives on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown/Space Virgins from Planet Sex/Queen of the Wild Frontier/Gregory: Diary of a Nutcase/Demonella/Jealousy; plus a 1998 reunion special: Four Men in a Car.

THE COSBY SHOW

USA 1984–93, 196 x 25m, 4 x 60m, col NBC. A Carsey-Werner Production in Association with Bill Cosby. UK tx 1985–94 C4.

CR Ed Weinberger, Michael Leeson, William H. Cosby, Jr., EdD. **EXEC PR** Marcy Carsey, Tom Werner. **PR** Various, including John Markus, Terri Guarnieri, Matt Williams. **DR** Various, including Jay Sandrich, Tony Singletary. **WR** Various, including Ed Weinberger, Michael Leeson, John Markus, Chris Auer, Gary Knot, Bill Cosby, Earl Pomerantz, Matt Williams, Bernie Kukoff and Ehrich Van Lowe. **MUS** Stu Gardner and Bill Cosby (theme). **CAST** Dr. Heathcliff “Cliff” Huxtable Bill Cosby Clair Huxtable Phylicia Rashad (née Ayers Allen) Denise Huxtable Kendall Lisa Bonet Sondra Huxtable Tibideaux Sabrina LeBeauf Vanessa Huxtable Tempestt Bledsoe Theodore Huxtable Malcolm Jamal-Warner Rudy Huxtable Keshia Knight Pulliam Pam Tucker Erika Alexander Russell Huxtable (Cliff’s father) Earle Hyman Anna Huxtable (Cliff’s mother) Clarice Taylor Martin Kendall Joseph C. Phillips Elvin Tibideaux Geoffrey Owens.

Although Bill Cosby (*I Spy*, *The Bill Cosby Show*, *The New Bill Cosby Show*, *Captain Kangaroo*, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*) had been a TV item for nearly two decades, few gave this comedy of domestic drolleries much hope of success; it was a “domcom” at a time when the form was held to be in decline and, worse, it was about a black family. Whites, it was feared, would turn off. This wisdom did not last *The Cosby Show*’s first season. By 1985 and its second season it had risen to number one in



◀◀◀ William H. Cosby, star of *The Cosby Show*.

the Nielsens and stayed there for four years running, a record only ever surpassed by *>All in the Family*.

What audiences watched were poignant and gently amusing moments (episodes were frequently plotless) in the life of the middle-class Huxtables, headed by caring Cliff (Cosby’s most sensitive performance to date), an obstetrician, and wife Clair, a lawyer (played by Phylicia Rashad, née Phylicia Ayers-Allen, sister of Debbie Allen of *Fame* and wife of NBC sportscaster Ahmad Rashad). Sharing their New York brownstone at 10 Stigwood Avenue in Brooklyn Heights were offspring Denise, Theo, Vanessa, Rudy, and Sondra, all of them high achievers.

The show was a conscious crusade by Cosby to enlighten, providing a role model parade for blacks

and instruction in anti-racism for whites (as Cosby put it: “The Huxtables were set up to counter some of the minstrel shows Hollywood had set up”). Above all, though, the show was a lesson for everybody on how to bring up baby (i.e., with tolerance and love). Significantly, in early episodes Cosby styled himself William H. Cosby, Jr., Doctor of Education. *The Cosby Show* won four Emmys: Outstanding Comedy Series, 1985;

Outstanding Writing in a Comedy, 1985; Outstanding Guest Performer in a Comedy Series (Roscoe Lee Browne, 1986); and Outstanding Directing in a Comedy Series (Jay Sandrich, 1986). It also made “the Cos” one of the richest men in showbiz – though even with the benefit of an extended last episode in 1993, Cosby/Cliff was unable to fix the doorbell.

A 1987 spin-off, *A Different World*, related Denise Huxtable’s experiences on leaving the family home for Hillman College.

Four years after the close of *The Cosby Show*, Cosby and Rashad were reunited in *Cosby*, concerning a retired airline executive and his sorely-tried wife. It was based on the British sitcom *>One Foot in the Grave*.

CRAPSTON VILLAS

UK 1990–5, Approx 19 x 30m, col C4. *Spitting Image* Productions.

CR Sarah Anne Kennedy. **PR** Richard Bennett.

DR Sarah Anne Kennedy. **WR** Sarah Anne Kennedy.

CAST (voices) Jane Horrocks, Steven Steen, Alison Steadman, Liz Smith.

Animated soap opera from the >*Spitting Image* team. Set in mythical London SE69 (a jibe at soap *EastEnders*), where the featured characters shared a crumbling Victorian villa. In slug-ridden Flat B lived down-trodden Sophie, her “resting” film-maker boyfriend Jonathon (complete with pretentious goatee), and cutsie actress lodger Floss (who saw life in SE69 as “just like being in a documentary”). In Flat C was single mother Marge Stenson, her teenage son, and poppet-from-hell daughter Samantha. Robbie and Larry were the gay couple in Flat D. Fatso was the cat. Enid the granny.

Grotesque in both its scatological humor and its unnervingly accurate characterization; it would have been funny if it wasn’t so real. Jane Horrocks (from >*Absolutely Fabulous*) and Alison Steadman were among the famous lending their voices.

THE CRITIC

USA 1994, 23 x 30m, col ABC/Fox. Gracie Films/Columbia Pictures Television/Film Roman Production. UK tx 1995 Bravo.

CR Mike Reiss, Al Jean. **EXEC PR** James L. Brooks, Al Jean, Mike Reiss, Phil Roman. **PR** Various, including

Richard Sakai, Richard Raynis, Steve Tompkins.

DR Various, including Bret Haaland, Lauren McMullen, Rich Moore, Dan Jeup. **MUS** Hans Zimmer (theme), Alf Hauser. **CAST** (voices) Jay Sherman Jon Lovitz Duke Phillips Charles Napier Doris Doris Grau Jeremy Hawke Maurice La Marche Marty Sherman Christine Cavanaugh Margo Nancy Cartwright Franklin Gerritt Graham Eleanor Judith Ivey Alice Tompkins Park Overall Penny Tompkins Russi Taylor Vlada Nick Jameson.

The success of >*The Simpsons* caused much pitching of “toon” ideas at US networks. *The Critic* – from the producers of *The Simpsons* – was one of the few to make it to the airwaves.

Its title character was unattractive Manhattan film critic Jay Sherman (any resemblance to reviewer Roger Ebert was of course, um, coincidental), host of the little-watched cable show “Coming Attractions.” Here he pilloried the latest releases, none of which could meet his impossibly high standards (“It stinks!”). As well as jibing nicely at the movie crit brigade, *The Critic* also parodied the movies themselves and cable TV (not least in the shape of Sherman’s megalomaniacal media mogul boss), and even found time to follow Sherman’s disastrous personal life. Guest voices included Billy Crystal, Adam West, Dan Castellana, and Rod Steiger.

A thumbs up for this one.

It Stinks!

CYBILL

USA 1995–8, 82 x 30m, col CBS. YBL/River Siren Productions/Carsey-Werner Productions/Chuck Lorre Productions/Jay Daniel Productions. UK tx 1995– C4.

CR Cybill Shepherd. **EXEC PR** Marcy Carsey, Caryn Mandabach, Cybill Shepherd, Chuck Lorre, Jay Daniel. **PR** Various, including Bob Meyer. **DR** Various, including Jonathan Weiss, Tom Moore, Robert Berlinger, Andy Weyman. **WR** Various, including Joey Murphy and John Pardee. **CAST** Cybill Sheridan Cybill Shepherd Ira Woodbine Alan Rosenberg Jeff Robbins Tom Wopat Maryann Thorpe Christine Baranski Zoey Woodbine Alicia Witt Rachel Blanders Deedee Pfeiffer Sean Jay Paulson Claire Paula Cole Kevin Peter Krause.

After a period of conspicuous absence from the small screen, Cybill Shepherd (>*Moonlighting*) did a Roseanne Barr and based a sitcom around herself. In the resultant *Cybill* she played a bit-parting Hollywood actress (victim of vampires, that sort of thing) with fortysomething aging worries and two daughters, conservative Rachel and sarcastic Zoey (played by Alicia Witt, who made her screen debut at seven in *Dune*, and is the daughter of the woman with the world's longest hair). There was also a duo of intrusive ex-husbands, dunder-headed stuntman Jeff Robbins (a wondrously cast Tom Wopat from *The Dukes of Hazzard*) and neurotic novelist Ira Woodbine. Cybill's best friend was the hard-drinking Maryann (an Emmy-winning performance by Christine Baranski).

If *Cybill* never broke new ground, it was likeable

» **Stuntman Jeff:** “There’s this great scene where I jump from a speeding train with my head on fire.” **Cybill:** “Well, nobody’s head burns like yours.”



enough, with savvy swipes at Hollywood and a stockpile of smart one-liners. (Stuntman Jeff: “There’s this great scene where I jump from a speeding train with my head on fire.” Cybill: “Well, nobody’s head burns like yours.”) Morgan Fairchild, Paula Abdul, Jonathan Frakes, and Shepherd’s real-life ex-husband Peter Bogdanovich (who had long, long before directed her in the best of movies, *The Last Picture Show*, and the worst of movies, *At Long Last Love*) were among those on the obligatory roster of stellar guests.

DAD’S ARMY

UK 1968–77, 80 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Jimmy Perry, David Croft. **PR** David Croft. **DR** David Croft, Bob Spiers, Harold Snoad. **WR** Jimmy Perry, David Croft. **MUS** Ivor Novello (theme music), Jimmy Perry (theme lyrics), Bud Flanagan (theme vocal). **CAST** Captain Mainwaring Arthur Lowe Sergeant Wilson John Le Mesurier Corporal Jones Clive Dunn Private Frazer John Laurie Private Pike Ian Lavender Private Walker James Beck ARP Warden Hodges Bill Pertwee Verger Yeatman Edward Sinclair The Vicar Frank Williams Mavis Pike Janet Davies Private Sponge Colin Bean Mrs. Fox Pamela Cundell. Video BBC.

It was their finest half-hour. Based by writer Jimmy Perry on his youthful experiences with the local defense corps, this archetypal English TV comedy gently and nostalgically followed the misadventures of a Home Guard platoon in the fictional south coast town of Walmington-on-Sea during the Second World War. Initially the show was rejected by the BBC for fear it would denigrate the wartime heroes. This gloriously missed the point; the Walmington platoon, led by pompous bank manager Captain Mainwaring, may have been bumbling amateurs, but there was never any doubt that if the feared “Narzi paratroopers” had landed, they would have fought bravely to a man.

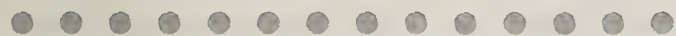
Much of the humor of the show came from the

▼▼ *“They don’t like it up ’em” – Arthur Lowe (center) leads the cast of Dad’s Army into TV legend.*

mixing of the social classes that war occasioned (epitomized by Mainwaring’s outranking of the public school-educated Sergeant Wilson), and from the inspired characters. Under Mainwaring (“Right then. Pay attention, men”) served the diffident Wilson (“Is that really wise, sir?”); the eternally volunteering Corporal Jones (“Don’t panic!”/“They don’t like it up ’em”); spivvy Private Walker (whose shiftiness was captured perfectly in the end credits, as he sneaked a “gasper” on duty); the wild-eyed coffin maker Private Fraser (“We’re doomed I say. Doomed”); young Mummy’s boy Pike; and aging incontinent Private Godfrey (“Do you think I might be excused, sir?”). The ARP warden, Hodges (who addressed Mainwaring as “Napoleon”), the vicar, and the verger were constant irritations to the platoon, endlessly competing with them for use of the church hall. Perhaps the quintessential moment



Don't panic!



of *Dad's Army*, when its sense of Englishness, its debt to Ealing film comedy, its characterization, and performances all came together, was the episode "The Deadly Attachment," in which the platoon captured a German submarine officer (Philip Madoc), who haughtily demanded the name of the Home Guardsman who mocked him. "Don't tell him, Pike," shouted Mainwaring.

So identified did the cast become with their *Dad's Army* roles that their other achievements are frequently overlooked. Arthur Lowe had previously starred in *Coronation Street* and *Pardon the Expression*, and would later lead *Potter* and *>A. J. Wentworth, BA*, while the distracted John Le Mesurier (of whom BBC comedy head Michael Mills once remarked, "he suffers so beautifully") had previously starred in *>George and the Dragon* as well as a reel of cinema films. (First married to *Carry On* and *>Sykes* actress Hattie Jacques, Le Mesurier's air of good breeding hid an irreverent nature; he once famously smoked a cannabis joint at a BAFTA Awards ceremony.) Arnold Ridley OBE had thirty-eight plays to his name, including the West End classic, *The Ghost Train*.

Filmed on location at Thetford, Norfolk, *Dad's Army* recruited a small army of guest actors, many of whom – Don Estelle, Jack Haig, Donald Hewitt, Michael Knowles, Carmen Silvera (Mainwaring's fling), and Wendy Richard (Walker's girlfriend) – would be economically recycled by producer (and ex-Royal Artillery major) David Croft in future shows

such as *>Are You Being Served?*, *>'Allo, 'Allo*, *>It Ain't Half Hot, Mum*, and *>Hi-De-Hi!*.

Classic episodes include: "The Deadly Attachment," "The Gorilla," and "The Day the Balloon Went Up." The series won the BAFTA for Best Comedy in 1971. Columbia Pictures released a spin-off feature film in the same year. There were also stage and radio versions.

Although the last original episode was filmed in 1971, the show remains timelessly popular, for it was Perry and Croft's great genius to create in *Dad's Army* a sublime picture of the English as they like to see themselves.

DARIA

USA 1997–, 19 x 30m, col MTV. MTV. UK tx 1997–MTV.

CR Glenn Eichler. **EXEC PR** Glenn Eichler. **PR** Susie Lewis Lynn. **CAST** (voices) Daria Morgendorffer Tracy Grandstaff Jane Lane/Quinn Morgendorffer Wendy Hoopes Trent Lane Alvaro J. Gonzalez Jake Morgendorffer Julian Rebolledo.

Spin-off from *>Beavis & Butt-head* in which the boys' smart, sardonic, and unpopular eponymous friend (she of the specs and ironic post on the school newspaper as fashion reporter),

>> Art teacher: "Good work, Daria... You've really created the illusion of depth!"

Daria: "I'm thinking of going into politics."



moves to the posh suburbs to be smart, sardonic, and unpopular at Lawndale High. Typical unteen hobbies: watching TV show "Sick Sad World" and... writing. She was the daughter of hyperactive lawyer Helen and stressed businessman Jake, and older sister to the beautiful and popular Quinn (with whom she was engaged in a mutual pact of dislike). Jane Lane was Daria's best friend and fellow teen cynic and observer of the ridiculous behavior of the world.

Actress-writer Tracy Grandstaff, who supplied the teen cynic's voice in *B&B*, carried the job over to the new animation.

DAVE ALLEN AT LARGE

UK 1971–5, 50 x 35m, col BBC2. BBC TV. US tx 1975 Syndicated.

PR Peter Whitmore. **WR** Dave Allen, Austin Steele, Peter Vincent. **CAST** Dave Allen, with Paul McDowell, Ralph Watson, Jacqueline Clark, Robert East, Ronnie Brody.

Rambling monologues from Irish sit-down (on a stool) comic, with nine-and-a-half nicotine-stained fingers and a perpetual whiskey glass. Interspersing the rants were filmed sketches. Much the most favored of Allen's targets were sex, religion, and bureaucracy; his risqué comedic thrusts – often skillfully done – were much appreciated by a TV audience tired of conservatism on the small screen. A virtuoso interlude in which Allen anagrammed the names of famous politicians ("Rev. Ian Paisley" became "Vile IRA Pansy")

remains an undimmed classic, even if long ago locked in the vaults of TV land.

Born David Tynan O'Mahoney, Dave Allen ("Anal Delve") began his TV career with Val Doonican, graduating to his first solo series, *The Dave Allen Show*, in 1969. Others followed, for both the ITV and BBC networks, but *At Large* was the creative high tide.

THE DAY TODAY

UK 1994, 14 x 30m, col BBC2. Talk Back.

CR Christopher Morris, Armando Iannucci. **EXEC PR** Peter Fincham. **PR** Armando Iannucci. **DR** Andrew Gilman. **WR** Christopher Morris, Armando Iannucci. **CAST** Christopher Morris, Patrick Marber, Rebecca Front, Steve Coogan, Doon Mackichan, David Schneider.

TV news satire, similar to >*Drop the Dead Donkey* and >*KYTV* of the same era, but infinitely more savage in its exposure of media manipulation and the degrading of newscasting standards. In this it proved award-winningly successful, despite a tendency in moments of laziness to fall back on the standard ploy of alternative shows, a dose of >*Monty Python* surrealism, e.g. the headline "Dismantled Pope Found Sliding Along Road." Among the featured newzak folk were decapitated weatherman Sylvester Stuart, economics correspondent Peter O'Hanraha'hanrahan (Patrick Marber), business affairs reporter Collaterlie Sisters (Doon Mackichan, >*The Comic Strip Presents*), Christopher Morris

(played by Christopher Morris) as argumentative Paxman-like anchor, and Pringle-clad sportscaster Alan Partridge (Steve Coogan) – soon to enjoy a spoof show of his own, *>Knowing Me, Knowing You... with Alan Partridge*. A prefamous Minnie Driver could be glimpsed as an Italian TV presenter.

DESIGNING WOMEN

USA 1986–93, 163 x 30m, col CBS. Bloodworth: Thomason Mozark Productions/Columbia Pictures Television/CPT Holdings. UK tx 1993–6 Sky 1.

CR Linda Bloodworth-Thomason. **EXEC PR** Harry Thomason, Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, Pamela Norris, Douglas Johnson, Tommy Thompson, Norma Safford Vela. **DR** Various, including Jack Shea, Ellen Falcon, Arlene Sanford, Harry Thomason, David Steinberg, David Trainer. **WR** Various, including Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, Pamela Norris. **CAST** Suzanne Sugarbaker Delta Burke Julia Sugarbaker Dixie Carter Charlene Frazier Stillfield Jean Smart Mary Jo Shively Annie Potts Anthony Bouvier Meshach Taylor Carlene Frazier Dobber Jan Hooks Allison Sugarbaker Julia Duffy Bernice Clifton Alice Ghostley Bonnie Jean ("B. J.") Poteet Judith Ivey Etienne Toussant Bouvier Sheryl Lee Ralph Bill Stillfield Douglas Barr Claudia Shively Priscilla Weems.

Created by writer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason (an Arkansas friend of Bill and Hillary Clinton, no less), this comedy about a quartet of southern belles working for an Atlanta interior design firm debuted in fall of 1986 to respectable ratings. For

reasons best known to themselves, however, CBS then moved the show to a death slot and ratings plummeted. *Designing Women* went into "hiatus."

However, in a virtual rerun of the *Cagney and Lacey* saga, viewers (predominantly women, and led by Viewers for Quality Television) campaigned for *Designing Women's* return. And got it, the show later reaching the top ten of the Nielsens.

The original drawling decorator foursome who worked at Sugarbakers were employees Mary Jo Shively (single mother) and Charlene Frazier (utterly conventional), and the two Sugarbaker sisters who employed them, Julia (liberal professional) and Suzanne (sex-mad and dumb: "I'm gonna turn the TV off – it's only the news and I saw that yesterday"). Essentially, though, the Sugarbaker four were archetypes used to explore the problems of modern women, which the show did humorously well. The sole man in the hen coop was Anthony Bouvier (Meshach Taylor), a campy black ex-convict who served as their assistant. (Eventually, Anthony made the grade as partner, thus neatly puncturing viewer notions that the deep South was run entirely by rednecks.)

There were several cast changes, the most important being the departure of former Miss Florida, Delta Burke, who played Suzanne. Burke went to fat and was fired – somewhat tarnishing the show's image as a feminist sitcom beacon. (Burke later starred in the short-lived 1992 sitcom, *Delta*.) She was replaced by Julia Duffy as Cousin Allison



***I'm gonna turn the TV off
– it's only the news and I saw
that yesterday***



Sugarbaker. Duffy lasted a single year, to be replaced by Tony-winner Judith Ivey as B. J. Poteet, a Texan widow who became part owner of Sugarbakers. As Ivey went in through the Sugarbakers door, so Annie Potts, who played Mary Jo (and previously the record store owner in *Pretty in Pink*), went out. By the end of the 1992 season, only Dixie Carter and Taylor were left from the original cast, and the show was clearly floundering in its attempt to restore the original balance of characters, even shifting the epicenter of the humor away from the Sugarbaker belles to Bouvier and wacky client Bernice Clifton. It was canceled in May 1993. The show's co-executive producer was Linda Bloodworth-Thomason's husband, Harry Thomason.

A spin-off, *Women of the House*, aired in 1991.

DESMOND'S

UK 1989–94, 65 x 30m, col C4. Humphrey Barclay Productions. US tx 1990– Black Entertainment Television.

CR Trix Worrell. **PR** Humphrey Barclay, Charlie Hanson. **DR** Various, including Trix Worrell, Charlie Hanson, Nic Phillips, Liddy Oldroyd, Mandie Fletcher, David Askey, Ian McLean. **WR** Trix Worrell, Joan Hooley. **CAST** Desmond Ambrose Norman Beaton Shirley Ambrose Carmen Munroe Porkpie Ram John Holder Matthew Christopher Asante/Gyearbuor Asante Sean Justin Pickett Gloria Kim Walker Lee Robbie Gee Tony Dominic Keating Michael Ambrose Kim Walker Louise Lisa Georghan Mandy Matilda Thorpe Beverley Joan Ann Maynard.

Not Britain's first all-black sitcom (that honor belongs to *The Fosters*, LWT 1976–7), nor its second (>*No Problem!*), but certainly its most successful. Norman Beaton, who had starred in *The Fosters*, played the testy yet tolerant Desmond Ambrose, proprietor of a barbershop in Peckham, South London that served as the social scene for his family and assorted locals – and gave the occasional haircut. Carmen Munroe – also of *The Fosters* – played Desmond's long-suffering wife, Shirley. The other main characters included the Ambrose offspring Michael, Sean, and Gloria; and regular customers/friends, usually of a philosophizing bent – lollipop man Porkpie, Matthew, Lee (Robbie “Buck” Gee, *The Real McCoy*), Tony, and Louise.

Most of the humor was spun from the intergenerational conflict between the values of young black characters who grew up in Britain and an older generation from the West Indies. Some predictable scripts were triumphed over by charismatic performances, and the show ran to five seasons, earned Beaton an appearance on >*The Cosby Show* (as a cricket-loving West Indian doctor), and sold around the world. In the USA, it attracted millions on Black Entertainment Television. It also spawned a spin-off, *Porkpie*, following that character and his fabulous million-pound lottery win. Like *Desmond's* itself, it was created and written by Trix Worrell.

Oh, R-o-b

THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW

USA 1961–5, 156 x 30m, bw CBS. Calvada Productions/T & L Productions. UK tx 1963–6 BBC1.

CR Carl Reiner. **EXEC PR** Sheldon Leonard, Carl Reiner, Danny Thomas. **PR** Carl Reiner, Ronald Jacobs. **DR** Various, including Carl Reiner, John Rich, Jerry Paris, Robert Butler, Stanley Z. Cherry, Claudio Guzman. **WR** Various, including Carl Reiner, Bill Persky, Sam Denoff. **MUS** Earle H. Hagen. **CAST** Rob Simpson Petrie Dick Van Dyke Laura Petrie (née Meeker) Mary Tyler Moore Ritchie Petrie Larry Matthews Alan Brady Carl Reiner Jerry Helper Jerry Paris Millie Helper Ann Morgan Guilbert Buddy Sorrell Morey Amsterdam Sally Rogers Rose Marie Mel Cooley Richard Deacon.

Classic sixties sitcom about Rob Petrie, the head TV comedy writer for the fictional *The Alan Brady Show*. For the most part, the plots involved shenanigans at the office, where Petrie worked with man-eating Sally Rogers and Buddy Sorrell (plus pompous balding producer, Melvin Cooley), and at his home in the New York suburb of New Rochelle. There Petrie lived with his perky wife, the former dancer Laura, and son Ritchie. Jerry and Millie Helper were the next-door neighbors.

Originally creator Carl Reiner (who had previously worked on *Your Show of Shows*) intended to play the lead part of Petrie himself, but was



▲▲▲ One of the most sophisticated sitcoms ever to hit the tube, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* followed the lives of TV comedy writer Rob Petrie and his wife Laura.

persuaded to stand down by veteran TV executive producer Sheldon Leonard (although Reiner got to play the often heard but rarely seen Alan Brady). In his stead Sheldon cast, after initially slating Johnny Carson, onetime game show host and Broadway actor Dick Van Dyke. Sixty actresses were

interviewed before the unknown Mary Tyler Moore (whose most substantial roles hitherto had been the secretary – seen only from the hips down – in *Richard Diamond*, *Private Eye* and the “Happy Hotpoint Elf” in TV commercials that aired during >*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*) was cast as Petrie’s wife Laura.

As if to prove the truth of Sheldon’s axiom “the higher the quality of the show, the longer it will take to catch on with the general public,” *DVDS* took two seasons to become a hit (and then needed to be scheduled to follow >*The Beverly Hillbillies* on Wednesday nights), but was never out of the ratings top twenty thereafter. The show’s slow start was partly caused by the obstruction of CBS chief Jim Aubrey (“The Smiling Cobra”), who took a perverse dislike to *DVDS* and had to be pressured by sponsors Proctor and Gamble into airing it. Famously liberal in its world view, the show was financed initially by money from the Kennedy clan, via John F. Kennedy’s brother-in-law, Rat Pack actor Peter Lawford. As if to underline the show’s embodiment of the Kennedy age, Moore even looked like Jackie Kennedy.

Among the fifteen Awards bestowed by the Television Academy on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, a watershed in the development of adult comedy for the sophistication of its scripts, were Emmys for Outstanding Comedy Series in 1963, 1964, and 1966. Van Dyke and Moore also both received Emmys for their performances. The show came to an end in 1966 when Van Dyke, the “male Julie Andrews” as he called himself, left to pursue movie work full time. He returned to TV in 1971, however, with *The New Dick Van Dyke Show*, playing Dick

Preston, the host of a TV chat show. Meanwhile, Mary Tyler Moore went on to star in her own phenomenally successful >*Mary Tyler Moore Show*, also set in TV land.

Episodes of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* are repeated to this day, its timeless appeal helped by the show having been filmed originally without any slang expressions.

DIFF'RENT STROKES

USA 1978–86, 184 x 30m, col NBC/ABC. Embassy Pictures Corp/TAT Productions.

CR Jeff Harris, Bernie Kukoff. **PR** Budd Grossman, Howard Leeds, John Maxwell Anderson. **DR** Leslie H. Martinson. **MUS** Alan Thicke. **CAST** Arnold Jackson/Drummond Gary Coleman Willis Jackson/Drummond Todd Bridges Philip Drummond Conrad Bain Kimberley Bain Dana Plato Mrs. Garrett Charlotte Rae Charlene DuPrey Janet Jackson.

Interracial sitcom which premised the adoption of two black Harlem orphans, Arnold (Gary Coleman) and Willis Jackson, by a white Park Avenue millionaire, Philip Drummond. Developed by NBC executive Fred Silverman as a vehicle for the precocious eight-year-old Coleman (he of the extraordinary savvy self-confidence and comic timing), the show sought to bridge the racial divide in the American audience. It did so, but at the cost of much criticism from black organizations that Coleman was just the grinning wire-headed pickaninny from TV and films of yesteryear.

Tragically, renal disease and a subsequent

kidney transplant stunted actor Coleman's growth and caused his face to look aged, giving his performance a diverting oddness. He also starred in *The Gary Coleman Show*, a Hanna-Barbera cartoon (1982–3), in which he voiced a mischievous angel, Andy Lebeau.

In the days before she became popastically famous, Janet Jackson appeared in *Diff'rent Strokes* as Willis' girlfriend. Among the show's guest stars were Muhammad Ali and Forest Whitaker.

There were two spin-offs, *The Facts of Life* and *Hello Larry*.

DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

UK 1969–70, 26 x 30m, col ITV. LWT.

CR Frank Muir. **PR** Humphrey Barclay. **DR** Various, including Bill Turner, David Askey. **WR** Various, including John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Bill Oddie, Graeme Garden, Jonathan Lynn.

CAST Michael Upton Barry Evans Duncan Waring Robin Nedwell Dick Stuart-Clark Geoffrey Davies Paul Collier George Layton Huw Evans Martin Shaw Prof. Geoffrey Loftus Ernest Clark The Dean Ralph Michael Danny Hooley Jonathan Lynn Dave Briddock Simon Cuff.

Medical sitcom which pleased in small doses. Loosely derived for TV from the novel by Richard Gordon, at the instigation of the then head of comedy at LWT, Frank Muir, it updated the story to feature a fresh intake of students at famed St. Swithin's teaching hospital. Prominent among the tyro quacks were Michael Upton (Barry Evans, later

>*Mind Your Language*), Duncan Waring, Paul Collier (George Layton, >*It Ain't Half Hot, Mum*), and upper-class Dick Stuart-Clark. Leery, beery antics ensued in a style not a whole ward away from *Carry On Doctor*. Professor Loftus and the Dean were the stock figures of aghast authority.

Funnily enough, despite its MORism the show was largely scripted by writers associated with zany edge-of-late-sixties comedy – the Cambridge contemporaries John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Bill Oddie, Graeme Garden, and Jonathan Lynn (who also appeared on screen as mad Irish medic Danny Hooley). A sequel, *Doctor at Large* (ITV, 1971), however, allowed Cleese a tryout situation about a rude hotelier that would eventually transmogrify into >*Fawlty Towers*.

After *Doctor at Large* – which saw Upton et al. newly qualified and joined in the department of incompetence by puritan killjoy Bingham (Richard O'Sullivan, later >*Man About the House*) – the *Doctor* series began to issue from LWT with apparent incontinence: *Doctor in Charge* (ITV, 1972–3), *Doctor at Sea* (ITV, 1974), *Doctor on the Go* (ITV, 1975–7), and even the antipodean-set *Doctor Down Under* (ITV, 1980). By this time, only Waring and Stuart-Clark were left from the original cast of TV characters. But there was still more *Doctoring* to come: in 1983 a film version of *Doctor in the House* segued clips from the *Doctor* shows thus far, and in 1991 the BBC produced a revival, *Doctor at the Top* (BBC1, 1991), which saw Waring, Collier, and Stuart-Clark twenty years later and the holders of (improbably enough) high office at St. Swithin's. Alas, all the sequels did was to demonstrate the law of diminishing comic returns.

DR. KATZ, PROFESSIONAL THERAPIST

USA 1995–, 41 x 30m, col Comedy Central. HBO
Downtown Productions/Tom Snyder Productions/
Popular Arts Entertainment. UK tx 1995
Paramount.

CR Jonathan Katz, Tom Snyder. **EXEC PR** Tom Snyder, Tim Braine, Nancy Geller. **PR** Jonathan Katz, Julianne Shapiro, H. Jon Benjamin, Tom Snyder, Loren Bouchard, Karen LeBlanc, Anette LeBlanc Cates, Will LeBow. **MUS** Tom Snyder and Shapiro Music. **CAST** (voices) Dr. Katz Jonathan Katz Ben H. Jon Benjamin Laura Laura Silverman Stanley Will LeBow Julie Julianne Shapiro.

Stand-up comedian Jonathan Katz voiced cartoon therapist “Dr. Katz,” whose caseload (neurotic patients, usually impersonated by other comedians) was not helped by having a contemptuous, nail-filing secretary, Laura, and a 23-year-old slacker son, Ben. Off duty, Dr. Katz (who was, natch, not quite sorted in the department of life himself) liked to pontificate with friend Stan and bartender Julie at “Jacky’s 33.”

A loony toon for the middle- to highbrow market, the show was acerbically funny and scripted with casual brilliance. It was produced using computer-generated SquiggleVision, which made the drawn lines shake distinctively, some thought irritatingly.



**Dr. Katz: “Ray, Ray, Ray.
What are we going to do with
you, laddy boy?”
Ray: “Fix me.”**



Before going into series production in 1995, the show was preceded by seven one-minute pieces in 1994. Among the guest voices were Ray Romano, Rita Rudner, Garry Shandling, and Winona Ryder.

DOOGIE HOWSER, MD

USA 1989–93, 60 x 30m, col ABC. Steven Bochco Productions. UK tx 1990–3 BBC1.

CR Steven Bochco, David E. Kelley. **PR** Steven Bochco. **DR** Various, including Paul Newman, Bill D’elia, Kris Tabori, Steven Cragg, Joan Darling, Matia Karrell, Eric Laneuville. **MUS** Mike Post. **CAST** Dr. Douglas “Doogie” Howser Neil Patrick Harris Dr. David Howser (father) James B. Sikking Katherine O’Brien Howser (mother) Belinda Montgomery Vinnie Delpino Max Casella Nurse Cauly Spaulding Kathryn Lang Dr. Benjamin Canfield Lawrence Pressman Dr. Jack McGuire Mitchell Anderson Wanda Plenn Lisa Dean Ryan Raymond Alexander Markus Redmond Nurse Faber Robyn Lively.

Implausible but diverting sitcom featuring a boy genius who becomes a fully qualified doctor at fourteen. The fresh-faced one practiced – to the jaw-dropping panic of patients – at the Eastman Medical Center in Los Angeles, but was constantly torn between serious career professionalism and wanting to have typical teen fun with his buddy Vinnie.

The show was developed by Steven Bochco as part of his ten-pilot contract with ABC network, and cocreated with David Kelley, with whom Bochco later teamed up for *L. A. Law*.



DREAM ON

USA 1990–6, 100 x 30m, col Home Box Office.
 Kevin S. Bright Productions/MCA Television
 Entertainment. UK tx 1991– C4.

CR David Crane, Marta Kauffman. **EXEC PR** Kevin S. Bright, John Landis. **PR** Robb Idels, David Crane, Marta Kauffman. **DR** Various, including John Landis, Eric Laneuville, Betty Thomas, Rob Thompson, Anson Williams, Stephen Engel, Lisa Gottlieb, Jerry London, Arlene Sanford, Mel Smith, Peter Baldwin, Debra Hill, Nick Marck, Michael McKean, Bethan

▲▲ Brian Benben starred in HBO's "adult comedy" *Dream On* about a thirtysomething sex-obsessed single white male in New York.

Rooney, Kevin Bright. **WR** Various, including David Crane, Marta Kauffman, Jeff Greenstein, Jeff Strauss, Stephen Engel, Andrew Gordon and Eileen Conn. **MUS** Michael Skloff. **CAST** Martin Tupper Brian Benben Judith Tupper/Stone Wendie Malick Toby Pedalbee Denny Dillon Jeremy Tupper (son) Chris Demetral Eddie Charles Jeff Joseph (1990)/Dorien Wilson Gibby Fiske Michael McKean.

Made-for-cable American “adult comedy” (i.e., spiced with naked embonpoint), which also circulated the airwaves in a syndicated version sans nudity. Brian Benben played sex-mad N.Y. book editor Martin Tupper, a TV child of the fifties who became a newly divorced guy of the nineties. With scant sympathy from Toby, his secretary at Whitestone’s, and dubious advice from womanizing best friend Eddie Charles, Tupper entered the N.Y. dating scene and ended up in comic neuroses and bed with almost every passing woman. Running storylines included Tupper’s attempts to maintain a relationship with his son and his continued love for ex-wife Judith, who had gone on to marry – to Tupper’s chagrin – the literally perfect man in Dr. Richard Stone. (Tupper had a revenge of sorts, however, in the episode “For Richard or For Poorer,” in which Stone took a bullet for the Pope, but lost a kidney in the process; Tupper donated one of his, knowing henceforth that a part of Stone’s greatness would always be his.)

Written and produced by the team who would later create *>Friends*, the show’s main gimmick was to illustrate Tupper’s every thought with a clip from archive black-and-white TV shows, *GE Theatre* and *Alcoa Premiere* being favorites. The device wasn’t new – Woody Allen had used it in the 1972 movie *Play It Again Sam* – and co-executive producer John Landis (better known for his helming of such films as *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Blues Brothers*) only adopted it as a lucrative means of utilizing MCA’s unsyndicable back catalogue, but it was often wittily done. When Tupper heard the news that his wife wanted a divorce, the screen cut to footage of Lee Marvin

delivering a knockout blow; when a young college coed tried to seduce the 36-year-old Tupper, handsome Hollywood star Cornel Wilde popped up to assure him, “Age has nothing to do with it, it’s performance that counts.”

The cable version had its tacky moments (a threesome with Eddie Charles in “Come and Knock on Our Door” being the exemplar), and a mite of controversy around a scene in which Tupper and Charles smoked a joint, but the risky adult formula generally held good. The show also contained one of the TV in-jokes of the nineties, in a scene in which actor Brent Spiner, best known as the android Data in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, played a computer system repair man.

DROP THE DEAD DONKEY

UK 1990–8, 66 x 30m, col C4. *Hat Trick*. US tx 1992– *Comedy Central*.

CR Andy Hamilton, Guy Jenkin. **EXEC PR** Denise O'Donoghue. **PR** Andy Hamilton, Guy Jenkin. **DR** Liddy Oldroyd. **WR** Andy Hamilton, Guy Jenkin, Ian Brown, Nick Revell, Malcolm Williamson. **CAST** Gus Hedges Robert Duncan George Dent Jeff Rawle Alex Pates Haydn Gwynne Damien Day Stephen Tomkinson Dave Charnley Neil Pearson Henry Davenport David Swift Sally Smedley Victoria Wicks Joy Merryweather Susannah Doyle Helen Cooper Ingrid Lacey.



“Are we cooking with napalm? Good.”

– Gus Hedges, Globelink News Executive



In the beginning, this behind-the-scenes sitcom set in a TV newsroom was heavily topical in its humor, with a steady stream of up-to-the-minute one-liners about real events (scripts being written twenty-four hours before broadcast). As the seasons passed, however, the current events gags were much reduced in number (from around twenty-five to around twelve per episode) and the humor came to center on the memorable caricatures who were the staff of Sir Royston Merchant's Globelink TV. These were: Gus Hedges, the craven, virginal, jargon-spouting chief executive ("Could we interlock brain spaces in my office?");

Alex, his acerbic prime mover, later replaced by lesbian Helen; Damien (Stephen Tomkinson, later *Ballykissangel*), the amoral, thrusting, cub reporter; Henry, the dissolute news anchorman who was constantly at war with the snobbish but dim newsreader, Sally Smedley; George, the be-cardiganed, hypochondriac, divorced senior news

▼▼ *The dysfunctional staff of the TV newsroom sitcom Drop the Dead Donkey. It starred, from left to right, Susanah Doyle, Jeff Rawle, David Swift, Robert Duncan, Victoria Wicks, Stephen Tomkinson, Ingrid Lacey, and Neil Pearson.*



editor; Dave Charnley (played by Neil Pearson, later the cop show *Between the Lines*), the indefatigable tottyholic – although according to Alex, in the aftermath of a classic drunken office Christmas party episode, he possessed “a small penis and the sexual prowess of a panda”; and Joy, the permanently angry personal assistant.

Transmuted into what was essentially a conventional comedy – with the added plus of an alarmingly true depiction of the backbiting in office life – the show became a massive international hit, selling to countries as diverse as Turkey and Iceland. It was also accorded two International Emmys and BAFTAs for Best Comedy Series, among other honors. The show was the creation of Guy Jenkin and Andy Hamilton (formerly the producer of *>Who Dares Wins* and a writer for *>Spitting Image*).

DUCKMAN

USA 1994–7, 70 x 30m, col USA Network.
Paramount Pictures. UK tx 1995– BBC2.

EXEC PR Jeff Reno, Ron Osborn. **PR** Gabor Csupo, Sherry Gunther, Arlene Klasky, Gene Laufenberg, Michael Markowitz, David Misch. **DR** Various, including Raymie Musquiz, John Eng, Jeff McGrath, Norton Virgien. **WR** Various, including Jeff Reno, Ron Osborn, Ron Lux, Bill Canterbury, Bernie Keating, Michael Markowitz. **MUS** Scott Wilk, Todd Yvega, Frank Zappa. **CAST** (voices) Eric Tiberius Duckman Jason Alexander Cornfed Pig Gregg Berger Ajax Dweezil Zappa Mambo E. G. Daily Charles Dana Hill/Pat Musick Aunt Bernice Nancy Travis.

Animated misadventures of an irascible wise-quacking detective duck (with the appearance of “a urine-colored feather duster”) who, along with porcine partner Cornfed Pig, ran a private detective agency. However, the duo’s cases seldom ran along ordinary lines: in one episode alone, Duckman went on the run from the IRS aboard a Harley (shades of *Easy Rider*), joined a hippie commune, drank a hallucinogenic potion, and burned his bra – all in under thirty minutes. In another episode, the detective drake staged a coup in South America against pay toilets. Befitting the show’s subtitle, “Private Dick/Family Man,” Duckman’s home life also figured centrally, his brood being composed of Siamese-twin sons who loathed him, a frighteningly stupid teenager, Ajax (“Stand away from the door, son, then pull”), and exercise fetishist sister-in-law Bernice.

If the show was an obvious spoof of film noir and the TV “domcom,” its weird artwork and weirder hardboiled humor gave it the sharp edge of social satire (and was thus completely in keeping with Duckman’s origins in Everett Dick’s underground cartoon strip). Jason Alexander – from *>Seinfeld* – voiced the venal Duckman with obvious relish, while Dweezil (son of Frank) Zappa was the voice of Ajax. The guest star voices were headed by David Duchovny, Brian Keith (from sixties sitcoms *The Brian Keith Show* and *>Family Affair*, and the sublime Sam Peckinpah TV oater *The Westerner*) as Duckman’s father, Burt Reynolds, Ice-T, Coolio, and Leonard Nimoy.

Seemingly uneasy at the show’s bizarrerie, Paramount pulled the plug after seventy shows (the last episode being the cliffhanging “Four Weddings

What the hell you starin' at?

Inconceivable"), though lampooning Paramount's own products, such as *Star Trek* ("Where No Duckman Has Gone Before"), might be said to be a classic case of pecking the hand that feeds you. Duckman, however, later bobbed back on the Internet as an MSN talkshow host.

ELLEN

USA 1994-8, 109 x 25m, 1 x 60m, col ABC. The Black-Marlens Company/Touchstone TV. UK tx 1994- C4.

CR Neal Marlens, Carol Black, David Rosenthal.

EXEC PR Eileen Heisler, DeAnne Heline, Vic Kaplan, Mark Driscoll, Daval Savel. **PR** Various, including Tracy Newman, Jonathan Stark, Lisa DeBenedictis, Daryl Rowland, Ellen DeGeneres.

DR Various, including Robby Benson, Tom Cheronos, Gil Junger, Gail Mancuso, Lorraine Sevre-Richmond. **MUS** W. G. Snuffy Walden.

CAST EllenMorgan Ellen DeGeneres "Coffee" Joe Farrell David Anthony Higgins Paige Clark Joely Fisher Audrey Penney Clea Lewis Adam Green Ayre Gross Spence Kovak Jeremy Piven Anita Maggie Jakobson Holly Holly Fisher.

▶▶▶ Ellen DeGeneres (right), star of kooky sitcom *Ellen*, aka *These Friends of Mine*.

Kooky >*Seinfeld*>*Caroline in the City*>*Friends*-type sitcom about mixed-up single people.

Stand-up comic Ellen DeGeneres starred as an L. A. bookshop/coffeeshop manager, queenpin to a group of goofy chums – ambitious Paige, irritating "Coffee" Joe, lecherous Adam, and whiny airhead Audrey – who tolerated her idiosyncrasies (babbling and bumbling in her handling of people) as she tolerated theirs. Filmed in feel-good warm lighting



reminiscent of shampoo advertisements, it did OK in plumbing the corners of relationship paranoias and exhibited the occasional flash of inspired surrealism (including a mind-catching weird satire on car consumerism). Those who loved it loved it, but probably not as much as some other sitcoms.

In 1997 *Ellen* made the news headlines when DeGeneres announced "I'm gay," and that she was in a relationship with actress Anne Heche (the main squeeze of Steve Martin, a fact likely to test his sense of humor). Department store J C Penney and car giant Chrysler withdrew their advertising from the show, and ABC affiliates in the Midwest dropped it from their schedules. ABC responded with a star-studded special (including Demi Moore, k.d. lang, Oprah Winfrey), "Ellen: The Episode," in which the sitcom *Ellen* was introduced to sapphic ways by Laura Dern. The show was axed in 1998.

EMPTY NEST

USA 1988–95, 170 x 30m, col NBC. Witt-Thomas-Harris/Touchstone Productions. UK tx 1989–92.

CR Susan Harris. **EXEC PR** Susan Harris, Paul Junger Witt, Regina Stewart Larsen, Tony Thomas, Bob Tischler. **PR** Various, including Pat Dougherty, David Richardson, Peter Callay, Dennis Snee, Steven Sullivan, Ursula Ziegler. **DR** Various, including Hal Cooper, Stephen Zuckerman, Renny Temple, Dinah Manoff. **WR** Various, including Dennis Snee, Paolo Poeti (aka Paul B. Price), Steven Sullivan, Ursula Ziegler. **MUS** John Bettles, George Aliceson Tipton. **CAST** Dr. Harry Weston Richard Mulligan Carol

Weston Dinah Manoff Barbara Weston Kirsty McNicol Nurse LaVerne Todd Charley Dietz David Leisure Sophia Petrillo Estelle Getty.

A knock-off from Susan Harris's >*The Golden Girls* and set in the Miami matrons' own neighborhood. Richard Mulligan from >*Soap* starred as widowed pediatrician Harry Weston, whose daughters – neurotic Carol and undercover cop Barbara – had flown the nest. But only to return. Paternal anxiety and misunderstanding ensued, while Weston sought to deal with the mature female suitors who appeared at his door and lascivious neighbor Charley. A sympathetic ear was lent by dog Dreyfuss. Nothing if not economical, Harris used the show to launch another sitcom, >*Nurses*.

EVENING SHADE

USA 1990–4, 98 x 30m, col CBS. CBS Entertainment Productions/Bloodworth-Thomason/Mozark. UK tx 1992–4 C4.

PR Tommy Thompson and Don Rhymer. **DR** Various, including Burt Reynolds, John Ratzenberger, Robby Benson, James Hampton. **CAST** Wood Newton Burt Reynolds Ava Evans Newton Marilu Henner Taylor Newton Jay R. Ferguson Molly Newton Melissa Martin/Candace Hutson Will Newton Jacob Parker Evan Evans Hal Holbrook Dr. Harlan Ellidridge Charles Durning Frieda Evans Elizabeth Ashley Herman Stiles Michael Jeter Fontana Beausoleil Linda Gehringer Ponder Blue Ossie Davis.

Laid-back ensemble sitcom which marked Burt Reynolds' return to the medium that made him (he came up playing in fifties oaters *Gunsmoke* and *Riverboat*). Here Reynolds starred as a former American football hero, Wood Newton, who goes back to his hometown in Arkansas to become the High School coach. The team hadn't won a game in two years – and Newton's coaching did nothing to change that. His family consisted of wife Ava (Marilu Henner from *>Taxi*), who had career ambitions and eventually became local district attorney; baby daughter Emily; teen son Taylor; and Molly and Will. Ava's father, Evan, owned the local paper, the *Evening Shade Argus*. Other regulars included Ponder Blue, the musing narrator who doubled as restaurateur at Ponder Blue's Barbecue Villa, stripper Fontana Beausoleil (who was being dated by Evan), Ava's straight-talking Aunt Frieda, gimp math teacher Herman Stiles, and town physician Harlan Ellbridge.

Almost hypnotic (at its best) in its easy charm and sense of rural small-town place rare in nineties sitcomland (you have to go back to the era of *>The Andy Griffith Show* for anything comparable), it went high in the ratings, and Reynolds himself picked up a 1991 Emmy for Best Comedy Actor for the series. Unfortunately, the revelation that Reynolds was engaged in an extra-marital affair was deemed by the network to be a ratings liability, and the show was pulled.

Those sharing the directing duties included Reynolds himself, plus John Ratzenberger, better known as Cliff Clavin in *>Cheers*. *Evening Shade* came from the Arkansas team of Linda Bloodworth-Thomason and Harry Thomason (*>Designing Women*).

FAIRLY SECRET ARMY

UK 1984–6, 12 x 30m, col C4. Video Arts.

CR David Nobbs. **PR** Peter Robinson. **DR** Robert Young, Roy Ward Baker. **WR** David Nobbs. **CAST** Major Harry Kitchener Wellington Truscott Geoffrey Palmer Nancy Diana Fletcher Sgt.-Major Throttle Michael Robbins Doris Entwistle Liz Fraser Stubby Collins Ray Winstone Beamish Jeremy Child.

Sitcom veteran Geoffrey Palmer (*>Butterflies, Last Song, As Time Goes By*) played retired army major Harry Kitchener Wellington Truscott, a right-wing fanatic who believed the country to be overrun by “right-on feminists, do gooders, and left-wing anarchist sympathisers.” Accordingly, he founded a private army – alas for him, composed of half-brained fascists and no-brained toffs – to whip the British nation back into shape. Actors Michael Robbins (*>On the Buses*), Liz Frazer, and Ray Winstone were among those cast with inspiration.

The character of Truscott was fairly heavily derived from the military-minded Jimmy played by Palmer in David Nobbs' earlier *>The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*.

THE FALL AND RISE OF REGINALD PERRIN

UK 1976–9, 21 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx Syndicated 1978.

CR David Nobbs. **PR** John Howard Davies, Gareth Gwenlan. **DR** Gareth Gwenlan. **WR** David Nobbs. **MUS** Ronnie Hazlehurst. **CAST** Reginald Iolanthe

Perrin Leonard Rossiter Elizabeth Perrin Pauline Yates C. J. John Barron Joan Greengross Sue Nicholls Doc Morrissey John Horsley Tony Webster Trevor Adams David Harris-Jones Bruce Bould Prue Harris-Jones Theresa Watson Jimmy Geoffrey Palmer Linda Sally-Jane Spencer Tom Tim Preece/Leslie Schofield McBlane Joseph Brady.

Inspired serial satire on middle everything (age, class, England), adapted by David Nobbs from his novel, *The Death of Reginald Perrin*.

After twenty years as an executive for Sunshine Desserts, Reginald Iolanthe Perrin (Leonard Rossiter, *>Rising Damp*) walks out on his monotonous life and fakes a seaside suicide. After a spell as a pig farmer, he then assumes the persona of Martin Welbourne, remarries wife Elizabeth, and starts a company called Grot. This sells everything totally useless (son-in-law Tom's abysmal wines, square footballs) at inflated prices. As a sly critique of consumerism Grot fails abysmally, becoming instead a capitalist success, and Reggie enters the ranks of tycoonery. When Sunshine Desserts collapses, Reggie employs all his old colleagues (boss C. J., secretary Joan, sycophantic juniors Tony "Super" Webster and David "Great" Harris-Jones), which seems a pleasant revenge until these incompetents all develop the Midas touch. Worse, Reggie realizes that he has simply recreated his former life. At the end of season two, Reggie et al. stage a counterfeit suicide, returning for a season in which Reggie founds a community for stressed executives. This also has room for an impenetrable Scottish cook, McBlane, and Reggie's militaristic brother-in-law Jimmy (played by Geoffrey Palmer,

who virtually reprised the character in *>Fairly Secret Army*), the latter always on the scrounge for food with the apology, "Bit of a cock-up on the catering front." (The show also donated another catchphrase to the English lexicon: C. J.'s "I didn't get where I am today...").

Peculiarly cynical and cerebral for a late seventies British sitcom, *Fall and Rise* avoided dry-as-dustness through the vital performance of Rossiter, who took a sitcom creation and made something tragicomically great out of it: the patron saint of the suburban commuter on the 7:50 from Purley Oaks. (Rossiter's turn as Perrin also managed to camouflage the show's tendency to repeat a distinctly small store of jokes.) It traveled well, going into syndication in the USA in 1978, and eventually gave birth to a US version, *Reggie* (starring Richard Mulligan from *>Soap*, Barbara Barrie, Dianne Kay, Timothy Stack, Chip Zien, Jean Smart and a pre-*thirtysomething* Timothy Busfield), and was broadcast by ABC in 1983.

Against all sanity, the BBC made a sequel to *Fall and Rise* in 1996, with the scenario that Reggie had been killed by an insurance billboard (Rossiter himself had died in 1984), leaving his cronies to perform absurd tasks in the hope of receiving large amounts of lucre from his will. Devoid of Reggie and the show's original context, the characters and jokes were just dead ciphers walking around bemused.

***I didn't get where
I am today...***

FAMILY AFFAIR

USA 1966–71, 138 x 30m, col CBS. Don Fedderson Productions. UK tx 1969 ITV.

CR Edmund Hartmann and Don Fedderson. **PR** Don Fedderson. **DR** Various, including James Sheldon, William D. Russell, Charles Barton. **CAST** Bill Davis Brian Keith Mr. Giles French Sebastian Cabot Jody Johnnie Whitaker Buffy Anissa Jones Cissy Kathy Garver Niles French (French's brother) John Williams Emily Turner Nancy Walker.

American character actor Brian Keith (born Robert Keith, Jr.) took his first plunge into sitcomland with this archetypal “heart show,” in which he played Bill Davis, a playboy Manhattan millionaire who became the foster father to his orphaned nephew and twin nieces. Such a kindness, however, was much to the initial dismay of his disdainful and obsessively tidy butler, French. But, of course, all eventually lived in tolerant harmony.

An obvious rehash of CBS's own *>Bachelor Father*, the hit show went through 138 episodes in the USA, only a smattering of which were shown in the UK. Keith himself carried over his screen-warming, gruff-but-kind persona – via Sam Peckinpah's oater series *The Westerner* – to sitcom *The Little People* (1972–4, NBC), in which he played Hawaii pediatrician Sean Jamieson, the show eventually being retitled *The Brian Keith Show*. The actor later cropped up in the abysmal thriller series, *The Zoo Gang*.

Guest stars included Myrna Loy, Jackie Coogan, Ida Lupino, and Dana Andrews.

FAMILY TIES

USA 1982–9, 181 x 30m, 1 x 60m, col NBC. UBU Productions/Paramount TV. UK tx 1985–9 C4.

CR Gary David Goldberg. **EXEC PR** Gary David Goldberg. **DR** Various, including Debbie Allen, John Pasquin, Lee Shallat, Alan Bergman, Tony Mordente, Sam Weisman. **WR** Various, including Gary David Goldberg, Ruth Bennett, Alan Unger. **MUS** Jeff Barry and Tom Scott (theme), J. A. C. Redford. **CAST** Elyse Keaton Meredith Baxter-Birney Steve Keaton Michael Gross Alex P. Keaton Michael J. Fox Mallory Keaton Justine Bateman Jennifer Keaton Tina Yothers Andrew Keaton Brian Bonsall.

The show responsible for launching the career of the diminutive Michael J. Fox. Fox played Alex P. Keaton, the archconservative teenage son of former flower children Elyse and Steve Keaton, who were continuing to espouse liberal values in the cold climate of the eighties. The pilot episode, in which Alex attended a restricted country club with his socialite girlfriend, set the tone. The other Keaton progeny – none of them the hippie type – were fashion plate Mallory and cutsie Jennifer, later joined by baby Andrew.

While the show's main vein of humor was the generation gap, it also parodied Reaganite values: Fox's besuited, monetarism-espousing Alex was intended as a ridiculous figure but, like Gordon Gecko in *Wall Street*, ironically became a hero. Tom Hanks appeared in some early episodes as Elyse's embezzling brother, Ned. Johnny Mathis and Deniece Williams crooned the “Without Us” theme. In the final episode, a one-hour special, “Alex



Doesn't Live Here Anymore," Alex appropriately enough joined a Wall Street firm.

Reputedly President Ronald Reagan's favorite TV show.

THE FAST SHOW

UK 1995–7, 32 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

CR Paul Whitehouse, Charles Higson. **PR** Paul Whitehouse, Charles Higson. **DR** Mark Mylod, Sid Robertson. **WR** Various, including Paul Whitehouse, Charles Higson, Simon Day, Caroline Aherne.

Furiously inventive and pacy comedy skit show (averaging a machine-gun-like twenty-five sketches per thirty-minute episode), helpfully apolitical, and fueled by cleverly repetitive, playground-friendly catchphrases and *Viz*-like creations. The Fat Sweaty Cops, Arthur "Where's Me Washboard?" Atkins, tongue-tied toff Ralph and Irish gardener Ted, coughing Bob Fleming, the Alcoholics, and jinxed geriatric Unlucky Alf were among the most famous characters. (These may have all been gross caricatures, but they were caricatures with depth; there was something almost moving in repressed Ralph's unexpressed but powerful emotions for the monosyllabic Ted.)

Creators Paul Whitehouse (ex-plasterer) and Charlie Higson (ex-rock band, the Higsons) had previously scripted for Harry Enfield – even inventing his famous >*Saturday Live* creations

Stavros and Loadsamoney – as well as appearing in his >*Harry Enfield's Television Show* and its various incarnations. Whitehouse and Higson first met as students at the University of East Anglia. As well as penning seventy percent of *The Fast Show* material, Whitehouse and Higson led the performers, who included Caroline Aherne from >*The Mrs Merton Show*. *The Fast Show* re-established the art of comic-sketch timing, in contrast to the self-indulgency shown by such contemporaries gone to flab as >*French and Saunders*.

Brilliant!... and now for some (more) catchphrases: Scorchio/Does my bum look big in this?/We're off-roaders/Ooh! Suits you, sir/I'm a geezer. I'll nick anything/Get yer knickers on and make a cup of tea/Relieved *and* gutted, I think/Roy... you sack of shit/Meal for one... live alone, do you? [checkout girl]/... which was nice.

FATHER DEAR FATHER

UK 1968–73, 36 x 30m, col ITV. Thames TV. US tx 1977 Syndicated.

CR Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **PR** William G. Stewart. **DR** Various, including William G. Stewart. **WR** Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **CAST** Patrick Glover Patrick Cargill Anna Glover Natasha Pyne Karen Glover Ann Holloway Matilda "Nanny" Harris Noel Dyson Barbara Glover/Mossman Ursula Howells Mrs. Glover (mother) Joyce Carey Georgie (literary agent) Sally Beazley/Dawn Addams Bill Mossman Patrick Holt/Tony Britton Tim Tanner Jeremy Child Howard Richard O'Sullivan.

◀◀◀ Brilliant! Paul Whitehouse and Charlie Higson's The Fast Show.



Sitcom starring Patrick Cargill as Patrick Glover, a suave divorced writer of pulp thrillers, whose romantic assignations and attempts at work were farcically interrupted by his mother, his agent, his ex-wife Barbara, her lover (Bill, his ex-best friend), his housekeeper, and his two teenage daughters. The latter blond sixties twosome, who wore skirts up to *there*, were a particular bane to the crusty, cravat-wearing author-father. A St. Bernard named H. G. Wells acted as Glover's sole male confidant. In the later seasons, daughter Anna married Tim Tanner, and daughter Karen found a boyfriend in the eager-puppy shape of Howard (Richard O'Sullivan). The show was produced by William G.

▲▲▲ *Daughters Ann and Karen (who wore skirts up to there) with novelist pater Patrick in Father, Dear Father.*

Stewart, later to turn up before the camera as the presenter of *Fifteen-to-One*.

This mildly likeable comedy was the dream TV machine for the suave Cargill, a former Army officer, whose previous screen roles had included Number 2 in *The Prisoner* and the doctor in the classic blood donor sketch in *>Hancock's Half-Hour*. The show was sufficiently popular to spin off a 1971 film of the same name, and then an Australian TV version in 1977, with Glover leaving urbane Kensington for Down Under, to care for a

couple of inherited nieces. Of the original cast, only Noel Dyson, as the fussing housekeeper ("Nanny"), joined him. Almost simultaneously with this, Cargill starred in the LWT sitcom *The Many Wives of Patrick*, in which he played a character highly similar to Glover, one Patrick Woodford, a much-divorced antiques dealer.

FATHER KNOWS BEST

USA 1954–62, 191 x 25m, bw CBS/NBC. Rodney-Young Productions. UK tx 1956– ITV.

PR Eugene B. Rodney, Robert Young. **DR** Various, including William D. Russell, Peter Tewksbury. **MUS** Irving Friedman, Joseph Weiss. **CAST** Jim Anderson Robert Young Margaret Young Jane Wyatt Betty Anderson Elinor Donahue Bud Anderson Billy Gray Kathy "Kitten" Anderson Lauren Chapin Miss Thomas Sarah Selby.

Lightly comic events in the idyllic life of the American family Anderson. The epitome of the "Hi, Honey, I'm home" family sitcoms of the affluent Eisenhower fifties, *Father Knows Best* transferred to TV after a successful radio run. Somewhat unusually, the show played on all three main US networks, including the reruns on ABC. The show was set in the Midwest town of Springfield, where Jim Anderson worked for the General Insurance Company, returning home each day to deal with mini-crises which had arisen during his absence.

Star Robert Young, a Hollywood front man from the thirties and forties, later led the medical soap, *Marcus Welby M. D.*

FATHER TED

UK 1995–8, 19 x 30m, 1 x 40m, col C4. Hat Trick.

CR Graham Linehan and Arthur Matthews. **PR** Lissa Evans, Geoffrey Perkins. **DR** Declan Lowney. **MUS** Neil Hanlon. **WR** Graham Linehan and Arthur Matthews. **CAST** Father Ted Crilly Dermot Morgan Father Dougal McGuire Ardal O'Hanlon Father Jack Hackett Frank Kelly Mrs. Doyle Pauline McLynn.

Superior clerical caper following the misadventures of an unholy trinity of priests – relatively sensible Ted, permanently inebriated Jack ("Drinks! Gurr!s! Feck!"), transcendently dim Dougal – living on godforsaken Craggy Island, somewhere off the west coast of Eire. Dithering old Mrs. Doyle was the housekeeper. Blessed, as it were, with outstanding performances, it also had a heavenly absurdity: Mrs. Doyle's bad back was cured after tripping over a hamster's bicycle and falling down the stairs (the hamster later rode off...), while minor character Father Duff repeatedly died and reappeared. There was no internal logic whatsoever. Innocently, almost childishly daft, the show was deluged with awards, although it took a repeat of the first season for some to see the joke.

Star Dermot Morgan was the most influential Irish humorist since Dave Allen (>*Dave Allen at Large*), who, before moving to Britain, had created



Father Ted: "What was it that he [Father Jack] used to say about the needy? He had a term for them."

Father Dougal: "A shower of bastards."



an infamous and iconoclastic radio show (favorite targets: politics and the church), *Scrap Saturday*. Ironically enough, the show – which was street-emptyingly popular in Ireland – was itself scrapped by RTE, reputedly because of political and clerical pressure. Shortly after the filming of the third season of *Father Ted*, Morgan died of a heart attack. He was forty-five.

▼▼ Father Ted was blessed with unimprovable surreal humor.

FAWLTY TOWERS

UK 1975–9, 12 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV. US tx 1976–9 PBS.

CR John Cleese and Connie Booth. **PR** John Howard Davies, Douglas Argent. **DR** Bob Spiers. **WR** John Cleese and Connie Booth. **MUS** Dennis Wilson.

CAST Basil Fawlty John Cleese Sybil Fawlty Prunella Scales Polly Connie Booth Manuel Andrew Sachs Major Gowen Ballard Berkely Miss Tibbs Gilly Flower Miss Gatsby Renee Roberts. Video BBC.



Que?

The origins of *Fawlty Towers* are well known: in 1972 the >Monty Python team stayed in a hotel in Torquay on a location shoot, which gave them a somewhat jaundiced view of Britain's hotel industry, particularly after the proprietor threw Eric Idle's briefcase into the street for fear that it contained a bomb. The following year John Cleese wrote six scripts for >Doctor in the House sequel *Doctor at Large*, setting one of them in just such a seedy hotel, and two years later he wrote the first six-episode season of *Fawlty Towers* together with his then wife Connie Booth.

The series starred Cleese as manic, blustering hotelier Basil Fawlty, Prunella Scales as his long-suffering, over-coiffeured wife Sybil ("sour old bag"), and Connie Booth as pert maid Polly, apparently the only sane person in the hotel. Spanish waiter Manuel (Andrew Sachs) meanwhile darted about incompetently, much bullied by his employer and scorned for his inadequate grasp of English. Manuel's usual response to an order was an uncomprehending "Que?", whereupon Fawlty would offer by way of apology to his guests, "You'll have to excuse him – he comes from Barcelona." (When Spanish TV later bought the series, they avoided offending Barcelona viewers by transforming the waiter into an Italian in the dubbing process.) In the name of comedy, Manuel was famously used as a battering ram to open a fire exit, and dragged around by his ear.



▲▲▲ Polly, Basil, Manuel, and Sybil from *Fawlty Towers* in a rare moment of camaraderie.

Plots were based on misunderstanding and Basil's tireless efforts to impress those guests he believed were important while mercilessly insulting those he considered inferior. When Polly and the kitchen staff went out for the evening, a solo Basil attempted to pretend to his American guests that the hotel was actually fully staffed. A visit by German tourists ("Don't mention the war!") ended with Basil goose-stepping around the dining room

making a finger moustache above his upper lip. Imagined romantic intrigues behind the hotel's bedroom doors led Basil into paroxysms of indignation and ill-fated attempts to spy through keyholes and from wardrobes. And when a woman complained that her half-eaten prawn cocktail was inedible, the hotelier responded with "Well, only half of it is inedible, apparently," and agreed to refund the full price only if she brought up the eaten half during the night. Through all this Basil and Sybil maintained a relationship based entirely on mutual irritation.

Much of the humor of *Fawlty Towers* came from the performances, with John Cleese in particular the master of comic movement. According to series director Bob Spiers, Cleese wrote every detail of his performance into the scripts, with no move or gesture the result of improvisation. Each episode took Cleese and Booth six weeks to write (the industry norm is ten days), and ran to 120 pages of script for one half-hour (the norm being 65).

Prunella Scales' previous comedy credits include *Marriage Lines* with Richard Briers and *Seven of One* with Ronnie Barker. Ex-Python Cleese has since gone on to international acclaim for such feature films as *Clockwise* and *A Fish Called Wanda*.

A US-made show, *Amandas*, starring Bea Arthur (>*The Golden Girls*), tried to duplicate the formula, but failed to achieve either the same comic brilliance or critical success, even when it appropriated some episodes word for word.

The episodes were: A Touch of Class/The Builders/The Wedding Party/The Hotel Inspectors/Gourmet Night/The Germans/Communication

Problems/The Psychiatrist/Waldorf Salad/The Kipper and the Corpse/The Anniversary/Basil the Rat.

FILTHY RICH AND CATFLAP

UK 1987, 6 x 30m, col BBC1. A Paul Jackson Production for BBC TV.

CR Ben Elton. PR Paul Jackson. WR Ben Elton, Rik Mayall. CAST Filthy Ralph Nigel Planer Richard Rich Rik Mayall Eddie Catflap Adrian Edmondson.

A short-lived reuniting of Nigel Planer, Rik Mayall, and Adrian Edmondson from >*The Young Ones*, in the sitcom story – mainly scripted by Ben Elton – of Richie Rich's bid for TV stardom. Unfortunately for Rich, his attempts to enter the stellar showbiz ranks are undone by his own incompetence, the brainless violence of his bodyguard, Catflap, and the dodgy dealings of his dipso agent, Filthy Ralph.

Dismissed as "The Young Ones: The Next Generation," *Filthy Rich and Catflap* certainly continued with that show's formula of excessive violence, scatology, and inexplicable surrealist interludes. Yet, viewed through a generous lens, it was possible to see in *Filthy* a lurking critique by Elton of the traditional sitcom (evidenced by the characters' habit of making self-referential comments on the show, and Eddie's demolishing of the set in the finale, to reveal the studio behind) and the tawdry nature of showbiz fame.

The only problem was that the jokes weren't terribly good. Funny, but not *that* funny.

THE FLINTSTONES

USA 1960–6, 166 x 30m, col ABC. Hanna-Barbera.
UK tx 1961–6 ITV.

CR Joseph Barbera, William Hanna. **PR** William Hanna, Joseph Barbera. **DR** Various, including William Hanna, Joseph Barbera, Charles A. Nichols, Ray Patterson. **WR** Joseph Barbera, William Hanna, Warren Foster, Mike Maltese, R. Allen Saffian, Barry Blitzer, Tony Benedict, Herb Finn, Jack Raymond, Sydney Zelinka, Arthur Phillips, Joanna Lee. **MUS** Hoyt S. Curtin, William Hanna, Joseph Barbera (theme). **CAST** (voices) Fred Flintstone Alan Read Wilma Flintstone/Pebbles Jean Vander Pyl Barney Rubble/Dino Mel Blanc Betty Rubble Bea Benaderet (1960–4)/Gerry Johnson (1964–6) Bamm Bamm Don Messick. Video *Video Collection*.

The animated lives and times of Stone Age suburban family the Flintstones and their best friends and neighbors the Rubbles, who all lived in the prehistoric city of Bedrock, 250 miles below sea level in Cobblestone County. Fred Flintstone, operator of a dinosaur-powered crane at the Rock Head & Quarry Cave Construction Co. (slogan: “Own Your Own Cave and Be Secure”), and his wife Wilma had a split-level cave complete with such ingenious Stone Age gadgetry as a Stoneway piano, a bird with a long beak that acted as a phonograph, and an automatic garbage disposal unit in the famished shape of a buzzardlike pigasaurus stashed under the sink. The vacuum cleaner was a baby mastodon with a long trunk. To travel around, the Flintstones hopped into their Cavemobile, propeled by the occupants’ feet. At first, Fred and

Wilma had only Dino, their pet dinosaur, around the cave to play with. Then in February 1963 they were blessed with a baby daughter, born in Bedrock’s Rockapedic Hospital (after panicky Fred had initially admitted Dino instead of Wilma), whom they called Pebbles. Not to be outdone, Barney and Betty Rubble adopted a baby boy they found on their doorstep, little Bamm Bamm, an infant possessed of alarming strength. (The kid twosome later had a spin-off show of their own, *Pebbles and Bamm Bamm*; there was also another kiddie knock-off, *The Flintstones Kids*.)

Originally to be called “The Flagstones” until the name ran into copyright problems, *The Flintstones* was dreamed up in response to a request from Columbia for an animated prime-time sitcom with “kidult” appeal. Cartoon masters Joseph Barbera and William Hanna began by taking Jackie Gleason’s *>The Honeymooners* as their model, then artist and storyboard man Dan Gordon suggested characters out of the Stone Age dressed in leopard skins, and the concept fell into place.

Like Gleason’s Ralph Kramden in *The Honeymooners*, Fred Flintstone was a well-meaning know-it-all who fancied himself capable of carrying out get-rich-quick schemes and, like Kramden, had a long-suffering wife and neighbors who became embroiled in his antics. Barney, genial but none too bright, in the style of Kramden’s neighbor Ed Norton, acted as foil to Fred. *The Flintstones* also drew on the old stockpile of sitcom jokes – Fred had an ogre of a boss, forgot his wedding anniversary, was always trying to sneak away to go bowling, and

Yabba Dabba Doo!



Flintstones, meet the Flintstones

They're a modern Stone Age family

From the town of Bedrock

They're a page right out of history...



had problems with his mother-in-law. More comedy came from the showbiz in-jokes and puns: attorney Perry Masonry, who never lost a case, turned up, as did actor Stony Curtis (voiced by Tony Curtis), while Weirdly and Creepella Gruesome burlesqued the then popular >*The Addams Family* and >*The Munsters*. Most of the show's satirical thrust, however, was aimed at consumerism and the insatiable desire of affluent America for ever more home gadgets.

The Flintstones was not easy to sell. CBS and NBC both turned it down (a prime-time cartoon was too much of an unknown entity), but after weeks of negotiation ABC said yes, Reynolds Tobacco Company bought half the show for their Winston Cigarettes, and Miles Laboratories bought the other half for their One-a-Day vitamins. It premiered on 30 September 1960 and instantly assumed historic status as the first animated TV sitcom, the first animated TV series longer than the standard six or seven minutes, and the first animated series to feature human characters. Reviews were largely hostile (Jack Gould of the *New York Times* dubbed the program an "inked disaster"), but the show was given an Emmy nomination, won a Golden Globe, was voted the most original new series by *TV Radio Mirror*, and pulled in viewers by the million.

Well, whaddya know, Barn... Along with

numerous other classic shows of the sixties, *The Flintstones* was revived in the nineties as a (live action) feature film. The part of Fred went to sitcom star John Goodman from >*Roseanne*.

FRANK STUBBS PROMOTES

UK 1993-4, 13 x 30m, col ITV. Noel Gay Television/Carlton.

CR Simon Nye. **EXEC PR** Charles Armitage, Robin Banks Stewart. **PR** Hilary Bevan Jones. **DR** Various, including Tom Cotter, Nick Hurran, Richard Standeven, John Glennister. **WR** Simon Nye. **MUS** Brian May. **CAST** Frank Stubbs Timothy Spall Archie Nash Trevor Cooper Dave Giddings Nick Reding Diane Stubbs Hazel Ellerby Petra Dillon Lesley Sharp Dawn Dillon Daniella Westbrook.

The misadventures of a chronically optimistic – but doomed to fail – latter-day spiv who throws over his ticket-scalping business to promote an array of comically dubious products, from kit cars to the memoirs of an ex-con. The show was adapted by Simon Nye (the creator of >*Men Behaving Badly*) from his novel *Wideboy*, though in the process of becoming videotape it filched conspicuously from the >*Only Fools and Horses* school of light criminal comedy. It starred hamster-faced Timothy Spall from >*Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, who later progressed to the cricket comedy *Outside Edge*. The 1994 season was aired under the shorter title of plain *Frank Stubbs*. Former Queen guitarist Brian May contributed the music.

FRASIER

USA 1993–, 100 x 30m, col NBC. Grub Street/Paramount Pictures. UK tx 1994– C4.

CR David Angell, Peter Casey, David Lee. **EXEC PR** David Angell, Peter Casey, David Lee, Christopher Lloyd, Linda Morris, Vic Rauseo. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, Kelsey Grammer, Pamela Fryman, William Lucas Walker, David Lee, Jeffrey Melman, Andy Ackerman, Philip Charles MacKenzie. **WR** Various, including David Angell, Peter Casey, David Lee, Sy Dukane and Denise Moss, Chuck Ranberg and Anne Flett-Giordano, Don Siegel and Jerry Perzigan, Leslie Eberhard, Christopher Lloyd, Ken Levine and David Isaacs, Linda Morris and Vic Rauseo. **MUS** Bruce Miller. **CAST** Dr. Frasier Crane Kelsey Grammer Dr. Niles Crane David Hyde Pierce Martine Crane John Mahoney Daphne Moon Jane Leeves Roz Peri Gilpin Kate Costas Mercedes Ruehl Gil Chesterton Edward Hibbert Bulldog Dan Butler.

A spin-off from >Cheers that relocated the elegantly pompous Dr. Frasier Crane (Kelsey Grammer) to his home town of Seattle where he moved into a luxury apartment and began a psychiatrist phone-in show on radio KACL–780 AM. Alas, Crane's hoped-for easy and urbane life was ended when anally retentive younger brother (and fellow shrink) Niles unloaded their crotchety ex-cop dad Martin on him, complete with dog Eddie. Soon afterwards, daffy Brit Daphne (played by former >Benny Hill Show dancer Jane Leeves) moved in as Martin's home help and physiotherapist, to become the object of unrequited lust for the fragile Niles,

Hi, you're on the air with Dr. Frasier Crane. If you can feel, I can heal.

the latter having a less than successful marriage to the unseen Maris ("I do love Maris. Why, the other week I kissed her for absolutely no reason at all!"). Meanwhile, Frasier's self-esteem, never too hot at the best of times, was steadily shaken at work and at play, particularly in his tendency to pursue pathetically doomed affairs.

A steady troupe of Cheers stars (Shelley Long, Ted Danson, Bebe Neuwirth) made guest appearances, underlining the show's genealogical connection to the Boston barcom. Yet *Frasier* was more than TV therapy for Cheers fans suffering from withdrawal. It had sublime scripts, sublimer (ensemble) acting, and a range of comedy techniques that went from verbal wit ("The man is a fascist. He's like Himmler without the whimsy") to quasi-slapstick (Niles' famed dancing maneuver to grab a book which revealed Frasier's love life) in a glorious split second. Not to mention matchless dialogue. Niles: "Well, as some illustrious person said, 'Popularity is the hallmark of mediocrity.'" Frasier: "You made that up, didn't you?" Niles: "Yes, but I stand by it."

Awards duly followed, including three consecutive Emmys in 1993, 1994, and 1995, for Best Comedy. There were also individual Emmys for Grammer and Hyde Pierce. Perhaps the only



caution is that the show lacked the moral depth of the sitcom as true art (e.g., >*All in the Family*, >*M*A*S*H*, >*The Phil Silvers Show*, >*Cheers*); on occasion *Frasier* was only about its own cleverness. A dance on the surface of life.

As no shortage of sage pundits noted, there was an irony in Grammer – who learned the art of comedy by watching Jack Benny – playing a psychiatrist, since he was unable to straighten out his own conspicuously troubled life. He was a cocaine addict, a battered husband, a two-time divorcee, and had served a prison sentence for alcohol-related offenses. His public willingness, however, to discuss the most intimate corners of his psyche (and those parts of himself that he lent to the character of *Frasier*) served only to increase his celebrity in America, making him one of the most stellar stars in the TV firmament. In acknowledgment, Paramount paid Grammer \$250,000 to star in each episode.

Classic episodes include: “My Coffee with Niles”; “Adventures in Paradise, Parts I and II” (in which *Frasier* finds himself on holiday alongside ex-wife Lilith); “Moondance”; “The Show Where Lilith Comes Back”; “*Frasier* Crane’s Day Off”; “Seat of Power”; “The Show Where Sam Shows Up” (Malone from *Cheers* flies in to talk over his forthcoming marriage, and *Frasier* finds that he has slept with Sam’s bride-to-be; even worse, it turns out she has also slept with... Cliff.); and “The Matchmaker.”

◀◀ *Kelsey Grammer (with dog) and the cast of Frasier, a hit spin-off from Cheers. The show garnered Grammer a cool \$250,000 per episode and made him one of the brightest – and richest – stars in US TV heaven.*

FRENCH AND SAUNDERS

UK 1987–96, 33 x 30m, 2 x 40m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

CR Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders. **PR** Jon Plowman. **DR** John Birkin, Bob Spiers. **WR** Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders. **CAST** Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders; plus Simon Brint, Rowland Rivron, Kevin Allen, Patrick Barlow, Sue Perkins, Mel Giedroyc.

Award-winning sketch show from Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders, originally the female duo of >*The Comic Strip Presents*. Comic actresses rather than comediennes, French and Saunders, along with Victoria Wood, laid the foundation for women’s TV comedy in Britain. Here the formula for the funnies was an invented gallery of recurring characters (the country women who thought any mishap or amputation “stuff and nonsense”; the two sexist slobs who chorused “I’d give her one”), unnervingly exact observations on contemporary lifestyle (including a “Modern Mother” skit that eventually spun off >*Absolutely Fabulous*), and spoofs of TV and the movies. As the seasons progressed, the show relied increasingly on these TV/film pastiches of, inter alia, *Batman*, *La Dolce Vita*, *Thelma and Louise*, *Baywatch*; yet, basically, the elaborate spoofs only contained two jokes: the visual immaculateness of the parody, and the moment when French and Saunders stepped out of character to bicker in their time-honored fashion (French being the bossy one, Saunders the naïf). There was mileage in the screen send-ups, but not quite as much as given.

Musical backing (and comic intervention) came

from Rowland Rivron and Simon Brint as Raw Sex, while songster Kirsty MacColl was a regular guest in the third season. Others to appear included Patsy Kensit, Helen Mirren, and Lenny Henry (French's husband).

French and Saunders first met at the Central London School of Drama, where they trained to be teachers. As a "joke" they performed at Peter Richardson's club The Comic Strip (the crucible of British alternative comedy) in Soho, and Richardson encouraged them to polish and perfect their act. After transferring to TV via guest spots in >*The Young Ones* and then as stars of *The Comic Strip Presents*, they featured in the "flatcom" >*Girls on Top* (1985–6, with Tracey Ullman and Ruby Wax), before treading the studio floor in *French and Saunders*. They have also pursued lustrous solo careers: Saunders most visibly with *Absolutely Fabulous* and French with *Murder Most Horrid* and >*The Vicar of Dibley*.

THE FRESH PRINCE OF BEL AIR

USA 1990–6, Approx 125 x 30m, col NBC. A *Stuffed Dog Company* and Quincy Jones Entertainment Productions in Association with NBC Productions. UK tx 1991– BBC2.

CR Benny Medina, Jeff Pollack, Susan Borowitz, Andy Borowitz. **EXEC PR** Various, including Susan Borowitz, Andy Borowitz, Quincy Jones, Kevin Wendle, Winifred Hervey Stallworth, Gary H. Miller.

PR Various, including Werner Walian, Samm-Art Williams, Cheryl Gard, Benny Medina, Jeff Pollack,



Now this is the story all about how my life got flipped, turned upside down and I'd like to take a minute just sit right there and I'll tell you how I became the prince of a town called Bel Air...



Lisa Rosenthal, Leslie Ray, David Steven Simon.

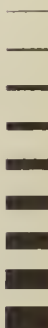
DR Various, including Debbie Allen, Jeff Melman, Rita Rogers Blye, Ellen Falcon, Shelley Jensen.

WR Various, including Susan Borowitz, Andy Borowitz, Samm-Art Williams, Shannon Gaughan, Cheryl Gard, Rob Edwards, Lisa Rosenthal, John Bowman, Sandy Frank, Leslie Ray, David Steven Simon, David Zuckerman, Maiya Williams.

MUS Quincy Jones. **CAST** Will Smith himself Philip Banks James Avery Vivian Banks Janet Hubert-Whitten/Daphne Reid Carlton Banks Alfonso Ribeiro Hilary Banks Karyn Parsons Ashley Banks Tatyana M. Ali Geoffrey (the Butler) Joseph Marcell Jazz Jeff Townes ("DJ Jazzy Jeff" Nicky Banks Ross Bagley.

Funky comedy coproduced by multiple Grammy-winning music business legend Quincy Jones and starring real-life rapper Will Smith. Smith plays Will, a fun-loving black homeboy from a Philadelphia ghetto who is sent west by his mother to live with rich relatives in their mansion at 805 St. Claud Road, Bel Air. There, Will is in the care of Uncle Philip and Aunt Vivian Banks, plus their insane snooty butler, Geoffrey (British Royal Shakespeare

▶▶▶ Former Comic Strip players Dawn French (left) and Jennifer Saunders in the double-act skit show French and Saunders.





Company and former *EastEnders* actor Joseph Marcell). Though Will challenges Philip for forsaking his humble roots, pompous attorney Philip can tell Will a thing or two about black experience when necessary. The Banks' preppy son Carlton – who makes the perfect foil for streetwise Will – and narcissistic daughter are rivals from the start with the newcomer, though youngest daughter Ashley is his friend and confidante. Outside the home, Will attends the exclusive Bel Air Academy, and later the University of Los Angeles, both of which staid institutions he alarms.

A teen comedy of clashing cultures, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* regularly slipped in pertinent comments on the situation of blacks in white society. Will Smith, who played the lead role with a comic timing and infectious enthusiasm that was the show's key to success, previously performed as half of the duo Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince with *Bel Air* costar Jeff Townes (who played Will's friend). The duo won a Grammy award for their 1988 hit "Parents Just Don't Understand."

The show was based on an idea by record executive Benny Medina who, as a boy, had been fostered by Beverly Hills musician Jack Elliott, composer of music for such TV series as *>Barney Miller*, *Charlie's Angels*, and *Fish*.

FRIENDS

USA 1994–, 1 x 60m, 78 x 30m, col NBC. Warner Bros. UK tx 1995– C4.

◀◀ Shiny happy New Yorkers – the male/female balance that makes up the cast of *Friends*.

CR David Crane and Marta Kauffman. **EXEC PR** Kevin S. Bright, David Crane, Marta Kauffman. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, Kevin S. Bright, Michael Lembeck, Peter Bonerz, Thomas Schlamme, Pamela Fryman, Gail Mancuso, Steve Zuckerman. **WR** Various, including David Crane, Marta Kauffman, Alexa Junge, Jeffrey Astrof and Mike Sikowitz. **MUS** *The Rembrandts* (theme song). **CAST** Chandler Bing Matthew Perry Ross Geller David Schwimmer Rachel Green Jennifer Aniston Monica Geller Courteney Cox Phoebe Buffay Lisa Kudrow Joey Tribbiani Matt LeBlanc.

Hit US sitcom, from the creators of *>Dream On*, featuring six shiny happy New Yorkers who drank large amounts of caffè latte at "Central Perk," pontificated on relationships, and became entangled in humorous "everyday" twentysomething situations. Monica Geller was a chef who shared her Greenwich Village apartment with pampered high school buddy Rachel Green (Jennifer "Big Hair" Aniston, daughter of soap star John, and god-daughter of Telly "Kojak" Savalas). Across the hall lived computer programmer Chandler Bing and struggling actor Joey Tribbiani. Phoebe Buffay was a New Age guitar-playing masseuse, and Monica's ex-roomy. Ross Geller was Monica's nerdish brother, whose wife had left him for another woman.

Incurably schmaltsy – the episode entitled "The One With the Lck Factor" could be said to be something of a hostage to fortune – the show nevertheless boasted sharp writing, and sharp one-liners, most of these issuing from the dry-witted Chandler. (For example, Chandler on the virtues of breastfeeding: "The packaging is attractive to

adults.”) Moreover, as star David Schwimmer observed: “*Friends* works because it’s a fantasy family at a time when the family is so dysfunctional for this generation.” Elliot Gould appeared occasionally as Monica and Ross’s father, Jack, while Tom “*Magnum P. I.*” Selleck was Monica’s sometime fortysomething boyfriend, Richard Burke. Charlie Sheen, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Isabella Rossellini were among the other celebs giving cameos.

The show was a huge hit, although with an almost entirely white audience (it was 118th on the viewing list of black Americans). One episode was watched by half the households in America, the nation’s highest ever audience rating.

THE FROST REPORT

UK 1966–7, 30 x 30m, bw BBC1. BBC TV.

PR Duncan Wood, James Gilbert. **WR** Various, including David Frost, Michael Palin, Terry Jones, Eric Idle, John Cleese. **CAST** David Frost, John Cleese, Ronnie Barker, Ronnie Corbett, Nicky Henson, Tom Lehrer, Julie Felix, Nicholas Smith, Sheila Steafel.

Always beginning with a “Hello, good evening, and welcome...” by frontman David Frost (previously > *That Was the Week That Was*), each week this show debunked a topical institution or subject in a series of skits. Among these was the immortal class sketch, in which upper-class John Cleese looked down on middle-class Ronnie Barker, who in turn looked down on working-class Ronnie Corbett, who in turn looked down on... Not the least

of *The Frost Report*’s claims to entry in the annals of hip TV history is that it brought together the anarchic writing talents of Cleese, Graham Chapman, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, and Eric Idle – the > *Monty Python* team, bar one – for the first time. A selection of the show’s best moments, *Frost Over England*, was awarded the Golden Rose at the 1967 Montreux Festival.

F TROOP

USA 1965–7, 65 x 30m, bw/col ABC. Warner Bros-TV. UK tx 1967 ITV.

CR Richard M. Bluel. **EXEC PR** Hy Averbach, William T. Orr. **PR** Richard M. Bluel, Hy Averbach. **DR** Various, including David Alexander, Hollingsworth Morse, Charles R. Rondeau, Leslie Goodwins, Seymour Robbie. **WR** Various, including Arthur Julian, Howard Merrill and Stan Dreben, Richard Baer, Austin Kalish and Irma Kalish. **MUS** Richard LaSalle, William Lava. **CAST** Captain Parmenter Ken Berry Sergeant Morgan O’Rourke Forrest Tucker Corporal Randolph Agarn Larry Storch Wrangler Jane Melody Patterson Bugler Hannibal Dobbs James Hampton Trooper Vanderbilt Joe Brooks Trooper Hoffenmuller John Mitchum Chief Wild Eagle Frank deKova Roaring Chicken Edward Everett.

Bilkoesque shenanigans out in the Old West. When Private Wilton Parmenter accidentally leads a Civil War charge the wrong way (i.e., towards the enemy), he becomes a hero and is given command of work-shy F Troop at Fort Courage on the Indian frontier. Here, behind the



*Where Indian fights are
colorful sights*

And nobody likes a lickin'

Where pale-face and redskin

Both turn chicken...



back of the newly promoted Captain Parmenter, crafty Sergeant O'Rourke has a deal with the local Hekawi Indians whereby he sells their wares to tourists. For the sake of appearances, the troopers and braves occasionally rattle sabres and shoot off guns; things only get sticky when the Shugs, with whom there is no treaty, appear to upset the souvenir cart. Wrangler Jane was the colorful, Calamity-ish type out to marry Parmenter. Also prominent in the cast was O'Rourke's comrade in crookery, Corporal Randolph Agarn.

GAME ON

UK 1995–6, 12 x 30m, col BBC2. *Hat Trick.*

CR Andrew Davies and Bernadette Davis. **EXEC PR** Denise O'Donoghue. **PR** Geoffrey Perkins and Sioned Wiliam. **DR** John Stroud. **WR** Andrew Davies and Bernadette Davis. **CAST** Matthew Malone Ben Chaplin/Neil Stuke Martin Henson Matthew Cottle Mandy Wilkins Samantha Janus Clare Monahan Tracy Keating.

Three twentysomething friends, products of the nervous nineties, share a Battersea apartment and their problems – mostly about sex. The threesome were: agoraphobic Matthew Malone, diffident ginger-haired bank clerk Martin (the

“ginger tosser”), and shag-happy Mandy.

Cocreated by Andrew Davies (the pen behind *A Very Peculiar Practice*, and the serial adapter of the classics for TV, such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Middlemarch*), the show built up a devoted late-night following. Actress Samantha Janus was the dish who also adorned *Demob* and the crime caper *Pie in the Sky*.

GEORGE AND MILDRED

UK 1976–9, 38 x 30m, col ITV. *Thames TV.* US tx 1984 *Syndicated.*

CR Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **PR** Peter Frazer-Jones. **DR** Peter Frazer-Jones. **WR** Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **CAST** George Roper Brian Murphy Mildred Roper Yootha Joyce Jeffrey Fourmile Norman Eschley Ann Fourmile Sheila Fern Tristram Fourmile Nicholas Bond-Owen Jerry Roy Kinnear. Video V-Col.

A spin-off from *>Man About the House* in which basement landlords George and Mildred Roper continued their domestic warfare in the new battleground of tweely suburban 26 Peacock Crescent, Hampton Wick. He was lazy and working-class, she was sex-starved (witness those Freudian banana print trousers) and socially aspirant. Their neighbors were middle-class Jeffrey and Ann Fourmile and their bespectacled son Tristram, who was not allowed to play with “rough boys.” An element of class conflict was expressed through Fourmile's irritation that Roper (Brian Murphy, later *Brookside*) and his motorcycle sidecar were



lowering the tone of the newly built development, as did the occasional presence of Roper's friend Jerry (Roy Kinnear). Worse, Roper also led Tristram into such ungenteel – but enjoyable – pursuits as gambling. The characters were stereotypical (intentionally so), with George and Mildred merely a TV version of the old hen-pecked music-hall husband and nagging wife. The routines might have been Victorian, but they were immaculately performed. Like its parent show, *George and Mildred* was written by the team of Mortimer and Cooke, who helped in the creation of an American version of *G&M* called *The Ropers* (ABC, 1979–80).

▲▲▲ *George and Mildred* was a spin-off from *Man About the House*. Brian Murphy played work-shy Roper, Yootha Joyce his sex-starved wife. The show format sold to the USA as *The Ropers*.

GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

UK 1966–8, 26 x 30m, bw ITV. Thames TV.

CR Vince Powell and Harry Driver. **PR** Alan Tarrant, Jack Williams. **DR** Shaun O'Riordan. **WR** Vince Powell and Harry Driver. **MUS** Tom Springfield (theme). **CAST** George Russell Sid James Gabrielle Dragon Peggy Mount Colonel Maynard John Le Mesurier.

Semi-remembered classic from the vaults of black-and-white TV. To the chagrin of retired Colonel Maynard, his country house had a “bigger [female] staff turnover than Selfridges” thanks to the lascivious attentions of his chauffeur-cum-dogsbody, George. That is, until the frightening, bellow-lunged Gabrielle Dragon was hired as housekeeper – a woman even George could not fancy. Scheming comic warfare between George and the Dragon ensued. Perhaps the classic episode was “The Not So Tender Trap,” when the Dragon, with the connivance of the Colonel and meek gardener Ralph, conned the grotesquely horrified George into believing he had drunkenly agreed to marry her. Written by Vince Powell and Harry Driver (later >*Bless This House*, >*Love Thy Neighbour*) and with an immortal actors’ lineup of Sid James, John Le Mesurier, and Peggy Mount.

GET SMART

USA 1965–70, 138 x 30m, col NBC/CBS. Talent Artists and Heyday Productions. UK tx 1966–70 BBC1.

CR Mel Brooks and Buck Henry. **EXEC PR** Arne Sultan, Mel Brooks. **PR** Leonard B. Stern, Jess Oppenheimer, Jay Sandrich, Burt Nodella, Arnie Rosen, James Komack. **DR** Various, including Paul Bogart, Richard Donner. **WR** Various, including Mel Brooks, Buck Henry, Leonard B. Stern. **CAST** Maxwell Smart, Agent 86 Don Adams Agent 99 Barbara Feldon Thaddeus, the Chief Edward Platt Agent 13 Dave Ketchum Carlson Stacy Keach Conrad Siegfried Bernie Kopell Starker King Moody Hymie, the Robot Dick Gautier

Agent 44 Victor French Larrabee Robert Karvelas 99's Mother Jane Dulo.

Spoof show from Mel Brooks (later >*When Things Were Rotten*, and such movies as *Blazing Saddles* and *High Anxiety*) and Buck Henry (>*Quark*, >*Captain Nice*), lampooning the rash of spy dramas (*The Avengers*, *The Man from UNCLE*, the Bond movies) which appeared on the screen in the sixties.

Get Smart featured the cases of Maxwell Smart, the enthusiastic but incompetent Agent 86 for Washington-based international intelligence agency C.O.N.T.R.O.L. Headed by Thaddeus, “The Chief,” with his headquarters in a music hall, C.O.N.T.R.O.L. waged war against the evil agents of K.A.O.S. who, led by mastermind Siegfried and his assistant Starker, planned to take over the world. Max went undercover as a salesman for the Pontiac Greeting Card Company, and his special equipment included a telephone in a shoe and robot, Hymie, who had a marked tendency to interpret orders literally. When told to “kill the lights,” Hymie blasted them with bullets. Also aiding Maxwell in his espionage was a dog named Fang, plus beautiful and brilliant partner Agent 99 (Barbara Feldon, previously a Revlon model and winner of *The \$64,000 Question*). In the 1968–9 season, love blossomed between the mismatched Agents 86 and 99 – her name was never given – and they married and had twins soon after.

Sorry about that, chief

When NBC canceled the show in 1969, CBS picked up *Get Smart* for an extra season. One of the most successful parodies in TV history, *Get Smart* won seven Emmys, including three for Don Adams. The show was originally commissioned by ABC, who later jettisoned it because of an "un-American scene" in which the Statue of Liberty was blown up.

The show's catchphrases, which still circulate to this day, were: "Sorry about that, chief"; "would you believe..."; and "the old ——— trick").

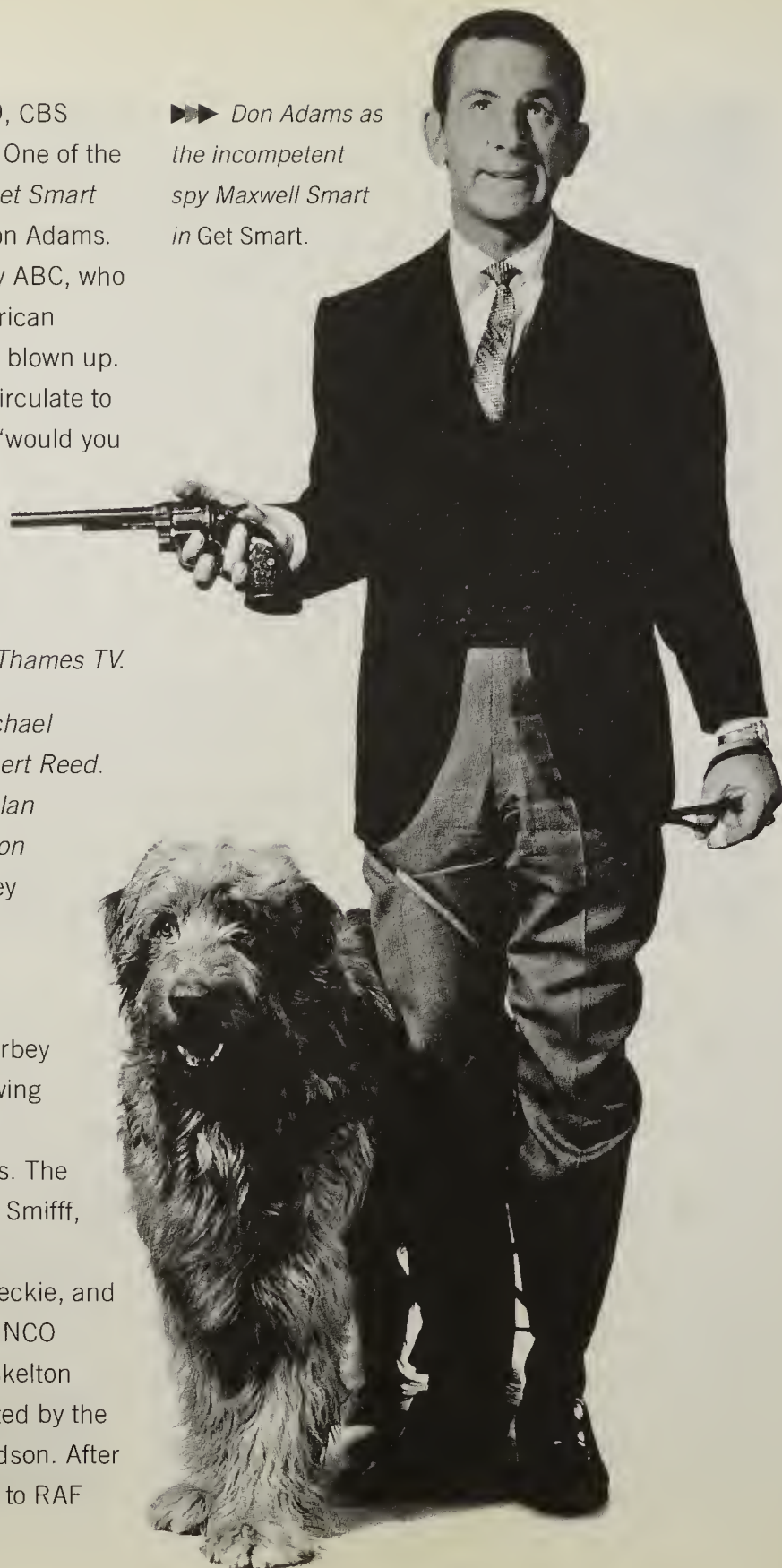
►► Don Adams as the incompetent spy Maxwell Smart in *Get Smart*.

GET SOME IN

UK 1975–8, 1 x 60m, 34 x 30m, col ITV. Thames TV.

CR John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. **PR** Michael Mills, Robert Reed. **DR** Michael Mills, Robert Reed. **WR** John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. **MUS** Alan Braden. **CAST** Ken Richardson David Janson Jakey Smith Robert Lindsay Matthew Lilley Gerald Ryder Bruce Leckie Brian Pettifer Corporal Marsh Tony Selby.

Military sitcom from Esmonde and Larbey (>*Please Sir*, >*The Good Life*) following the misfortunes of four national service conscripts in the RAF of the austere fifties. The four were: teddy boy Jakey Smith ("that's Smiff, with three fs"), grammar school boy Ken Richardson, uncoordinated Scot Bruce Leckie, and effete vicar's son Matthew Lilley. Sadistic NCO Marsh was their chief tormentor at RAF Skelton training camp, though predictably outwitted by the recruits, particularly "Poofhouse" Richardson. After basic training, the squad was transferred to RAF



My name is Marsh. B.A.S.T.A.R.D. Marsh.



Midham for instruction in nursing (much to the amusement of nemesis Marsh – until he was ordered to accompany them), before postings to Malta and RAF Druidswater.

Tony Selby made the scheming, bullying Marsh into one of British TV's most memorable sitcom creations, and the series also launched the career of Robert Lindsay, soon to become *>Citizen Smith*. (Indeed, the character of Wolfie Smith owes something to *Get Some In*'s Jakey, hence the same surname.) Those who also served in the sitcom included Lori Wells as Marsh's platinum blond wife Alice; Madge Hindle as Min the Naafi woman; and Jenny Cyst as Bruce's manly girlfriend (later wife), Corporal Wendy Williams.

THE GHOST AND MRS MUIR

USA 1968–70, 50 x 30m, col NBC/ABC. 20th Century Fox.

EXEC PR David Gerber. **PR** Howard Leeds, Gene Reynolds, Stanley Rubin. **DR** Various, including Hollingsworth Morse, Ida Lupino, Gene Reynolds, Lee Phillips, Gary Nelson, Jay Sandrich. **WR** Various, including Jean Holloway, Joseph Bonaduce, Arthur Alsberg and Don Nelson. **MUS** Dave Grusin. **CAST** Carolyn Muir Hope Lange Captain Greeg (the ghost) Edward Mulhare Jonathan Muir Harlan Carraher

Candy Muir Kellie Flanagan Marta (the housekeeper) Reta Shaw Claymore Gregg Charles Nelson Reilly.

Small-screen remake of the 1947 movie of the same title (which starred Gene Tierney and Rex Harrison). When young widow Carolyn Muir moves with her children into a seaside New England cottage, she finds the place possessed by an old crotchety seadog spook, with whom she falls in love. Pleasant enough fantasy-comedy, seldom seen.

Show trivia: Richard Dreyfuss made an early screen appearance in the 1969 segment "Buried on Page One," playing the editor of the *Schooner Bay Beacon*; the ghost was played by Edward Mulhare, later to reappear in *Knight Rider*; the Muirs' pooch was called Scruffy; and the name of the haunted house was Gull Cottage.

GIDGET

USA 1965, 32 x 30m, col ABC. Columbia.

PR Bob Laver, Harry Ackerman, William Sackheim. **DR** Various, including William Asher, E. W. Swackhamer, Gene Reynolds. **WR** Various, including Ruth Brooks Flippen, Austin and Irma Kalish, Barbara Avedon. **MUS** Various, including Howard Greenfield and John Keller ("Gidget" theme), Johnny Tillotson (theme vocals), Dave Grusin, Hugh Montenegro. **CAST** Frances "Gidget" Lawrence Sally Field Russell Lawrence Don Porter Anne Cooper Betty Conner John Cooper Peter Deuel Jeff "Moondoggie" Matthews Steven Miles Larue (Gidget's best friend) Lynette Winter.

The fun-lovin' misadventures of short Francine Lawrence (nicknamed "gidget" from "girl midget") at home, high school, and among her surfing buddies on Santa Monica beach. Her father, Professor Lawrence, was a widower, so big sister Anne and her husband John (Peter Deuel, later to star in *Alias Smith and Jones*) helped out with the protective parenting.

Terminally sunny show, which launched the career of Sally Field to screen stardom. Derived from the *Gidget* movies of the late fifties/early sixties, the TV show was revived in 1976 as *The New Gidget* (via the pilot, *Gidget's Summer Reunion*), which found the heroine aged twenty-seven, married to her boyfriend Jeff "Moonoggie" Griffin (Matthews in the original series), owning her own travel business and – irony of ironies – caring for a teenage niece with a knack for finding trouble.

GILLIGAN'S ISLAND

USA 1964–6, 98 x 30m, bw/col CBS. United Artists/CBS Television/Gladysya Productions. UK tx 1965– ITV.

CR Sherwood Schwartz. **PR** Sherwood Schwartz.

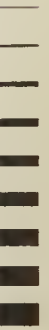
DR Various, including John Rich, Jack Arnold, Ida Lupino, Stanley Z. Cherry. **MUS** George Wyle and Sherwood Schwartz ("Ballad of Gilligan's Island" theme), *The Wellingtons* (theme vocals), John Williams.

CAST Jonas Grumby (the skipper) Alan Hale, Jr. Gilligan Bob Denver Ginger Grant Tina Louise Thurston Howell III Jim Backus Lovey Howell Natalie Schaefer Mary Ann Summers Dawn Wells Roy Hinkley (the Professor) Russell Johnson.

Farce in which a group of vacationers become marooned on an uninhabited South Pacific island when their sightseeing boat, the SS *Minnow*, founders. Alan Hale, Jr. (from *Casey Jones*) played the good-natured skipper, Grumby, while Bob Denver (from the grocery store sitcom *Dobie Gillis*) took the role of Gilligan, the hapless first mate whose attempts to return to civilization started and ended in ineptitude. For laughs it depended entirely on pratfalls (Gilligan's trousers catching fire, Gilligan accidentally dispatching the radio to the deep, that sort of thing). The characters themselves – who were, in addition to the skipper and Gilligan, movie star Ginger, country girl Mary Ann, science teacher the Professor, and the idle rich Thurston and Lovey Howells – had no psychological dimension, being mere ciphers for the plot.

Still, the show's Crusoe-esque fantasy scenario was strong enough for it to survive three years aboard the airwaves, and to spin off two animations: *The New Adventures of Gilligan* (1974) and *Gilligan's Planet* (1982–3). And then, nearly ten years after the original series ended, NBC made a slew of nostalgic TV movie sequels, *Rescue from Gilligan's Island* (1978, with Judith Baldwin replacing Tina Louise from the original cast), *Castaways on Gilligan's Island* (1979), even *The Harlem Globetrotters on Gilligan's Island* (1981). For the record, Gilligan's first name, never used in the series but later revealed by Bob Denver, was "Willy."

►► Created by Sherwood Schwartz, Gilligan's Island followed the farcical misfortunes of a group of latter-day Robinson Crusoes.

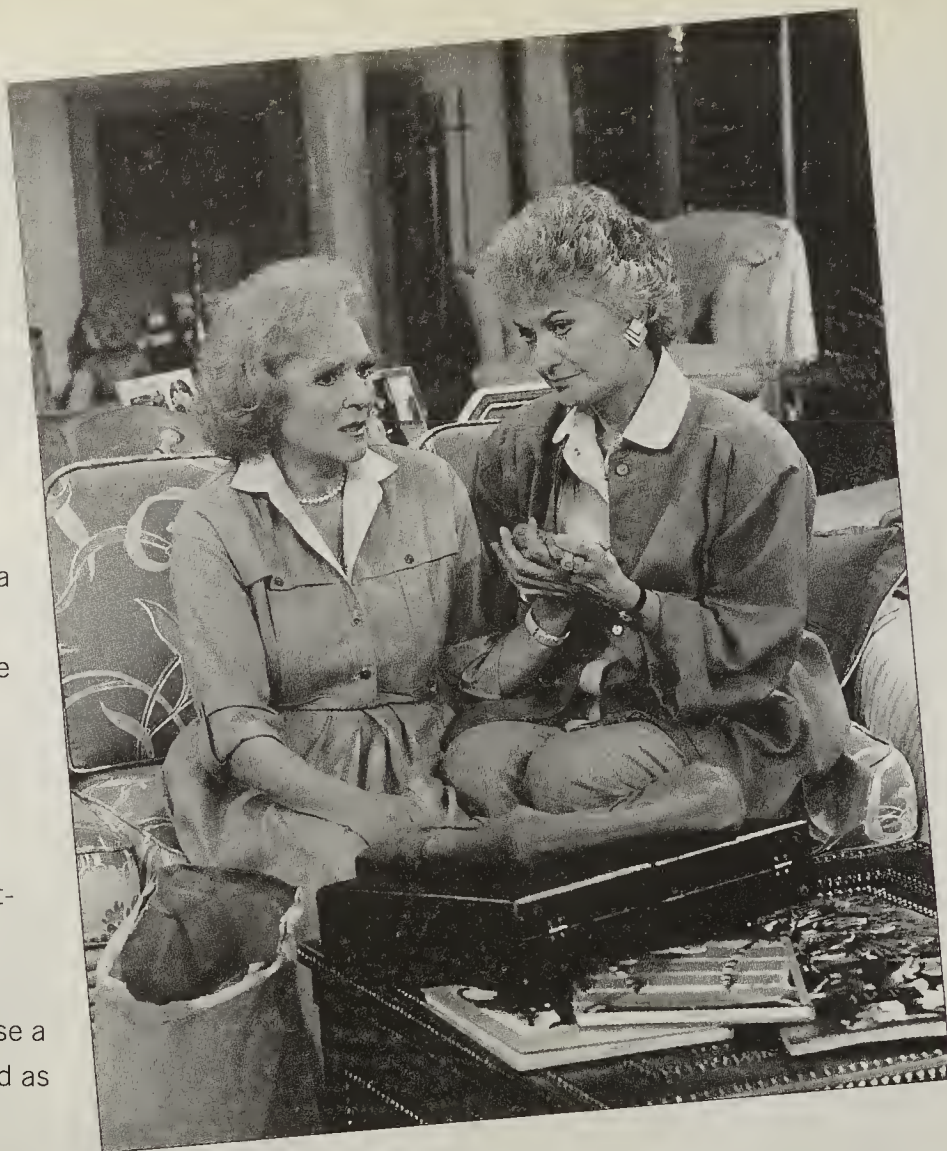


GIRLS ON TOP

UK 1985–6, 13 x 30m, col ITV.
Central Independent Television
plc.

CR Dawn French, Jennifer
Saunders, Ruby Wax. **PR** Paul
Jackson, Trevor Walton. **DR** Ed Bye.
WR Dawn French, Jennifer
Saunders, Ruby Wax. **MUS** Chris
Difford, Glenn Tilbrook. **CAST** Amanda
Dawn French Jennifer Jennifer
Saunders Shelley Ruby Wax Candice
Tracey Ullman Lady Carlton Joan
Greenwood.

Female version of >*The Young
Ones*, in which four variously out-
to-lunch girls share a Chelsea
apartment that was owned by daffy
romance writer Lady Carlton (as close a
TV parody of Dame Barbara Cartland as
the lawyers would allow), who lived
downstairs. The tenants were: feminist
Amanda, who worked for *Spare Cheeks* magazine;
the dull Jennifer (hobby: making things from
shells); the mendacious Candice; and the loud-
mouthed Shelley, an American wannabe actress
whose talents had no beginning. At the start of the
second season Candice departed for America (as
had actress Tracey Ullman). The show was created
by >*Comic Strip* veterans Dawn French and
Jennifer Saunders (later >*French and Saunders*
and all), along with US comedienne Ruby Wax. The
script editor was Ben Elton.



▲▲ Betty White and Bea Arthur in *The Golden Girls*.

THE GOLDEN GIRLS

USA 1985–93, 180 x 30m, col NBC. Witt-Thomas-
Harris in association with Touchstone Television. UK
tx 1986–93 C4.

CR Susan Harris. **EXEC PR** Paul Junger Witt, Tony
Thomas, Susan Harris. **PR** Various, including Kathy
Speer, Terry Grossman, Nina Feinberg, Mitchell
Hurwitz, Jim Vallely, Kevin Abbott, John Zifren,

Jamie Wooten, Marc Cherry. **DR** Various, including Jay Sandrich, Paul Bogart, Terry Hughes, Lex Passaris, Peter Beyt. **WR** Various, including Susan Harris, Kathy Speer, Terry Grossman, Winifred Hervey, Mort Nathan, Barry Fanaro. **MUS** Andrew Gold (“Thank You For Being a Friend” theme), George Tipton. **CAST** Dorothy Zbornak Bea Arthur Rose Nylund Betty White Blanche Devereaux Rue McClanahan Sophia Petrillo Estelle Getty Stanley Zbornak Herb Edelman Miles Webber Harold Gould.

In 1985 >Soap creator Susan Harris followed up that success with *The Golden Girls*, a comedy about four middle-aged to elderly women sharing a house together in Miami, sunny mecca of retirees. Rose (Betty White from >*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*) was a dippy widow who worked as a grief counselor and frequently remarked on her Norwegian roots – her mother’s maiden name was Gerkelnerbigenhoffstettlerfrau. Dorothy (Bea Arthur from >*Maude*) was the acid-tongued teacher whose husband Stan had left her for an airline stewardess. Blanche (Rue McClanahan, also from *Maude*), who owned the house, was a man-mad southern belle, who once took mouth-to-mouth resuscitation classes because she liked kissing. Sophia was Dorothy’s tactless octogenarian mother who moved in when her retirement home, Shady Pines, burned to the ground.

Some occasional men drifted through the series. Herb Edelman was seen from time to time as Dorothy’s ex-husband Stan, who now seemed to want her back. Rose, for a while, had a boyfriend called Miles who unfortunately turned out to be a

mob accountant and had to leave town pronto. And Blanche set her heart on many a passing anything in trousers but never found true love.

The first show to depict women senior citizens positively, *Golden Girls* was directly commissioned by NBC chief Brandon Tartikoff because he had noted the changing demographics of the US population and wanted a show to suit. Though sharply written and brazenly sentimental, it was the humorous, sometimes poignant relationship between the four “girls” that was the core of its appeal. They may have looked like everyone’s favorite aunties or grandmothers, but they traded wicked one-liners over helpings of cheesecake (over a hundred cheesecakes were consumed during the seven-year series) and discussed taboo subjects from dating midgets to drooping breasts, incontinence, abortion, and hot flashes. Their surprisingly broad base of fans included the British Queen Mother, who personally requested their presence at the Royal Variety Performance in 1988.

Golden Girls was a smash hit in sixty countries and highly regarded by the TV industry. It won sixty-five Emmy nominations, ten Emmy Awards, including Best Comedy (twice) and awards for each of its four stars as Best Actress or Best Supporting Actress (making it the only series on television for which all of its leading players have won Emmys), and three Golden Globe Awards. Among the queue of (suitably grey) guest stars on the show were Bob Hope, Don Ameche, Mickey Rooney, Dick Van Dyke, and Julio Iglesias.

The show ended its run with a two-parter, “One Flew Out of the Cuckoo’s Nest,” in which Bea married Blanche’s Uncle Lucas (Leslie Nielsen from

> *Police Squad* and *The Naked Gun* movies) and relocated to Atlanta. A spin-off series, *The Golden Palace* (also by Susan Harris) saw the three remaining Miami matrons enter the hotel trade and buy *The Golden Palace* and its curious staff of three – manager Roland, Oliver, and overworked Chuy, the Mexican chef (played by Cheech Marin, one half of seventies film comedy duo Cheech and Chong).

The success of *The Golden Girls* on British minority Channel 4 led Carlton Television to develop a British version for mainstream ITV. *The Brighton Belles*, 1993, was set on the South Coast and starred Jean Boht, Sheila Hancock, Wendy Craig, and Sheila Gish. It became a TV byword for disaster, being withdrawn before the end of its premier season.

Susan Harris went on to create > *Empty Nest*, set in the same Miami neighborhood as *The Golden Girls*, with the characters from the two shows sometimes overlapping.

● GOMER PYLE, USMC

USA 1964–70, 150 x 25m, bw/col CBS. Ashland.

PR Aaron Ruben, Sheldon Leonard, Ronald Jacobs.

DR Various, including John Rich, Coby Ruskin, Peter Baldwin. **CAST** Pfc. Gomer Pyle Jim Nabors Sgt. Vincent Carter Frank Sutton Pvt. Gilbert “Duke” Slattery Ronnie Schell Bunny Olsen Barbara Stuart Lou-Ann Poovie Elizabeth MacRae Pvt. Frankie Lombardi Ted Bessell Pvt. Lester Hummel William Christopher Sgt. Charles Hacker Allan Melvin Cpl. Chuck Boyle Roy Stuart Cpl. Edward Gray Forrest Compton.

After a mere one-season appearance on > *The Andy Griffith Show*, gormless country-boy character Gomer Pyle was sent to join the United States Marine Corps, who stationed him at Camp Henderson, California. There his slapstick antics in Company B caused his immediate superior, leather-necked Sergeant Carter, to believe that Gomer was making a fool out of him – until Carter realized that Gomer truly was a wide-eyed naïf, and the two became friends. Not that Gomer’s stupidity didn’t still cause Sergeant Carter to regularly blow a fuse. Miss Lou-Ann Poovie was Gomer’s equally rustic girlfriend. The show was a top ten hit for almost its entire run.

THE GOODIES

UK 1970–81, 73 x 30m, 2 x c50m, col BBC2/LWT. BBC TV/LWT. US tx 1976 Syndicated.

CR Tim Brooke-Taylor, Graeme Garden, Bill Oddie.

EXEC PR Alan Bell (LWT). **PR** John Howard Davies, Jim Franklin, Bob Spiers. **DR** John Howard Davies, Jim Franklin, Bob Spiers. **WR** Bill Oddie, Graeme Garden. **CAST** Tim Tim Brooke-Taylor Graeme Graeme Garden Bill Bill Oddie.

Originally to be called *Narrow Your Mind*, in reference to Graeme Garden and Tim Brooke-Taylor’s earlier show for the BBC, *Broaden Your Mind*, *The Goodies* was a situation comedy with only the haziest of situations. Garden, Brooke-Taylor, and Bill Oddie played three characters – “Graeme,” “Tim,” and “Bill” – whose brief was to do “Anything, Anyplace, Anytime.” Without any of the traditional

constraints of sitcom, the Goodies were thus free to indulge in an anarchic array of visual slapstick, pop culture parody, and, especially, cartoonlike surrealism. In the BBC Visual Effects Department they found willing collaborators, the Department's trickery allowing the Goodies to tackle many infamous baddies, prime among them giant white

kitten Twinkle (a burlesque of *King Kong* which won the show a Silver Rose at the 1972 Montreux Festival).

Aside from the fix-it theme, the only other constants were the Goodies' mode of travel from one caper to another, a tandem for three, and their assumed characters: Tim was the upper-class patriot (and coward – *The Goodies* was notably anti-establishment); Graeme was the mad scientist inventor; and Bill the “yobbo” conservationist who used mind-expanding sherbet to achieve “total awareness.” A musical element often surfaced,

even spinning off a string of singles:

“The In-Betweenies,” “Funky Gibbon,” and “Wild Thing.” There was frequent contemporary comparison to *Monty Python*, but this should not have surprised: both “teams” came out of the Cambridge Footlights revues of the early sixties and had honed their off-centered comedy on *At Last the 1948 Show*.

Even over a run of ten years, the novelty of *The Goodies* barely wore off, since there was always something to spoof: punks (which caused the Goodies to wear giant safety pins through their heads); Margaret Thatcher (who had to retire to the Bahamas in *The Goodies*, to be replaced by Tim... until he proved too kind); the kung fu craze, which produced, in the episode “Ecky Thump,” a *Goodies* Up North version in which the lethal weapons were black puddings; and the British Royal Family – always. Not until the

▼▼ Graeme Garden, Bill Oddie, and Tim Brooke-Taylor in *The Goodies*.



move to LWT in 1980 did the show go off the mark, by which time it was apparent that a new generation of comedians, those grouped around *>Not the Nine O'Clock News*, had their finger closer to the funny bone of humor.

Classic episodes include: "Kitten Kong"; "Ecky Thump"; "Goodies Rule – OK?" (Christmas 1975 Special); "Earthanasia" (1977 Christmas Special).

THE GOOD LIFE

UK 1975–8, 28 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC.

CR John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. **PR** John Howard Davies. **WR** John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. **MUS** Burt Rhodes. **CAST** Tom Good Richard Briers Barbara Good Felicity Kendal Margot Leadbetter Penelope Keith Jerry Leadbetter Paul Eddington.

Much-loved sitcom from the seventies that centered on the attempt of forty-year-old Tom Good, a draftsman for the JJM Company, to drop out of the rat race and go self-sufficient. Thus, Tom and his infeasibly perky wife Barbara dug up their Surbiton back garden and turned it over to a pig, a goat, and numerous hens. Tom's hit-or-miss DIY and agricultural methods were a major source of the show's twee but feel-good humor, as were the shocked reactions of snobbish next-door neighbor Margot Leadbetter, leading light of the local music society. It was Margot's constant fear that the Goods would bring the social tone of "The Avenue" down irrevocably; however, since sitcoms cannot contain genuinely unpleasant characters, Margot's snootiness was more than tempered by her

generous friendship to her odd-couple neighbors in their times of need. Meanwhile, Margot's husband Jerry (who still worked for JJM), looked on the Goods with bemused affection.

Accorded the accolade of a special Royal Command performance, the show established the cast foursome as some of the best-loved faces on TV. All went on to continued small-screen success: Briers with *Ever Decreasing Circles* (another Esmonde and Larbey series); Keith in *>To The Manor Born* and *Next of Kin*; Felicity Kendal – whose coquettish sex appeal was one of *The Good Life*'s unacknowledged keys to success – in *Solo* and *The Mistress*; and Eddington in the *>Yes, Minister* cycle.

GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART

UK 1993–, 44+ x 30m, col BBC1. Alomo/SelecTV.

CR Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran. **PR** John Bartlett. **DR** Terry Kinane, Robin Nash. **WR** Various, including Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, Paul Makin. **CAST** Gary Sparrow Nicholas Lyndhurst Yvonne Sparrow Michelle Holmes/Emma Amos Phoebe Bamford Dervla Kirwan/Elizabeth Carling Ron Wheatcroft Victor McGuire P. C. Reg Deadman Christopher Ettridge Eric David Ryall.

Time-travel comedy in which nineties TV repair man Gary Sparrow (Nicholas Lyndhurst, *>Butterflies*, the dim-witted Rodney in *>Only Fools and Horses*) found a secret entrance – Duckett Passage – to the London of the wartime forties. There he fell in love with barmaid Phoebe (Dervla



▲▲▲ *The Good Life* for Felicity Kendal (left) and Richard Briers (standing).

Kirwan from *Ballykissangel*), his resultant absences giving him some explaining to do with his contemporary wife, Yvonne. At one stage, a shopping development threatened to block Sparrow's route to the past – but no sitcom with thirteen million viewers was going to allow a row of shops to stand in its way; accordingly, Sparrow

leased the offending unit, and used it to sell Second World War memorabilia. Naturally, Sparrow's time-flitting led to all sorts of anachronistic and culture clash problems – among the most humorously sweet of them the occasion when he arrived at Phoebe's with a bottle of wine bought from a nineties off-license, only to discover that the wine was... German. In general, however, Sparrow found the crusading anti-Hitler forties – in which he passed off his modernity by pretending to be a

secret agent with an American background – more appealing than contemporary reality.

The show was created by the ubiquitous Lawrence Marks and Maurice Gran (*Shine On Harvey Moon, Birds of a Feather*), who, just when its formula seemed to be passing its use-by date, introduced the neat plot element of Sparrow's son by his wartime squeeze. As the son was also a time-traveler, this gave Sparrow even more line-spinning to do with his nineties spouse. *Goodnight Sweetheart* was produced by the independent company Alomo, which took its name from its three main movers: Executive producer Allan McKeown, Laurence Marks, and Maurice Gran – Al', lo', mo'.

GOOD TIMES

USA 1974–9, Approx 80 x 30m, col CBS. Tandem Productions.

CR Eric Monte and Michael Evans. **PR** Norman Lear.

DR Various, including Jack Shea, Gerren Keith.

MUS Dave Grusin, Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman.

CAST Florida Evans *Esther Rolle* James Evans *John Amos* James Evans, Jr. (“J. J.”) *Jimmie Walker*

Michael Evans *Ralph Carter* Thelma Evans

Anderson *Bern Nadette Stanis* Sweet Daddy *Teddy*

Wilson Mr. Bookman (the janitor) *Johnny Brown*

Willona Woods *Ja'net DuBois* Penny Gordon Woods *Janet Jackson*.

Sitcom concerning the sorrows and joys of black American parents Florida and James Evans, as they struggled to bring up their brood of three in a South Side Chicago housing project (known as

“cockroach towers”). Much the most problematic of the offspring was James Evans, Jr. (“J. J.”), who had one eye for the ladies and the other for quick get-out-of-the-ghetto schemes, usually of dubious probity. The jive-talking J. J., with his trademark expression of “Dyn-O-Mite!”, became a TV antihero of the seventies, but his negative aspects as a role model caused star Esther Rolle to quit the show temporarily. Also to leave, but permanently, was John Amos (for *Roots*), and to make up the cast numbers Janet Jackson was shipped in as battered girl Penny, while the role of next-door neighbor Willona Woods was given more prominence. Originally ingenious – it was America's first black family sitcom – and socially aware, *Good Times* ended as little more than a stage on which for J. J. to strut his funky stuff.

The show was a spin-off from >*Maude*, in which Esther Rolle's Florida had featured as a maid, that show itself being a spin-off from >*All in the Family*.

GRACE UNDER FIRE

USA 1993–8, 107+ x 30m, col ABC. Carsey-Werner. UK tx 1995– BBC2.

CR Chuck Lorre. **EXEC PR** Various, including Kevin

Abbott, Brett Butler, Chuck Lorre, Jeff Abugov. **PR**

Various, including Wayne Lemon, Dava Savel,

Miriam Trogon, Ed Yeager, Danny Zucker. **DR**

Various, including Michael Lessac, Harry Murray.

WR Various, including Chuck Lorre, Dottie Dartland,

Dava Savel, Brett Butler, and Wayne Lemon. **MUS**

Dennis C. Brown. **CAST** Grace Kelly Brett Butler

Russell Norton Dave Thomas Quentin Kelly



Boyfriend: "See you tonight, huh."

Grace: "Why don't you just wear a big sign that says, 'I know what Grace's tongue tastes like?'"



Jon Paul Steuer/Sam Horrigan Patrick Kelly Cole/Dylan Sprouse Elizabeth Louise "Libby" Kelly Kaitlin Cullum Dougie Walter Olkewicz Nadine Swoboda Julie White Wade Swoboda Casey Sander Jimmy Kelly (Grace's ex-husband) Geoffrey Pierson Rick Bradshaw Alan Autry.

Sardonic blue-collar comedy in which recovering alcoholic Grace Kelly divorces her abusive husband and supports her three kids on her own – with a little help from her friends next door, Nadine and Wade, and local pharmacist Russell. Actress Brett Butler gave perfect delivery as sharp-witted, sharper-tongued Grace (whose jobs included working in an oil refinery), a turn acknowledged by a Best Comedy Actress Award from Viewers for Quality Television. Like *>Murphy Brown*, a show which managed to be simultaneously funny and smart about single momming in the nineties.

GREEN ACRES

USA 1965–71, 170 x 25m, col CBS. Filmways.
UK tx 1966–8 BBC1.

►► From the producer of *The Beverly Hillbillies* came the situation-reversed *Green Acres*.

CR Jay Sommers, Paul Henning. EXEC PR Paul Henning. PR Jay Sommers. DR Various, including Richard L. Bare. WR Various, including Jay Sommers, Dick Chevillat. MUS Eddie Albert and Eva Gabor ("Green Acres" theme vocal), Vic Mizzy. CAST Oliver Wendell Douglas Eddie Albert Lisa Douglas Eva Gabor Fred Ziffel Hank Patterson Ed Dawson Tom Lester Eustace Haney Pat Buttram. Video Columbia House.

After *>The Beverly Hillbillies*, in which the country folks went to town, producer Paul Henning cannily reversed the comedic formula with *Green Acres*. Here successful Manhattan lawyer





*Green acres is the place to be
Farm living is the life for me
Land spreading out
So far and wide
Take Manhattan
Just give me that countryside.*

*New York
Is where I'd rather stay
I get allergic smelling hay
I just adore a penthouse view
Darling, I love you
But give me Park Avenue...*



Oliver Wendell Douglas drags socialite wife Lisa and her finery – to her considerable dismay – to ramshackle 160-acre Haney farm, outside Hooterville, in a bid to get back to nature.

Originating in the radio series *Granby's Green Acres*, the broadbrush humor of the show came from the culture clash of city-meets-country, plus the language difficulties of the Hungarian-accented Lisa (played by Eva Gabor, younger sister of Zsa Zsa), who misunderstood almost everything said to her. There was also a scene-stealing pig, Arnold, owned by neighbor Fred Ziffel, who performed party tricks to order and watched TV.

The show was closely related to another US sitcom, *>Petticoat Junction*, also set in Hooterville and produced by Paul Henning.

A reunion TVM, *Return to Green Acres*, was aired in 1990.

Show trivia: Pat Buttram, who played Mr. Haney, modeled his character on Elvis' manager, Colonel Parker; the Douglas' cow was called Eleanor.

HALE AND PACE

UK 1988–, Approx 61 x 25m, 1 x 52m, col ITV. LWT.

PR Charlie Hanson. **DR** Various, including Peter Orton. **WR** Various, including Gareth Hale and Norman Pace, Nick Woodey. **MUS** Peter Brewis. **CAST** Gareth Hale, Norman Pace; with Ainsley Harriott, Annette Badland, Paula Hannis, Maggie Henderson.

S kit-based show from comedians Gareth Hale and Norman Pace, featuring such invented characters as the patronizing children's TV presenters Billy and Johnny, and the cockney gangsters The Two Rons (a parody of the infamous Kray twins). Clearly oblivious to the concept of good taste – one sketch featured the controversial microwaving of a cat – Hale and Pace were former teachers who rose through the alternative comedy circuit, making their début on TV in Channel 4's mid-eighties shows *Pushing Up Daisies* and *Coming Next...* before exposure in *>The Young Ones* and *>Saturday Live* persuaded LWT to give them a show of their own. LWT's faith was well placed: the comic twosome won the Golden Rose of Montreal. For the same company, Hale and Pace also spun off the two Rons into a short sitcom series entitled *The Management*.

HANCOCK'S HALF-HOUR

UK 1956–61, 56 x 30m, 1 x 43m, bw BBC. BBC TV.

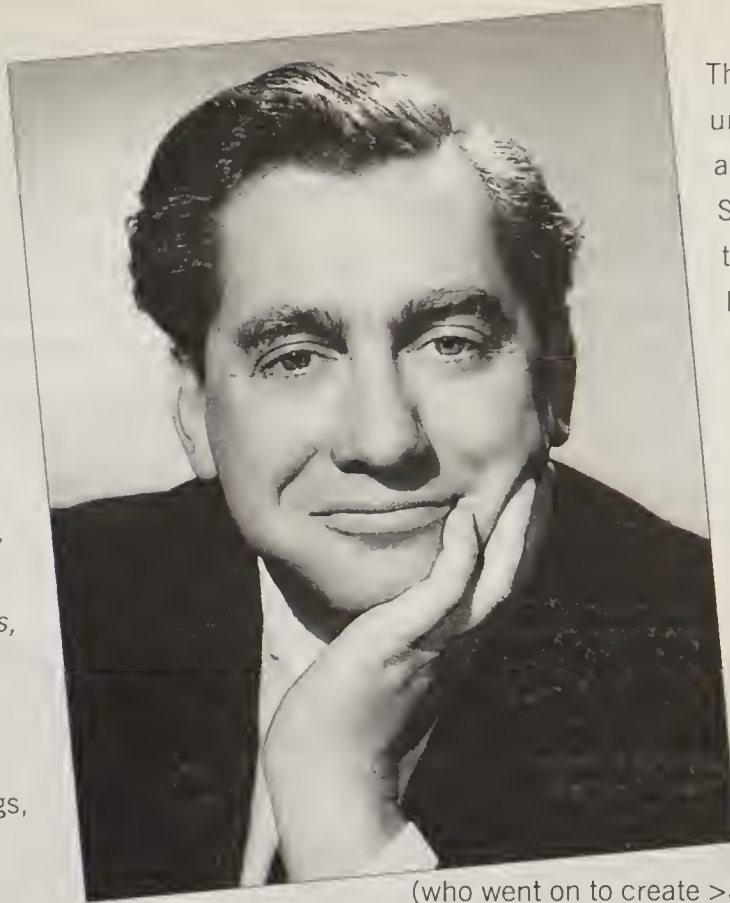
CR Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. **PR** Duncan Wood. **DR** Duncan Wood. **WR** Ray Galton and Alan Simpson.

►► Tony Hancock,
"the lad himself."

CAST Anthony Aloysius St. John Hancock *Tony Hancock* Sid *Sid James*; plus Bill Kerr, Irene Handl, June Whitfield, Warren Mitchell, Patricia Hayes, Patrick Cargill, Kenneth Williams, Hattie Jacques, Frank Thornton, Liz Fraser. Video BBC.

At 23 Railway Cuttings, East Cheam, the bumptious Anthony Aloysius St. John Hancock dreamed of rising above his humble origins while gloomily observing life's petty frustrations (including, in "The Missing Page," coming to the end of a thriller only to find that the page has been torn out). Roommate Sid provided the common-sense foil. Transferring from radio, the show's bittersweet scripts (by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson) perfectly suited the deadpan delivery and comic timing of Hancock, the self-proclaimed "the lad himself," and over ten million viewers tuned in.

» **Hancock to jury:**
"Does Magna Carta
mean nothing to you?
Did she die in vain?" «



The final season was aired under the title *Hancock* and, despite the absence of Sid James and Hancock's trademark black Homburg hat, produced the two classic *Hancock* episodes (two, even, of the high-water marks in British TV humor): "The Blood Donor" ("A pint? That's nearly an armful!") and "The Radio Ham." Thereafter, Hancock defected to ITV and unwisely dispensed with the scripts of Galton and Simpson

(who went on to create *Steptoe and Son*). This, plus Hancock's decision to read his lines off autocue rather than memorize them, saw quality drop through the floor. Some accordingly deduced that Hancock was nothing without his scribes (Kenneth Williams, for one, confided to his diary that Hancock was a "philistine nit... an indifferent performer saved by... Galton and Simpson"), but there was clearly more to it than that. A nineties revival of the original *Half-Hour* scripts with Paul Merton (from *Have I Got News for You* and *The Paul Merton Show*) in the lead was an embarrassing flop.

The son of a hotelier and part-time entertainer, Hancock made his stage début in the RAF with ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association) and touring gang shows. He then moved into pantomimes, cabaret, and radio, appearing in

Educating Archie in 1951. The radio series *Hancock's Half-Hour* began in 1954. Famous as much for his real-life alcoholism and self-doubt as for his comic performances, Hancock – the archetypal sad clown – committed suicide on 25 June 1968 in a hotel room in Sydney, Australia, at the age of forty-four. His suicide note read: "This is quite rational... there was nothing left to do. Things seemed to go wrong too many times."

▼▼ "Aaayh!" *Happy Days* for Henry Winkler and Ron Howard.

HAPPY DAYS

USA 1974–84, 255 x 30m, col ABC. Miller-Milkis/Paramount TV. UK tx 1975–84 ITV.

CR Garry Marshall. **PR** Garry Marshall, Edward K. Milkis, Thomas L. Miller, Jerry Paris. **DR** Various, including Jerry Paris, Mel Ferber, Don Weis, Peter Baldwin. **WR** Various, including Rob Reiner, Garry Marshall, William S. Bickley. **MUS** Bill Haley ("Rock Around the Clock" theme), Gimel and Fox ("Happy Days" theme). **CAST** Richie Cunningham Ron Howard Arthur "the Fonz" Fonzarelli Henry Winkler



Howard Cunningham *Tom Bosley* Marion Cunningham *Marion Ross* Joanie Cunningham *Erin Moran* Warren "Potsie" Weber *Anson Williams* Ralph Malph *Danny Most* Charles "Chachi" Arcola *Scott Baio* Arnold Takahashi *Pat Morita* Al Delvecchio *Al Molinaro* Lori Beth Allen *Lynda Goodfriend* Jenny Piccolo *Cathy Silvers* Leather Tuscadero *Suzy Quatro* Pinky Tuscadero *Roz Kelly*.

Nostalgia fest set in small-town Milwaukee in the fifties that began as a sketch on *Love, American Style* in 1972 but gained its production impetus from the success of the rock'n'roll movie *American Graffiti*. Initially the show centered on "humdrum" teenager Richie Cunningham (Ron Howard from *>The Andy Griffith Show* and the star of *American Graffiti*), and his worldly-wise friend at Jefferson High, Potsie Weber (Anson Williams, born Anson William Heimlich). The guys hung out at a burger joint called Arnold's Drive In, invariably with fellow buddy Ralph Malph. It became apparent by the second season, however, that the real star of the show was none of these characters but a minor creation brought in by show supremo Garry Marshall to lessen the show's tendency towards middle-American gooeyness: the leather-jacketed biker, Arthur "the Fonz" Fonzarelli. The streetwise Fonz (played by Henry Winkler, holder of a Masters in drama from Yale) was so cool that he had only to snap his fingers and the chicks came running. To incorporate the Fonz into more of the narrative action, the scriptwriters moved him into the apartment over Richie's parents' garage. By 1977 *Happy Days* was the most popular program on US TV. Kids everywhere imitated the Fonz and his biker

look and gestures, particularly his thumbs-up "Aaayh!" His iconic nature was further confirmed when the Smithsonian Institution in Washington put his leather jacket on display.

As the show gained in years and stature, it dropped the nostalgia and became a character-based sitcom, and Richie's parents Howard and Marion came increasingly to the fore. (Mrs. C's line, "Are you feeling *frisky*, Howard?" became something of a show catchphrase.) The cast changed surprisingly little until the eighties, when Ron Howard, Danny Most, and Anson Williams all left the show. By that time their characters were far from teenage; they had all grown up, gone to college, got jobs and, in the case of Richie, got married to Lori Beth. The main addition to the cast was Chachi, Fonzie's cousin, who fell in and out of love with Richie's sister Joanie (actors Baio and Moran – who had previously starred in *Daktari* – were also on/off lovers in real life). At one stage they were given their own series, *Joanie Loves Chachi*. It flopped. But two other spin-offs from *Happy Days* became major successes. In 1975, two blue-collar girls, Laverne DeFazio (played by Penny Marshall, sister of Garry, and previously a fixture in *>The Bob Newhart Show*) and Shirley Feeney, appeared in *Happy Days* for a double date with Richie and the Fonz, and promptly waltzed off to their own *>Laverne and Shirley* series. In 1978, actor Robin Williams, in his first real screen exposure, dropped into Milwaukee as Mork, an extraterrestrial from Ork. The episode was so

Aaayh!

successful that he was given his own show, *>Mork and Mindy*, almost overnight.

Happy Days ended its 255-episode, ten-year run in 1984. Since then, Ron Howard has forged a career as a major-league Hollywood director (*Backdraft*, *Cocoon*), and Henry Winkler has become an award-winning producer. Tom Bosley, who played Cunningham senior, later starred in the clerical crime caper, *The Father Dowling Mysteries*.

HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS

USA 1991–3, 72 x 30m, col Syndicated. Amblin Entertainment. UK tx 1991–3 BBC1.

PR Lin Oliver. **MUS** Leon Redbone (“Your Feet’s Too Big” theme). **CAST** Harry Kevin Peter Hall/Sawan Scott/Brian Steele George Henderson Bruce Davison Nancy Henderson Molly Cheek Ernie Henderson Zachary Bostrom Sarah Henderson Carol-Ann Plante.

A TV knock-off from the 1987 film *Bigfoot and the Hendersons*. While vacationing in the Pacific Northwest, the Henderson family ran over a large, hairy creature. This turned out to be a bigfoot, or sasquatch, which the Hendersons took home for its convalescence. To protect Harry – for it was he – from the authorities, the Hendersons were obliged to perform farcical acts of cover-up. Lively enough family fodder. Initially Harry was played by Kevin Peter Hall, who had taken the role in the movie. The theme music was Leon Redbone’s “Your Feet’s Too Big.”

HARRY ENFIELD’S TELEVISION PROGRAMME

UK 1990–2, 16 x 30m, col BBC2. Hat Trick.

CR Harry Enfield, Paul Whitehouse, Geoffrey Perkins, Charlie Higson. **EXEC PR** Denise O’Donoghue. **PR** Geoff Posner, Geoffrey Perkins. **DR** Geoffrey Perkins. **WR** Harry Enfield, Charlie Higson, Paul Whitehouse, Geoffrey Perkins. **CAST** Dave Nice/Lee/Stavros/Tim Nice-But-Dim/Wayne Slob/Mr. “You Don’t Want to Do That” Harry Enfield Alf Git/Lance/Mike Smash Paul Whitehouse Waynetta Slob Kathy Burke.

After a celebrated stint on *>Saturday Live*, comedian Harry Enfield gained his own BBC2 show, which introduced a collection of new comic-cut caricatures, usually performed in cooperation with Paul Whitehouse (later *>The Fast Show*) or Kathy Burke. Though Enfield’s performances were highly controlled, the satire was barely restrained: his spoof D. J.s Mike Smash and Dave Nice (fave rave: “You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet” by Bachman Turner Overdrive) demolished any lingering credibility of an entire generation of D. J. presenters at BBC Radio 1. No less comically cruel were some of his other creations: upper-class twit Tim Nice-But-Dim; the Old Gits; wise guys Lee and Lance; Wayne and Waynetta Slob (the latter giving birth to a daughter called “Spudulika”); Mr. “You Don’t Want to Do That”; The Scousers (a lampoon of Liverpool-set soap, *Brookside*); and Mr. Cholmondley-Warner and Mr. Greyson, whose forties-style documentary presentations were later translated into a series of advertisements for a

telephone company. Unwilling to preserve characters beyond a short screen life (the “poptabulous” D. J.s Mike and Dave went to TV hell in a “tip-top, tippety-top” 1994 special, *Smashey and Nicey – The End of an Era*), Enfield was obliged to invent new ones at a prodigious rate. Accordingly, *Harry Enfield and Chums* (BBC1, 1994–), which was effectively *Harry Enfield’s Television Programme* under another title and channel, saw the birth of the Self-Righteous Brothers, Kevin the Teenager, Tory Boy, Lovely Wobbly Randy Old Ladies, and Considerably Richer Than You. More uneven in quality than the *Television Programme*, it also suffered in comparison with the rapid-fire pace of *The Fast Show*, from Enfield’s own “chums,” Whitehouse and Charlie Higson (who, like Whitehouse, cocreated the *Television Programme*; he also occasionally performed in it).

In addition to skit shows, Enfield has also tried his face at sitcoms in *Gone to the Dogs* (as Little Jim Morley) and *>Men Behaving Badly*. A 1989 spoof documentary on the life of a thespian, *Norbert Smith... A Life* (C4) was awarded an international Emmy.

HI-DE-HI!

UK 1980–9, Approx 70 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Jimmy Perry and David Croft. **PR** David Croft, John Kilby. **DR** David Croft, Jimmy Perry, John Kilby. **WR** Jimmy Perry and David Croft. **MUS** Jimmy Perry (“Holiday Rock” theme). **CAST** Jeffrey Fairbrother Simon Cadell Ted Bovis Paul Shane Gladys Pugh Ruth Madoc Spike Dixon Jeffrey Holland

Mr. Partridge *Leslie Dwyer* Fred Quilley *Felix Bowness* Yvonne Stuart-Hargreaves *Diane Holland* Barry Stuart-Hargreaves *Barry Howard* Peggy Ollerenshaw *Su Pollard* Sylvia *Nikki Kelly* Betty Rikki Howard *Mary Penny* Irving Squadron Leader Clive Dempster *David Griffin* The Yellowcoat boys *Terence Creasey, the Webb twins*. Video *BBC*.

Good morning, campers! It’s Maplin’s Holiday Camp at Crimpton-on-Sea, circa 1959, and the staff and entertainers are assembled for *Hi-De-Hi!*, Jimmy Perry and David Croft’s affectionate send-up of that peculiarly British institution, the seaside holiday camp. Episodes follow the farcical misadventures of the entertainment staff of the cut-price camp (a barely veiled Butlins, where Perry had once worked as a Redcoat) as they forcibly jolly along the holidaying proles. Chief Entertainments Officer is the donnishly misplaced Jeffrey Fairbrother (played by Simon Cadell, grandson of famous West End actress Jean Cadell and later Croft’s son-in-law), under whom serve the spivvy camp host Ted Bovis; Welsh senior Yellowcoat Gladys Pugh (who tries to speak posh, but usually malaprops); and young comic Spike. Dim-witted and accident-prone maid Peggy, meanwhile, tries to rise above her chalet in life and don a yellow blazer. Also to be seen are the snobby, bickering ballroom dancers Barry and Yvonne; ex-jockey Fred Quilley (now in charge of the camp horses); and drunken, child-hating Punch-and-Judy-man Mr. Partridge. In the later seasons, Fairbrother is replaced as CEO by Squadron Leader Clive Dempster DFC.

A show of camp humor, in more ways than one. By the later seasons, the writers’ inventiveness was

wearing thin, but audiences seemed not to care, and the show remained popular until the last (its highest position in the BARB ratings was number three, in 1984). Perry and Croft's previous joint exercises in nostalgic lampoonery were *>Dad's Army* and *>It Ain't Half Hot, Mum*, while Croft (with Jeremy Lloyd as partner) had given a comedic makeover to the British department store in *>Are You Being Served?* and to the spy genre in *>'Allo, 'Allo*. Many of the *Hi-De-Hi!* cast came back for *You Rang, M'Lord*, Croft and Perry's spoof on *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

UK 1981, 6 x 35m, col BBC2. BBC TV. US tx 1982 PBS.

CR Douglas Adams. **PR** Alan J. W. Bell. **WR** Douglas Adams. **MUS** Paddy Kingsland. **CAST** Arthur Dent Simon Jones Ford Prefect David Dixon Voice of the Book Peter Jones Zaphod Beeblebrox Mark Wing-Davey Trillian (aka Trisha McMillan) Sandra Dickinson Marvin David Learner Voice of Marvin Stephen Moore. Video BBC.

***I think you should know
I'm feeling very depressed***

Seconds before Earth is destroyed by a Vagon Constructor Fleet (to make way for a hyperspace by-pass), Ford Prefect, an alien from planet Betelgeuse and researcher for the best-selling intergalactic reference book *The Hitchhiker's Guide*, rescues typical Englishman Arthur Dent from



▲▲ Why do people wear digital watches? Mark Wing-Davey in *The Hitchhiker's Guide*.

the impending doom. Arthur, surprised to hear that Ford Prefect is not, in fact, from Guildford, finds himself on a journey through space, where he meets such exotic beings as two-headed, part-time Galactic President Zaphod Beeblebrox and his starship-driving girlfriend Trillian (Sandra Dickinson); Marvin the paranoid Android ("I think you should know I'm feeling very depressed"); the unpoetic Vogons, the useless Golgafrinchians; and a pair of pan-dimensional beings who are searching for the Ultimate Question to Life, the Universe, and Everything. (They already have the *answer* – it's 42.) As they travel, Prefect and Dent ponder on such questions as: Why are people born? Why do they die? Why do they spend so much of the intervening time wearing digital watches? They finish up at the Restaurant at the End of the Universe, with a prime view of the exploding heavens.

Douglas Adams' brilliant satire on modern times and sci-fi conventions began as a radio play and

then became a novel before being serialized for TV under the hand of Alan J. W. Bell. Notorious for its low sci-fi budgets, the BBC graced the show with superior – for the BBC, at least – special effects, with sophisticated computer animation converting the viewer's screen into the Guide when necessary. The guest stars, who formed something of an in-joke, were headed by Peter Davison (Dickinson's husband and the sixth incarnation of *Dr. Who*) and David Prowse, previously Darth Vader in the movie *Star Wars*. Prowse played the bodyguard for plutonium rocker Hotblack Desiado. Adams himself appeared in the second episode, where he disrobed and, à la the credits of *>The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*, walked into the sea.

HOGAN'S HEROES

USA 1965–71, 168 x 30m, col CBS. Bing Crosby Productions. UK tx 1967–9 ITV.

CR Bernard Fein, Albert S. Ruddy. **EXEC PR** Edward H. Feldman. **DR** Various, including Gene Reynolds, Edward H. Feldman. **WR** Various, including Lawrence Marks. **CAST** Col Robert "Papa Bear" Hogan Bob Crane Col. Wilhelm Klink Werner Klemperer Sgt. Hans Schultz John Banner Cpl. Peter Newkirk Richard Dawson Cpl. Louis LeBeau Robert Clary Sgt. James Kinchloe Ivan Dixon Sgt. Andrew Carter Larry Hovis Helga Cynthia Lynn Sgt. Richard Baker Kenneth Washington.

▼▼ John Banner, Bob Crane, and Werner Klemperer in POW farce *Hogan's Heroes*.



Tasteless prison camp farce set in Germany's Stalag 13 during the Second World War. Ostensibly, the establishment was run by pompous Nazi Colonel Klink and dim, strudel-gorging sidekick Sergeant Schultz, but in fact it was under the control of US inmate Colonel Hogan (Bob Crane, from *The Donna Reed Show*). With his Allied pals – chiefly French cook LeBeau, Sergeant James Kinchloe, and cockney Corporal Newkirk – Hogan ran rackets galore and circles around Klink. The POWs also lived in a state of some luxury, and even had a sauna. To justify their continued presence in the camp – since they could leave at any time through a special door in the fence – Hogan's merry men were charged with secret anti-German sabotage and espionage missions by the Allied High Command. Despite a similarity to the stage play *Stalag 17* that was strong enough to invite a lawsuit, the show ran for six raucous seasons. It once again made the news in 1978 when actor Bob Crane was found beaten to death in his condo in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Show trivia: actor Werner Klemperer was the son of the famous Jewish-German conductor Otto Klemperer; Larry Hovis, who played Sergeant Carter, was a regular writer-performer for *>Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* and had previously served in the military sitcom *>Gomer Pyle, USMC*; Ivan Dixon later directed the cult spy movie *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*; Robert Clary's real name was Robert Wideman, and he had been interned in a Nazi concentration camp as a child.



Schultz: When it comes to war, I do not like to take sides



HOME IMPROVEMENT

USA 1991–8, 178 x 30m, col ABC. Disney/Touchstone Television/Wind Dancer Group Productions/Buena Vista Television. UK tx 1994–C4.

CR Matt Williams, David McFadzean, Carmen Finestra. **EXEC PR** Matt Williams, David McFadzean, Carmen Finestra. **PR** John Pasquin, Gayle S. Maffeo. **DR** Various, including John Pasquin, Andy Cadiff, Peter Bonerz. **WR** Various, including Matt Williams, David McFadzean, Carmen Finestra, Billy Riback, Elliot Stern. **CAST** Tim Taylor Tim Allen Jill Taylor Patricia Richardson Brad Taylor Zachery Ty Bryan Randy Taylor Jonathan Taylor Thomas Mark Taylor Taran Smith Wilson Earl Hindman Al Borland Richard Karn Lisa Pamela Denise Anderson Heidi Debbie Dunning.

Smash hit sitcom from Matt Williams (creator of *>Roseanne*) starring Tim Allen as Tim Taylor – chauvinist, gadget-crazy, know-it-all presenter of a DIY cable program called “The Tool Show.” At home, however, his wife Jill sensibly kept him away from the appliances, since his every attempt to “fix” them ended in calls to the fire brigade. Together, Tim and Jill tried to bring up their three tow-headed sons, who liked to be bad but always ended up comfortingly good.

Misread by some as an unreconstructed piece of macho posturing, *Home Improvement* in truth effectively and amusingly satirized the unreconstructed male, down to the home truth that it was Jill, not Tim, who held the reins of real power. There were other notable comedic elements to the

show: as with any domestic comedy, there was a next-door neighbor, but in the case of Wilson he was permanently hidden from view by a fence and given to gurulike sayings on Tim's perennial problem of trying to understand the female mind;

and, as with *Roseanne*, the closing credits showed "bloopers" committed by the cast. A hit till it quit, *Home Improvement* found the perfect casting in Allen – a former stand-up comic – as Taylor, who tried to be the archetypal male chauvinist pig but was truly a nice guy underneath. The show received several awards, and even praise from the right-wing

▼▼ Wilson offers some more off-the-fence tips to Tim Taylor in *Home Improvement*.



Family Guide for portraying a “secure family unit... in a TV landscape littered with atypical or dysfunctional families.”

Perhaps the funniest thing about *Home Improvement*, however, was that it gave Pamela Anderson her big screen break playing Lisa, the, er, “Tool Time Girl.”

THE HONEYMOONERS

USA 1955–6, 39 x 30m, bw CBS, 1966–71, 13 x 60m, col CBS, 1984–5, 68 x 30m, col CBS. CBS Entertainment. UK tx 1958 ITV, 1987 BBC2.

CR Jackie Gleason, Joe Bigelow, Harry Crane.

EXEC PR Jack Philbin. **PR** Jack Hurdle. **DR** Various, including Frank Satenstein, Jackie Gleason.

WR Jackie Gleason, Marvin Marx, Walter Stone, Andy Russell, Herbert Finn, Leonard Stern, Sydney Zelinka. **MUS** Jackie Gleason (theme), Sammy Spear. **CAST** Ralph Kramden Jackie Gleason Ed Norton Art Carney Alice Kramden Audrey Meadows (1955–6)/Sheila MacRae (1966–71) Trixie Norton Joyce Randolph (1955–6)/Jane Kean (1966–71)

The saga of Ralph and Alice Kramden, the not-so-newlyweds who lived in a grimy, rundown apartment at 328 Chauncey St., Brooklyn. (*The Honeymooners*’ set was about the bleakest in TV sitcom history – a kitchen/living room with a fridge, a table, and view out on to the bricks of the neighboring building.) The show centered on portly Ralph (Jackie Gleason, >*The Life of Riley*), a blustering New York City bus driver always on the

look-out for scams for making/saving money. Yet these, whether it was unloading a warehouseful of useless can openers on late-night TV, or withholding a rent increase, always ended in disaster. Ever willing to help Ralph in his ambitions was best friend Ed Norton, a cheery but incompetent sewer-cleaner who lived upstairs with spouse Trixie. Continually displeased by the duo’s schemes was Ralph’s practical wife Alice, whose devastating put-downs and complaints were regularly met by the response, “One of these days, Alice, one of these days... POW! Right in the kisser.”

Much of *The Honeymooners*’ appeal lay in the fact that it was at heart an old-fashioned romance. “The guy really loved this broad,” creator Gleason maintained. “They fight, sure. But they always end in a clinch.” And, sure enough, the episode’s curtain would fall on harmony and Ralph proclaiming, “Alice, you’re the greatest!” – a moment the scriptwriters dubbed “kissville.” There was also the comic drama of the indefatigable bus driver always keeping his head in the clouds while the rest of him was sinking fast, and the contribution of gifted physical actor Art Carney (the Hardy to Gleason’s Laurel), in whose hands the chalking of a pool cue could become a feat of comic choreography. Unlike its heavily polished and scripted contemporary >*I Love Lucy*, *The Honeymooners* came complete with adlibs and

Alice, you’re the greatest!



▲▲▲ Jackie Gleason rode to the heights of the ratings as bus driver Ralph in *The Honeymooners*.

improvisations, giving it an energy rare in prime-time sitcomland, even to this day.

The Honeymooners spent most of its history as a segment within other programs, running only one season as an independent show. It was first seen as a sketch in *DuMont's Cavalcade of Stars* in 1951, then on CBS as part of *The Jackie Gleason Show*. *The Honeymooners* finally became a series in its own right in 1955, when the Buick Motor Company sponsored the freestanding sitcom to the tune of over six million dollars – then the largest

sponsorship commitment in TV history. (The ultimate compliment to *The Honeymooners* would come later, however, with Hanna-Barbera's shameless, and admitted, cartoon imitation, > *The Flintstones*.) *The Honeymooners* was filmed twice weekly before a live audience of 1,100 people crowded into New York's Adelphi Theater, one of the first TV shows to be so produced.

In 1956, *The Honeymooners* – the first TV show to tune in to the frustrations of America's urban blue-collar workers – ended after only one season, but in 1966 it was revived in the form of one-hour episodes of Gleason's then-current variety series, with Broadway-style musicals padding out the



▲▲ Astronaut Tony Nelson (Larry Hagman, right) is landed in another supernatural sitcom mishap inevitably involving the cross-legged Jeannie (Barbara Eden) in *I Dream of Jeannie*.

episodes by some thirty minutes. A collection of reruns was aired as a "new" series in 1971, and four "specials" were shot between 1976 and 1978. In the eighties, "lost episodes" of *The Honeymooners* were broadcast (by Showtime, a pay-cable network owned by Viacom), but these were in fact skits from *DuMont's Cavalcade* and *The Jackie Gleason Show* edited together to make sixty-eight new *Honeymooners* half-hours.

I DREAM OF JEANNIE

USA 1965–70, 139 x 25m, col NBC. Columbia. UK tx 1966–70 ITV.

CR Sidney Sheldon. **EXEC PR** Sidney Sheldon.

DR Various, including Gene Nelson, Alan Rafkin, E. W. Swackhamer, Hal Cooper, William Asher, Claudio Guzman, Theodore J. Flicker, Larry Hagman, Hal Cooper. **WR** Various, including Sidney Sheldon, Tom Waldman and Frank Waldman, Arthur Alsberg and Bob Fisher, William Davenport. **MUS** Hugh Montenegro. **CAST** Jeannie Barbara Eden Capt. Anthony "Tony" Nelson Larry Hagman Capt. Roger Healey Bill Daily Dr. Alfred Bellows Hayden Rorke.

When NASA astronaut Tony Nelson (Larry Hagman, later the US *Good Life* sitcom and sudster *Dallas*) crashes on a desert island, he finds a beautiful blond genie in a bottle. She accompanies him back to Cape Canaveral, where she seeks to magically improve his lot in life. Unfortunately, Jeannie – who is only visible to Nelson and buddy Roger Healey – is both over-zealous and petulantly jealous. Still, with just a blink of her eyes she easily undoes the mayhem she causes each episode. The story ends happily ever after when Jeannie and Tony – who had previously been engaged to general's daughter Melissa – marry in the final season.

A likeable, light supernatural sitcom, *I Dream* was intended by US network NBC to ride the tail of rival ABCs >*Bewitched*. With starette Barbara Eden in skimpy harem attire, it also pandered to an obvious male fantasy (would she really do *anything* for him?), and many turned on.

I LOVE LUCY

USA 1951–61, 179 x 30m, bw CBS. Desilu Productions. UK tx 1955–65.

CR Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, Bob Carroll.
EXEC PR Desi Arnaz. **PR** Jess Oppenheimer, Desi Arnaz. **DR** Ralph Levy, Marc Daniels, William Asher, James V. Kern. **WR** Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, Bob Carroll Jr., Bob Schiller, Bob Weiskopf.
MUS Eliot Daniel (theme), Wilbur Hatch and the Desi Arnaz Orchestra. **CAST** Lucy Ricardo Lucille Ball Ricky Ricardo Desi Arnaz Ethel Mertz Vivian Vance Fred Mertz William Frawley Little Ricky

Ricardo Richard Keith Jerry (the agent) Jerry Hausner Mrs. MacGillicuddy (Lucy's mother) Kathryn Card Caroline Appleby Doris Singleton.

The scatter-brained antics of N.Y. housewife and showbiz wannabe Lucy Ricardo snap the patience of her fiery Cuban bandleader husband, whose fractured English degenerates into a stream of Spanish epithets. Meanwhile, nosy apartment neighbors the Mertzes look on.

The prototype sitcom with its polished scripts and performances, its structure of neighboring interrelating couples, its theme of frustration, *I Love Lucy* grew from Ball's CBS radio show *My Favorite Husband* (in which she perfected her trademark dottiness and crying fits), with Richard Denning originally slated to play opposite her on TV. Instead, she decided to film a pilot with her real-life spouse, the Cuban musician-actor Desi Arnaz (the two had met on the set of Arnaz's Hollywood feature, *Too Many Girls*), which sold them and the concept to CBS. Almost immediately after it went on the air, *I Love Lucy* became a smash hit, rose to the top of the ratings and stayed there for most of its years on CBS. A kind of *I Love Lucy* mania gripped the USA; the 1953 episode in which the Ricardos' baby boy was born (its airing, extraordinarily enough, coinciding with Ball's real-life delivery of Desi Arnaz, Jr.) attracted 44 million viewers. President Dwight Eisenhower's inaugural address the next night could only manage 29 million viewers.

The sheer classiness of the plots, gags, editing (from four cameras, rather than the usual one), and performances lifted the show above all its

predecessors and peers, with the partial exception of the raw-energy > *The Honeymooners*. The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences bestowed five Emmys. Meanwhile, the revolutionary decision to film the *I Love Lucy* shows, rather than broadcast them live, meant that the high-quality prints of each episode could be reshow. As a result, the show sold

▼▼ More scatter-brained domestic mayhem for Lucy and Desi in the classic *I Love Lucy*.

around the world (including to Britain, where it was one of the first programs shown on the fledgling ITV network). It has been estimated that *I Love Lucy* has been on the air somewhere in the world throughout the last forty years. Not the least effect of the show's use of film was that it shifted TV production away from New York, where it started, to Hollywood, where the film facilities were.

In the summer of 1958, a collection of reruns entitled *The Top Ten Lucy Shows* revealed the



difficulty of selecting an all-time list – it contained thirteen episodes. Among these was the episode where Lucy maneuvered her way on to Ricky's TV show (he having worked his way up, as the fiction had it, from bandleader at the Tropicana, via ownership of the Ricky Ricardo Babaloo Club), in order to promote a health tonic commercial, and then got drunk sampling the highly alcoholic product. (Lucy's attempts to break into showbiz, and Ricky's attempts to keep her at home as a housewife, were the show's staple plot.) Then there was the time when she tried to bake her own bread, threw in two entire packets of yeast, and ended up pinned to the wall of her kitchen when she opened the oven. And the time Lucy (whose maiden name, for the record, was MacGillicuddy) and neighbor Ethel were looking for mementos of Hollywood to take home to New York and tried to pry loose the block of cement bearing John Wayne's footprint from in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater.

I Love Lucy was made by the independent company owned by Arnaz and Ball, Desilu (named from a meld of their first names), which became one of the most successful in Hollywood. It was bought out in 1967 for \$20 million. Some six years before this, however, Arnaz and Ball had divorced, with former speakeasy hostess Ball going on to star in sitcom *The Lucy Show* (coproduced with new husband Gary Morton). There she played Connecticut widow and mother of two, Lucy Carmichael. Despite a shift down in quality and a confusing change of title to *Here's Lucy*, its longevity alone (it lasted until 1972) established Ball, if proof were needed, as America's TV comedienne *sans pareil*.

I'M DICKENS, HE'S FENSTER

USA 1962–3, 32 x 25m, bw ABC. Heyfay. UK tx 1964 ITV.

CR Leonard Stern. **PR** Leonard Stern. **CAST** Harry Dickens John Astin Arch Fenster Marty Ingels Kate Dickens Emmaline Henry Mel Warshaw Dave Ketchum Banister Frank DeVol.

Intermittently amusing show, something like *>Abbott and Costello* for the sixties, concerning two carpenters-cum-builders whose best-laid plans became pratfalls. At the least, it proved a useful step up the career ladder for John Astin, soon to head *>The Addams Family*. Co-lead Marty Ingels, one of TV's great journeymen, later appeared in Phyllis Dyller's riches-to-rags sitcom, *The Pruitts of Southampton*, and as the recurring character Sol Pomeroy in *>The Dick Van Dyke Show*. In the early eighties he became the voice of Pac Man in Hanna-Barbera's cartoonized video game of that name. He was the second husband of Shirley Jones from *>The Partridge Family*.

IT AIN'T HALF HOT, MUM

UK 1974–81, 56 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Jimmy Perry and David Croft. **PR** David Croft. **DR** John Kilby, Phil Bishop, Bob Spiers. **WR** Jimmy Perry and David Croft. **MUS** Jimmy Perry and Derek Taverner (theme). **CAST** RSM B. L. Williams Windsor Davies Bombardier Solomons George Layton Bombardier "Gloria" Beaumont Melvyn Hayes



Gunner "Lofty" Sugden *Don Estelle* Gunner
 "Paderuski" Graham (aka "La-de-dah") *John Clegg*
 Gunner Mackintosh *Stuart McGugan* Gunner Parkin
Christopher Mitchell Colonel Reynolds *Donald*
Hewlett Captain Ashwood *Michael Knowles* Rang
 Ram *Michael Bates* Gunner "Nosher" Evans *Mike*
Kinsey Gunner "Nobby" Clarke *Kenneth MacDonald*
 Char Wallah Muhammed *Dino Shafeek* Punka
 Wallah *Babar Bhatti*.

▲▲▲ *The cast of Croft and Perry's 70s military sitcom find It Ain't Half Hot, Mum.*

concert party in India during the Second World War. Most of the humor comes from the efforts of blustering Welsh Sergeant-Major Williams to instill in the effete entertainers ("a bunch of poofs") some semblance of military order. On sitcom parade alongside Williams was the assorted platoon of: diminutive "Lofty" Sugden; Bombardier Solomons (George Layton); Scottish Gunner Mackintosh; Gunner Parkin (possessor of a "fine pair of shoulders" according to Williams, who thought he

Coarse-cut comedy from Croft and Perry (previously the sublime *>Dad's Army*), concerning the misadventures of a Royal Artillery



Meet the gang, 'coz the boys are here

The boys to entertain you...



was the boy's father); egg-headed pianist "Lah-de-dah" Gunner Graham; and Gunner Beaumont, who cross-dressed into "Gloria" in cabarets for the troops. (Beaumont's transvestism was the other wellspring of the show's laughs.) The entertainers' idiotic commissioned officers were Colonel Reynolds and the drippy Captain Ashwood. Also seen were the local wallahs, including a blackfaced Michael Bates (>*Last of the Summer Wine*), whose stereotyped pidgin English as Rangi Ram suggested that the show – which climbed as high as number two in the BARB ratings – might have been better titled "It Ain't Half Racist, Mum."

A spin-off single, "Whispering Grass," performed by actors Windsor Davies and Don Estelle in their Lofty and Sergeant Major personae, became a number one hit in 1975.

IT'S A SQUARE WORLD

UK 1960–4, 32 x 30m, bw BBC. BBC TV.

CR Michael Bentine. **PR** G. B. Lupino, John Street, Joe McGrath. **WR** Michael Bentine, John Law.

CAST Michael Bentine, Frank Thornton, Clive Dunn, Ronnie Barker, Benny Lee, Dick Emery, Leon Thau, Joe Gibbons, Freddie Earlie, John Bluthal, Louis Mansi, Janette Rowsell, Len Lowe, Anthea Wyndham.

After leaving the radio *Goon Show* for a solo career in TV, Michael Bentine first tried his

hand at kiddie-time animation (the classic *The Bumblebees* of 1954), before testing the adult airwaves in *After Hours*. Then came *It's a Square World*, which essentially combined Goonery with the animation techniques of *The Bumblebees* to create a visual TV surrealism that prefigured the more famous exploits of >*Monty Python*. The series was built around Bentine in the guise of a lecturer/commentator, whose illustrative models had a habit of coming to "life." Perhaps the most famous – and controversial – of the resultant gags saw a Chinese junk sailing up the Thames to attack the House of Commons. (The sequence was banned temporarily by the BBC for fear that it was too political at general election time.)

Those assisting Bentine in the live-action sequences included Clive Dunn (later >*Dad's Army*); Frank Thornton (later >*Are You Being Served?*); Dick Emery (>*The Army Game*); Louis Mansi (later >'Allo, 'Allo); and, in his first lead TV role, Ronnie Barker (later >*Porridge*). Bentine followed *Square World* with *It's All Square* for ITV (1966–7); the children's show *Michael Bentine's Potty Time*; and the 1977 BBC1 special, *Michael Bentine's Square World*.

IT'S GARRY SHANDLING'S SHOW

USA 1986–90, Approx 60 x 30m, col SHO/Fox. Showtime. UK tx 1987–91 BBC2.

CR Garry Shandling, Alan Zweibel. **EXEC PR** Bernie Brillstein, Brad Gery, Garry Shandling. **PR** Alan Zweibel. **DR** Various, including Alan Rafkin, Paul

Miller, Stan Lathan, Thomas Schlamme. **WR** Various, including Garry Shandling, Alan Zweibel, Jeff Franklin. **MUS** Joey Carbone (theme).. **CAST** Garry Shandling himself Mrs. Ruth Shandling Barbara Cason Nancy Bancroft Molly Cheek Leonard Smith Paul Wilson Pete Schumaker Michael Tucci Jackie Schumaker Bernadette Birkett Grant Schumaker Scott Nemes Phoebe Bass Jessica Harper.

Postmodern sitcom from toothsome comic Garry Shandling, in which he played a fictitious version of himself, an angst-ridden goofball plagued by odd characters and his own neuroses. Although set exclusively in Shandling's condo, the plots went far, far away; in one episode Shandling hosted the 1988 elections; in another, the condo was turned into a private theme park, "Shandlingland." The epitome of postmodernist TV, the show consciously referenced the classics of the past, with its opening monologue à la >*The Jack Benny Show*, the direct addresses to the audience ("breaking the fourth wall") borrowed from *The Burns and Allen Show*, and the single set echoing both >*I Love Lucy* and >*The Honeymooners*. Elaborately concerned with stressing the artificiality of TV, the show was full of self-referentialism, even opening the credits with the gag line, "This is the theme to Garry's show." Yet, the show ensured mainstream watchability by cannily foregrounding the staples of sitcoms everywhere – funny family and friends – and followed a conventional sub-plot in Garry's relationship with girlfriend Phoebe. At the end of the show's run, the two even married to live happily ever after. The nonfictitious Shandling, meanwhile, moved to the black-humor side of life in >*The Larry Sanders Show* for HBO.

THE JACK BENNY SHOW

USA 1950–65, Approx 170 x 30m, bw/col CBA/ NBC. UK tx 1956– BBC.

EXEC PR Ralph Levy. **PR** Various, including Irving Fein, Fred DeCordova, Ralph Levy, Hilliard Marks.

DR Various, including Ralph Levy, Fred DeCordova.

WR Various, including Neil Morrow, John Tackaberry, Ed Beloin, Sam Perrin, George Balzer. **MUS** Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger ("Love in Bloom" theme).

CAST Jack Benny himself Mary Livingston herself Rochester Eddie Anderson Don Wilson himself Prof. LeBlanc/Si (Mexican foil) Mel Blanc Fred (Jack's director) Fred DeCordova Dennis Day himself Mr. Kitzel (Jewish foil) Arte Auerbach Sam (Jack's writer) Herbert Vigran.

One of the first comedians to see the possibilities of TV, Jack Benny (aka Benjamin Kubelsky) transferred his long-running radio show to the new medium virtually unchanged. The show centered on his fictionalized persona as a pompous aging actor (who always claimed to be "thirty-nine") and the world's outstanding miser, regularly and comically brought low by the foils who were his workmates. (Added for the screen, by Benny, were an affected campy walk and equally affected hand to the cheek.) As such, the program's elements of



Robber to Jack Benny: "Your money or your life!"

[silence]

Robber: "Quit stalling. I said your money or your life."

Jack Benny: "...I'm thinking it over."



extended sketches, invented characters, and “family” of regulars marked a departure from the variety model of early TV humor, making *The Jack Benny Show*, along with *>I Love Lucy*, the prototype sitcom. And, like the humor of *I Love Lucy*, Jack Benny’s lacked malice, instead resting on his perfect comic timing, understatement, and invented, self-deprecating persona.

The show’s regulars, all veterans from the radio version, were Don Wilson as Benny’s announcer and friend; secretary Mary Livingston (Benny’s real-life wife, born Sadie Marks); Eddie Anderson, who played Benny’s negro valet Rochester; and Mel Blanc (the voice of Bugs Bunny and later that of Barney in *>The Flintstones*), who voiced Benny’s antique Maxwell car and played his hapless violin teacher, Professor LeBlanc. (Despite Benny’s acted ineptitude on the violin, he had been a child prodigy with the instrument.) Among the guests were Lucille Ball herself, Carol Burnett, Ginger Rogers, and John Wayne (in one of his very few TV appearances). Ronald Colman made semiregular appearances as Benny’s neighbor. The show – sometimes known as *The Jack Benny Program* – was as loved on TV as it had been on radio, and it lasted from 1950 to 1965. By then, Benny was aged seventy-one and, although he much reduced his schedule, he continued to produce TV specials until his death in 1974.

JEEVES AND WOOSTER

UK 1990–3, 23 x 52m, col ITV. US tx 1991–3 PBS.
Picture Partnership Productions/Carnival Films.

PR Brian Eastman. *DR* Robert Young, Simon Langton, Ferdinand Fairfax. *WR* Clive Exton. *MUS* Anne Dudley.
CAST Bertie Wooster Hugh Laurie Jeeves Stephen Fry Aunt Agatha Mary Wimbush/Elizabeth Spriggs Aunt Dahlia Brenda Bruce/Vivian Pickles.

Archaic TV version of P. G. Wodehouse’s stories of dimwit socialite Bertie Wooster and his capable valet Jeeves, starring Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry in lively plots that contained the perfect formulaic blend of hair-brained money-making schemes, mad pashes, and formidable dowager aunts. Designer Eileen Diss was responsible for the sumptuous sets. The later episodes were set in New York, after Bertie’s escape from his imminent marriage to Honoria Glossop.

The Jeeves and Wooster stories had been adapted for TV before in the BBC’s *P. G. Wodehouse’s World of Wooster* (BBC1, 1965–7), with Ian Carmichael as Wooster and Dennis Price as the gentleman’s gentleman. However, it was Fry and Laurie, seemingly born to play the parts, who established the definitive version.

Fry and Laurie first performed together in the 1981 Cambridge Footlights (with Emma Thompson), and their award-winning show “The Cellar Tapes” was aired by the BBC in 1982. After stints, individually and together, on *Alfresco*, *>The Young Ones*, *>Saturday Live*, *>Blackadder*, *This Is David Lander*, and *Happy Families*, the two opened their own BBC show, *A Little Bit of Fry and Laurie*, in 1989; a year later changing channel for *Jeeves and Wooster*.

What ho!

JULIA

USA 1968–71, 86 x 30m, col NBC. 20th Century Fox. UK tx 1969–71 ITV.

PR Hal Kanter. **DR** Various, including Hal Kanter.

CAST Julia Baker Diahann Carroll Corey Baker Marc Coppage Dr. Morton Chegley Lloyd Nolas Marie Waggener Betty Beaird Earl J. Waggener Michael Link Hannah Yarby Lurene Tuttle.

The first TV series since *Beulah* (ABC, 1950) to star a black woman and, unlike *Beulah's* maid-heroine, one which starred a black woman in a “prestige” role. *Julia* was a half-hour comedy about a beautiful young nurse raising her six-year-old son single-handedly after her air force pilot husband was killed in Vietnam. Moving to Los Angeles, Julia Baker found a job at the medical office of Astrospace Industries. Julia’s work, home life, and social activities all provided grist for the show’s humor mill. The show was totally integrated – to the nervousness of NBC executives, who then decided it had no chance of survival and scheduled it in a “coffin spot” opposite CBS’s *The Red Skelton Show*; indeed, NBC only aired *Julia* for the kudos of making a show with a black principal. Against network expectation, the show became popular with white audiences as well as black and became a full-fledged hit.

In the world of the show, Julia lived with son Corey in a modern, mixed-race apartment building, where his best friend was white Earl J. Waggener. Other characters in Julia’s home life were Earl’s dad Leonard, landlord Sol Cooper, and mother’s helper Carol Deering. At work, the middle-class

heroine had equally harmonious relationships with her white employer, feisty, kind-hearted Doctor Morton Chegley, his wife Melba, fellow nurse Hannah Yarby, and plant employee Eddie Edwards. Romantic partners were, however, strictly black. Paul Cameron was Julia’s occasional boyfriend for the first two seasons and was replaced during the show’s final year by Steve Bruce, a widower with a four-year-old daughter, Kim.

It soon became apparent, though, that this rather cute, romanticized version of black/white relations was running out of sync with real time. This was 1968, an era of ghetto riots and a new black militancy, and Julia’s trouble-free, color-blind integration into the white community bore little relation to the reality of black experience in the USA. The show came under fire from black nationalists and the liberal white press for being false and distorted, and partly because of this political pressure, star Diahann Carroll decided to quit after the third season.

Diahann Carroll (born Carol Diann Johnson), a singer with motion-picture experience, later secured an Oscar nomination for her role in *Claudine* (1974), giving a romantic-comedy performance of a depth not suggested by her pretty, plastic turn in *Julia*. In the 1980s she returned to undemanding glamour as Dominique Devereaux, Blake Carrington’s half-sister in *Dynasty*.

KATE AND ALLIE

USA 1984–8, Approx 111 x 30m, col CBS. Reeves Entertainment. UK tx 1982–9 C4.



CR Sherry Kobin. **EXEC PR** Mort Lachman, Merrill Grant, Bill Persky, Saul Turtleaub, Bernie Orenstein. **PR** Bob Randell, Anne Flett, Chuck Ranberg. **DR** Various, including Bill Persky, Linda Day. **WR** Various, including Bob Randell, Sherry Kobin. **CAST** Kate McCardle Susan Saint James Allie Lowell Jane Curtin Emma McCardle Ari Meyers Chip Lowell Frederick Koehler Jennie Lowell Alison Smith Ted Bartelo Gregory Salata Charles Lowell Paul Hecht Bob Barskey Sam Freed Lou Carello Peter Onarati.

▲▲▲ A distaff *Odd Couple*, Kate and Allie (Susan Saint James and Jane Curtin).

Female version of >*The Odd Couple*. Kate and Allie were two New York divorcées obliged by shaky finances to share an apartment. Their kids came, too. Although Kate, a high energy swinging sixties liberal, and Allie, a quiet conservative, had little in common, they bonded like glue, even setting up a catering business together. Toward the end of the show's run, Allie remarried, but

continued to live with Kate, since her television sportscaster husband, Bob Barskey, worked during the week in Washington D. C.

Wryly amusing sitcom, with perfectly cast leads in Susan Saint James (previously the costar, with Rock Hudson, of *McMillan and Wife*) and Jane Curtin (the mom of the "Conehead" family on *>Saturday Night Live*). Curtin collected two Emmys for her portrayal of Allie. Among the later entries on her résumé was *Third Rock from the Sun*.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

UK 1990–95, 40 x 30m, 4 x c60m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx 1992– PBS.

CR Roy Clarke. **PR** Harold Snoad. **DR** Harold Snoad.

WR Roy Clarke. **MUS** Nick Ingman (theme).

CAST Hyacinth Bucket Patricia Routledge Richard Bucket Clive Swift Daisy Judy Cornwall Rose Shirley Stelfox Mary Millar Onslow Geoffrey Hughes Elizabeth Josephine Tewson Emmett Hawsworth David Griffin Vicar Gerald Sim/Jeremy Gittins Daddy George Webb.

Situation comedy from Roy Clarke featuring Mrs. Hyacinth Bucket – "It's pronounced bouquet!" – a matronly class climber obsessed with her social standing. To elevate this she went to extreme lengths, dressed for elevenses, and polished the leaves of her trees. The laugh, of course, was that Bucket, despite her airs and graces, had no accurate notion of "U" behavior and was permanently undone by her own gaffes. Worse, her

It's pronounced bouquet!

council-house relatives turned up regularly to embarrass her. They were: slutty sisters Daisy and Rose; brother-in-law Onslow (Daisy's husband, the vest-wearing driver of an S-reg Cortina); and senile Daddy, who believed that the war was still on. (Another sister, unseen, lived in a "big house on the hill.") And though Hyacinth sought to impress her neighbors and believed they admired her, they tended to flee as she hove into view. Her singing was held to be a particular peril. Through all this, Hyacinth's meek husband Richard endured a life of exasperated resignation.

The aural joke of bucket/bouquet was not new, it dated back to the days of British black-and-white cinema, but Clarke's (*>Last of the Summer Wine*, *>Open All Hours*) observations of social mores and class nuances were turned to exquisitely painful degree. Meanwhile, Patricia Routledge (born Katherine Patricia Routledge) positively bloomed as the suburban matron from hell. She was named Top Television Comedy Actress in 1991. Two years later she was awarded an OBE for services to acting. After *Keeping Up Appearances*, she appeared in the star vehicle *Hetty Wainthrop Investigates*, a comedy caper about an OAP detective.

Some *Keeping Up Appearances* trivia: Hyacinth and Richard's unseen son Sheridan, who only ever phoned home when he needed money, was studying to be a quantity surveyor; actor Clive Swift was once married to authoress Margaret Drabble,

while actress Josephine Tewson (who played horrified neighbor Elizabeth) was the sometime wife of Leonard Rossiter; Geoffrey Hughes used to play Eddie Yates in northern soap *Coronation Street*; the Buckets lived in Blossom Avenue; Richard's job before retirement was Deputy Manager of Finance and General Services.

THE KENNY EVERETT VIDEO SHOW

UK 1978–80, 24 x 30m, col ITV. Thames TV.

PR David Mallett. DR John Birt. WR Ray Cameron, Barry Cryer, Kenny Everett. CAST Kenny Everett, Cleo Rocas.

A shock-jock before the term was invented, radio D. J. Maurice James Cole – aka Kenny Everett – first took his patented madcap humor to TV in the children's show *Nice Time*, in 1968. Here his unlikely cohosts were Jonathan Routh from *Candid Camera* and a then unknown Warwick University academic by the name of Germaine Greer. For Greer, Everett, and the show's director, John Birt, *Nice Time* proved to be a crucial rung on the TV career ladder (Routh was already on the way out of TV to become an amateur painter, and find his recreational fun tossing wooden dwarfs in Jamaica), and in 1970 LWT awarded Everett his own show, *The Kenny Everett Explosion*. But it was the follow-up series, *The Kenny Everett Video Show*, for Thames, in which Everett really found his métier. His enthusiasm for the medium, especially the nascent video gadgetry, was positively infectious.



▲▲▲ The zany Kenny Everett.

Presenting from a studio empty except for a wall of TV monitors, Everett led the audience at home on a thirty-minute weekly tour of gleefully adolescent erotics, courtesy of Arlene Phillips' dance troupe Hot Gossip, and equally gleeful and adolescent comic sketches, featuring such Everett creations as Sid Snot, Marcel Wave, punk Gizzard Puke, and a

Dolly Parton-like celeb of unfeasible décolletage (known off-air as "Cupid Stunt"). Everett's chief on-screen collaborator was Cleo Rocas, who played the buxom Miss Whiplash.

It was, of course, "all done in the best possible taste." Not.

With the show's end, Everett then fronted the short-lived *The Kenny Everett Video Cassette* (Thames TV, 1981), before presenting *The Kenny Everett Television Show* (1982–8) for the BBC. If this lacked the verve and originality (and Hot Gossip) of the *Video Show*, it nevertheless produced Everett's greatest video gag, a Bee Gees sketch in which Everett played all three toothsome, tandoori-tanned brothers at the same time. Interviewed (by Everett), the "Bees Gees" answered all questions with lines from their songs. Asked, "How do you sell so many records?" they chorused, "Because we're living in a world of fools..." It was one of the truly hysterically funny moments of eighties British comedy.

A prominent supporter of the Conservative Party (Everett once did a Tory Conference sketch in which he suggested "we should bomb Russia" and "kick away" the walking stick of then Labour leader Michael Foot), Everett died of an AIDS-related condition in 1995.

KING OF THE HILL

USA 1997–, 30+ x 30m, col Fox. 20th Century Fox Television/Film Roman Productions/3 Arts Entertainments. UK tx 1997– C4.

CR Mike Judge, Greg Daniels. **EXEC PR** Howard Klein, Phil Roman, Michael Rotenberg, Greg Daniels, Mike Judge. **PR** Joseph A. Boucher, Richard Raynis. **DR** Various, including Jeff Myers, Monte Young, Chuck Sheetz, Cyndi Tang, Tricia Garcia, Wesley



►► King of the Hill, another looney 'toon success for Mike Judge.

Archer, Shain Cashman, Klay Hall, Adam Kuhlman, Gary McCarver, John Rice. WR Various, including Mike Judge, Greg Daniels, Johnny Hardwick, Jim Dauterive. MUS Brian David Blush and Roger Meade Clyne (theme). CAST (voices) Hank Hill/Boomhauer/Dooley Mike Judge Peggy Hill Kathy Najimy Bobby Hill Pamela Segall Luanne Platter/Joseph Gribble Brittany Murphy Dale Gribble Johnny Hardwick Bill Dauterive Stephen Root.

Hank Hill resides in the 'burb of Arlen, Texas, with his wife Peggy, awkward twelve-year-old son Bobby, and live-in niece Luanne. The assistant manager of the Strickland Propane company, Hank likes to drink beer with his redneck buddies, ride in his pickup truck, and keep his tools in the right place. The voice of reason – as he sees it – in a world gone awry, he tries to keep life simple.

The problem is, Hank is besieged by his own idiosyncrasies (he's anally retentive to the degree that he measures the grass after cutting), those of his family, and those of the world. And his friends – military barber Bill Dauterive, conspiracy theorist Dale Gribble, and gibberish-spouting Boomhauer – are plain crazy.

An Everydad, Hank Hill was the lead character in *King of the Hill*, an animated ironic browse through the American suburban South. Cofathered by Mike Judge of *>Beavis and Butt-head* and Greg Daniels from *>The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill* combined obvious elements of both those shows (the familyness of *The Simpsons*, the distinctive graphic simplicity of *B&B*) in a way that viewers liked; the show was the first major post-*Simpsons* cartoon hit.

Looked at another way, however, what *King of the*

Hill left out from its precursors was equally important to its success, viz. the *Simpsons*' busy cultural referencing and *B&B*'s nihilism. Written with casual, ironic genius, *King of the Hill* poked fun at its targets, but not too hard, while its slack pace allowed time for characterization. (The dim-witted, monotone Hill clan had some pleasingly amusing quirks: Bobby, in between trying to please his father – but never quite succeeding – by participating in Little League, could watch TV for hours without moving a muscle; while Peggy, scribe of the column "Peggy Hill's Musin's" for the local paper, had such large feet she had to drive a hundred miles to "Lubbock's Very Big Shoes" for her footwear.) The theme running through the show, if you cared to look, was the right of Americans to be left alone.

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU... WITH ALAN PARTRIDGE

UK 1994–5, 6 x 30m, 1 x 50m, col BBC2. Talkback.

EXEC PR Peter Fincham. PR Armando Iannucci.

DR Dominic Brigstocke. WR Steve Coogan, Henry Normal, Patrick Marber. CAST Steve Coogan, with Rebecca Front, Doon Mackichan, David Schneider.

Spoof chat show hosted by the smarmy, logorrheic and hugely incompetent "Alan Partridge." A-ha.

A transfer from radio to TV (via *>The Day Today*) of comedian Steve Coogan's presenter persona, initially a Pringle-clad sportscaster but then



elevated to talkshow supremo. In the new medium, Partridge proved to be an even more squirmingly accurate send-up of the self-importance of broadcasting and those who front it. A 1995 Christmas special was broadcast under the title of "Knowing Me, Knowing Yule with Alan Partridge"; naturally, the joys of Christmas were lost on Partridge, who resorted to telling Norwich bellringers to "shut up," shamelessly dropping

▲▲▲ *A-ha! Steve Coogan (standing) as spoof talkshow supremo Alan Partridge in Knowing Me, Knowing You.*

plugs for the car brand he advertised (Rover Vitesse), and erroneously and insensitively comparing a disabled golf caddy to other disabled people "like Einstein and Daniel Day-Lewis."

The most telegenic of the wave of absurdist nineties humorists who grew around Radio 4's "On

the Hour," Coogan first came to TV providing voices for >*Spitting Image* (Neil Kinnock, Mick Jagger) and Allied Carpets advertisements. In 1993, he developed the characters of lager-drinking Mancunian Paul ("bag o'shite") Calf and his shag-happy sister Pauline Calf for *Saturday Zoo*, these developing through *Paul Calf's Video Diary* into the immortal 1994 *Three Fights, Two Weddings and a Funeral* (aka *Pauline Calf's Wedding Video*), which was awarded a BAFTA. The character of Paul Calf reappeared in the 1995 series *Coogan's Run*, which also memorably featured Coogan's nerdy software salesman Gareth Cheeseman, an invention who did little for the sales of the Ford Probe. In the same year Partridge himself reappeared in "The [General] Election Night Armistice" episode of *The Saturday Night Armistice* show, coming back to the small screen for a full-fledged series, *I'm Alan Partridge*, in 1997. This refined the abusive, self-hating Partridge to a yet funnier degree. A-ha.

KYTV

UK 1990–3, 18 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

PR Jamie Rix. **DR** John Kilby, John Stroud. **WR** Angus Deayton, Geoffrey Perkins. **MUS** Philip Pope.

CAST Mike Channel Angus Deayton Mike Flex Geoffrey Perkins Anna Daptor Helen Atkinson Wood Martin Brown Michael Fenton-Stevens Continuity Announcer Philip Pope.

Sitcom parodying satellite TV. Set in station KYTV, named for fictitious Sir Kenneth Yellowhammer ("When it comes to quality, we stop

at nothing"), it remorselessly spoofed every aspect of satellite programming, in particular the technical deficiencies and cultural crudity that dogged the extraterrestrial networks in the early eighties. The target was difficult to miss, but sometimes the KYTV team skewered it with panache. A spoof fly-on-the-wall documentary about a suburban family, in which the said clan descended into alcoholism, crime, and working in a petrol station, and suffered the pedophilic attentions of the KYTV interviewer, was a particular highlight. Other episodic highlights included a poor British version of the glitzy *Baywatch*, entitled "Herne Bay Watch," and "The Making of David Chizzlenut" – "a chance to look behind the scenes of a classic drama production." The show came from the same team who had written and presented Radio 4's lampoon of local commercial radio, *Radio Active*, prime among them the rising Angus Deayton (*Have I Got News for You*, >*One Foot in the Grave*). The title of KYTV was intended to suggest a brand of lubricant jelly commonly used as a sex aid.

THE LARRY SANDERS SHOW

USA 1992–8, 88+ x 30m, col HBO. HBO/Brillstein-Grey Productions. UK tx 1995– BBC2.

EXEC PR Brad Grey, Garry Shandling, Peter Tolan, Paul Simms. **PR** John Ziffren, Paul Simms. **DR** Various, including Todd Holland, Garry Shandling, Dennis Erdman, Paul Flaherty, Thomas Schlamme, Michael Lehman, John Riggi, Ken Kwapis. **WR** Various, including Garry Shandling, Peter Tolan,

Maya Forbes, Steve Levitan, Jon Vitti. CAST Larry Sanders Garry Shandling Artie (Arthur) Rip Torn Hank Kingsley Jeffrey Tambor Paula Janeane Garafalo Jeannie Sanders Megan Gallagher Phil Wally Ward Jerry Jerry Piven Beverly Penny Johnson Darlene Linda Doucett.

Spoof TV chat show. Modeled on David Letterman and Jerry Langford (the character played by Jerry Lewis in the movie *King of Comedy*), "host" Sanders oozed schmooze on screen and vitriol off, and paranoid ego all the while. A wincingly brilliant lampoon of its subject, with masterful performances by Garry Shandling (grown inestimably in comic maturity since *>It's Garry Shandling's Show*) in the title role; nuclear-powered Rip Torn as producer Artie; and Jeffrey Tambor as Sanders' second banana, the obsequious Hank "Hey Now" Kingsley (a character not a million miles from Johnny Carson's sidekick, Ed McMahon).

Viciousness, expletives, and arty overlapping conversations all ensured the program low ratings. However, those who liked it liked it, and happened to be the glitterati of the US screen trade. Robin Williams, Sharon Stone, Roseanne, Billy Crystal, David Duchovny, Jay Leno, and Letterman himself all appeared. In a proof positive that life and art are just the same, actress Linda Doucett (who played

Hank's comely assistant Darlene) was removed from the show when she ceased to be Shandling's girlfriend (to be replaced by Scott Thompson from the Canadian sitcom *Kids in the Hall*). Moreover, Shandling then hit his manager (and best friend) Brad Grey for a \$100 million lawsuit, because Grey had not given Shandling a cut of the profits from his other clients...

The Larry Sanders Show came to an end in 1998, with a running theme of the network trying to replace star Sanders, but not before humiliating him by making him hug his guests. Don't flip!

Among the classic *Sanders* are: "Broadcast Nudes" (in which Hugh Hefner and Hank want Darlene to pose for *Playboy*, but "very tasteful, no bush"); "Hank's Wedding"; "Hank's Sex Tapes"; and "Hank's Night in the Sun."

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

UK 1973–, 171 x 30m, 4 x 60m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Roy Clarke. **PR** James Gilbert, Bernard Thompson, Sydney Lotterby, Alan J. W. Bell. **DR** Various, including Bernard Thompson, Sydney Lotterby, Alan J. W. Bell. **WR** Roy Clarke. **CAST** William "Compo" Simmonite Bill Owen Norman "Cleggy" Clegg Peter Sallis Cyril Blamire Michael Bates Foggy Dewhurst Brian Wilde Seymour Utterthwaite Michael Aldridge Sid John Comer Ivy Jane Freeman Nora Batty Kathy Staff Wally Batty Joe Gladwin Wesley Pegden Gordon Wharmby Edie Pegden Thora Hird Eli Danny O'Dea Smiler Stephen Lewis Auntie Wainwright Jean Alexander. Video BBC.

» **Producer Artie to host Larry Sanders: "You're a talkshow animal... You're like one of those goddam creatures out of Greek mythology. Half man, half desk."**



Long, long-running sitcom (indeed, the world's longest-running sitcom) about three reprobate Yorkshire pensioners, developed from a 1973 *Comedy Playhouse* piece entitled "Of Funerals and Fish" by Roy Clarke (later >*Open All Hours*, *Rosie*, >*Keeping Up Appearances*). Filmed on location in Holmfirth, the show was novel in that it asked you to laugh with retirees, rather than at them (in this predating >*The Golden Girls* by a decade). The original terrible threesome were: unkempt Compo (Bill Owen, ex-lyricist for Ken Dodd); widower Norman "Cleggy" Clegg; and ex-Signals sergeant Blamire, with their adventures turning into misadventures either through Compo's delinquent behavior or Blamire's misplaced self-confidence. Over the passing seasons, Blamire (Michael Bates, also >*It Ain't Half Hot, Mum*, d. 1976) was replaced by another ex-army man, Foggy Dewhurst, then by retired teacher Seymour Utterthwaite, before Dewhurst returned. It was notable that, whatever the particular configuration of the three characters, their (essentially overgrown schoolboy) antics were always met with stone-faced disapproval by the village's womenfolk, especially Nora Batty (Compo's landlady and improbable object of desire, her wrinkly-stockinged legs like "a pair of Chinese lanterns") and café proprietor Ivy; underneath the

geriatric novelty of *Last of the Summer Wine* lurked the old stalwart of British TV comedy: the battle of the sexes. That and a sense of gentle, peculiarly English whimsy, with an almost exclamation mark-free humor built out of fond observation, character, and meandering conversation...

In 1988–90, a prequel, *First of the Summer Wine*, was aired on BBC1 (12 x 30m) featuring Compo, Cleggy, Utterthwaite, and Dewhurst in their pre-war Dales youth.

LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY

USA 1976–83, 178 x 25m, col ABC. Miller-Milkis/Henderson/Paramount TV. UK tx 1977–83 ITV.

CR Garry K. Marshall. **EXEC PR** Garry K. Marshall, Thomas L. Miller, Edward K. Milkis. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, Jay Sandrich, Howard Storm, Joel Zwick. **WR** Various, including Michael McKean, David L. Lander. **MUS** Norman Grimble and Charles Fox ("Making Our Dreams Come True" theme). **CAST** Laverne DeFazio Penny Marshall Shirley Feeney Cindy Williams Andrew "Squiggy" Squigman David L. Lander Lenny Kosnoski Michael McKean Carmine Ragusa Eddie Mekka Frank DeFazio Phil Foster Edna Babbish Betty Garrett

» **Clegg:** "We might all have been better off if the Wright brothers 'ad never got off the ground with an aeroplane."

Blamire: "There's always the atomic bomb."

Clegg: "I know. But if they'd had to drop it from a bicycle it might 'ave made them think a bit..."

A smash hit for America's ABC network and, like >*Mork and Mindy*, a spin-off from >*Happy Days*. In its original format the slapstick show concerned two feisty fifties girls, Laverne DeFazio and Shirley Feeney, who worked as bottle cappers at Milwaukee's Shotz Brewery and roomed together at 730 Hampton Street. After their dismissal from



the brewery in the 1980 season, the duo moved to California, where they hoped to break into the movies but instead ended up behind the counter of the Bardwell Department Store. They were accompanied in their move west by comic greaser neighbor-friends, Lenny (Michael McKean from *>Saturday Night Live*) and Squiggy (David L. Lander, aka David Landau), who took up the unlikely occupation of talent scouting for the movies. When a contract dispute forced actress Cindy Williams (born Cynthia Williams) to leave the show, her character married an army medic and

▲▲▲ *Laverne and Shirley* was one of two hit spin-offs from *Happy Days*: the other was *Mork and Mindy*.

moved overseas, so ending a long-running comedic worry about Shirley retaining her virginity in an increasingly permissive age. The more raucous Laverne (favorite drink: milk and Pepsi mixed) was left alone as a single gal wage-slaving for the Ajax Aerospace Company and hoping to find romance.

One of the few blue-collar sitcoms (and one of the very few to center on women), *Laverne and*

Shirley was created by Garry K. Marshall, who cast his sister Penny (previously >*The Bob Newhart Show*) in the role of Laverne. Penny Marshall – the sometime spouse of Rob Reiner from >*All in the Family* – later became a big-shot Hollywood director, helming such features as *Awakenings*, *Big*, *Jumping Jack Flash*, and *A League of their Own*.

Two cartoon versions of *Laverne and Shirley* were made by Hanna-Barbera, *Laverne and Shirley in the Army* (1981–2) and *Laverne and Shirley with the Fonzy* (1982–3).

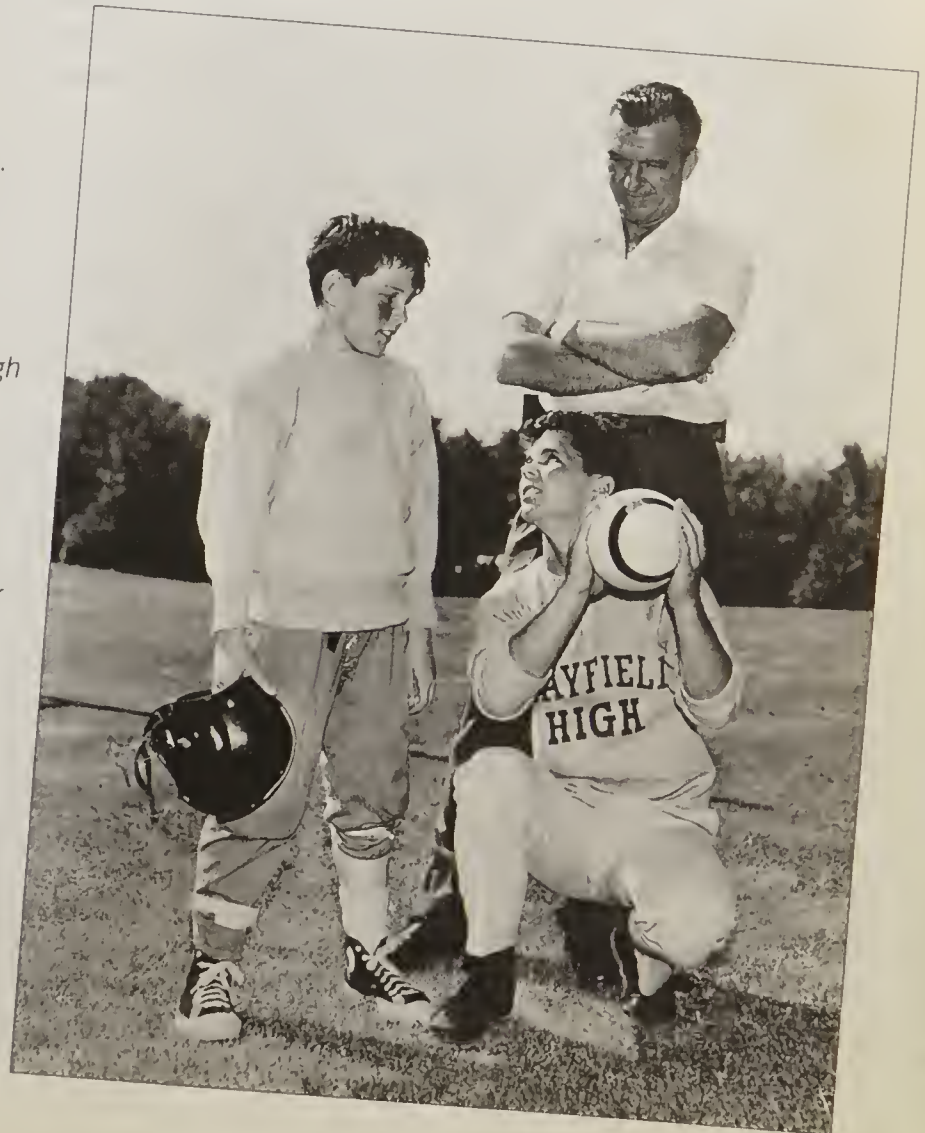
Long-running family sitcom – the first to deal with life from a kid’s point of view – set within the middle-class Cleaver household of 485 Maple Drive (later 211 Pine Street), Mayfield, U S of A. Kindly Ward and June Cleaver (a Mom always ready with neat hair and milk and cookies) were the perfect parents for offspring Theodore “Beaver” Cleaver – aged seven when the series began – and his older

▼▼ For family life from the kids’ point of view, Leave It To Beaver.

LEAVE IT TO BEAVER

USA 1957–63, 234 x 30m, bw CBS/ABC.
Gomalco Productions/Universal TV.

CR Bob Mosher, Joe Connelly. **PR** Harry Ackerman, Joe Connelly, Bob Mosher.
DR Various, including Norman Tokar, Hugh Beaumont. **WR** Various, including Joe Connelly, Bob Mosher, Dick Conway, Roland MacLane. **MUS** Dave Khan (theme), Melvin Lenard. **CAST** June Cleaver Barbara Billingsley Ward Cleaver Hugh Beaumont Theodore “Beaver” Cleaver Jerry Mathers Wally Cleaver Tony Dow Eddie Haskell Ken Osmond Miss Canfield Diane Brewster Miss Landers Sue Randall Larry Mondello Rusty Stevens Whitey Whitney Stanley Fafara Clarence “Lumpy” Rutherford Frank Bank Mr. Fred Rutherford Richard Deacon Gilbert Bates Stephen Talbot.



brother Wally, aged twelve. Larry, Whitey, and Gilbert were Beaver's pals, and Wally's buddies were Clarence "Lumpy" Rutherford (whose father Fred was Ward's boss) and the unctuous Eddie Haskell – sycophant to adults, bully to rugrats, and probably the first really nasty kid on TV. Miss Canfield and Miss Landers were Beaver's schoolteachers.

Beaver was a typically rambunctious youth, more interested in pet frogs than in girls, while Wally was beginning to discover that there were other things in life than pets'n'toys, and the show's storylines dwelt on the good-natured tiffs between the siblings and their necessary chidings from their ever-loving elders. Over the six years that the show ran, the stories gradually moved away from the little boy premise until, in the final season, Beaver was about to enter his teens and Wally was ready for college. Yet, throughout, Beaver and Wally and their assorted buddies were reassuringly, believably real, unlike the saccharine goody-two-shoes who infested most family sitcoms in the late fifties (a time when the genre was in full spate, a reflection of the baby boom, with Danny Thomas, *>Father Knows Best*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *The Real McCoys*, and *Dennis the Menace* all on the air).

Leave It To Beaver premiered on CBS in October 1957 and moved to ABC a year later. In the 1957 pilot, Ward Cleaver was played by Casey Adams, Wally by Paul Sullivan, and "Frankie" (an Eddie Haskell-like brat) by Harry Shearer, later a regular on *>Saturday Night Live*. Creators Mosher and Connelly had written together since 1942 on over 1,500 *>Amos'n'Andy* radio and TV scripts. They went on to create *>The Munsters*, but left some of



June Cleaver: "*Ward, Wally's best friend is Eddie Haskell and yours is Fred Rutherford. What's wrong with this family?*"

Ward: "*Can I help it if both Wally and I are humanitarians?*"

June: "*Oh, you have a girl, Eddie?*"

Eddie Haskell: "*Oh, yes. She goes away to boarding school. My father says that's a pretty good sign her family has money. My father says you shouldn't waste time with people who don't count.*"

June: "*Well, it's nice of you to come over anyway, Eddie.*"



their best dialogue back in suburban Mayfield.

Twenty years after *Leave It To Beaver* ended its original run, the Cleaver family, played by virtually all the original cast, were reunited in a TV movie, *Still the Beaver* (1983). Beaver was now thirty-three, grossly overweight, out of work, and undergoing a divorce, and was having trouble communicating with his two young sons. Wally was a successful attorney but had troubles at home, while Eddie Haskell was a crooked contractor. Dad was no longer around (actor Hugh Beaumont had died) and wife June made regular trips to his grave to ask advice. Viewers apparently wanted more, and so a series, *Still the Beaver*, ran on the Disney Channel, 1985–6, followed by *The New Leave It To Beaver* in 1986 on WTBS. The original *Leave It To Beaver* remains one of the most popular reruns in America.

Beaver trivia: Ken Osmond, who played Eddie Haskell, later joined the LAPD and was awarded a medal for valor; June's maiden name was Bronson;

Hugh Beaumont was an active Methodist lay preacher; the schools Wally and Beaver attended were Mayfield High School and Grant Avenue Grammar School; the place where they played ball was Metzger's Field; actress Barbara Billingsley always wore a string of pearls around her neck, because she was self-conscious about a deep wrinkle that looked like a scar.

THE LENNY HENRY SHOW

UK 1984–8, 36 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV/Crucial Films.

CR Lenny Henry, Stan Hey, Andrew Nickolds. **PR** Geoff Posner, Geoff Atkinson. **DR** Various, including Juliet May. **WR** Lenny Henry, Andrew Nickolds, Stan Hey. **CAST** Lenny Henry, with Vas Blackwood, Gina McKee, Ellen Thomas, Pip Torrens, Naim Khan, Nimmy March, Michael Mears, Malcolm Rennie.

Showcase for talents of black British comedian Lenny Henry. Over the seasons it changed humorous hue, as Henry flirted with formats (stand-up, sketches, sitcom), although a constant was his talent for developing broad comic caricatures, such as P. C. Ganga, drag queen Deeva, Jamaican pensioner Deakus, Reverend Nat West, and, especially, testosteroned crooner Theophilus P. Wildebeest. (In an immortal gag, Wildebeest once asked a female member of the audience, "Do you have any African in you? Do you want some?") For the 1987–8 season, the show was entirely given over to a twelve-episode sitcom built around Henry's egotistical D. J., Delbert Wilkins, who ran a

pirate radio station in London – the Brixton Broadcasting Corporation. He was assisted in this by his more responsible chum, Winston (Vas Blackwood). "Crucial."

A former winner of talent program *New Faces*, Henry (born Lenworth Henry, 1958) got his screen break on the Saturday morning kiddie classic *Tiswas*, then joined the cast of the all-black, South London-set sitcom *The Fosters* in 1976. Skit show *Three of a Kind*, with Tracey Ullman and David Copperfield, followed in 1981, then an ill-advised sojourn on *OTT*, Central's much-panned adult version of *Tiswas*. Three years later Henry switched to the BBC with his own *Show*, by which time exposure to the alternative comedy scene (not least because Henry had married >Comic Strip actress Dawn French) had moved Henry towards a more radical humor, less dependent on the clubland-type gags he started out with. More recently (1994–), Henry led the restaurant sitcom *Chef!*, in which he played temperamental meistercook Gareth Blackstock.

THE LIFE OF RILEY

USA 1949–50, 20 x 30m, bw DuMont, 1953–8, 90 x 30m, bw NBC. UK tx 1959–60 ITV.

PR Andy Potter, Irving Brecher, Tom McNight. **CAST** Chester A. Riley Jackie Gleason/William Bendix (1953–8) Peg Riley Rosemary DeCamp/Marjorie Reynolds (1953–8) Junior Lanny Rees/Wesley Morgan (1953–8) Babs Gloria Winters/Lugene Sanders (1953–8) Jim Gillis Sid Tomack/Tom D'Andrea Honeybee Gillis Gloria Blondell (1953–8) Digby "Digger" O'Dell John Brown.

Misadventures of Chester A. Riley, a none-too-bright aircraft riveter who lived at 113 Blue View Terrace, Los Angeles, where he opined from his armchair on the world's problems and interfered in family life – with chaotic results. Long-suffering wife Peg and children Junior and Babs were left to sort out the comic mess. Also seen were Riley's gravedigger friend Digby O'Dell ("Guess I'd better be shoveling off") and sardonic friend Jim Gillis.

The Life of Riley was the prototypical sitcom of the Bumbling Dad sort, and starred Jackie Gleason in its début 1949 season. Although Gleason's interpretation of the radio favorite secured the show an Emmy, it did not catch on with Joe Audience and the show was canceled. (Gleason went on to >*The Honeymooners*.) When it was revived three years later, Riley was played by William Bendix – the actor who had played Riley on radio. In this form it enjoyed a five-year run. Riley's catchphrase was: "What a revoltin' development this is!"

A 1948 pilot episode had featured yet another actor as Riley, Herb Vigran, later a stalwart on >*The Jack Benny Show*.

LIFE WITH FATHER

USA 1953–5, 26 x 25m, bw CBS. McCadden. UK tx 1963 ITV.

PR Ben Feiner, Fletcher Markle. **CAST** Clarence Day, Sr. Leon Ames Vinnie Day (wife) Lurene Tuttle Clarence Day, Jr. Ralph Reed/Steven Terrell Whitney Day Ronald Keith/B. G. Norman/Freddy Ridgeway Harlan Day Harvey Grant John Day Freddie Leiston/Malcolm Cassell Margaret Dorothy Bernard.

Domestic sitcom based on the popular book, play, and film by Clarence Day. Set in 1880s New York, it chronicled the misadventures of the upper-middle-class Day family, as ruled over by their stubbornly Victorian pater.

Likeable early evening fare, with convincing period atmosphere, and notable for being the first live color show made in Hollywood for US network TV. The part of Day senior was taken by veteran character actor Leon Ames (born Leon Waycoff), shortly to star in another sitcom, >*Mister Ed*. Ames was the winner, in 1981, of a lifetime achievement award from the Screen Actors Guild. Meanwhile, further down the cast list, actress Marion Ross, later Mrs. Cunningham in >*Happy Days*, was to be found as the maid, Nora.

THE LIKELY LADS

UK 1965–9, 26 x 30m, bw/col BBC2/BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement. **PR** Dick Clement. **WR** Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement. **MUS** Ronnie Hazlehurst. **CAST** Terry Collier James Bolam Bob Ferris Rodney Bewes Audrey (Terry's sister) Sheila Fern.

A sitcom which arose out of a sketch Dick Clement wrote with friend Ian La Frenais for the exam part of his BBC directors course. Set in the Northeast of England, it concerned two young electrical workers, Terry Collier (ex-trainee chartered accountant James Bolam, *When the Boat Comes In*, *Only When I Laugh*) and Bob Ferris (Rodney Bewes, *Dear Mother*, *Love Albert*), who



▲▲▲ Rodney Bewes (left) and James Bolam as The Likely Lads brewing up trouble and bitter laughs over a pint of beer.

were markedly different in character and attitudes, particularly towards the class system. Terry was brash, aggressive, only interested in girls, and resigned to his proletarian station in life. Bob was Terry's alter ego: diffident, cautious, scared of authority (particularly if it had a posh accent), and almost pitiful in his belief that he could escape the

class trap if he only worked hard enough. (It was not difficult to see the show as a critique of the supposed social mobility of the swinging sixties.) Despite their over-a-pint philosophizing, each would view the other's approach with leaden dismay. Not least because their escapades, usually originated by Terry, always ended in tears.

In 1973, Terry and Bob were brought back for a revival, *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?* (BBC1, 1973–4, 47 x 30m). Unusually for a sequel, this was as well written and acted as the original

and, if anything, even sharper on the foibles of the class system. Here the ill-fated pair were four years older, with Terry having spent the intervening time in the army and a failed marriage. Bob, meanwhile, had risen up the career ladder to a white-collar job and become engaged to the boss's pushy daughter, the frightening Thelma (Brigit Forsyth). Bob had also bought a house of his own and taken to holidays on the Costa Brava and meals in restaurants. Terry's attack on such bourgeois delusions was remorseless. There was also a touching vein of social commentary on the bewildering changes to the industrial Northeast during the seventies.

With the end of the TV run (by which time Bob and Thelma had married), the misadventures of Bob and Terry continued in a 1975 radio version, then a 1976 feature film, *The Likely Lads*.

A LITTLE BIT OF WISDOM

UK 1974–6, 7 x 25m, col (1976 season) ITV. ATV.

PR Les Chatfield. **WR** Lew Schwarz, John Kane, Jon Watkins, Ronnie Taylor. **CAST** Norman Wisdom himself Albert Clark Robert Keegan Linda Clark Frances White Alec Potter Neil McCarthy.

A hot star after the success of the 1953 movie *Trouble in Store*, the “gump”-suited, peaked-capped Norman Wisdom became a regular fixture on the small screen in such variety-oriented shows as *It's Norman* (1953), and *The Norman Wisdom Show* (BBC, 1956). Wisdom also tried his hand at the sitcom in *Norman* (ITV, 1970), *Nobody is*

Norman Wisdom (ITV, 1973), and the last season of *A Little Bit of Wisdom* (the first two seasons presented nonlinked playlets). In this seven-week stint, Wisdom was given a permanent job as a clerk in a builder's office, where he caused slapstick mayhem between blushes at the boss's daughter. It persuaded 7.8 million viewers to tune in.

Thereafter, Wisdom largely disappeared from the British screen, although he continued to be a superstar in the Stalinist country of Albania, where he was dictator Enver Hoxha's favorite artiste.

THE LIVER BIRDS

UK 1969–78, 79 x 30m, bw/col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Carla Lane, Myra Taylor, Lew Schwarz. **PR** Sydney Lotterby, Douglas Argent, Roger Race. **DR** Ray Butt, Bernard Thompson, Douglas Argent. **WR** Carla Lane, Myra Taylor, Lew Schwarz. **MUS** *The Scaffold* (theme), Ronnie Hazlehurst. **CAST** Beryl Hennessey Polly James Dawn Pauline Collins Sandra Hutchinson Nerys Hughes Mrs. Hutchinson Mollie Sugden Carol Boswell Elizabeth Estensen Mrs. Boswell Eileen Kennally/Carmel McSharry Lucien Boswell Michael Angelis Paul John Nettles Robert Jonathan Lynn Derek Paynton Tom Chadbon.

Classic flatshare sitcom, usually attributed to Carla Lane alone, but in fact created with fellow housewife Myra Taylor and veteran screen scribe Lew Schwarz. It began as a 1969 *Comedy Playhouse* one-off, before going into a series of three episodes later the same year. In these episodes the two “Birds” sharing the poky studio

apartment in Huskisson Road, Liverpool, were Pauline Collins' prim Dawn and Polly James' raucous Beryl; but James and Collins never rapported, and in January 1971 when the show went into full production, Nerys Hughes arrived to play the diffident, socially aspirant Sandra – the perfect foil. The Birds then set forth on a season of “likely girl,” fella-chasing misadventures around

▼▼ *Beryl (left) and Sandra were the apartment-sharing Liver Birds.*

Merseyside, the perfect beat for their chirpy antics. By the third season, however, Lane had gone solo as writer (though the BBC brought in, bizarrely enough, >Monty Python's Eric Idle to act as her script editor), and she began to introduce the undertone of lonesome tragicomedy which would prove her TV trademark. Accordingly, the Birds, though they continued to room together, began to have separate lives: Sandra began a steady relationship with Paul (a pre-Bergerac John Nettles) and in 1974, on the same day as Princess Anne's



wedding, Beryl married Robert (played by Jonathan Lynn, previously >*Doctor in the House*, later the cowriter of >*Yes, Minister*) and left the series. Her successor was Carol Boswell, who wore multicolored jumpsuits and red hair, and had a morose brother called Lucien, whose hobby of rabbit keeping led to the catchphrase, "It's me rabbits..." (The show's other catchphrase was the durable, "You dancing?"/"You asking?" from the Scaffold's theme lyric.) Carol's Catholic, gin-swilling Ma, meanwhile, became the prototype for *Bread*'s Nellie Boswell, down to the shared surname. The series ended with Sandra finding a suitable match in vet Derek. It was 1978 and the days of the freewheeling *Liver Birds* were over.

A 1996 revival (produced by Philip Kampff) only proved the point. Here Nerys Hughes and Polly James played their original characters as older, but not necessarily wiser. Shorn of their youth and original social context, they were tragic, certainly, but not at all comic.

THE LOVERS

UK 1970–1, 14 x 30m, col ITV. Granada.

CR Jack Rosenthal. **PR** Jack Rosenthal, Les Chatfield. **DR** Michael Apted. **WR** Jack Rosenthal, Geoffrey Lancashire. **MUS** Derek Hilton (theme). **CAST** Geoffrey ("Bubbles Bon Bon") Richard Beckinsale Beryl Paula Wilcox Mum (Beryl's) Joan Scott Roland Robin Nedwell.

Jack Rosenthal sitcom in which Paula Wilcox sought to preserve her virginity on the sitting

room sofa against the desperate advances of Richard Beckinsale (later >*Rising Damp*, >*Porridge*), who was trying to lose his. To this end, Beckinsale's gauche Geoffrey, a Manchester bank clerk, agreed to a trial marriage, even a real engagement. All to no avail. (The trial marriage plot looked hopeful, until the scheming Beryl brought along a chaperone.) The series reached number three in the BARB ratings in 1971.

Dated, but funny. A big-screen version, with Wilcox still resisting "Percy Filth," was released by British Lion in 1972. Wilcox virtually reprised her frigid role in >*Man About the House*.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

UK 1972–6, 40 x 25m, col ITV. Thames TV.

CR Harry Driver and Vince Powell. **PR** Ronnie Baxter, Stuart Allen, Anthony Parker. **DR** Stuart Allen, Ronnie Baxter. **WR** Various, including Harry Driver and Vince Powell, Johnnie Mortimer, Sid Colin, Lawrie Wyman and George Evans. **CAST** Eddie Booth Jack Smethurst Joan Booth Kate Williams Barbie Reynolds Nina Baden-Semper Bill Reynolds Rudolph Walker Arthur Tommy Godfrey Jacko Jackson Keith Marsh Nobby Garside Paul Luty. Video BRAVE/SMO.

One of the first British comedies to deal exclusively with the subject of race relations, placing bigoted white trade unionist Eddie Booth and wife next door to black couple Bill and Barbie Reynolds. Eddie, whose aim in life was to preserve "our white heritage," called his neighbor "Sambo"

and “nig-nog”; in turn, Bill called him “snowflake” and “honky.” Much of the bickering took place at the workers’ social club, where Eddie was supported by cronies Jacko, Arthur, and Nobby. To add another element of conflict, Eddie was a socialist and Bill a Tory. Meanwhile, as is so often the case in sitcomland, the two wives got on like a house on fire.

Cocreator Vince Powell claimed that the intention behind the show’s trade in racist epithets was to “take the sting out of them, and make them less hurtful.” Whatever, it was never very funny, but its novel subject matter kept it high in the ratings, frequently in top position, for five years. If politically unsophisticated, it at least got two black characters into a prime-time British comedy and almost certainly paved the way for Britain’s first all-black comedy series, *The Fosters* (1976–7, LWT, starring Norman Beaton, Lenny Henry, and Carmen Munroe).

In 1973, a feature film version of *Love Thy Neighbour* (by EMI and Hammer) was released on a suspecting public in the UK, while in the USA an attempt to repeat the show’s success, also called *Love Thy Neighbor* (starring Ron Masak and Harrison Page, and set in San Fernando), lasted a lone season on ABC.

Writers Vince Powell and Harry Driver began their careers as a comedy duo, but turned to scriptwriting when Driver contracted polio. Their shows include *>George and the Dragon*; *>Never Mind the Quality, Feel the Width*; *For the Love of Ada*; *Spring and Autumn*; and *Nearest and Dearest*. They jointly contributed to *Harry Worth* and *>Bless This House*, while Driver alone was a regular storyliner for sudster *Coronation Street*.

MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE

UK 1973–6, 39 x 25m, col ITV. Thames TV.

CR Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **PR** Peter Frazer-Jones. **WR** Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **CAST** Chrissy Plummer Paula Wilcox Jo Sally Thomsett Robin Tripp Richard O’Sullivan George Roper Brian Murphy Mildred Roper Yootha Joyce.

Popular Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke sitcom about two chicks (prissy Chrissy, dumb blond Jo) who inadvertently ended up sharing their Earls Court flat with a guy (student chef Robin). Since, in the seventies, mixed-sex households were considered risqué, there resulted lots of “whoops-I-didn’t-know-you-were-in-the-bath” gags and hiding from visiting old-fashioned mums.

The trio’s basement-living, mean-minded landlord and his sex-starved wife were eventually spun off to their own show, *>George and Mildred*, while Robin (played by Richard O’Sullivan from the *>Doctor in the House* cycle) went on to culinary disasters in *>Robin’s Nest*. Actress Paula Wilcox, who in playing Chrissy virtually reprised her Beryl character from *>The Lovers*, moved on to another mildly risqué seventies sitcom, *Miss Jones and Son* (1977–8, 12 x 30m col, created by Richard Waring), in which she played a single mother.

A feature film version of *Man About the House* was released by Hammer/EMI in 1974, and the format sold to America as *Three’s Company*. Broadcast on ABC, 1977–84, it starred John Ritter, Joyce DeWitt, Suzanne Somers, Audra Lindley, and Norman Fell. Ray Charles and Julia Rinker sang the theme song.

THE MANY LOVES OF DOBIE GILLIS (AKA DOBIE GILLIS)

USA 1959–63, 147 x 30m, bw CBS. CBS/20th Century Fox.

CR Max Shulman. **EXEC PR** Martin Manulis. **DR** Various, including Rod Amateau, Stanley Z. Cherry, Guy Scarpitta. **WR** Various, including Max Shulman, Joel Kane, Bud Nye, Arnold Horwitt. **MUS** Lionel Newman. **CAST** Dobie Gillis Dwayne Hickman Maynard G. Krebs Bob Denver Herbert T. Gillis Frank Faylen Winifred “Winnie” Gillis Florida Friebus Thalia Menninger Tuesday Weld Zelda Gilroy Sheila James Milton Armitage Warren Beatty Davey Gillis Darryl Hickman Chatsworth Osborne Jr. Steve Franken Clarice Armitage/Mrs. Chatsworth Osborne Sr. Doris Packer Jerome Krens Michael J. Pollard.

Dobie Gillis was the quintessential American fifties teenager, with an eye for money, beautiful cars, and girls. Unfortunately, his romantic aspirations were somewhat hampered by his background – he was the grocer’s son. One bane of his life was plain but brainy Zelda, who wanted to snare him; another was handsome Milton Armitage (Warren Beatty in one of his earliest screen roles), who rivaled him for the attentions of the girl he dreamed of, snobbish Thalia Menninger. Meanwhile, Dobie and goatee-bearded beatnik buddy Maynard (“work!?!”) tried to ease through life with a minimum of effort, all the while pondering their futures. In an attempt to “find themselves,” Dobie and Maynard (who was played by Bob Denver, later >*Gilligan’s Island*) enlisted in the army

in the 1961 season but, not finding this to their liking, left for the easier pastures of St. Peter Prior Junior College, where they remained until the last episode in 1963. The characters were developed from the stories of humorist Max Shulman.

In May 1977, CBS aired a pilot for an intended revival show, *Whatever Happened to Dobie Gillis?* This found the fortysomething Dobie Gillis married to... Zelda. He was also a partner in the family grocery shop. Maynard, still a beatnik, came back to visit. The new series never happened, but there was another reunion, *Bring Me the Head of Dobie Gillis*, in 1988.

MARRIED... WITH CHILDREN

USA 1987–97, 259 x 30m, col Fox. Columbia Pictures TV/ELP Communications/Leavitt Productions. UK tx 1990– ITV/Sky1.

CR Michael G. Moyer, Ron Leavitt. **EXEC PR** Michael G. Moyer, Ron Leavitt, Katherine Green, Richard Gurman, Kim Weiskopf. **PR** John Maxwell Anderson, Sandy Sprung, Marcy Vosburgh, Kevin Curran, Barbara Blachot Cramer, Stacie Lipp. **DR** Various, including Linda Day, Tony Singletary, Amanda Bearse, Gerry Cohen, Sam W. Orender. **WR** Various, including Michael G. Moyer and Ron Leavitt, Sandy Sprung and Marcy Vosburgh, Jerry Perzigian, Ralph R. Farquhar. **CAST** Al Bundy Ed O’Neill Peggy Bundy Katey Sagal Kelly Bundy Christina Applegate Bud Bundy David Faustino Steve Rhoades David Garrison Marcy Rhoades D’Arcy Amanda Bearse Jefferson D’Arcy Ted McGinley Buck the Dog Buck.

Like >*Roseanne* and >*The Simpsons*, a domestic comedy which kicked against TV's idealized portrait of the US suburban family – only more so. Centering on the bickering, white-trash Bundy household of Chicago, the show featured Al, a former high school football star turned salesman for Gary's Shoe Accessory, and his couch potato wife, Peg. Their quarrels were invariably about sexual dissatisfaction, particularly her too frequent amorous advances. This left Al – who much preferred reading about it to doing it – to peruse his favorite reading matter, *Playboy* and *Big 'Uns*, and Peg to go off shopping at the mall. Their children were equally unwholesome; daughter Kelly spent her evenings leaving heel prints on the headlining of assorted boyfriends' cars, while girlfriendless son Bud enjoyed the company of a blow-up doll. The Bundys were also notably keen on violence, with Al once telling a court that a burglar “broke into my house, so I broke into his face.” Steve and Marcy were their neighbors.

Political correctness small. Comic popularity big. *Married... with Children* was one of America's longest-running sitcoms.

MARTY

UK 1968–9, 12 x 30m, bw BBC2. BBC TV.

PR Dennis Main Wilson, Roger Race, Michael Mills.
WR Marty Feldman, Barry Took, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, Philip Jenkinson, Donald Webster. **CAST** Marty Feldman, Tim Brooke-Taylor, John Junkin, Mary Miller.

For so long the backroom scribbler and third banana, bug-eyed Marty Feldman finally got a show of his own, with this late-evening BBC2 shot. There was plenty of offbeat visual gagging – most of the future >*Monty Python* team were contributing scripts – and studio tomfoolery; unfortunately, the cautious Corporation decided to temper this with such middle-England guests as *The Black and White Minstrel Show*. Of course, with something for everyone, the show could hardly fail. And didn't: it was quickly repeated on BBC1, where it reached number four in the ratings. *The Marty Feldman Comedy Machine* (ATV, 1971–2, with Spike Milligan) and *Marty Back Together Again* (BBC1, 1974) followed for TV, before Feldman decamped to Hollywood and the Mel Brooks movies, *Young Frankenstein* and *Silent Movie*, that would bring him international renown.

Feldman, who was the brother of actress Fenella Fielding, died in Mexico City in 1982.

THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

USA 1970–7, 120 x 25m, col CBS. MTM Enterprises Inc. Production. UK tx 1972–5 BBC1.

CR James L. Brooks, Allan Burns. **PR** James L. Brooks, Allan Burns, David Davis, Stan Daniels, Ed Weinberger. **DR** Jay Sandrich, Marjorie Mullen, James Burrows, Harry Mastrogeorge, Mel Ferber, Doug Rogers. **WR** Various, including James L. Brooks, Allan Burns, Treva Silverman, Ed Weinberger, Stan Daniels, David Lloyd, Bob Ellison. **MUS** Sonny Curtis (“Love Is All Around” theme lyrics,



vocals), Pat Williams. **CAST** Mary Richards Mary Tyler Moore Lou Grant Ed Asner Ted Baxter Ted Knight Murray Slaughter Gavin McCleod Rhoda Morgenstern Valerie Harper Phyllis Lindstrom Cloris Leachman Georgette Franklin Georgia Engel Sue Anne Nivens Betty White.

After success in *>The Dick Van Dyke Show*, Mary Tyler Moore spent several years in an ill-fated attempt to emulate Ginger Rogers before starring in

◀◀◀ The cast of the Emmy-laden *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

this show about Mary Richards, a career-girl-about-Minneapolis-town, who worked in the newsroom of TV station WJM-TV. The character represented a breakthrough in TV comedy history since she was, along with Marlo Thomas' Anne Marie in *That Girl* (1966–71), one of the first small-screen women to be single by choice. Moreover, her sheer urbanity was a conscious attempt to win back younger city-dwellers to the CBS network after a decade of rural farce.

At WJM-TV, Richards' boss was irascible but gold-hearted Lou Grant ("Oh! Mr Grant!" Richards was to exclaim on many an occasion); Murray Slaughter was the sarcastic head newscaster, and Ted Baxter the obtuse anchorman. Sue Anne Nivens (Betty White, *>The Golden Girls*) was the hostess of the station's *Happy Homemaker* show. While many of the laughs in this polished and realistic series – the dialogue in *TMTMS* was probably more natural than in any comedy to that date – came from the workplace situation, it also (like *The Dick Van Dyke Show*) focused on the main character's home life. Those featured on the domestic set included Richards' best friend, window dresser Rhoda Morgenstern, and busybody apartment neighbor Phyllis Lindstrom.

The show was created by James L. Brooks (later *>Taxi*, *>The Simpsons*) and Allan Burns, and

Oh! Mr. Grant ▶

developed for television by Moore and her husband, Grant Tinker, via their company Mary Tyler Moore Productions. Subsequently, MTM became one of the main independent production companies in Hollywood, issuing such hits as *Hill Street Blues* and *Remington Steele*.

For many fans and critics alike, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* represents the moment that the sitcom achieved the status of art. Over the show's seven-year run, it won a record twenty-seven Emmys, including Outstanding Comedy Emmys in 1975, 1976, and 1977. Among the Emmy awards was a 1976 Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series Emmy for the last, highly emotional episode, "The Final Show." In this, WJM-TV was taken over by a new owner who sacked all the staff – except Ted.

There was a bonanza of spin-off shows. They were: *>Rhoda*, *Lou Grant*, *The Betty White Show*, *The Love Boat*, and *Phyllis*.

THE MARY WHITEHOUSE EXPERIENCE

UK 1990–2, 13 x 30m, col. *Spitting Image* Productions/BBC TV.

CR Rob Newman, David Baddiel. **PR** Marcus Mortimer. **WR** Rob Newman, David Baddiel, Steve Punt, Hugh Dennis. **CAST** Rob Newman, David Baddiel, Steve Punt, Hugh Dennis.

Transfer to TV of the alternative(ish) radio comedy show of the same name, unusual for its alternating (at a frenetic three-minute-culture pace) between stand-up and sketches. Irreverent and

controversial – its name was an ironic reference to British TV's moral watchdog, Mary Whitehouse of the Viewers and Listeners Association – the *Experience* comprised writing-performing teams of Steve Punt and bishop's son Hugh Dennis (both previously *>Carrott's Lib*), and David Baddiel and Rob Newman. At a time when nearly all the other British rock'n'roll nineties comedians were appearing on Channel 4, the *Experience* proved a blush-saver for the BBC, so long the home of cutting edge TV humor.

The "fab four of TV comedy," as the BBC billed them, returned to TV in various permutations and projects, including *Newman and Baddiel in Pieces*, *Stab in the Dark*, and *The Imaginatively Titled Third Punt and Dennis Show*; but only Baddiel's 1994 *Fantasy Football League* really scored. A laddish late-night mix of soccer trivia and humor, epitomized by the "Phoenix from the Flames" recreations of great football moments, this was hosted by Baddiel with Frank Skinner from *Blue Heaven* and *Packet of Three*, his flatmate in real life.

M*A*S*H

USA 1972–83, 1 x 15m, 250 x 30m, col CBS. 20th Century Fox. UK tx 1973–84.

CR Larry Gelbart. **EXEC PR** Larry Gelbart, Gene Reynolds. **PR** Various, including Don Reo, Burt Metcalfe, Gene Reynolds. **DR** Various, including Larry Gelbart, Charles S. Dubin, Don Weis, Gene Reynolds, Jackie Cooper, Burt Metcalfe, Alan Alda, Harry Morgan, Joan Darling, Hy Averback. **WR** Various, including Larry Gelbart, Alan Alda,

Glen Charles, Les Charles, Jim Fritzell, Everett Greenbaum, Den Wilcox, Thad Mumford.

MUS Johnny Mandel (*"Suicide is Painless" theme music*), Mark Altman (*theme lyrics*). **CAST** Capt. Benjamin Franklin "Hawkeye" Pierce *Alan Alda* Capt. "Trapper John" McIntyre *Wayne Rogers* Maj. Margaret "Hotlips" Houlihan *Loretta Swit* Cpl. Maxwell Klinger *Jamie Farr* Lt. Col. Henry Blake *McLean Stevenson* Maj. Frank Burns *Larry Linville* Capt. B. J. Hunnicutt *Mike Farrell* Cpl. Walter "Radar" O'Reilly *Gary Burghoff* Maj. Charles Emerson Winchester III *David Ogden Stiers* Col. Sherman Potter *Harry Morgan* Father Francis Mulcahy *George Morgan/William Christopher*.



***Through early morning fog I see
visions of the things to be
the pains that are withheld for me
I realise and I can see...
... that suicide is painless
It brings on many changes
and I can take or leave it if I please.***



Developed from Robert Altman's 1970 hit movie about the misadventures of a weary MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) during the Korean War, this show was the unlikeliest hit comedy of the seventies. Not only did it satirize war at a time when the US was losing the Vietnam conflict, it also foregrounded such taboo TV subjects as interracial marriage, adultery, and homosexuality. On its side it had witty, skillful writers and a likeable collection of oddball characters, notably sensitive-but-cynical surgeon Hawkeye Pierce; Trapper John; head nurse

Major "Hotlips" Houlihan (who, though censorious about other people's morals, was having an affair with Frank Burns, the most incompetent surgeon in the unit); telepathic clerk Radar; and transvestite theater assistant Klinger (played by Jamie Farr, the only one of the cast to have served in Korea). Commanding officer Henry Blake ignored all antics as long as his doctors performed in the operating room. Though humorous, the show did not avoid the explicit physical and emotional details of war. In a key episode, "Sometimes You Hear the Bullet," a friend of Hawkeye's died on the operating table, much to the network's nervousness. The series had high production values, was shot on film, had a top-grade set (left over from Altman's movie), and, rare for prime-time TV, allowed the cast adequate rehearsal time. There was also a constant, but unselfconscious, sense of inventiveness, most notable in "The Interview," a black-and-white episode which viewed events as if through a TV documentary lens.

In 1976, the show's original writer, Larry Gelbart, left, partly because he was worn out battling with studio executives over the controversial storylines. ("War is hell," commented Gelbart. "So is TV.") Thereupon Alan Alda took over as the show's creative consultant, and as one of its principal writers and directors. His Hawkeye character became more and more central to the events at the 4077th, causing actor Wayne Rogers to quit for his own spin-off show, *Trapper John, M. D.* At the end of the third season, McLean Stevenson also

►► ***There is never likely to be a more unlikely hit comedy than MASH.***



departed the unit, his Colonel Blake character – shattering for the audience – being shot down on his return to the USA (the “Abyssinia, Henry” episode). Their places were taken by Mike Farrell (as B. J., Hawkeye’s chief conspirator in skewering military pretensions) and ex-*Dragnet* and ex-*Naked City* star Harry Morgan (as Colonel Potter, a man with a fine creative line in slang, viz. “busload of bushwah”). At the beginning of the 1977–8 season, David Ogden Stiers joined up as aristocratic Bostonian Charles Emerson Winchester, to replace Larry Linville’s Burns as the 4077th’s arch-pain in the butt. (Burns, as the storyline had it, had gone AWOL because Hoolihan had thrown him over for Lt. Col. Penobscott.)

Under Alda’s tutelage, the show came to rely for its humor on the irreverent wisecracking banter between the characters, with fewer banana-skin pratfalls. It also developed a strong vein of sentimentality, with Hawkeye becoming a “saint in surgical garb.” In 1983, having earned fourteen Emmys, *M*A*S*H* bowed out with a two-and-half-hour special, “Good-bye, Farewell and Amen” – to that date the most watched TV program in history. With the signing of the armistice, the medics bid their final adieus, with Hawkeye and B. J. delivering their first and only salute to Colonel Potter. As Alda claimed rightly, “We came to tell jokes, and stayed to touch the edges of art.”

Ironically, the one man on record as not liking the TV *M*A*S*H* was a certain Richard Hornberger. Under the pseudonym Richard Hooker, he wrote the original *M*A*S*H* novel. He was a conservative Republican, and would not watch the TV version because of its liberal sensibilities.

A sequel, *AfterMASH* (1983–4), presented Potter, Klinger, and Father Francis Mulcahy adjusting to civilian life at General Pershing’s Veteran’s Administration Hospital in River Bend, Missouri.

» ... 'cause suicide is painless
it brings on many changes
and I can take or leave it if I please...
... and you can do the same
thing if you choose.



MAUDE

USA 1972–8, 140 x 30m, col CBS. Tandem Productions. UK tx 1976 ITV.

PR Norman Lear. **DR** Various, including Hal Cooper, Tony Csiki. **CAST** Maude Findlay Bea Arthur Walter Findlay Bill Macy Carol Adrienne Barbeau Philip Brian Morrison/Kraig Metzinger Dr. Arthur Harmon Conrad Bain Vivian Cavender Harmon Rue McClanahan Florida Evans Esther Rolle Henry Evans John Amos Mrs. Nell Naugatuck Herminone Baddeley Victoria Butterfield Marlene Warfield.

Controversial spin-off from *>All in the Family*, centering on Archie Bunker’s upper-middle-class cousin-in-law, Maude Findlay, from the suburb of Tuckahoe, N. Y. There she lived with fourth husband Walter, the alcoholic owner of Findlay’s Friendly Appliances, divorced daughter Carol, and nine-year-old-son Philip.

Whereas Bunker caused critical heat for his blue-collar bigotry, Maude did the same by being

too pro-Women's Lib. In one episode she had an abortion, and in another she was treated for manic depression, in another she called Walter "a son of a bitch." In the process, actress Bea Arthur was elevated to stardom, winning a 1977 Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy. (A decade later she was again in Emmy-winning form, this time in > *The Golden Girls*, where she was joined by fellow *Maude* actress Rue McClanahan.) Maude Findlay, meanwhile, became one of the classic characters of the US small screen. The show reached as high as number four in the Nielsens. Only a few episodes were screened in the UK.

A spin-off, > *Good Times*, followed the life of Maude's black maid, Florida Evans.

McHALE'S NAVY

USA 1962-6, 138 x 25m, bw ABC.

ABC/Sto-Rev/MCA/Universal.

PR Edward J. Montagne, Si Rose.

DR Various, including Sidney Lanfield.

CAST Lt. Cmdr. Quinton McHale Ernest Borgnine Capt. Wallace B. Binghampton Joe Flynn Ensign Charles "Chuck" Parker Tim Conway Harrison "Tinker" Bell Billy Sands Happy Haines Gavin MacLeod Lt. Elroy Carpenter Bob Hastings Fuji Kobaiji Yoshio Yoda Quartermaster George "Christy" Christopher Gary Vinson Seaman Lester Gruber Carl Ballantine Seaman Virgil Edwards Edson Stroll.

US navy lark featuring the hustlers who crewed PT 73 (a motor torpedo boat) in the Pacific during the Second World War. Ernest Borgnine took a break from playing psychopathic heavies in Hollywood to reveal a surprisingly sure comic touch

James Cromwell gives Hermione Baddeley a hug in Maude.





as the sly McHale. For the last season, McHale and men were transferred to the Mediterranean, where their entertaining antics continued to plague their hapless C. O., Wallace B. Binghampton ("Old Lead Bottom"). Based on the TV play *Seven Against the Sea*, in which Borgnine had also starred, *McHale's Navy* was one of the more successful of the military sitcoms which marched across the American small screen in the early sixties. There were two spin-off feature films from the show, *McHale's Navy* and *McHale's Navy Join the Airforce*.

MEN BEHAVING BADLY

UK 1991–, 25+ x 30m, col ITV/BBC1 (from 1994).
Thames TV/Hartswood Films Ltd.

CR Simon Nye. **PR** Beryl Vertue. **DR** Martin Dennis.
WR Simon Nye. **MUS** Alan Lisk. **CAST** Gary Martin
Clunes Dermot Harry Enfield Tony Neil Morrissey
Dorothy Caroline Quentin Deborah Leslie Ash
George Ian Lindsay Anthea Valeri Minifie Les Dave
Atkins.

Politically incorrect – but woefully funny – sitcom about a pair of adolescent-minded males, who share a squalid flat and a consuming interest in girls. In the first two seasons the men behaving badly were Gary (jug-eared Martin Clunes, whose first TV part was in *Dr. Who* and who also starred in *No Place Like Home*) and Dermot (the ubiquitous Harry Enfield, >*Harry Enfield's Television Show*), but then Dermot moved out, leaving Gary to find a

new lodger. The successful applicant was Tony (Neil Morrissey, formerly Sammy the Shammy in *Noel's House Party*, and *Boon*), who impressed Gary with his claim to be "in the music business." A comic misunderstanding whereby Gary worried that his new flatmate was a "pillow biter" (homosexual) was soon ironed out, and the twosome settled down to a soul-mateyness, which survived the disclosure that Tony actually ran a secondhand record stall (later abandoned for a career as a busker). For Tony himself, a principal attraction of the flat was the upstairs neighbor, blond, Twiggy-like Deborah (Leslie Ash, *Quadrophenia*, *C.A.T.S. Eyes*), whom he lusted after relentlessly.

Meanwhile, Gary maintained a romantic relationship of sorts with long-suffering State Registered Nurse Dorothy (Caroline Quentin, ex-wife of Paul Merton, *Jonathan Creek*, *Kiss Me Kate*). By the fourth season, despairing of Gary's adolescent behavior and lack of commitment, Dorothy's eye began to wander. Her casual mention of a friend called Tim caused Gary to explode jealously: "Maybe you'd like to jiggle around on Tim's todger while I bring you a series of tasty snacks?" In fact, Dorothy was having an affair with Jamie, to whom she became engaged, until Jamie called it off – much to Gary's gloating. Gary and Dorothy then recommenced their relationship, although more rockiness ensued in "Playing Away," when Gary returned home unexpectedly and found Dorothy in flagrante delicto – with Tony. This indiscretion was overcome when Dorothy lied to Gary and told him that Tony was a useless lover. Gary promised not to rub Tony's face in it – and then proceeded to rub Tony's face in it.

◀◀ More watery mishaps in *McHale's Navy*.

Created and written by Simon Nye (also >*Frank Stubbs Promotes*, *Is it Legal?*, *True Love*, *How Do You Want Me?*), and based on his novel of the same name, *MBB* dextrously balanced the cathartic and the cynical. It allowed male viewers to indulge in vicarious “laddism,” while allowing female viewers to ridicule the bad but lovable Tony and Gary. Meanwhile, it was also a genuine sitcom in that the humor came from the characters and their context. “I don’t do mad, plot-driven farragoes,” Nye remarked. “You have to allow your characters time to talk.” A garland of prizes was bestowed on *Men Behaving Badly*, including the Comedy Awards’ Best ITV Comedy, and the first National Television Award for Situation Comedy.

The behind-the-scenes mover and shaker of *MBB* was the venerable Beryl Vertue (whose daughter was Harry Enfield’s main squeeze when *MBB* began). Originally an artists’ agent, Vertue moved into production with Eric Sykes’s comedy *The Plank* and the movie version of *Till Death Us Do Part*. As deputy chairman of the Robert Stigwood Group, Vertue pioneered the selling to foreign companies of the basic formats of British comedies, among them >*Till Death Us Do Part* (which became >*All in the Family* in the USA), >*Steptoe and Son* (*Sanford and Son* in the USA), and *Upstairs, Downstairs* (*Beacon Hill*). When, inexplicably, ITV decided not to film a second season of *MBB*, Vertue sold the show to the BBC. The inevitable US “re-version” starred stand-up comic Rob Schneider and Ron Eldred (Shep in *ER*) and came from Carsey-Werner. It screened on NBC from 1996, and also featured Justine Bateman and Ken Marino.

MISTER ED

USA 1960–6, 143 x 25m, bw Syndicated/CBS. Filmways. UK tx 1962–5.

CR Arthur Lubin. **PR** Various, including Al Simon, Arthur Lubin, George Burns. **DR** Various, including Arthur Lubin. **WR** Various, including Bob O’Brian, William Burns, Lou Derman, Ben Starr. **CAST** Wilbur Post Alan Young Carol Post Connie Hines Roger Addison Larry Keating Kay Addison Edna Skinner Colonel Gordon Kirkwood Leon Ames Winnie Kirkwood Florence MacMichael Mr. Ed (voice) Allan “Rocky” Lane.

On moving to the country, architect Wilbur Post finds that he has also bought a palomino horse, Mr. Ed... who can talk. American fantasy sitcom that inaugurated a host of similarly premised shows, among them >*My Favorite Martian*, >*Bewitched*, >*I Dream of Jeannie*. It was derived from the *Francis the Talking Mule* movie series by their director Arthur Lubin, but in a fashion that was studio bound and too feebly nonsensical to swallow. Equine scatology, in fact. Despite this, *Mister Ed* was awarded the 1963 Golden Globe for Best TV Show. The voice of Mr. Ed was supplied by the great B-western hard man Allan “Rocky” Lane (1901–73), while English actor Alan Young (born Angus Young) played his human foil. Leon Ames from >*Life With Father* played neighbor Colonel Gordon Kirkwood.

Show trivia: *Mister Ed* began life as a syndicated series, before being picked up by a network. Watching TV was one of the talking horse’s favorite hobbies – although he refused to watch Westerns because his relatives always got killed.

THE MONKEES

USA 1966–8, 58 x 30m, col NBC. Screen Gems/Raybert/NBC. UK tx 1966–8 BBC1.

CR Bert Schneider, Bob Rafelson. **EXEC PR** Ward Sylvester. **PR** Bert Schneider, Bob Rafelson.

DR Various, including Bob Rafelson, James Frawley, Bruce Kessler, Mickey Dolenz, Peter H. Thorkelson (Peter Tork), Russ Mayberry, Alexander Singer.

WR Various, including Bob Rafelson, Lee Sanford, Stanley Z. Cherry, Neil Burstyn, Mickey Dolenz, Joel

Kane, Jon C. Anderson. **MUS** Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart (main theme), Peter Tork and Joseph Richards ("For Pete's Sake" end credits). **CAST** Davy Jones himself Mike Nesmith himself Peter Tork himself Mickey Dolenz himself Mr. Babbitt (landlord) Henry Corden Mrs. Purdy (neighbor) Jesslyn Fax.

▼▼ Hey, hey, we're The Monkees, and people say we monkey around. Jones, Dolenz, Tork, and Nesmith put on a show.



» **Hey, hey, we're the Monkees**
And people say we monkey around...



So opened the theme tune of the weekly life-on-the-road misadventures of the Monkees, an artificially created American mop-top pop group based on the Beatles of *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* vintage. More than four hundred applicants were screened by producers Bert Schneider and Bob Rafelson before they chose as the "pre-fab four": English actor Davy Jones (previously Ena Sharples' grandson in soap *Coronation Street*); folk singer Peter Tork; former *Circus Boy* actor Mickey Braddock (now called Mickey Dolenz); and Michael Nesmith, whose mother had invented the liquid paper used in typing corrections.

Each episode featured picaresque madcap antics (emphasized by such innovative shooting techniques as slow motion and distorted lenses), plus a couple of musical numbers. To these the Monkees only contributed the vocals, since Peter Tork was the only one, despite TV appearances, who could play a chord.

Better than a manufactured product had a right to be, *The Monkees* won the 1966 Emmy for Outstanding Comedy. Several of the band's songs even reached number one in the charts ("Last Train to Clarksville," "Daydream Believer," "I'm a Believer"), though having lyricists such as Neil Diamond, Neil Sedaka, Carole King, and Harry Nilsson helped. A 1968 Monkees film, *Head*, directed by Rafelson and cowritten by him with Jack Nicholson (the two would team up again for *Five Easy Pieces*), proved too off-the-wall for the

teenyboppers who were the main Monkee maniacs, and died a death by box office. By then, anyway, the band had split up, except for a TV special released in 1969 entitled *33 1/3 Revolutions Per Monkee*.

Until 1997, that is. Then, without a trace of doubt in their minds, the Monkees (now in their fifties) took the first train to nostalgiaville and announced a new album, together with a TV special, *Hey, Hey, we're the Monkees*.

"Oooh, I'm a believer, I'm a believer, I'm a believer, yes I am."

An update of *The Monkees*, called *The New Monkees*, with an entirely new cast and set of characters, was syndicated in 1987, but isn't worth describing.

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

UK 1969–74, 45 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV. US tx 1974–6 PBS.

CR Barry Took, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Graham Chapman, Terry Jones, Michael Palin.

PR John Howard Davies, Ian MacNaughton. **DR** Ian MacNaughton.

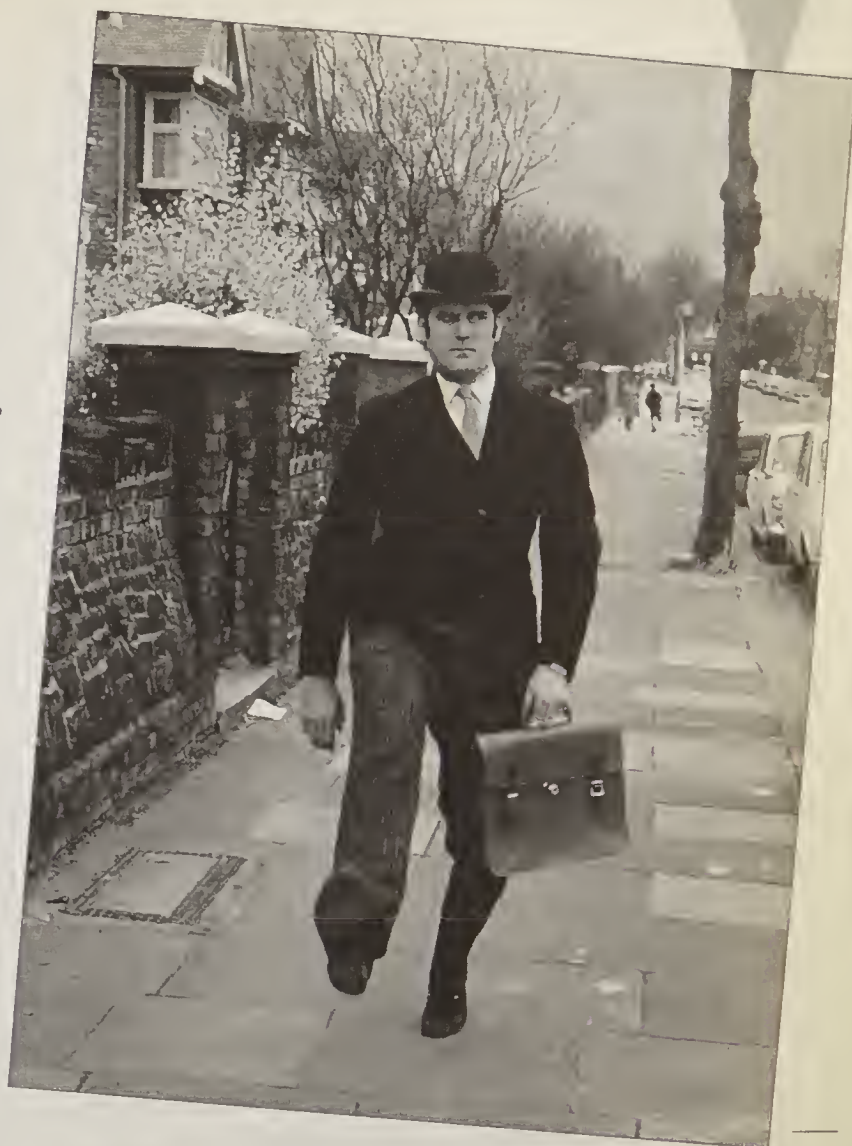
WR John Cleese, Michael Palin, Graham Chapman, Terry Jones, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam.

MUS John Philip Sousa ("Liberty Bell March" theme). **CAST** John Cleese, Terry Jones, Graham Chapman, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Michael Palin; plus Carol Cleveland.

And now for something completely different...

Landmark BBC comedy series – originally to be called *Owl Stretching Time*, then *Vaseline Review*, then *Cynthia Fellatio's Flying Circus* – of free-form sketches and blackout. With the exception of American illustrator Terry Gilliam, the *Python* team shared an Oxbridge background and had honed their talents on such mid-sixties TV shows as *Do Not Adjust Your Set*, *>At Last the 1948 Show*, *The Complete and Utter History of Britain*, and *>The Frost Report*, before coming together in *Python* at the instigation of BBC comedy veteran Barry Took. Although *Python* found its humor in almost anything, its favorite targets were quintessentially British: pompous, small-minded bureaucrats (John Cleese's Minister of Silly Walks), upper-class twits, lower-class wearers of knotted handkerchiefs ("Gumbies"), and accountants. But there was no political point to *Python* comedy (unlike the satirical thrust of many of its peers); it was entirely relativist ridicule.

The show also delighted in undermining the conventions of TV. Jokes failed to have punch lines, episodes were concluded with false endings, while characters, notably the blimpish Colonel and the Spanish Inquisition Cardinals Ximanez, Fang, and Biggles, flitted from skit to skit. Often the only link was a surreal Gilliam cartoon (the descending giant foot, the dropping sixteen-ton weight) or Cleese's "And now for something completely different..." Yet, for all its inspired brilliance, the anarchic series was as often miss as hit; for every quotable Dead Parrot, Cheese Shop, Spam, Crunchy Frog, and Argument Clinic sketch there were two of instant forgettability. Indeed, the first season was so poorly received that in the



▲▲ John Cleese as the Minister of Silly Walks in Monty Python's Flying Circus.

Midlands area of Britain it was replaced by a farming program. BBC bosses, meanwhile, were accusing the *Python* team of "wallowing in sadism." Still, by 1971, the show was enough of a cult hit to spin off a movie version, *And Now For Something Completely Different* (1972: essentially a rehash of show sketches). In 1972 the show was awarded a BAFTA.



Praline (John Cleese): *Hello, I wish to register a complaint... Hello? Miss?*

Shopkeeper: (Michael Palin): *What do you mean, miss?*

Praline: *Oh, I'm sorry, I have a cold. I wish to make a complaint.*

Shopkeeper: *Sorry, we're closing for lunch.*

Praline: *Never mind that, my lad, I wish to make a complaint about this parrot what I purchased not half an hour ago from this very boutique.*

Shopkeeper: *Oh yes, the Norwegian Blue. What's wrong with it?*

Praline: *I'll tell you what's wrong with it. It's dead, that's what's wrong with it.*

Shopkeeper: *No, it's resting, look!*

Praline: *Looky my lad, I know a dead parrot when I see one, and I'm looking at one right now.*

Shopkeeper: *No, no sir, it's not dead. It's resting.*

Praline: *Resting?*

Shopkeeper: *Yeah, remarkable bird the Norwegian Blue, beautiful plummage, innit?*

Praline: *The plummage don't enter into it – it's stone dead.*

Shopkeeper: *No, no – it's just resting.*

Praline: *All right then, if it's just resting I'll wake it up. [shouts into cage] Hello Polly! I've got a nice cuttlefish for you when you wake up, Polly Parrot!*

Shopkeeper: [jogging the cage] *There, it moved.*

Praline: *No he didn't. That was you pushing the cage.*

Shopkeeper: *I did not.*

Praline: *Yes, you did. [takes parrot out of cage, shouts] Hello Polly, Polly! [bangs it against counter] Polly Parrot, wake up. Polly! [throws parrot into air and lets it fall to floor] Now that's what I call a dead parrot.*

Shopkeeper: *No, no, it's stunned...*



After a five-year run and with Cleese in particular tiring of the “anything goes” structurelessness, the group pulled down the *Python* big top to pursue brilliant individual careers (including >*Fawlty Towers*, >*Rutland Weekend Television*, >*Ripping Yarns*). To the relief of *Python* fans everywhere, however, *Python* continued to exist as a cinema being, continuing the collective craziness in a cycle of *Python* films: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1974), *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979), and *Monty Python's Meaning of Life* (1983).

Of course, when the show was good, it was surreally sublime, as in the famous Dead Parrot sketch (see left).

MOONLIGHTING

USA 1985–9, 1 x 120m, 66 x 60m, col ABC.

Picturemaker Productions. UK tx 1986–9 BBC2.

CR Glenn Gordon Caron. **EXEC PR** Glenn Gordon Caron. **PR** Jay Daniel. **DR** Various, including Alan Arkush, Peter Werner, Will Mackenzie, Christian I. Nyby, Paul Krasny, Robert Butler, Sam Weisman. **WR** Various, including Glenn Gordon Caron. **MUS** Lee Holdridge and Al Jarreau (theme). **CAST** Maddie Hayes Cybill Shepherd David Addison Bruce Willis Agnes Dipesto Allyce Beasley Herbert Viola Curtis Armstrong Virginia Hayes Eve Maria Saint Sam Crawford Mark Harmon.

Stylish romantic comedy inspired by the 1940 film *His Girl Friday*, which rescued the stalled career of Cybill Shepherd and projected Bruce Willis to stardom.

Shepherd played former model Maddie Hayes who, after being swindled by embezzlers, decided to turn the Los Angeles detective agency that she had among her assets from a tax dodge to a profit maker. As her partner in the Blue Moon agency she takes in Willis's lascivious and wisecracking David Addison. Their subsequent lust-hate relationship was the essence of the show, with the investigations almost incidental. Sexual chemistry sparked on screen; he wolf-whistled after her, sang the lyrics from sixties girl-watchin' songs, but Maddie resisted – until season two, when the producers succumbed to the obvious temptation: a heavily hyped bed scene between Maddie and David, which raised the ratings to heavenly heights. The other leading cast members were Allyce Beasley as daffy receptionist Miss Dipesto and Curtis Armstrong as clerk Herbert Viola, the object of her unrequited sighs.

There was considerable crossover between the stars and their on-screen characters (although, if Shepherd's off-screen statements are to be believed, this did not stretch to the sexual chemistry). Cybill Shepherd was an ex-model herself, indeed 1968's Model of the Year, and came to *Moonlighting* as the one-time star of feature film *The Last Picture Show* (1971) and NBC's Texan rancher series *The Yellow Rose* (1983–4). Willis had previously landed only one screen role, a bit part as a crook in *Miami Vice*, and turned up among three thousand hopefuls to read for the part of David Addison with a punk haircut, khaki army trousers, and three earrings. He was the last to read and got the part.

Created by Glenn Gordon Caron, the show was

the epitome of postmodern TV, with its quirky but effective rummages through the cutting room floors of the past. One episode, "Atomic Shakespeare," was written entirely in iambic pentameter; another, dealing with an unsolved murder from the forties, was filmed in noir style; and nearly every installment incorporated some tricky self-referential statement to camera.

Although almost fanatically popular, the show was canceled in 1989. It had been beset throughout by three-way conflicts between Shepherd, Willis, and Caron, and increasingly, production had run over time and budget. Moreover, the storyline, in which Maddie had become pregnant (by either astronaut Sam Crawford or Addison), miscarried, and married a near stranger, had taken the scriptwriters up a dark alley from which they were having difficulty getting out. The plug was accordingly pulled. This proved no hardship to Willis, who moved into the major leagues with films like *Die Hard* and *Pulp Fiction*, and has become phenomenally popular. Shepherd's career, however, again went into abeyance, until she found the plot again in *Cybill*.

THE MORECAMBE AND WISE SHOW

UK 1961–83, Approx 60 x 30m, 100 x 60m, bw/col. ATV/BBC TV/Thames TV. US tx 1980– Syndicated.

PR Various, including Colin Clews (ATV), John Ammonds (BBC). **WR** Various, including Sid Green and Dick Hills (ATV), Eddie Braben (BBC/Thames).

CAST Eric Morecambe, Ernie Wise.

Not so much a comic double act as a British institution.

Eric Morecambe (born John Eric Bartholomew) and Ernie Wise (Ernest Wiseman) began their partnership in 1941. It was then interrupted by Morecambe's wartime service as a miner, but resumed in 1947 as part of *Lord George Sanger's Variety Service*, the duo making their way to the new medium of TV in 1951 as part of the BBC's *The Youth Parade*. A show of their own followed, the dismal *Running Wild* (BBC) of 1954, before extensive touring perfected their timing and rapport. When they were offered another chance at their own series, by ATV in 1961, they did not waste it. Playing their stage personae of Eric the mischievous pipe-smoking skeptic and Ernie the pompous, short-fat-hairy-legged foil (with "twenty-three A-levels, all of them in maths"), they mugged and sight-gagged happily, in between introducing musical artistes, the Beatles included.

In 1968, the duo were poached by the BBC, where they produced their greatest work; the catchphrase "you can't see the join" (about Ernie's wig), Eric's pretense of being strangled behind the stage curtain, Ern's plays "wot I wrote," Eric's skewed specs – all date from this time. So too does the classic "Breakfast Sketch," in which the pair prepared the morning meal to the music of "The Stripper." Most of the scriptwriting was done by Eddie Braben, who often gave the gags a touch of sure-fingered absurdity: a mock TV advertisement for a cold remedy ended with an unseen questioner saying to the flu-ridden Morecambe, "Fed up?" and then suggesting, "Why not try" – at which point a gunshot was heard.

*you can't see
the join...*

It was also for the BBC that Morecambe (the name was taken from Bartholomew's home town) and Wise produced their legendary Christmas specials, which entrapped stellar celebrities in affectionate antics. Peter Cushing was never paid, newscaster Angela Rippon stepped out from behind her desk to high-kick her way through "Let's Face the Music and Dance" and "You're Adorable," while Shirley Bassey tried to sing "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" as Eric and Ern pulled her foot from a hole in the stage and replaced her dainty footwear with an army boot. The 1976 guests were John Thaw and Dennis Waterman from thick-ear actioner *The Sweeney* (Morecambe and Wise guested on a comedic 1978 episode of that show in return), and ex-Prime Minister Harold Wilson. The special in 1977 was watched by 27 million people, by which time Morecambe and Wise had become as much a part of the British yuletide as plum pudding and the Queen's Speech.

In 1979, the duo moved to Thames TV (the first skit showed them being dumped from a BBC van outside Thames TV's HQ), but their sojourn there was plagued from the outset by Morecambe's poor health. He died in 1984 of a heart attack. An era in British comedy had ended. The work of Morecambe and Wise, however, continues to live on in repeats and videos, not to mention the living homage that is Vic Reeves (>*Vic Reeves' Big Night Out*).

"Bring me sunshine..."

MORK AND MINDY

USA 1978–82, 92 x 30m, 1 x 60m, col ABC. Miller-Milkis Productions/Henderson Production Co Inc/Paramount TV. UK tx 1979–83 ITV.

CR Garry K. Marshall, Tony Marshall, Dale McRaven, Joe Gauberg. **EXEC PR** Garry K. Marshall, Tony Marshall. **PR** Bruce Johnson, Dale McRaven. **DR** Various, including Bob Claver, Howard Storm. **WR** Various, including Dale McRaven, Ed Scharlach, Bruce Johnson, Robin Williams, April Kelly, Tom Tenowich, Deborah Raznicka. **CAST** Mork Robin Williams Mindy McConnell Pam Dawber Frederick

McConnell Conrad Janis Cora Hudson Elizabeth Kerr Orson Ralph James Exidor Robert Donner Mearth Jonathan Winters Nelson Flavor Jim Stahl Franklin Delano Bickley Tom Poston Remo DaVinci Jay Thomas Jean DaVinci Gina Hecht.

S hazbat! A spin-off from a 1978 episode of *>Happy Days* in which Mork from Ork (Robin Williams) landed on earth and tried to kidnap Richie Cunningham. Audience reaction to the episode was

▼▼ *ET* Mork finds a strange Earth life form in Mork and Mindy.



» **Pam Dawber: “He [Robin Williams] is the show, I’m lucky I got my name in the title.”** «

so favorable that it was decided to give the alien a show of his own.

For his second coming to Earth, Mork landed in Boulder, Colorado, in a giant egg and with a mission to study earthlings and report his findings back to His Immenseness, Orkan leader Orson (“cosmic breath”). In Boulder, Mork was befriended by Mindy McConnell, daughter of music store owner Fred. To the latter’s oft-stated disapproval, Mork moved into Mindy’s apartment. Initially, their relationship was, in fact, platonic, but eventually they married, and honeymooned on Ork – where Mork discovered he was pregnant and laid an egg. From this emerged their son, Mearth, played by middle-aged, 225-pound US comedian Jonathan Winters. On Ork beings grew younger, not older.

Mork and Mindy was a pleasant twist to a sci-fi perennial, for the invading Mork was no bug-eyed monster but a zany and endearing child-man, an innocent abroad in the universe (although Gore Vidal’s play *Visit to a Small Planet* and the 1963 TV show *>My Favorite Martian* prefigured it). Mork’s habits were strange – he slept upside down in a cupboard, drank through his finger, wore his suit backwards – but he was likeable.

The role of Mork, initially offered to Dom DeLuise, was perfectly suited to the wacky, stream-of-consciousness style of Williams, a former stand-up comic at Los Angeles’ Comedy Store. Understanding this, the producers allowed Williams to do his own stuff, marking scripts: “Mork can go

off here.” The show made Williams a star, and he followed it with a string of major films, including *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *The Fisher King* (1989), and *Toys* (1992).

Williams’ comic skills aside, the series had an almost fatal tumble in quality in season two, when the producers jettisoned the show’s zappy sci-fi sitcom format in favor of would-be-clever surrealism. Two principal cast members were sacked, Conrad Janis (also an accomplished jazz player who had cut records with Coleman Hawkins) and Elizabeth Kerr (who played Mindy’s with-it Grandma). The audience ratings plummeted, and the producers restored the old format – plus Janis and Kerr – for season three. Among the other regular characters seen were Exidor, a UFO prophet who thought Mork was crazy; and neighbor Mr. Bickley. Jim Stahl played Mindy’s yuppie cousin, Nelson. Lead guest actors were headed by Raquel Welch as beautiful captain Nirvana, who captured Mork in “Mork vs the Necrotons.”

If *Mork and Mindy* was something different on TV, it also used some classic sci-fi techniques, such as juxtaposing the alien with the human as a means of commentary on the latter. In case the audience missed the point, Mork’s end-of-episode reports to Orson were explicit comments on the state of humanity. Unfortunately, these tended to be cute (people should be nice to each other, etc.) rather than meaningful.

Na nu, na nu

►►► Rowan Atkinson as the walking disaster that was Mr Bean.



MR BEAN

UK 1990–6, 14 x 30m, col ITV. Tiger Aspect/Central TV/Thames TV. US tx 1992–6 HBO.

CR Richard Curtis. **PR** John Howard Davies, Sue Vertue. **DR** John Howard Davies, John Birkin, Paul Weiland. **WR** Rowan Atkinson, Richard Curtis, Robin Driscoll, Ben Elton. **MUS** Howard Goodall. **CAST** Mr. Bean Rowan Atkinson Irma Gobb Matilda Ziegler various roles Robin Driscoll.

Near-silent comedies starring rubber-faced Rowan Atkinson (>*Blackadder*, >*Not the Nine O'Clock News*) as the clueless Mr. Bean. The misadventures had their side-splitting moments (Mr. Bean's attempt to obtain a picture on his TV with an indoor aerial comes to mind), if only because of Atkinson's impeccable timing, but were often just plain dumb antics, telegraphed in advance and derivative of Charlie Chaplin and Monsieur Hulot. There were many specials, with "Merry Christmas Mr Bean" showing to 18.5 million in December 1992, making it the most watched program, apart from soaps, in the British yuletide week. A spin-off movie, *Mr Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie* (directed by Mel Smith) was released in 1997.

The episodes were: Mr Bean/The Return of Mr Bean/The Curse of Mr Bean/Mr Bean Goes to Town/The Trouble with Mr Bean/Mr Bean Rides Again/Merry Christmas, Mr Bean/Mr Bean in Room 426/Do-It-Yourself Mr Bean/Mind the Baby, Mr Bean/Back to School, Mr Bean/Torvill and Bean/Tee Off, Mr Bean/Goodnight Mr Bean/The Library/Mr Bean's Red Nose Day/The Bus Stop/Blind Date/Hair by Mr Bean of London.



THE MRS MERTON SHOW

UK 1994–7, 18 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

PR Peter Kessler, Mark Gorton. **DR** Pati Marr. **CAST** Mrs. Merton Caroline Aherne.

With the death of the British chat show in the nineties, there were only spoofs left, such as *>Knowing Me, Knowing You... with Alan Partridge* – and this program, featuring studio pensioner Mrs. Merton (played by thirtysomething comedienne Caroline Aherne, *The Dead Good Show*, *>The Fast Show*). It was full of winking innuendo and vicious swipes, in front of an elderly, extremely partisan Mancunian audience.

Brilliant, in fact. Mrs. Merton's archly styled questions (to Debbie McGee: "So tell me. What attracted you to millionaire Paul Daniels?") were simply devastating. A BAFTA Award followed, though eventually the idea burst its own bubble, as cautious A- and B-list celebrities began to refuse the Mancunian granny's invitation to have her verbal knitting needles jabbed into them. And *Mrs Merton's* heavily manufactured irony suited the iconoclastic mid-nineties, but not all times. The show's band featured Peter Hook from rock music combo New Order, who was Aherne's sometime husband (she was occasionally credited as Caroline Hook).

Mrs. Merton was famed for her piercing look, but there was a prosaic reason for it: Aherne suffered partial blindness in one eye.

◀◀ Yvonne DeCarlo and Fred Gwynne in *The Munsters*, a spoof horror show.

THE MUNSTERS

USA 1964–6, 70 x 25m, bw CBS. MCA/Universal. UK tx 1965–7 BBC1.

CR Joe Connelly, Bob Moshier. **PR** Joe Connelly, Bob Moshier. **DR** Jack Marquette, Harry Larrecq, Lawrence Dobkin, Ezra Stone, Charles Rondeau, Donald Richardson, Gene Reynolds, Joseph Pevney, Earl Bellamy, Norman Abbott. **WR** Bob Moshier, Joe Connelly, James Allardice, Dick Conway, Richard Baer, Dennis Whitcomb. **MUS** Jack Marshall. **CAST** Herman Munster Fred Gwynne Lily Munster (née Dracula) Yvonne DeCarlo Grandpa Munster Al Lewis Edward Wolfgang ("Eddie") Munster Butch Patrick Marilyn Munster Beverly Owen (1964)/Pat Priest (1964–6). Video CIC.

Spoof horror show created by Bob Moshier and Joe Connelly (also *>Amos'n'Andy*, *>Leave It To Beaver*). Contemporary with, and seen by some as cruder than, *>The Addams Family*, with which it has similarities. The Munsters live at 43 Mockingbird Lane, an average peaceful elm-shaded street in suburban America. But the Munsters are a little different from ordinary folks. Their three-story Victorian house has not seen a paintbrush since it was built. Shutters hang askew, weeds grow abundantly, vultures nest in the trees, and there's a dungeon in the basement. In the garage stands the fabulous (if archaic) Munster Koach and a drag speedster, the Dragula. The Munsters hail from Transylvania, and head of the household is Herman Munster (played by Fred Gwynne, formerly of *>Car 54, Where Are You?*), modeled on Frankenstein's monster, seven feet three inches tall, with a flat

head, lantern jaw, jagged scar on his forehead, and bolts through his neck. A devoted family man, Herman works hard at the Gateman, Goodbury & Grave Funeral Home to provide for his family, wife Lily, Grandpa, son Eddie, and niece Marilyn. Lily (played by film star Yvonne DeCarlo, born Peggy Yvonne Middleton) is aged 137, with long black hair with a white streak and a penchant for Chanel No. 13. Hauntingly beautiful, she is almost as pretty as the day she died. Grandpa Munster (played by Al Lewis, also from *Car 54*), aged somewhere between 62 and 479, is a practical joker who sleeps in a coffin in the cellar. He is idolized by ten-year-old Eddie, a happy youngster with Wolfboy fangs and pointed ears. Eddie thinks Grandpa's tricks are "neat." Innocent of the effect they have on others, the Munsters – who believe themselves to be the typical American clan – think it is other people who are odd. And no one is more unfortunate than "poor Marilyn," their ugly live-in niece, who just happens to be a blue-eyed blond.

Most of the jokes in *The Munsters* came from the ghoulish ones' culture clash with suburban America, and were straightforward inversions of the norm. Niece Marilyn was, in fact, a ravishing Monroe lookalike. Lily's response to a handsome male was, "He looks like Cary Grant, poor man." Standard family advice was, "Remember, every cloud has a dark lining." The gag was overworked until it wore out its welcome, but there was an explicit message of decent liberal tolerance behind the humor and the affectionate characterization of the happy monster family. (The creators of *The Munsters* themselves came from recent immigrant families to America).

After many fruitless weeks searching Los Angeles and the Midwest for a suitable Victorian-Gothic structure, the Munster house was built in its entirety on the studio lot and aged with chemicals and lighting. The main stars spent hours in makeup. Aside from his flat head and neck bolts, Fred Gwynne (d. 1993) – even though the series was filmed in black-and-white – was required to have his face painted green, a process which took over an hour and a half, every day of shooting. *The Munsters* ran for seventy episodes, followed by numerous repeats on both sides of the Atlantic. Memorable episodes include: "Herman the Great," in which Herman tries to earn extra cash by wrestling; and "Lo-cal Munster," in which Lily forces Herman to diet for his army reunion. A movie, *Munster Go Home*, featuring the TV cast, was released in 1966. Gwynne, DeCarlo, and Lewis again reprised their roles for a 1981 TVM, *The Munsters' Revenge*, an eminently forgettable disaster. So too was the 1989–91 series, *The Munsters Today*, an attempt to revamp the formula with the entirely new cast of John A. Shuck, Lee Meriweather, Jason Marsden, Hilary van Dyke, and Howard Morton.

THE MUPPET SHOW

UK 1976–80, 130 x 30m, col ITV. ATV/Henson Associates. US tx 1976–81 Syndicated.

CR Jim Henson, Frank Oz. **EXEC PR** David Lazer.

PR Jack Burns, Jim Henson. **WR** Jim Henson, Jack Burns, Marc London, Jerry Juhl. **CAST** Kermit the Frog/Waldorf/Rowlf/Doctor Teeth/Captain Link

Hearthrob/The Swedish Chef *Jim Henson* Miss Piggy Lee/Sam the Eagle/Fozzie Bear/Animal *Frank Oz* Gonzo (the stunt animal)/Dr. Bunsen Honeydew/Zoot/Beauregard *Dave Groelz* Statler/Scooter/Sweethums/Janice *Richard Hunt* Rizzo the Rat *Steve Whitmire* Pops/Sgt. Floyd Pepper/Robin the Frog/Lew Zealand/Dr. Julius Strangepork *Jerry Nelson*.

Fixtures on US TV, including *Sesame Street*, for over a decade, Jim Henson's bizarre creatures – half marionette, half glove puppet (hence their name) – only received a show of their own courtesy of British impresario Lew Grade, who bankrolled *The Muppet Show* in the UK.

The premise of each episode was that the Muppets were obliged to put on a variety performance at the Muppet Theatre, with Kermit the Frog as M. C. Naturally, there was more drama behind the stage than on it; frustrating Kermit's efforts were would-be-comedian bears, regular balcony hecklers in the irascible shape of Statler and Waldorf, a right-wing Eagle, and argumentative Miss Piggy (who was also in lurve with him). Caught in the frantic efforts was the week's human guest star, there to be ritually mock humiliated. (Those who so suffered included Julie Andrews, Carol Burnett, Peter Sellers, Christopher Reeve, and James Coburn.) There were also occasional running Muppet skits, such as Veterinarians Hospital, Pigs in Space, and Muppet News Flash. Providing the music were Rowlf, the shaggy piano player, and Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem, with Animal on the drums and hippie Floyd on guitar.

A world-wide success, the show led to feature film spin-offs: *The Muppet Movie* (1979), *The Great*

Muppet Caper (1981), *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984), *Muppet Christmas Carol* (1991).

Although Jim Henson himself died in 1990, the Muppets came back to the small screen in 1996 in *Muppets Tonight!*, an update of the old format that saw the featured creatures doing their putting-on-a-show routine for K-MUP TV. A troupe of new characters was added, of whom the dreadlocked Clifford ("your homey made of foamey"), Johnny Fiamma (the poor man's Sinatra) and a line of dancing cheeses shone out. A *Muppet Treasure Island* appeared in the same year.

MURPHY BROWN

USA 1988–98, 247 x 30m, col CBS. Shulovsky-English Productions/Warner Bros TV. UK tx 1992–Sky 1.

CR Diane English. **EXEC PR** Various, including Diane English, Joel Shulovsky, Steven Peterman. **PR** Various, including Ned E. Davis, Bill Diamond, Rob Bragin. **DR** Various, including Barnet Kellman, Lee Shailat, Peter Bonerz, Bill Bixby, Lee Zlotoff, Peter Baldwin, Burt Brinckerhoff. **WR** Various, including Diane English, Russ Woody, Denise Moss and Sy Dukane. **MUS** Steve Dorff. **CAST** Murphy Brown Candice Bergen Corky Sherwood Faith Ford Jim Dial Charles Kimbrough Frank Fontana Joe Regalbuto Miles Silverberg Grant Shaud Eldin Bernecky Robert Pastorelli Phil Pat Corley Kay Carter-Shepley Lily Tomlin Haley Joel Osment Avery Brown Peter Hunt Scott Bakula Audrey Cohen Jane Leeves Stan Lansing Garry Marshall Carl (the cameraman) Ritch Brinkley.



Sitcom starring Candice Bergen (daughter of Oscar-winning ventriloquist Edgar Bergen, and formerly best known for the antiwestern movie *Soldier Blue*) as star TV news reporter Murphy Brown of Washington D. C.'s magazine program *FYI*. A graduate of the Betty Ford clinic, Brown had notorious difficulty in retaining secretaries – who were simply marked with a number in the credits – and sustaining relationships, while her town house was in a permanent state of repainting. Crafted and honed in the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* manner (with which it has obvious similarities), the series was influential enough for former US Vice President Dan Quayle to cite the unmarried pregnant Brown as symbolizing the collapse of

▲▲ Dan Quayle's least favorite show – the single-mom sitcom *Murphy Brown*.

American family values that caused the L.A. riots. The TV industry, meanwhile, considered Bergen's show good enough to bestow a clutch of Emmys on it.

When Brown gave birth to her son ("I have breasts for the first time and the only man in my life doesn't know what to do with them"), she went through nannies at home at the same rate as she went through secretaries at work, until she hit on the solution – to give the job to Eldin, the house painter. Which was fine with him, as long as he was referred to as "Big Guy" and not "Nanny."

MY FAVORITE MARTIAN

USA 1963–6, 107 x 30m, bw/col CBS. A Jack Chertok Production.

CR John L. Greene. **PR** Jack Chertok. **DR** Various, including Alan Rafkin, Sheldon Leonard, Sidney Miller. **MUS** George Greeley. **CAST** Uncle Martin Ray Walston Tim O'Hara Bill Bixby Lorelei Brown Pamela Britton Angela Brown Ann Marshall Detective Bill Brennan Alan Hewitt The Police Chief Roy Engle Harry Burns J. Pat O'Malley.

The progenitor of the long line of alien-in-the-home sitcoms. On his way to the office, Los Angeles *Sun* journalist Tim O'Hara (Bill Bixby in his breakthrough role) sees a spaceship crash, and befriends its occupant – a professor of anthropology from Mars who is on a research trip. Taken to O'Hara's apartment as "Uncle Martin," the human-looking alien (he had retractable antennae)

causes sticky situations galore for his host, thanks to mischievous use of his powers of levitation, telepathy, and invisibility.

The show rode the wave of its own novelty into the top ten of the Nielsens, eventually spinning off a



►► A perplexed Bill Bixby in *My Favorite Martian*.

sixteen-episode animated version, *My Favorite Martians* (Filmation, 1973–5).

Ray Walston, the actor who played “Uncle Martin,” was previously best known for his role as Luther Bliss in the film version of *South Pacific*.

MY MOTHER THE CAR

USA 1965–6, 22 x 30m, col NBC. United Artists/Cottage Industries/MGM. UK tx 1965 ITV.

PR Rod Amateau. **WR** Various, including Lila Garrett, Bernie Kahn. **CAST** Dave Crabtree Jerry Van Dyke Mother (Gladys), the Car (voice) Ann Sothern Barbara Crabtree Maggie Pierce Randy Crabtree Randy Whipple Cindy Crabtree Cynthia Eilbacher Captain Bernard Mancini Avery Schreiber.

Jerry Van Dyke (brother of Dick) starred as Dave Crabtree, a lawyer who buys a 1928 Porter car, only to find that it is the machinating metal reincarnation of his domineering mother. To his embarrassment, she is also taste-challenged and insists on leopard-print seat covers.

It was intended as off-beat, but viewed simply as off-beam. A candidate for the worst sitcom ever, it was pulled after a single season. The original premise had been even more tasteless: the car was to be the spirit of Crabtree's deceased wife. After due consideration, however, that idea was rejected as too necrophiliac. The villain of the piece was Captain Mancini, who constantly sought to part Dave from his valuable vintage car. Producer Rod Amateau pursued his interest in the comedic possibilities of cars with *The Dukes of Hazzard*.

MY THREE SONS

USA 1959–65, 369 x 25m, bw/col ABC/CBS. Don Fedderson Production. UK tx 1961–ITV.

CR Peter Tewksbury. **PR** Don Fedderson. **DR** Various, including Fred DeCordova, Gene Reynolds.

MUS Frank De Vol. **CAST** Steve Douglas Fred MacMurray Mike Douglas Tim Considine Robbie Douglas Don Grady Chip Douglas Stanley Livingston Michael Francis “Bub” O’Casey William Frawley Uncle Charley O’Casey William Demarest Kate Miller Douglas Tina Cole Barbara Harper Douglas Beverly Garland Ernie Thompson Douglas Barry Livingston.

Hugely successful sitcom vehicle for film star Fred MacMurray in which he played Steve Douglas, a widower trying to raise three sons – Mike, Robbie, and Chip – through the usual rites of boyish, middle-American passage (camping trips, Little League, dating). And, as if Steve did not have enough problems, beautiful women were always chasing him and trying to move in on the boys. There was help, though, at 837 Mill Street, from father-in-law “Bub,” then (when actor William Frawley died) from crusty ex-sailor Uncle Charlie, who moved in as housekeeper. The inevitable lovable dog was called Tramp.

By the end of the run, the show's premise had changed considerably: Steve had adopted orphaned Ernie and remarried (Barbara Harper being the lucky woman), and Mike, the eldest son, had married, moved away from home, and had children of his own (three sons, of course). Steve's work – which he barely had time for – as a

consulting aviation engineer had meanwhile taken him from the Midwest to North Hollywood.

It was like *Disney-time*, only more so – but well enough done to win the 1962 Golden Globe for Best TV Program.

MY TWO DADS

USA 1988–90, Approx 61 x 30m, col NBC. Michael Jacobs Productions/Tri Star. UK tx 1990–1 C4.

PR Michael Jacobs, Danielle Alexander. **DR** Various, including Andrew D. Weyman, Andrew Cardiff, John Tracy, John L. Lobue, Florence Stanley, Peter Baldwin. **MUS** Greg Evigan. **CAST** Michael Taylor Paul Reiser Joey Harris Greg Evigan Nicole Bradford Staci Keanan Judge Wilbur Florence Stanley Ed Klawicki Dick Butkus.

One of many post-nuclear family sitcoms to come off the TV conveyor belt in the late eighties. When Marcy Bradford died, her twelve-year-old daughter Nicole was inherited by two single men, since it could not be determined which one was her biological father. And in order to provide proper coparenting, the judge ordered the two to live together. The resultant compromises and disputes between starch-shirted financial adviser Michael Taylor and Bohemian artist Joey Harris, as they worried over Nicole's growing up, provided consistent chuckles. The theme was written and performed by star Greg Evigan.

NEVER MIND THE QUALITY, FEEL THE WIDTH

UK 1967–71, 39 x 30m, col ITV. ABC TV/Thames TV.

CR Vince Powell and Harry Driver. **PR** Ronnie Baxter, Stuart Allen. **DR** Various, including Ronnie Baxter. **WR** Vince Powell and Harry Driver. **CAST** Patrick Michael Kevin Aloysius Brendan Kelly Joe Lynch Emmanuel "Manny" Cohen John Bluthal Father Ryan Eamon Kelly Rabbi Levy Cyril Shaps.

Situation comedy from Vince Powell and Harry Driver (> *George and the Dragon*, > *Love Thy Neighbour*) about two tailors, Jewish jacket maker Manny Cohen and Irish trouser maker Patrick Kelly,



▲▲ Tailored for laughs, John Bluthal and Joe Lynch in *Never Mind the Quality, Feel the Width*.



▲▲▲ Rik Mayall as Thatcherite MP Alan B'Stard in *The New Statesman*.

who had a small business in London's East End. The lowbrow humor exploited their stereotyped differences in religion and ethnicity, with Rabbi Levy and Father Ryan officiating.

The show was derived from a presentation for *Armchair Theatre* (with Frank Finlay as Kelly). It was originally made by ABC, but when that company lost its franchise, Thames took over the production.

THE NEW STATESMAN

UK 1987–92, 27 x 25m, 1 x 78 m, col ITV. Alomo/
Yorkshire TV. US tx 1990– PBS.

CR Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran. **EXEC PR** Michael Pilsworth, John Bartlett. **PR** David Reynolds, Tony Charles, Andrew Benson, Bernard McKenna. **DR** Graeme Harper, Geoffrey Sax. **WR** Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran. **MUS** Mussorgsky ("Pictures at an Exhibition" theme), Alan Hawkshaw. **CAST** Alan Beresford B'Stard Rik Mayall

Sarah B'Stard *Marsha Fitzalan* Piers Fletcher-Dervish *Michael Troughton* Crippen *Nick Stringer* Roland Gidleigh-Park *Charles Gray* Sidney Bliss *Peter Sallis* Sir Greville *Terence Alexander* Count Otto von Munchweiller *Benedick Blythe* Krimhilde Kleist *Brigitte Kahn* Norman Bormann *R. R. Cooper*.

Knock-about political satire starring Rik Mayall as Alan Beresford B'Stard, a connivingly amoral far-right Tory MP (Haltemprice constituency) who jackbooted over all in the pursuit of money, power, and sex. Michael Troughton played his wimpish assistant Piers Fletcher-Dervish and Marsha Fitzalan his aristo bisexual wife Sarah. The fourth season saw B'Stard, after a spell in a Russian gulag (courtesy of a vengeful Sarah), returning home to find himself unemployed – having been unavoidably detained during the General Election – the Leaderene gone from office, Sarah in the arms of Teutonic lover Count Otto von Munchweiller, and Britain in the grip of recession. B'Stard thus transferred his avaricious attentions to Europe, becoming the MEP for a lucrative corner of Saxony, while conniving the hapless Fletcher-Dervish into the useful job (for B'Stard, that was) of European Commissioner for Internal Relations.

As a parody of the Essex wing of Thatcherism it was faultless. Among the awards garnered was an International Emmy. From the reliable firm of Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran (*Birds of a Feather*, >*Goodnight Sweetheart*).

NIGHT COURT

USA 1984–92, Approx 93 x 30m, col NBC. Warner Bros/Starry Night Productions.

PR Various, including Reinhold Weege. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, John Larroquette, Thomas Klein, Lee Bernhard, Reinhold Weege.

CAST Judge Harold T. Stone *Harry Anderson* Court Clerk Lana Wagner *Karen Austin* Selma Hacke *Selma Diamond* Asst. D. A. Dan Fielding *John Larroquette* Liz Williams *Paula Kelly* Bailiff Nostradamus “Bull” Shannon *Richard Moll* Christine Sullivan *Markie Post* Art Mike Finneran *Billie Young* *Ellen Foley* Phil/Will *William Utay* Roz Russell *Marsha Warfield*.

Judge Harold T. Stone presides over “Night Court,” a Manhattan courtroom that has an endless passage of loony nocturnal defendants. Which is fine, since bejeaned, flippant Judge Stone and his motley crew of clerks and D.A.s are pretty odd, too.

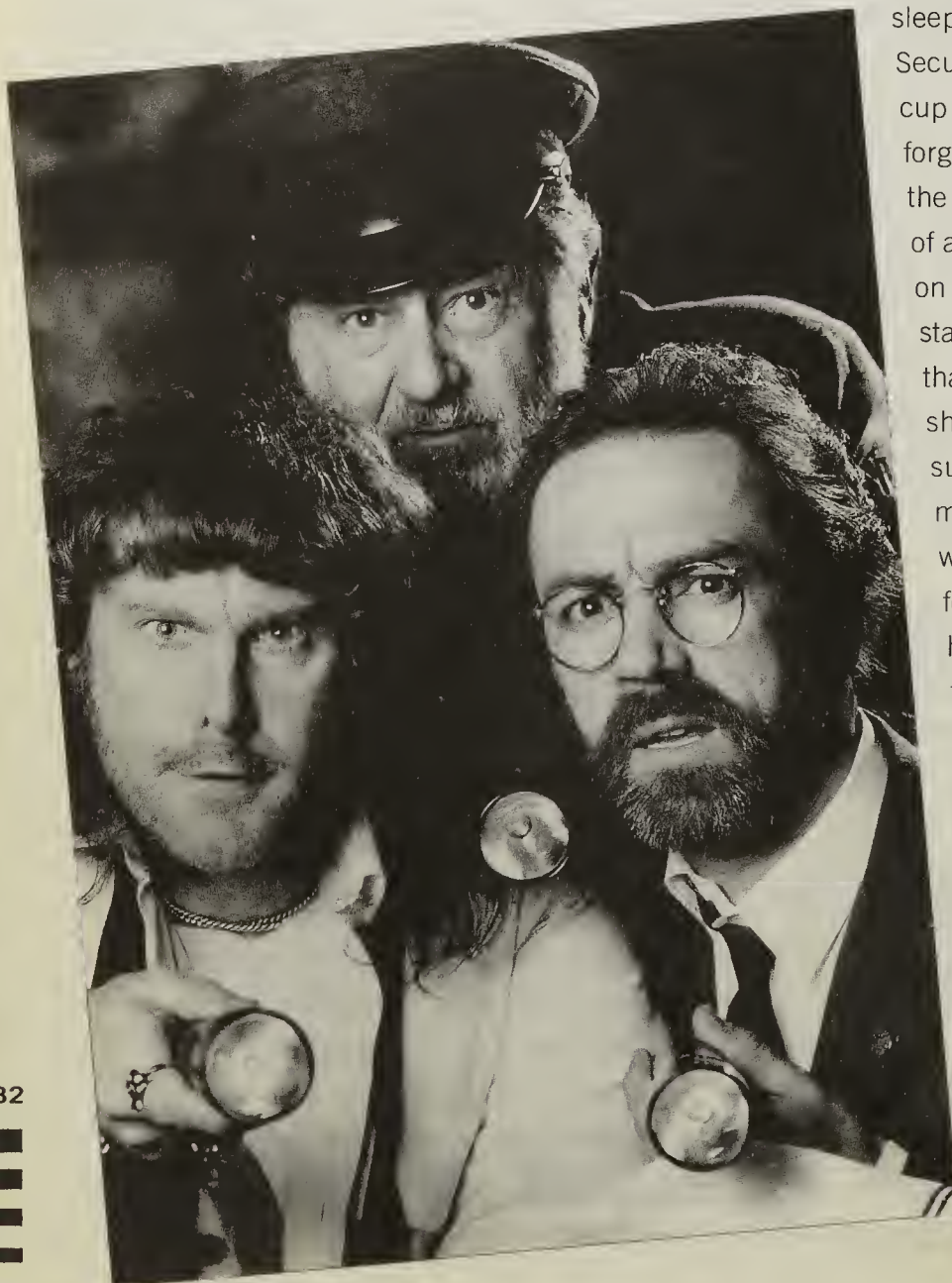
A long-running hit comedy for NBC, the show introduced many new TV faces, such as Richard Moll as the thick-headed court officer Nostradamus “Bull” Shannon, and Markie Post as the sexy public defender Christine Sullivan; the familiar faces were headed by John Astin (>*The Addams Family*) as Buddy Ryan, a mental patient who was in fact Judge Harry's father, and John Larroquette as the sex-starved prosecutor Dan Fielding. Mel Tormé appeared occasionally as a guest star.

B'Stard

NIGHTINGALES

UK 1990–2, 13 x 30m, col C4. Alomo.

CR Paul Makin. **PR** Esta Charkham, Laurie Greenwood, Rosie Bunting. **DR** Tony Dow. **WR** Paul Makin. **MUS** Clever Music. **CAST** Carter Robert Lindsay Bell David Threlfall Sarge James Ellis.



Surreal two-set (office rest room, lavatory) sitcom about a trio of security guards – Carter, Bell, and Sarge – who whiled away the job’s inactive midnight hours with flights of fantasy, power plays, pranks, and squabbles. Storylines included Bell having to attend a psychiatrist because he raped a horse (he, in fact, harbored a hidden fantasy to

sleep with Carter); a competition for Security Guard of the Year (prizes: an egg cup and a house brick); Carter and Bell forgetting Sarge’s birthday – luckily Eric the Werewolf remembered; and the arrival of a distressed and heavily pregnant Mary on Christmas Eve. She was allowed to stay after signing a contract agreeing that she was not an allegory, whereupon she gave birth to a goldfish and a succession of white goods (washing machines etc.). Meanwhile, a fourth watchman, Mr. Smith, had been dead for three years, but the others had kept his body hidden on the premises so that they could claim his salary.

Blackly weird, a kind of TV *Waiting for Godot*, *Nightingales* was dreamed up by Paul Makin, and based on a post-drama school stint as a security guard at Birmingham’s National Exhibition Center. Brilliantly realizing the idea and scripts (by Makin) were three of Britain’s best actors: James

◀◀ David Threlfall, James Ellis, and Robert Lindsay in the security guard sitcom *Nightingales*.

There's nobody here but us chickens!

Ellis (from *Z Cars*), David Threlfall (*Paradise Postponed*, *Diana: Her True Story* – as Prince Charles), and Robert Lindsay (>*Get Some In*, >*Citizen Smith*, GBH).

NO – HONESTLY

UK 1974–5, 13 x 30m, col ITV. London Weekend TV. US tx 1975 PBS.

CR Terence Brady and Charlotte Bingham. **PR** Humphrey Barclay. **DR** Bill Turner, David Askey. **WR** Terence Brady and Charlotte Bingham. **MUS** Lyndsey De Paul (theme). **CAST** Charles “C. D.” Danby John Alderton Clara Danby Pauline Collins Lord Burrell James Berwick Lady Burrell Fanny Rowe.

Starred husband-and-wife team of John Alderton (from >*Please Sir!*, *My Wife Next Door*) and Pauline Collins (>*Liver Birds*) in a sickly sweet “domcom” where they played the newly wedded Danbys. He was a calm thespian, she was the deeply dippy, book-writing (tales of “Ollie the Otter”) daughter of a peer. Episodes were wrapped around with *Burns and Allen Show*-esque addresses to camera. The same idea, with the cast changed to Donal Donnelly and Liza Goddard, became *Yes – Honestly* (1976–7, ITV).

No – Honestly’s theme song, as warbled by Lyndsey De Paul, reached the top ten in 1974.

Alderton and Collins later teamed again for the late eighties countrified drama *Forever Green*.

NO PROBLEM!

UK 1983–5, 22 x 30m, col C4. London Weekend TV C4.

CR Mustapha Matura, Farukh Dhondy. **PR** Charlie Hanson, Mickey Dolenz. **WR** Mustapha Matura, Farukh Dhondy. **CAST** Sensimilia Judith Jacob Bellamy Victor Romero Evans Beast Malcolm Frederick Toshiba Chris Tummings Terri Shope Shodeinde Angel Janet Kay Susannah Sarah Lam.

Home-alone comedy show featuring the Powell kids of Willesden, London, whose parents had returned to Jamaica for an extended holiday.

The show was the first original sitcom made for British minority network, Channel 4, and was almost absurdly true to its liberal brief, being written by two black writers, Farukh Dhondy and Mustapha Matura, for the Black Theatre Cooperative. Raucous. But funny. The producers included Mickey Dolenz, formerly of >*The Monkees*.

NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN

UK 1967–70, 35 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Richard Waring. **PR** Graeme Muir. **WR** Richard Waring. **CAST** Jennifer Corner Wendy Craig Henry Corner Paul Daneman/Ronald Hines Trudi Roberta Tovey/Verna Greenlaw Robin Hugo Keith-Johnson Amanda Jill Riddick.

Domestic comedy by Richard Waring, starring Wendy Craig as the matriarch-referee of the disputatious Corner family. It derived from a 1967

Comedy Playhouse presentation called "House in a Tree," and blueprinted the scatty middle-class housewife persona that Craig would take to Waring's *And Mother Makes Three/Five* (Thames 1971–6, as Sally Harrison) and then to Carla Lane's *>Butterflies*.

A radio version of *Not in Front* was broadcast between 1969 and 1970.

NOT ONLY... BUT ALSO...

UK 1965–6/1970–3, 14 x 45m, 7 x 30m, 2 x 50m, bw/col BBC2. BBC TV.

CR Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. **PR** Joe McGrath, Dick Clement, John Street, James Gilbert. **WR** Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, John Law, Robert Fuest. **CAST** Peter Cook, Dudley Moore.

Revue style show with *Beyond the Fringers* Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. Originally scheduled as a one-off, it achieved instant success – and thus a full series, its absurdist skits neatly capturing the psychedelic unreality of the swinging sixties. There was a Gerry Anderson puppet pastiche entitled "Superthunderstingcar," the Leaping Nuns of St. Beryl, the "Good vs. Evil" cricket match, the one-legged man auditioning for a Tarzan film, and Cook's immortal interpretation of Bo Diddley's R'n'B music ("Momma's got a brand new bag, we're gonna groove it" – "Now this, presumably, is a reference to the fact that mother, having bought the bag, decided to make some indentations on it..."). In each week's opening credits, the show's logo was depicted in the unlikeliest of situations, most memorably being carved by cavemen on a hillside

>> Tap, tap, tap at the bloody window pane. I looked out – you know who it was? Bloody Greta Garbo... <<

above a chalk horse; the closing song "Goodbyeee," meanwhile, made the top twenty in 1965. (Moore, the son of a railwayman, was a musical prodigy; he had won an organ scholarship to Oxford, and later led a jazz combo at Cook's Establishment Club.) But the undoubted highlight of *Not Only... But Also* episodes was Cook and Moore's "Dagenham" routine, in which two brain-dead, cloth-capped proletarians, Pete and Dud, met for a chat, beginning with something mundane and ending up with something sublimely fantastic. A visit to the zoo prompted a discussion on the immensely long tongue of the humming-bird, which would enable it to kiss at obscenely long distances: "That means you could stand on the Chiswick flyover and kiss someone on the Staines bypass." As for women, "She got off at the stop before me but I knew what she was after..."

Guests included Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers, Barry Humphries, and John Lennon, the latter once appearing as the commissionaire of a gents' lavatory.

A TV treasure for all time.

NOT THE NINE O'CLOCK NEWS

UK 1979–82, 28 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx 1981 Syndicated.

CR John Lloyd. **PR** John Lloyd, Sean Hardie. **WR** Various, including Mel Smith, Rowan Atkinson,

►►► Nice video, shame about the song.
Rowan Atkinson and Pamela Stephenson in
Not the Nine O'Clock News.

Griff Rhys Jones, John Lloyd, Arnold Brown, Andy Hamilton, Colin Bostock-Smith, Nigel Planer, Peter Richardson, Philip Pope, Guy Jenkin, Richard Curtis, Howard Goodall, Laurie Rowley, Andrew Marshall, Terry Kyan. **CAST** Rowan Atkinson, Pamela Stephenson, Mel Smith, Griff Rhys Jones, Chris Langham (first season only).

Satirical skit show from the twilight of the seventies, one of the first to break with the oldster comedy (of the >Two Ronnies type) which then dominated the BBC's airwaves. Conducted at a clip of 75 seconds each, the sketches were energetically iconoclastic and wonderfully offensive; everyone from Margaret Thatcher to Angela Rippon to Abba was done over, with a gag about a squashed hedgehog causing apoplexy among the responsible classes (i.e., anyone over twenty-five). The show scored a direct hit on pop music's new romanticism in "Nice Video, Shame About the Song," and on >Monty Python – once the Young Turks of comedy themselves – in a sketch about a humble carpenter who thought he was the new messiah, John Cleese. Other highlights included a spoof studio discussion on football



hooliganism ("Cut off their goolies," agreed the social worker), an interview with Gerald the Gorilla ("Wild? I was absolutely livid"), while the words of the "Trucking Song" passed into legend. The alternative voice-overs of news footage – from which

» ... *American Express*,
that'll do nicely, sir, and would
you like to feel my tits? «

the show took its title – had their moments, too, particularly Pamela Stephenson's bullseye impression of newscaster Angela Rippon's exaggerated pronunciation of African leader "Mugabe." Although Rowan Atkinson, Griff Rhys Jones, Pamela Stephenson, and Mel Smith are fixed in the memory as the presenters, Rhys Jones only joined in season two, to replace Chris Langham (who became a *Muppet Show* writer).

The most obviously punk-influenced comedy show to be broadcast on GB TV, the series launched the careers not only of its performers (who returned in such classics as *Blackadder*, *Alas Smith and Jones*, although Stephenson, the wife of ex-*Hazell* star Nicholas Ball, then of Billy Connolly, eventually quit showbiz to work in L.A. as a psychiatrist), but also of the writers. Richard Curtis went on to pen *Blackadder*, *The Vicar of Dibley*, and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*; Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin begat *Drop the Dead Donkey*; and Andrew Renwick *One Foot in the Grave*.

In 1980 the show won a Silver Rose at the Montreux Festival, and three years later the format was sold to the USA as *Not Necessarily the News* (1983, HBO).

NURSES

USA 1991–4, 67 x 30m, col ABC. Witt-Thomas-Harris. UK tx 1992–4 C4.

CR Susan Harris. **DR** Various, including Terry Hughes, Andy Cardiff, Peter D. Beyt, Bob Berlinger.

CAST Sandy Miller Stephanie Hodge Annie Roland Arnetia Walker Greg Vincent Jeff Altman Julie Milbury Mary Jo Keenen Gina Cuevas Ada Maris Dr. Hank Kaplan Kip Gilman Paco Ortiz Carlos Lacamara Jack Trenton David Rasche Casey MacAfee Loni Anderson Luke Fitzgerald Markus Flanagan Dr. Riskin Florence Stanley.

Medical mirth at Miami's Community Medical Center. The show was loosely spun off from creator Susan Harris' *Empty Nest*, which featured the Center's Dr. Harry Weston; here the featured characters were a group of overworked, underpaid – and mismatched – R.N.s. Nice gal Annie, a single mom, was in charge. Greg was a Vietnam vet, with more than a few cracked slates. Julie was phobic about... germs. Mexican Gina was culturally bemused. Sandy was the caustic-tongued divorcée. Dr. Hank was the one good doctor. It wasn't funny enough to make you spill your bedtime drink, but there were some nice one-liners injected into the scripts. Quipped Sandy to a Ku Klux Klan member admitted (in "Kind, Kompassionate, and Karing") for treatment: "We keep all our sheets here numbered... just in case you were thinking of wearing one home." John Ratzenberger from *Cheers* guested as hospital administrator Mr. Haffner. Also donating cameos were Richard Mulligan, Estelle Getty, and Adam "Batman" West.

**Cut off
their goolies**

THE ODD COUPLE

USA 1970–5, 100 x 25m, col ABC. Paramount TV.
UK tx 1971–5 ITV.

PR Garry K. Marshall, Jerry Belson, Harvey Miller, Sheldon Keller. **DR** Various, including Garry K. Marshall, Jerry Paris, Jay Sandrich, Charles R. Rondeau. **WR** Various, including Garry K. Marshall, Jerry Belson, Peggy Elliot and Ed Sharlach, Dick Bensfield and Peggy Grant, Albert E. Lewis. **MUS** Neal Hefti, Kenyon Hopkins. **CAST** Felix Unger Tony Randall Oscar Madison Jack Klugman Off. Murray Greshner Al Molinaro Speed Garry Walberg Vinnie Larry Gelman Cecily Pigeon Monica Evans Gwendolyn Pigeon Carol Shelly Gloria Unger Janis Hansen Blanche Madison Brett Somers Myrna Turner Penny Marshall.

A compulsively tidy photographer, Felix Unger, shares an apartment with a slobbish sportswriter for the *New York Herald*, Oscar Madison.

Sitcomized extrusion of Neil Simon's hit Broadway play. Wryly, sometimes brilliantly, written, with a successful, bickering chemistry between its principals – but bound to suffer, ever so slightly, in comparison with the 1968 movie version, with its wondrous casting of Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau.

In what would become a habit, producer Garry K. Marshall (>*Happy Days*, >*Laverne and Shirley*) cast his sister Penny in his show, here to play Oscar's secretary, Myrna Turner. Also seen were Oscar and Felix's daffy English upstairs neighbors, the Pigeon sisters; Felix's poker-playing buddies, Speed,

Vinnie, and Murray the cop (Al Molinaro, >*Happy Days*); and Felix and Oscar's ex-spouses – the men were both divorced – Gloria and Blanche. (Blanche was played by actor Jack Klugman's real-life wife, Brett Somers.) By the final season Felix moved out to remarry Gloria, leaving Oscar to return alone to the apartment – which to his joy he could now make as untidy as he wanted. Klugman won a 1974 Golden Globe for his portrayal of Oscar.

In 1982, the sitcom version was revived as *The New Odd Couple*, with two black stars, Ron Glass and Desmond Wilson, in the Felix and Oscar roles. It screened on ABC until 1983.

Nearly twenty years after the original TV show ended its run, Felix and Oscar (played again by Randall and Klugman) were reunited in the 1993 TV movie, *Odd Couple: Together Again*, when Felix was temporarily thrown out of his house by his wife, who wanted to plan for daughter Edna's wedding in peace. He moved back in with Oscar, who was still living in the same old apartment.

OH BROTHER!

UK 1968–70, 19 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR David Climie and Austin Steele. **PR** Duncan Wood, Johnny Downes. **WR** David Climie and Austin Steele. **CAST** Brother Dominic Derek Nimmo Father Anselm Felix Aylmer Master of the Novices Colin Gordon.

Starrer Derek Nimmo as the bumbling Brother Dominic of Mountacres Priory. The character, who was promoted up the clerical career ladder for a sequel, *Oh Father!* (1971, 7 x 30m, BBC1, where

he became curate to Father Harris), was essentially a resurrection of Nimmo's bashful, plummy-voiced Noote from *>All Gas and Gaiters*. And, thus, mildly watchable.

ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE

UK 1990–7, 29 x 30m, 5 x 50–95m, col BBC1.
BBC TV.

CR David Renwick. **PR** Susan Belbin. **DR** Susan Belbin. **WR** David Renwick. **MUS** Eric Idle (theme).
CAST Victor Meldrew Richard Wilson Margaret Meldrew Annette Crosbie Patrick Angus Deayton Pippa Janine Duvitski Nick Swaine Owen Brennan Ronnie Gordon Peters Mildred Jean Challis/Barbara Ashcroft Ronnie Gordon Peters. Video BBC.

David Renwick's acidly amusing "trials of retirement" sitcom following the misadventures of splenetic Victor Meldrew (played by former mortuary assistant Richard Wilson, *Only When I Laugh*) as he sought to understand the illogical behavior of household appliances and everyone else. Particular bugbears were "crap" in the front garden and the failure of mail order firms to supply the correct goods. Meanwhile, his Scottish wife Margaret (Annette Crosbie) found even her considerable patience tried by his diatribes and accidents. In 1992, the Meldrews moved to a modern estate in suburban Bournemouth, where neighbors Patrick (Angus Deayton, *>KYTV, Have I Got News for You*) and his bus-driving wife Pippa, and Nick Swaine, found themselves unfortunate enough to experience close encounters with the

I don't believe it...

grumbling curmudgeon, a man whose view of yuletide was that "All the miseries of the world seem a hundred times worse at Christmas."

Unusually reluctant to stay with the traditional confines of the sitcom, *One Foot in the Grave* broached pathos, even surrealism, yet remained constantly credible owing to Renwick's highly controlled writing. The show proved the most popular BBC sitcom of the early nineties, and sold to America, where it was remade as *Cosby*, with Bill Cosby from *>The Cosby Show*.

Trivia: Meldrew's job before retirement was security guard for Mycroft, Watts & Associates; the Meldrews' first address was 37 Wyngate Drive; the second address was 19 Riverbank. Their telephone numbers were 770301 and 4291.

ON THE BUSES

UK 1970–5, 70 x 25m, col ITV. London Weekend TV.

CR Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney. **PR** Stuart Allen, Bryan Izzard. **DR** Various, including Stuart Allen. **WR** Various, including Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney, Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis, George Layton and Jonathan Lynn. **CAST** Stan Butler Reg Varney Jack Bob Grant Inspector Blake ("Blakey") Stephen Lewis Mum Cicely Courtneidge/Doris Hare Olive Anna Karen Arthur Michael Robbins Jessie (conductress) Yootha Joyce Video Video Collection/LWT.

Like Chesney and Wolfe's earlier series, > *The Rag Trade*, this was a workplace sitcom of cheerfully lowbrow humor. The setting was The Luxton Bus Company, ruled over by the black-hearted Inspector Blakey, tormentor of ferrety driver Stan (ex-music hall performer Reg Varney, > *The Rag Trade*, *Beggar Thy Neighbour*, *Down the Gate*) and his lothario conductor, Jack. Stan lived with his mum, his plain sister Olive (former stripper Anna Karen, later Peg Mitchell's sister in soap

EastEnders), and idle brother-in-law Arthur (Michael Robbins). Stories centered on Stan and Jack's labor-management battles with the dim-witted Blakey (catchphrases: "I 'ate you Butler," "I'll get you Butler") and the attempts by the lads to woo the conductresses. A bus depot in Wood Green, London, provided the exteriors. For many, its gorbimey laffs were just the ticket, and it rode to the top of the BARB ratings in 1970, 1971, and 1972.

Three movies based on the show were released in the cinema: *On the Buses* (the highest-earning British film of 1971), *Mutiny on the Buses*, and *Holiday on the Buses*. None of them was worth the fare. The show's format was sold to America as *Lotsa Luck*.

ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES

UK 1981-96, 33 x 30m, 13 x 50m, 3 x 60m, col
BBC1. BBC TV.

CR John Sullivan. **PR** Ray Butt, Gareth Gwenlan. **DR** Various, including Ray Butt, Gareth Gwenlan, Tony Dow, Martin Shardlow, Susan Blebin, Mandie Fletcher. **WR** John Sullivan. **CAST** Derek "Del Boy" Trotter David Jason Rodney Trotter Nicholas Lyndhurst Grandad Trotter Lennard Pearce Uncle Albert Buster Merryfield Cassandra Parry/Trotter Gwyneth Strong Raquel Tessa Peake-Jones Boycie John Challis Marlene Sue Holderness Mike Fisher Kenneth MacDonald Trigger Roger Lloyd-Pack Denzil Paul Barber Mickey Pearce Patrick Murray Roy Slater Jim Broadbent.

◀◀◀ Reg Varney (right) headed the cast of *On the Buses*.





Uproariously funny John Sullivan sitcom that took its title from the cockney saying, “Only fools and horses work” (also an episode title in Sullivan’s earlier hit, *>Citizen Smith*). It followed the wise guy antics of South London’s Del Boy Trotter (immortally performed by David Jason, *>Open All Hours*), who sold “dodgy gear” from his rundown yellow Robin Reliant – the legend

▲▲▲ *Nicholas Lyndhurst, David Jason and Lennard Pearce in Only Fools and Horses.*

“Trotter’s Independent Trading Company” emblazoned on the side – and had delusions of imminent wealth. The Brut-splashed, gold-swathed Del Boy was helped in the family firm by naïve younger brother, “plonker” Rodney (Nicholas

You plonker

Lyndhurst, >*Butterflies*), the proud possessor of two GCSEs. They lived in a council flat (no. 368) in high-rise Mandela House, Peckham, with Grandad, and then (after the death of actor Lennard Pearce) old sea dog Uncle Albert. Also seen was a coterie of credibly bizarre friends, most of whom, like Del (favorite drink: Drambuie and grapefruit juice) were habitués of the Nag's Head: brain-fused road sweeper Trigger (Roger Lloyd Pack, *The Vicar of Dibley*, father of Emily Lloyd); gangsterlike businessman Boycie and his good-time gal wife, Marlene ("all the boys like Marlene"); and nerve-shattered lorry driver Denzil. Although Sullivan had originally intended the sitcom to be about "three men of different generations, all without a woman in their lives," by the early nineties Rodney had married the middle-class Cassandra and Del Boy had fallen in love with former stripogram/actress Raquel (Tessa Peake-Jones, *So Haunt Me*, *Up the Garden Path*), who later bore him a son, Damian ("The Son of Del" episode).

The 1991 season saw the last full series of *Only Fools and Horses*, although it continued to exist in Christmas specials (which, like >*Morecambe and Wise* of yore, became the turkey and cranberry sauce of British yuletide TV) until a "final" three-parter in 1996, in which Del and Rodney walked off into the sunset after finding a watch worth £6 million in their garage. A record 24.35 million viewers tuned in.

OPEN ALL HOURS

UK 1976–85, 25 x 30m, col BBC2/1. BBC TV. US tx 1982 TEC.

CR Roy Clarke. **PR** Sydney Lotterby. **DR** Sydney Lotterby. **WR** Roy Clarke. **MUS** Max Harris.

CAST Arkwright Ronnie Barker Granville David Jason Nurse Gladys Emmanuel Lynda Baron Mrs. Featherstone Stephanie Cole Mavis Maggie Ollerenshaw.

Roy Clarke (>*Last of the Summer Wine*, >*Keeping Up Appearances*) situation comedy set in a Yorkshire corner shop, which opened as a 1974 *Comedy Playhouse* and received its first run on BBC2, where it picked up only modest trade. A repeat on BBC1 in 1979, however, took it to the very pinnacle of the ratings.

Ronnie Barker (*Hark at Barker*, >*The Two Ronnies*) starred as the stammering, scroogelike shopkeeper Arkwright who, in between counting his money, bullied his daydreaming assistant, nephew Gr-Gr-ranville, and lusted after big-bosomed, Morris Minor-driving Nurse Gladys Emmanuel. To counter the rising tide of supermarkets, Arkwright opened his shop first thing in the morning till last thing at night, and conned his customers into buying goods they did not want. Among the regulars in the shop were Mrs. Featherstone (Stephanie Cole, later *Waiting for God*) and Mavis.

Gr-Gr-ranville

Seaside postcard-type laughs, always crucially dependent on Barker's performance as Arkwright. But then, Clarke had tailor-made the part for Barker (it was originally tried out in Barker's *Seven of One* show), and he was never s-s-s-s-short of superb.

The format sold to America as *Open All Night* (1981–2), with George Dzundza as Gordon Feester, the owner of a Californian "364" store.

PARKER LEWIS CAN'T LOSE

USA 1990–3, Approx 60 x 30m, col FOX. Clyde Phillips Productions/Columbia Pictures TV. UK tx 1992–BSkyB.

CR Clyde Phillips and Lon Diamond. **EXEC PR** Clyde Phillips. **PR** Lon Diamond, Russell Marcus, Robert Lloyd Lewis. **DR** Various, including Max Tash, Bryan Spicer, Andy Tennant, Rob Bowman, Thom Eberhardt. **WR** Various, including Lon Diamond and Clyde Phillips. **MUS** Dennis McCarthy. **CAST** Parker Lloyd Lewis Corin Nemec Mikey Randall Billy Jayne Jerry Steiner Troy W. Slaten Principal Ms. Grace Musso Melanie Chartoff Mr. Martin Lewis Timothy Stack Mrs. Lewis Anne Bloom/Mary Ellen Trainor Annie Sloan Jennifer Guthrie Francis Lawrence "Larry" Kubiak Abraham Benrubi.

Initially slated as a carbon copy of *Ferris Bueller* (the movie and the TV show) this US sitcom chronicling the machinations and misadventures of ice cool, rule-defying Santa Domingo High School student Parker Lewis actually had a style all its own. Made with a single camera, full of unusual angles

and special video effects, it erred toward a cartoonlike bizarreness which ensured youth appeal. Adults liked it, too.

Unfortunately for Lewis (motto: "Not a problem"), his quest for ultimate cool during puberty was frequently frustrated by his little sister Shelly. Not to mention principal Grace Musso. Mikey and Jerry were Parker's best buds, Annie Sloan his girlfriend. From 1993 the show went out as plain *Parker Lewis*.

THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY

USA 1970–4, 96 x 25m, col ABC. Columbia Pictures Corporation. UK tx 1971–4 BBC1.

CR Bernard Slade. **EXEC PR** Bob Claver. **PR** Paul Junger Witt, Michael Warren, Mel Swope, Bob Claver, William S. Bickley. **DR** Various, including Bob Claver, E. W. Swackhamer, Lou Antonio, Russ Mayberry, Claudio Guzman, Earl Bellamy, Herb Wallerstein, Jerry London, Ralph Senensky, Lee Philips, Richard Kinon. **MUS** Wes Farrell and Diane Hilderbrand ("When We're Singing" theme and lyrics), Danny Janssen ("Come On Get Happy" lyrics), Hugh Montenegro. **CAST** Shirley Partridge Shirley Jones Keith Partridge David Cassidy Laurie Partridge Susan Dey Danny Partridge Danny Bonaduce Christopher Partridge Jeremy Gelwaks/Brian Forster Tracy Partridge Suzanne Crough Reuben Kinkaid (manager) Dave Madden Rickey Stevens Ricky Segall.

►► Come on, get happy! The Partridge Family go on the road again. The musical sitcom launched David Cassidy (right) to teenybop stardom.



In which a widowed suburban mom, Shirley Partridge, joins her kids' band as a singer – and, hey presto, they become a big sensation. Embarking in a painted school bus, the Partridge family duly tour the US of A making music and having squeaky-clean sitcom fun.

Though Shirley Jones was ostensibly the star, her real-life stepson David Cassidy – who played the eldest Partridge boy, Keith – quickly emerged as the real draw, and for a brief rocket-glare moment became the biggest teen idol on Earth.

For the record, *The Partridge Family* line-up was: Shirley Partridge, sixteen-year-old Keith, fifteen-year-old Laurie, ten-year-old Danny, seven-year-old Chris, and five-year-old Tracy. The dog was Simone. In the 1973–4 season, next-door neighbor Ricky (aged a cute four) joined the band. Among the *Family's* spin-off chart hits were the sixties covers, “Breaking Up is Hard to Do,” and “Walking in the Rain.”

The guest actor list included Jodie Foster (as Julie Lawrence), Farah Fawcett, and Cheryl Ladd. Richard Pryor and Lou Gossett, Jr. both appeared in the immortal “Soul Club” episode, in which Shirley organized a block party to save their characters' Detroit nightclub. (Keith Partridge, of course, wrote a song for the occasion, “It's a Sort of Afro thing,” and Black Panthers danced in the street to it...)

A 1974 animated spin-off, *Partridge Family: 2200 A.D.* (directed by Joy Batchelor and John Halas), posited the phenomenon of widow Partridge (her forename changed to Connie and voiced by Sherry Alberoni) leading the clan on a rock'n'roll tour of the planets.

PETTICOAT JUNCTION

USA 1963–9, 148 x 25m, col. Filmways. UK tx 1964– ITV.

CR Paul Henning. **PR** Paul Henning, Charles Stewart, Al Simon, Dick Wesson. **MUS** Paul Henning and Curt Massey (theme). **CAST** Kate Bradley Bea Benaderet Billie Jo Jeannine Riley /Gunilla Hutton Bobbie Jo Pat Woddell/Lori Saunders Betty Jo Linda Kaye Henning Homer Bedloe Charles Lane Uncle Joe Edgar Buchanan Charley Pratt Smiley Burnett Floyd Smoot Rufe Davis Dr. Janet Craig June Lockhart Fred Ziffel Hank Patterson Sam Drucker Frank Cady.

Countrified farce about the proprietress of the Shady Rest Hotel, at the end of the Hooterville line. She was Kate Bradley, and she was supported in her endeavors to keep the hotel running and the steam-age line open (bad-guy rail executive Homer Bedloe of C. F. & W. wanted to close it down) by her three buxom, beautiful daughters, Billie Jo, Bobby Jo, and Betty Jo. Zany Uncle Joe was the manager.

The show was created for actress Bea Benaderet, formerly elderly cousin Pearl Bodine in >*The Beverly Hillbillies*, by Paul Henning, with a faith which was well justified. Benaderet (and the rest of the cast) rose above its studio-bound production, and the show ran for 148 episodes. Benaderet herself died in the sixth season, which led to a loss of quality in the last episodes. Henning's own daughter, Linda Kaye Henning, played Betty Jo. The show was closely related to another Henning production, >*Green Acres*.

THE PHIL SILVERS SHOW

USA 1955–9, 143 (inc pilot) x 30m, 1 x 60m, bw
CBS. CBS. UK tx 1957–61 BBC1.

CR Nat Hiken. **PR** Nat Hiken, Al De Caprio, Edward J. Montagne. **DR** Nat Hiken, Al De Caprio. **WR** Various, including Nat Hiken, Arnold Auerbach, Terry Ryan, Barry Blitzer, Aaron Rubin, Vincent Bogert, Harvey Orkin, Tony Webster, Coleman Jacoby, Arnie Rosen, Billy Friedberg, Leonard Stern, Phil Sharp, Neil Simon. **MUS** John Strauss. **CAST** M.Sgt. Ernie Bilko *Phil Silvers* Cpl. Rocco Barbella *Harvey Lembeck* Pvt. Sam Fender *Herbie Faye* Col. John Hall *Paul Ford* Pvt. Duane Doberman *Maurice Gosfield* Sgt. Rupert Ritzik *Joe E. Ross* Cpl. Henshaw *Allan Melvin* Pvt. Dino Paparelli *Billy Sands* Pvt. Zimmerman *Mickey Freeman* Nell Hall *Hope Sansberry* Sgt. Grover *Jimmy Little* Sgt. Joan Hogan *Elizabeth Fraser*.
Video Fox/Columbia House.

Master Sergeant Ernie Bilko, based at mythical Fort Baxter, Kansas, was the biggest and most charming rogue in the US Army. With little to do in the world of the Midwest, Bilko was incurably occupied in

►► *Phil Silvers as the irrepressible Bilko.*



get-rich-quick schemes, spending most of his time gambling (in the episode “The Twitch,” he even managed to run a book on an officer’s lectures on Beethoven), conjuring up scams, and out-maneuvering his unfortunate and all too trusting commanding officer, the hapless Colonel Hall, who was reduced to calling his post “the Little Las Vegas.” The Bilko-Hall relationship was central to the genius of the show: a modern reworking of the dumb master–clever servant relationship found as far back as ancient Greek theater. Highly resourceful, Bilko could talk his way out of any situation. His example was followed by most of his subordinates whom he involved as willing aides and accomplices (although he was not above fleecing them in times of desperation). A favorite target for his con tricks was the ill-fated Rupert

Ritzik. Sergeant Joan Hogan, who worked in the base’s office, was Bilko’s mild romantic interest during the first three seasons, but was later phased out. Bilko also endlessly flattered the Colonel’s wife (“Hello Miss – the Colonel didn’t tell me his daughter was visiting – why it’s *Mrs.* Hall...”), with the result that she was one of his staunchest defenders. Bilko’s wooing technique was known as the “Bilko Blitz,” an unbeatable

combination of a "man in uniform, moonlight, and music." Of course, underneath the Machiavellian clown exterior, Bilko had a heart of gold; in the classic spoof on Elvis joining the army, "Rock'n'Roll Rookie," Bilko eventually refused to exploit his new musical recruit, "Elvin Pelvin," after overhearing him sing "Bilko is the Best" to the tune of "Love Me Tender." Down on the guest list, the show provided early screen appearances for Alan Alda (as Carlisle Thompson in "Bilko, the Art Lover"), Fred Gwynne, and Dick Van Dyke. A musical special, "Keep in Step," was released in 1959, the same season that saw Bilko and entourage move from Kansas to Camp Fremont, California ("a lousy idea," admitted producer Edward J. Montagne, "but by then we had told all the jokes"). In a moral conclusion to the long-running satire on army life, the final episode, "Weekend Colonel," saw Bilko behind bars. Colonel Hall had won the war.

The original title was *You'll Never Get Rich*, which remained as the subtitle when the series became *The Phil Silvers Show* two months after its premiere. Although there was fine support from the cast – headed by Paul Ford's Hall and Maurice Gosfield's Doberman ("the slob of the century") – it was Silvers's show in name and fact, his oxygen-consuming performance frequently leaving everyone else to gasp "But Sarge...!" It was perhaps the greatest sitcom act of all time, and won Silvers three Emmys.

Silvers was born Philip Silver in New York, the son of Jewish immigrants. He made his show business debut at the age of eleven, and featured in numerous films over the next decade, signing to MGM in 1940. But it was as Bilko that he found

But Sarge...!

fame, and the character overshadowed everything he did thereafter. A *New Phil Silvers Show*, in which he played maintenance superintendent Harry Grafton, lasted only the 1963–4 season on CBS. *Just Polly and Me*, *The Slowest Gun in the West*, and *Summer in New York* fared even worse. After several years of illness and clinical depression, Silvers died in 1985.

The Bilko character, meanwhile, turned up in cartoon form in Hanna-Barbera's *Boss Cat* (which even had Gosfield voicing his 'toon representation, blue Benny the Ball). In 1996, a movie version of *Bilko* was released (directed by Jonathan Lynn) with Steve Martin as the eponymous conman, but it never quite came off, and viewed like endless foreplay.

PLEASE SIR!

UK 1968–9, 40 x 25m, col ITV. London Weekend TV.

CR John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. **PR** Mark Stuart, Phil Casson. **DR** Mark Stuart. **WR** John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. **CAST** Bernard Hedges John Alderton Price Richard Davies Doris Ewell Joan Sanderson Norman Potter Deryck Guyler Mr. Cromwell (the Headmaster) Noel Howlett Mr. "Smithy" Smith Eric Chitty Eric Duffy Peter Cleall Frankie Abbot David Barry Maureen Bullock Liz Gebhardt Peter Craven Malcolm McFee Dennis Dunstable Peter Denyer Sharon Eversleigh Penny Spencer Penny Wheeler/Hedges Jill Kerman.

Actor John Alderton, in his first starring role since playing Dr. Moon in soap *Emergency – Ward 10*, was sensitive teacher Bernard “Privet” Hedges, the form master of unruly 5C at inner-city Fenn Street School. The class – played by actors clearly much older than fifth-formers – caused Bernard considerable heartache, but many of the show’s best moments came in the staff room with the interchanges between cynical Welsh teacher Price and the straight-laced deputy head, Doris Ewell. Norman Potter was the uniformed, Hitlerian school porter. Towards the end of the run, Hedges acquired a wife in Penny Wheeler. The show was inspired by the 1967 movie *To Sir with Love*, starring Sidney Poitier, Judy Geeson, and Lulu.

After Alderton left *Please Sir!* (to eventually appear in *My Wife Next Door*, and *>No – Honestly*), the series continued for several seasons as *The Fenn Street Gang*, concentrating on 5C’s antics after leaving their alma mater. This was likewise created and (mainly) written by John Esmonde and Bob Larbey, who then went on to pen *>Get Some In*, the self-sufficiency sitcom *>The Good Life*, *Ever Decreasing Circles*; with Larbey alone creating *A Fine Romance* and *As Time Goes By*.

The format of *Please Sir!* was sold to the USA as *>Welcome Back, Kotter*, where it launched the career of John Travolta.

POLICE SQUAD!

USA 1982, 6 x 30m, col ABC. Paramount TV. UK tx 1982.

CR Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker.

PR Bob Weiss. **DR** Jerry Zucker, Reza S. Badiyi, Paul Krasny, Joe Dante, George Stanford Brown, Jim Abrahams. **WR** Various, including Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker, Tino Insana, Robert Wuhl, Nancy Steen, Pat Proft, Neil Thompson.



▶▶▶ John Alderton was the trouble-struck teacher of 5C in *Please Sir!*



MUS *Ira Newborn*. **CAST** Detective Frank Drebin *Leslie Nielsen* Captain Ed Hocken *Alan North* Norberg *Peter Lupus* Abraham Lincoln *Rex Hamilton* Johnny the Snitch *William Duell* Al John *Wardell* Ted Olson *Ed Williams*. Video *Paramount*.

This short-lived spoof police show came from the creators of *Airplane!* and featured that film's star, Leslie Nielsen (also *The New Breed*, > *The Golden Girls*), as fearless, deadpan Inspector Frank Drebin of Police Squad. The comedy came from a deluge of sight gags (giant policeman Al was only ever seen from the neck down), non sequiturs, and literalisms: when Drebin requested a colleague to "Cover me!" the officer did so – with a coat. In his fight to keep the streets clean, Drebin had the help of forensic scientist Ted Olson (who had an unhealthy interest in young children) and stoolie shoeshine Johnny, who could give more information on any given subject than the *Encyclopedia Americana*. Although it fared abysmally on TV (ABC executives reportedly believed it required too much concentration from the average viewer), it became the basis for the successful movies *The Naked Gun* ("From the Files of Police Squad!"), *Naked Gun 2½*, and *Naked Gun 3½*.

The six episodes were: A Substantial Gift (The Broken Promise)/Ring of Fear (A Dangerous Assignment)/The Butler Did It (A Bird in the Hand)/Revenge and Remorse (The Guilty Alibi)/Rendezvous at Big Gulch (Terror in the Neighborhood)/Testimony of Evil (Dead Men Don't Laugh).

◀◀◀ *I said cover me, Al... Leslie Nielsen deadpans it up as fearless Lieutenant Frank Drebin in Police Squad!*

PORRIDGE

UK 1974–7, 18 x 30m, 2 x c60m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR *Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais*. **PR** *Sydney Lotterby*. **DR** *Sydney Lotterby*. **WR** *Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais*. **CAST** *Fletcher Ronnie Barker* Godber *Richard Beckinsale* Chief Officer Mackay *Fulton MacKay* Warden Barrowclough *Brian Wilde* Mr. Venables, the Governor *Michael Barrington* Lukewarm *Christopher Biggins* Blanco *David Jason* Warren *Tony Osiba* 'Orrible Ives *Ken Jones* Harry Grout *Peter Vaughan* Heslop *Brian Glover* Harris *Ronald Lacey* Ingrid *Patricia Brake*. Video *BBC*



Norman Stanley Fletcher... you are an habitual criminal who accepts arrest as an occupational hazard and presumably accepts imprisonment in the same casual manner...



So intoned the judge over the opening credits of *Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais's* (> *The Likely Lads* > *Auf Wiedersehn*, *Pet*) sitcom about an aging Muswell Hill lag sentenced to a five-year term at HM Prison Slade in darkest Cumbria. There the genial, crafty, quick-quipping Fletcher (*Ronnie Barker*, *Hark at Barker*, > *Open All Hours*) shared a cell with naïve Birmingham offender Godber (*Richard Beckinsale*, > *The Lovers*, > *Rising Damp*), and generally ran comic rings around the warders – notably strutting Scotsman Chief Officer Mackay and kindly (but dim) Warden Barrowclough – while earning the awestruck admiration of his fellow cons. These included Bunny Warren (*Sam Kelly*, > *'Allo*,

'Allo), brain-dead murderer Blanco (David Jason, >*Only Fools and Horses*), gay cook Lukewarm, and "Black Jock" McClaren. Harry Grout (the frightening Peter Vaughan, >*Citizen Smith*) was the Mr. Big who still ran his racket from the prison wing. Mr. Venables was the do-gooder governor. By the end of the run, Rawley, the judge who had sentenced Fletcher, had also joined the inmates of Slade (imprisoned on corruption charges), and Fletcher himself had tired of prison life and was determined never to reappear behind bars again.

Porridge was stacked with shining performances, brilliant characterization and droll humor. It was derived from a play, "Prisoner and Escort," seen on Barker's 1973 anthology for BBC2, *Seven of One*. A sequel, *Going Straight* (1978, 6 x 30m), followed Fletcher's fortunes on release and his resumed life with his family. His son, Raymond, was played by Nicholas Lyndhurst (>*Butterflies*, *Only Fools and Horses*). A cinema version of *Porridge*, with the TV cast, was released by Black Lion/Witzend in 1979.

Classic episodes include: "A Day Out"; "Men without Women" (in which Fletcher, with the connivance of wife and daughter, hatches a compassionate leave plan for a weekend at home); and "Final Stretch."

QUARK

USA 1978, 1 x 60m, 7 x 30m, col NBC. NBC/Columbia.

CR Buck Henry. **PR** Buck Henry, David Gerber, Mace Neufeld, Bruce Johnson. **DR** Peter H. Hunt, Hy Averback. **WR** Buck Henry, Steve Zacharias.

MUS Perry Botkin, Jr. **CAST** Adam Quark Richard Benjamin Gene/Jean Tim Thomerson Ficus Panderato Richard Kelton Betty I Tricia Barnstable Betty II Cyb Barnstable Andy the Robot Bobby Porter Otto Palindrome Conrad Janis The Head Alan Caillou.

It is 2222 A.D., and Commander Adam Quark is head of an interplanetary garbage crew whose mission on behalf of the United Galaxy Sanitation Patrol is to clean up the Milky Way. In order to receive his assignments he returns his patrol ship to giant space station Perma One, operation headquarters, where disembodied Secretary General The Head rules the universe from a TV screen. Orders also come from Superintendent Otto Palindrome (Conrad Janis, >*Mork and Mindy*), Perm One's woolly-brained chief architect with four arms.

Under Quark himself served First Officer Gene/Jean, a transmute with male and female chromosomes who was sometimes tough and sometimes delicate; Science Officer Ficus, a humanoid vegetable; Andy the Robot; and Ergo, the ship's mascot (a temperamental blob of protoplasm with one eye). Glamorous ex-cheerleaders Betty I and Betty II (a clone), who were so similar that no one could tell them apart, were the co-pilots.

While ridding the galaxy of litter, this motley crew met with adventure and such colorful galactic inhabitants as the evil High Gorgon, Zoltar the Magnificent, and Zorgon the Malevolent. But the series was first and foremost a spoof on space adventure epics such as *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Flash Gordon*, and, especially, *Star Wars*.

Quark first appeared as a pilot in 1977 and débuted as a TV series in 1978 with a one-hour special. Its slick blend of in-jokes, innuendo and slapstick gained a devoted cult following but not a mass audience. Termination followed. The mastermind of the show was Buck Henry, who had earlier hit the jackpot with his sixties spy spoof, *>Get Smart*.

RAB C NESBITT

UK 1990–3, 18 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

PR Colin Gilbert. **DR** Colin Gilbert. **WR** Ian Pattison.
CAST Rab C. Nesbitt Gregor Fisher Mary Nesbitt Elaine C. Smith Jamesie Cotter Tony Roper Gash Nesbitt Andrew Fairlie Burney Nesbitt Eric Cullen.

The string-vested Glasgow street philosopher made his début in *Naked Video* sketches, before spinning off into a series (via 1989 one-off *Rab C Nesbitt's Seasonal Greet*) which took the British sitcom for a header into the sewer.

Operating on a perpetually full tank of alcohol, Nesbitt (a touching injured-warrior performance by Gregor Fisher) ranted in foul-mouthed Scottish about life and the establishment in between raucous squabbles with wife Mary and revolting spawn “Wee Burney” (Eric Cullen, d. 1996) and Gash. At least they were united in killing the rats which infested their apartment (the weapon of choice being a frying pan). Also seen was Nesbitt’s lugubrious drinking partner Jamesie.

Painfully, perceptively funny.

Gregor Fisher, who played Nesbitt, later starred

in *The Tales of Para Handy*, a 1994 revival of Neil Munro’s stories about a Scottish cargo boat skipper, which had first sailed the airwaves as the 1959 show, *Para Handy – Master Mariner*.

THE RAG TRADE

UK 1961–3, 35 x 30m, bw BBC. BBC TV.

CR Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney. **PR** Dennis Main Wilson. **WR** Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney.
CAST Paddy Miriam Karlin Mr. Fenner Peter Jones Reg Reg Varney Carole Sheila Hancock Little Lil Esma Cannon Judy Barbara Windsor Sandra Sheena Marshe Janet Amanda Reiss Betty Patricia Denys Myrtle Claire Davenport Olive Stella Tanner Gloria Carmel Cryan.

Everybody Out!

London’s East End workshop of Fenner Fashions was the setting for Wolfe and Chesney’s situation comedy of workplace strife, much loved but clearly indebted to the cinema hit *I’m Alright Jack*.

Militant machine shop steward Paddy (Miriam Karlin, later *So Haunt Me*) led the work-shy women workers, with her ever-ready cry of “Everybody out!” becoming something of a national catchphrase. Their complaints against unscrupulous boss Mr. Fenner (Peter Jones) were usually well founded, however, since he was always on the lookout for ways and means of making them work more for less. A not inaccurate picture of shopfloor life in the

early sixties, it was assisted by a cast of heavenly configuration, featuring – in addition to Karlin – Reg Varney (later >*On the Buses*), Sheila Hancock, Peter Jones, and Barbara Windsor (>*Carry On Laughing*). The format sold to the USA as *The Rag Business*, set in the L.A. dressmaking industry, but failed to make it beyond a 1978 pilot for ABC.

For a crude revival of *The Rag Trade* by LWT (1977–8, 26 x 30m, col), a decade after the original closed down, only Karlin and Jones resumed their old roles. New faces seen included Christopher Beeny, Anna Karen (>*On the Buses*), and Gillian Taylforth (*EastEnders*).

RED DWARF

UK 1988–, 42 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV/A Paul Jackson Production/Grant Naylor Productions.

CR Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. **PR** Ed Bye, Rob Grant, Doug Naylor, Hilary Bevan Jones. **DR** Ed Bye, Juliet May, Grant Naylor. **WR** Various, including Rob Grant, Doug Naylor, Paul Alexander, James Hendries. **MUS** Howard Goodall (theme). **CAST** Dave Lister Craig Charles Arnold Rimmer Chris Barrie Cat Danny John-Jules Kryten David Ross/Robert Llewellyn Holly Norman Lovett/Hattie Hayridge Kochanski Claire Grogan/Chloe Annett. Video BBC.

Space-age sitcom. This tale of intergalactic curry-eating slob Dave Lister (Craig Charles, *Captain Butler*), the last human alive, originated as a sketch for BBC Radio 4's *Son of Cliché*, but owed much to such sci-fi screen vehicles as *Dark Star*, >*Quark*, and >*Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. As

incarnated for TV, Dave was a twenty-third-century Liverpudlian with a penchant for derivatives of the expletive “smeg,” and the sole survivor of a radiation leak aboard the mining vessel of the title. Brought out of a three-million-year-long “stasis” by ship's computer Holly, Lister was given company in the form of a hologram of his ex-boss, the pompous Arnold Rimmer (Chris Barrie, >*Spitting Image*, >*The Brittas Empire*). Also aboard was Cat, a narcissistic, Little Richard-type dude who had evolved in the ship's hold from Lister's pet feline, and was a humanoid except for fangs and six nipples. (Alas for hip Cat, he had an alter ego – the far-from-cool Duane Dibley.)

Much of the humor of the show, especially in the first two seasons, came out of the characters and their interrelationships, but was also schoolboyish (“No way are these my boxer shorts – these bend”) and bizarre (the Talking Toaster). Indeed it could be described as >*The Young Ones* in space. But the comedy was generous and skillful, and it was also more serious than initially appeared. Rimmer was a semiparody of a Thatcherite – Lister was the proletarian end of the class struggle aboard *Red Dwarf* – and two shows from season four, “Dimension Jump” and “Meltdown,” were held back by the BBC at the time of the Gulf War because of their antiwar content. A weakness was the writers' tendency to borrow plots from other sci-fi works wholesale; the time-reverse idea in the

Smeg...



▲▲▲ *Going not so boldly into space, the crew of Red Dwarf.*

episode "Backwards" is suspiciously similar to that in Philip K. Dick's sci-fi classic, *Counterclock World*.

On its first voyages along the airwaves, *Red Dwarf* bumped along the bottom of the ratings (although it scored high in audience appreciation). The third season, which opened with "Backwards" – a classic for all its apparent plagiarism – saw changes in format, and the introduction of more recognizably sci-fi situations. The personnel also changed as stand-up comic Hattie Hayridge replaced Norman Lovett as Holly, while the

subservient android Kryten (who was programmed to be polite, and thus could only manage "sme" as an insult) became a regular crew fixture. The production values were also upped, and the series won the World Television Award for its special effects. In 1994, *Red Dwarf* was awarded an International Emmy. By this time, Lister had mislaid *Red Dwarf*, and the boys were rocketing around the universe in the *Starbug*. After a break of three years (largely caused by cocreator Rob Grant jumping ship, and the trial – and subsequent acquittal – of actor Craig Charles on a rape charge), the show was revived from TV stasis to become BBC2's longest-running sitcom. In the interval, addicted fans had

made it the Corporation's most popular video buy. Actress Chloe Annett (previously teen soap *Byker Grove*) replaced former Altered Images singer Claire Grogan as the recurring character Kochanski, Lister's unrequited (and holographic) love interest. Two attempts were made to launch *Red Dwarf* on US airwaves – the first, in 1992, featuring Jane Leeves from *Frasier* – but both proved abortive.

The episodes to date have been: season 1: The End/Future Echoes/Balance of Power/Waiting for God/Confidence and Paranoia/ME; season 2: Kryten (guest Tony Slattery)/Better Than Life/Thanks for the Memory/Stasis Leak/Queeg/Parallel Universe/; season 3: Backwards/Marooned/Polymorph/Body Swap/Timeslides (guest Koo Stark)/The Last Day; season 4: Camille/DNA/Justice/White Hole/Dimension Jump/Meltdown; season 5: Holoship/The Inquisitor/Terrorform/Quarantine/Demons and Angels/Back to Reality; season 6: Psirens/Legion/Gunmen of the Apocalypse/Emohawk-Polymorph 3/Rimmerworld/Out of Time; season 7: Tikka to Ride/Stoke Me a Clipper/Ouroborus/Duck Soup/Blue/Beyond a Joke/Epideme/Nanarchy.



It's cold outside, there's no kind of atmosphere,

I'm all alone, more or less.

Let me fly far away from here,

Fun, fun, fun in the sun, sun, sun.

I want to live shipwrecked and comatosed

Drinking fresh mango juice,

Goldfish shoals nibbling at my toes

Fun, fun, fun in the sun, sun, sun,

Fun, fun, fun in the sun, sun, sun...



REN AND STIMPY

USA 1991–, 38+ x 25m, col Nickelodeon.

Carbunkle/SpumCo/Nickelodeon. UK tx 1994– BBC2.

CR John Kricfalusi (aka John K.). **EXEC PR** Vanessa Coffey. **PR** John Kricfalusi, Bob Camp, Jim Smith, Jim Ballentine, Frank Sapperstein. **DR** Various, including John Kricfalusi, Bob Camp, Vincent Waller, Greg Vanzo. **WR** Various, including John Kricfalusi, Bob Camp, Vincent Waller, Jim Smith, Will McRobb, Bill Wray, Jim Gomez, Elinor Brake, Richard Purcel. **CAST** (voices) Ren Hoek John Kricfalusi/Bob Camp Stimpson J. "Stimp" Cat Billy West.

Happy Happy Joy Joy... Launched on US kiddie cable channel Nickelodeon in 1991 as part of its promotion of creator-based animations, *Ren and Stimpy* featured an irritable, nuclear-fried chihuahua and a stupid fat cat of those names. And an avalanche of lateral jokes, surreal graphics, grossed-out violence and bodily functions. In one memorable but not atypical episode ("Big House Blues"), the pair escaped from a dog pound after Stimpy coughed up a fur ball on Ren so that he was mistaken for a poodle and taken home by a kindly girl. The stories went far into outlandishness ("The Rubber Nipples Salesman"), deep into sacrosanct American culture ("Out West" featured red-necked Western folk singing "The Lord Loves a Hanging"), and tended to bite the hand that fed them by viciously satirizing children's TV – especially the advertisements on which Nickelodeon depended for its revenue.

Educationalists issued dire warnings, but what

the heck, it made great television – for adults. Understanding that Ren and Stimpy was a sly joke mostly lost on its supposed preteen audience, many networks and stations gave it a respectable evening, even nighttime, airing.

It was too good to last. Eventually, Nickelodeon dispensed with creator Kricfalusi's services (either because of his inability to meet deadlines or because the product, particularly the homoerotic relationship between Ren and Stimpy, was becoming too controversial), and lesser men and women took the cartoon's helm.

RHODA

USA 1974–8, 110 x 25m, col CBS. MTM. UK tx 1974–80 BBC2.

CR James L. Brooks, Allan Burns. **EXEC PR** James L. Brooks, Allan Burns. **PR** Lorenzo Music, David Davis, Charlotte Brown. **DR** Various, including James Burrows, Charlotte Brown, Bob Claver, Howard Storm, Alan Rafkin, Joan Darling. **WR** Various,

▼▼ Valerie Harper (left) won an Emmy for her starring turn as Rhoda.



including *Charlotte Brown*, *David Davis*. **MUS** Billy Goldenburg. **CAST** Rhoda Morgenstern Gerard Valerie Harper Brenda Morgenstern Julie Kavner Ida Morgenstern Nancy Walker Martin Morgenstern Harold J. Gould Joe Gerard David Groh Gary Levy Ron Silver Carlton the doorman (voice only) Lorenzo Music Myrna Morgenstein Barbara Sharma Jack Doyle Ken McMillan Ramon Diaz, Jr. Rafael Campos Johnny Venture Michael Delano Donny Gerard (Joe's son) Todd Turquand.

The character of Rhoda first appeared as the overweight, overanxious neighbor in *>The Mary Tyler Moore Show* before being slimmed down, made more obviously Jewish, and given a show of her own. She was also relocated to New York, where she initially lived with her parents, Ida and Martin, before moving in with her dowdy sister Brenda (played by Julie Kavner, later the voice of Marge in *>The Simpsons*). She also got a job as a window dresser and fell in love with Joe, owner of the New York Wrecking Company. They married (in the highest-rated TV special of the 1974 season) but separated soon after – largely because the scriptwriters decided that the abrasive but vulnerable Rhoda worked comically best as a single girl, although she later took up with Vegas lounge singer Johnny Venture in an on/off relationship. Also seen was Rhoda's friend Myrna Morgenstein, and towards the end of the run Rhoda joined Jack Doyle and Ramon Diaz in the shaky Doyle Costume Company. Unseen but heard was Carlton, the mad doorman at Rhoda's apartment block. In Britain, *Rhoda* was first aired in BBC2's "Tankee Treble" slot in autumn 1974,

and was so popular that it was screened weekly from February 1975.

Valerie Harper won the 1976 Outstanding Lead Comedy Actress Emmy for her portrayal of Rhoda.

RIPPING YARNS

UK 1977–9, 9 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

CR Michael Palin and Terry Jones. **PR** Alan J. W. Bell.

DR Terry Hughes, Alan J. W. Bell, Jim Franklin.

WR Michael Palin and Terry Jones. **CAST** Michael Palin.

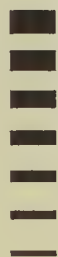
Irreverent parodies of Boy's Own literature from those cheeky ex-*>Monty Pythons* Michael Palin and Terry Jones.

A 1976 one-off, Tompkinson's Schooldays (BBC2), inaugurated the series, which presented such delightful dottiness as stiff-upper-lipped British heroes crossing the Andes by frog (Captain Snetterton), and escaping from the ever-so-secure Stalag Luft 112B. No matter the scenario, the period detail was spot on. Palin played the lead character in each Yarn, and those providing cameos were John Cleese and Eric Idle. It was awarded a BAFTA for light entertainment.

The episodes were: Tompkinson's Schooldays/The Testing of Eric Olthwaite/Escape from Stalag Luft 112B/Murder at Moorstones Manor/Across the Andes by Frog/The Curse of the Claw/Whinfrey's Last Case/Golden Gordon/Roger of the Raj.

►► *Captain Snetterton (Michael Palin) puts on a stiff upper lip in Ripping Yarns.*





RISING DAMP

UK 1974–8, 28 x 30m, col ITV. Yorkshire TV.

CR Eric Chappell. **PR** Vernon Lawrence, Ronnie Baxter, Len Lurcuck, Ian MacNaughton. **DR** Vernon Lawrence, Ronnie Baxter, Len Lurcuck, Ian MacNaughton. **WR** Eric Chappell. **CAST** Rupert Rigsby Leonard Rossiter Philip Smith Don Warrington Alan Moore Richard Beckinsale Miss Ruth Jones Frances de la Tour Spooner Derek Newark Brenda Gay Rose.

Originally a stage show called *Banana Box*, Eric Chappell's masterly series about the sneering, jeering landlord Rigsby ("My-y-y God...") and his seedy Northern boarding house was one of ITV's few quality comedy hits in the seventies. Almost as obnoxious a character as the elder Steptoe or Alf Garnett, the arms-folded, eyes-rolling Rigsby (dressed always in a sleeveless cardigan) lusted ceaselessly after his one female boarder, spinster university administrator Ruth, and endlessly battled with his two male boarders, effete medical student Alan and scion of an African chieftain Philip. Rigsby's snide manner was splendidly evidenced in the first episode when the fashionably hirsute Alan defended himself saying "Jesus had long hair." "Yes," replied Rigsby with perfect timing, "but I bet he never had a hairdryer." Always rebuffed in his advances to Ruth, Rigsby took out his frustrations on his cat Vienna (who could sometimes be heard screeching in fright off stage), and by interfering in

the attempts of Alan to bring girls back to the flat. The series was compelling not only because of its writing and acting (especially Rossiter's virtuoso performance as Rigsby), but because it struck a chord with anybody who had ever lived in rented digs. The show topped the BARB ratings in both 1977 and 1978.

Of the TV cast only Richard Beckinsale (previously >*The Lovers*, >*Porridge*, and who died during the fourth season of *Rising Damp*) did not appear in the original play, and both Rossiter and Frances de la Tour had distinguished stage careers. An insurance clerk until he was twenty-seven, Rossiter had achieved notable success in the theater for his renditions of Arturo Ui and Richard III. On television he had put in a long spell in *Z Cars* in the sixties. After *Rising Damp*, the lugubrious, Liverpudlian actor appeared in the 1980 film version of the series, and the TV sitcom >*The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*. He died during a production of Joe Orton's *Loot* in 1984.

ROBIN'S NEST

UK 1977–81, 36 x 30m, col ITV. Thames TV. US tx 1983 Syndicated.

CR Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. **PR** Peter Frazer-Jones. **WR** Various, including Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke, George Layton, Adele Rose, Dave Freeman, Ken Hoare, Bernard McKenna, Willis Hall, Jon Watkins, Richard Waring and Gail Renard. **MUS** Richard O'Sullivan (theme). **CAST** Robin Tripp Richard O'Sullivan Vicky Nicholls Tessa Wyatt James Nichols Tony Britton Marion

◀◀◀ "My-y-y God." Leonard Rossiter as the parsimonious landlord Rigsby in *Rising Damp*.

Nichols *Honor Blackman/Barbara Murray* Albert Riddle *David Kelly* Gertrude *Peggy Aitchison*.

Spin-off from *>Man About the House* in which Robin Tripp qualifies as a chef, moves into a Notting Hill pad with airline hostess girlfriend Vicky Nicholls (Tessa Wyatt, ex-wife of Radio 1 D.J. Tony Blackburn), and opens the bistro of the title. Comically hindering in this endeavor are one-armed Irish washer-upper Albert Riddle and Vicky's divorced, interfering father, James, who (despite not approving of his daughter's live-in arrangement) co-owns the restaurant, and likes to try his hand at waiting, when not using the place as an upmarket pick-up joint. Honor Blackman (previously *The Avengers*) played the occasional character of James's wife and Vicky's mother. The show was later remade in America as *Three's a Crowd* (ABC 1984–5).

A predictable, thus easily digestible, Mortimer and Cooke sitcom which topped the ratings in 1978.

ROSEANNE

USA 1988–97, 221 x 30m, col ABC. Carsey-Werner Productions. UK tx 1989–97 C4.

CR Matt Williams. **EXEC PR** Various, including Marcy Carsey, Tom Werner, Roseanne Barr, Tom Arnold.

DR Various, including Ellen Falcon, Gail Mancuso, Andrew D. Weyman, Jeff Margolis, John Whitesell,

John Pasquin. **WR** Various, including Matt Williams,

David McFadzean, Bill Pentland, Tom Arnold. **CAST**

Roseanne Conner Roseanne Barr (aka Roseanne Arnold, Roseanne) Dan Conner John Goodman

Darlene Conner/Healy Sara Gilbert Becky Conner/Healy Lecy Goranson/Sara Chalke David Jacob "D. J." Conner Michael Fishman Jackie Harris Laurie Metcalf David Healy Johnny Galecki Mark Healy Glenn Quinn Fred Michael O'Keefe Crystal Anderson Natalie West Arnie Thomas Tom Arnold Booker George Clooney Ed Conner Ned Beatty Beverly Harris Estelle Parsons "Nana-Mary" Harris Shelley Winters Nancy Bartlett Sandra Bernhard.

A blue-collar comedy set in the Illinois town of Lanford, about a caustic and corpulent mother, Roseanne Conner. Making up the rest of her family were equally large husband Dan and assorted children: boy-mad Becky, small son D. J., and cynical Darlene. Jackie was Roseanne's single sister (until she got mixed up with Fred, and had baby Andy), and much disliked by Dan. Though Roseanne put down her kids mercilessly (when one complained of being bored, she advised, "Go play in the traffic"), the viewer was never left in any doubt that she loved the brats. She also worked outside the home in a variety of dead-end jobs, including on the production line at a plastics factory, busing tables at Lobo's Lounge, and later corunning the Lunch Box diner. After Dan gave up his drywall business for a motorbike shop, the family enjoyed a middle-class income, until the early nineties recession forced Dan out of business. When times got hard, Roseanne was obliged to use son D. J. to con the electricity man. Aside from the problems of cash shortage, the comedy focused on the "usual" problems of family life, including generational conflict. Stories of this type included Dan's father Ed marrying Roseanne's

Go play in the traffic



friend Crystal, Becky's elopement with Mark, and Darlene's drug use at art college.

The series was based (through the comic magnifying glass of Matt Williams, later *>Home Improvement*) on a character created by Roseanne Barr, a Jewish waitress turned stand-up comic from Salt Lake City who came to prominence after an appearance on *The Tonight Show*. Not long after the instant success of *Roseanne*, Barr divorced husband Bill Pentland; in 1991, she married reformed cocaine addict Tom Arnold, whom she brought into the series as co-executive producer and as the character Arnie, the Conners' neighbor. Arnold subsequently starred in *The Jackie Thomas Show*, a ratings disaster for the ABC network, and was divorced by Roseanne. Aside from the regular cast, those appearing in *Roseanne* (which grossed over \$91 million per year at its peak in revenues) have included Shelley Winters as Roseanne's grandmother Mary, Estelle Parsons as Roseanne's mother Bev, Sandra Bernhard as neighbor Nancy, and Mariel Hemingway as a lesbian stripper (who gave Roseanne a much publicized "sapphic kiss" in the episode "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"). With a famously fast turnover of writers – a scriptwriter's life expectancy on *Roseanne* was much like that of a subaltern in the trenches of the Western Front – the show deteriorated somewhat in its latter seasons, as Roseanne remodeled her character (and herself, thanks to the surgeon's knife) into something distinctly glamorous, rather than

proletarian-looking. A vein of sentimentality also became evident, with Roseanne having a baby, and the show bowing out with a storyline in which the Conners won the state lottery.

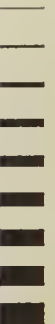
Roseanne trivia: The Conners' address was 714 Delaware Street, Lanford; in the end credits of the episode "The Dark Ages," Laurie Metcalf can be seen polishing a trophy – her 1992 Emmy, the first acting Emmy to be bestowed on *Roseanne*; in the following year, Roseanne herself won the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy.

ROWAN AND MARTIN'S LAUGH-IN

USA 1967–73, 150 x 50m, col NBC. Romart Inc.
UK tx 1968–71, BBC2.

PR George Slatter, Paul W. Keyes, Ed Friendly, Carolyn Raskin. **CAST** Various, including Dan Rowan, Dick Martin, Ruth Buzzi, Garry Owens, Goldie Hawn, Judy Carne, Lily Tomlin, Arte Johnson, Larry Hovis, Pigmeat Markham, Alan Sues, Jud Strunk, Dave Madden, Jeremy Lloyd, Dick Whittington, Johnny Brown, Henry Gibson, Ann Elder, Charlie Brill, Jo Anne Worley, Mitzi McCall, Teresa Graves, Byron Giliham, Richard Dawson, Moosie Drier, Patti Deutsch, Sarah Kennedy, Todd Bass, Donna Jean Young.

Running wild variety show. Hosted by nightclub comedians Dan Rowan and Dick Martin, each *Laugh-In* formed a madcap sixty minutes satirizing the contemporary scene in skits, songs, and slapstick. Using almost all new talent – including





Here come de judge

the then unknowns Goldie Hawn and Lily Tomlin – it fast built up a repertoire of stock characters and catchphrases that were used over and over until the mere mention of them was funny (the “shtick technique”; the British *>Fast Show* would do the same thing in the nineties). Among the most famous of them were: “Sock it to me” (at which Judy Carne got drenched); “Here come de judge”; “You bet your bippy”; Lily Tomlin’s sardonic, nasal-voiced telephone girl; Arte Johnson’s German soldier peering over the potted plant to say “Verry interrestink”; Goldie Hawn’s giggling blond; Ruth Buzzi’s umbrella-wielding old lady. Regular skit-slots included the talent show send-up “The Flying Fickle Finger of Fate,” “Hollywood News” with Ruth Buzzi, the Cocktail Party, and the joke wall at the end of each episode.

Eventually, *Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In* (sometime just plain *Laugh-In*) was undone by its own success; its now famous performers moved on to do other things. Only Garry Owens and Ruth Buzzi, in addition to Rowan and Martin, were in the show for the duration. But for three years it ruled the American airwaves, its enthusiasm and daring seeming to catch the liberated mood of the late sixties. Even President Nixon dropped in. A cynical

◀◀◀ *John Wayne gets in on the comic act in Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In. Also on the show’s guest list was the well-known comedian Richard Milhous Nixon.*

1977 revival, however, was almost universally divellicated... “Look that up in your Funk and Wagnall’s.”

RUTLAND WEEKEND TELEVISION

UK 1975–6, 12 x 30m, col BBC2. BBC.

PR Ian Keill. **WR** Eric Idle. **MUS** Neil Innes. **CAST** Eric Idle, Neil Innes, David Battley, Henry Woolf, Gwen Taylor.

Eric Idle’s follow-up to *>Monty Python’s Flying Circus* cast him as the program controller of fictional Rutland Weekend Television, based in England’s smallest county. From there issued forth sub-*Python* parodies of TV – and one solid gold masterpiece in the 1978 one-off sequel, *The Rutles* (65m col, BBC2, aka *All You Need is Cash*).

This presented a (spoof) documentary history of the “pre-Fab Four”: Dirk, Nasty, Stig, and Barry – the Rutles, from their beginning in Egg Lane, Liverpool, in 1959, when Ron Nasty and Dirk McQuickly first bumped into each other and Ron invited Dirk to help him stand up. They were then joined by Stig O’Hara, a guitarist of no fixed hairstyle, and finally Barrington Womble on drums. *The Rutles* then followed the story of the band through their early days at the Cavern to their worldwide success and their recording sessions at Shabby Road. Interviews with (real) rock faces such as Mick Jagger and Ron Wood were intercut with footage of the band performing such Rutles classics as “W. C. Fields Forever,” “Goose-Step Mama,” and



"Cheese and Onions." A band of whom it could safely be said that they were legends in their own lunchtime. And then, of course, there was the mystery of Stig. Was he still alive? Well, if you sing the title song of "Sgt. Potter's Only Darts Club Band" backwards it sounds like "Stig has been dead for ages honestly"...

An unsurpassable send-up of the Beatles and the slew of serious programs made about them. Eric Idle and Gary Weis directed Lorne Michaels's production for Above Average Productions. The main cast was: Dirk McQuickly/Narrator/S. J. Krammerjhad *Eric Idle* Barry Wom *John Halsey* Stig O'Hara *Ricky Fataar* Ron Nasty *Neil Innes* Eric Manchester *Michael Palin* The Interviewer *George Harrison (!)* Ron Decline *John Belushi* Brian Thigh *Dan Ackroyd* Mrs. Emily Pules *Gilda Radner* Bill Murray the K. *Bill Murray*. The music was by Neil Innes.

A treasure for all time.

SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE

USA 1975–, 1000 x 90m, col NBC. NBC Studios/Broadway Video.

CR Lorne Michaels, Dick Ebersol. **EXEC PR** Lorne Michaels. **PR** Various, including Lorne Michaels, Jean Doumanian. **DR** Various, including Dave Wilson, Paul Miller. **WR** Various, including Michael O'Donoghue. **CAST** Various, including Chevy Chase, John Belushi, Dan Ackroyd, Gilda Radner, Jane Curtin, Bill Murray, Albert Brooks, Jim Henson's Muppets, Don Novello, Tom Davis, Joe Piscopo, Eddie Murphy, Christine Ebersole, Jim Belushi, Billy Crystal, Harry Shearer, Nora Dunn, Dennis Miller,

Christopher Guest, Pamela Stephenson, Jon Lovitz, Damon Wayans, Robert Downey, Jr., Victoria Jackson, Phil Hartman, Jan Hooks, Kevin Nealon, Dana Carvey, Mike Myers, Chris Farley, Ellen Cleghorne, Rob Schneider, Tim Meadows, Molly Shannon, Tracy Morgan, Cheri Oteri, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Laurie Metcalf.

SNL began as an experiment by the NBC network to create a showcase for young comedians whose material was unsuitable for prime-time broadcasting, but who might attract a young (and relatively affluent) audience. The ninety-minute program was broadcast live from New York, the first episode being hosted by George Carlin – who was allowed by NBC to wear a T-shirt, but only if he wore a jacket over it. The show's mix of improvisation, skits, and rock music took a while to catch on, but when it did it became essential baby-boom viewing, its preoccupations – sex, drugs and rock'n'roll – being also those of its audience. A small rep company of performers ("The Not Ready for Prime Time Players") did the in-front-of-camera antics, Chevy Chase being the luminary of the first season with his slapstick routines and catchline of "Good evening. I'm Chevy Chase and you're not!" He also made a memorable bumbling President Ford (whose mishaps included stapling his ear to his desk), and his popular satirical newscasts. Around Chase coalesced what would become known as the "original cast"; it included Jane Curtin, John Belushi, and Dan Ackroyd, with the latter two developing the "Blues Brothers" routine they would take into the movies. Jim Henson's Muppets (see > *The Muppet Show*) were a regular fixture, as were

the Coneheads, a group of egg-headed aliens who got by in the USA by pretending to be from France. Almost everyone buzzed around in bee costumes.

In 1976, Chase left to pursue an independent career, and three years later Belushi and Ackroyd followed him. By now, burnout was clearly affecting *SNL*, and in 1980 Lorne Michaels, the show's creator and producer, also quit.

An entirely new *SNL* cast was brought in for the 1980–1 season, to heavily critical reviews. Of the new cast, only Eddie Murphy shone out, and in 1981 a new production team took over. Ratings steadily improved, despite a high turnover of cast members. Those joining the intake of 1984 included Billy Crystal, whose obsequious interviewer Fernando (“You look mahvelous”) became a standard fixture. By the late eighties, with Lorne Michaels again on the production tiller and a stable cast in Jon Lovitz, Nora Dunn, Dennis Miller, Dana Carvey, Jan Hooks, Victoria Jackson, and Mike Myers, the show reached another peak, exemplified by the spinning-off to movie mega-success of Myers and Carvey’s “Wayne’s World” skit. By 1998 *SNL* had won fourteen Emmys.

A British copy was broadcast as > *Saturday Live/Friday Night Live*.

SATURDAY LIVE/FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE

UK 1985–8, Approx 32 x 60m, col C4. Thames TV.

CR Geoff Posner, Geoff Perkins. PRESENTERS Ben Elton, plus Michael Barrymore, Tracey Ullman, Lenny Henry.

Review-style series for upcoming comedians, based on the American model > *Saturday Night Live*. After a problematic start involving misguided scheduling (it was put on too early in the evening for its sometimes dubious items) and rotating presenters (including Michael Barrymore), the show was shifted to a 10:00 P.M. time slot and Ben Elton, “the smug git in the shiny suit,” was hired in as permanent host. In between right-on, anti-Thatcher rants, he introduced the unknown likes of Julian Clary (as the Joan Collins Fan Club, with Fanny the Wonder Dog), Josie Lawrence, Jack Docherty, Jo Brand (“The Sea Monster”), Craig Charles, Stephen Fry, and Hugh Laurie. The showcase, however, was stolen by Harry Enfield, whose Greek kebab-shop owner Stavros (“Hello, matey peeps,” “Up the Arse[nal]!”) was only eclipsed by his Turbo Nutter-driving plasterer, Loadsamoney (“Look at my wad!”). Created for Enfield by Paul Whitehouse and Charlie Higson (later > *The Fast Show*), Loadsamoney was probably the most telling caricature of Essex Man in the 1980s. When, ironically enough, Loadsamoney became appropriated by the selfsame Essex Man as a hero, Enfield introduced the Northern “Buggarallmoney” as a counterbalance, before killing off the character entirely. To mark its change of transmission day, the program was retitled *Friday Night Live*, although the format of live turns remained the same.

**Look at
my wad!**

SEINFELD

USA 1990–8, 150 x 30m, col NBC. Castle Rock Entertainment West-Shapiro. UK tx 1993–8, BBC2.

CR Jerry Seinfeld, Larry David. **EXEC PR** Jerry Seinfeld, George Shapiro, Howard West, Alec Berg, Jeff Schaffer. **DR** Various, including Tom Cheronos, David Steinberg, Jason Alexander, Joshua White. **WR** Various, including Jerry Seinfeld, David Steinberg. **CAST** Jerry Jerry Seinfeld Elaine Benes Julia Louis-Dreyfus George Costanza Jason Alexander Cosmo Kramer Michael Richards.

» **Jerry:** “Look at this woman feeding her baby greasy disgusting coffee-shop corned-beef hash. Isn’t that child abuse?”

George: “I’d like to have a kid... of course, I’d have to get a date first.” «

The American sitcom sensation of the nineties. Though reminiscent of *>Rhoda* (the New York–apartment set, open house to a group of quirky loser friends) and *>Dick Van Dyke* (the comedian-lead playing himself), *Seinfeld* consciously redrew the boundaries of the sitcom. The show featured nerdy, white-sneakered stand-up comic Jerry Seinfeld pontificating on the absurd minutiae of life with fellow “schlubs” – former girlfriend Elaine, luckless George (Jason Alexander, *>Duckman*), and shock-haired neighbor Kramer. There were no plots, no canned laughter, no moral pieties. “No Hugs, No Lessons” was the producers’ mantra. That this tricky act of dramatizing everyday life – obsessively observed – could last thirty minutes, let alone

entertain 76 million Americans per episode, was due to precision-tuned scripts and a flurry of set-piece jokes that cunningly linked into a whole.

Zen and the art of sitcom maintenance.

The off-beatness of *Seinfeld* was much imitated, but never bettered. A final episode on 14 May 1998 drew 30 million viewers.

Seinfeld trivia: Jerry Seinfeld’s first stand-up comedy performance was at Manhattan’s Catch a Rising Star Club in 1976; his TV début was in *>Benson*, playing a gag writer whose gags weren’t funny; in an attempt to persuade Seinfeld to continue the show beyond the ninth season, NBC reputedly offered him \$5 million per episode; an in-flight screening of *Seinfeld* once had to be switched off because the passengers were laughing so much that they were making the plane rock out of control.

Classic *Seinfeld* episodes include: The Contest (in which the gang see who can go the longest without self-gratification); Soup Nazi; The Rye; The Note (in which Kramer thinks he’s spotted Joe DiMaggio in Dinky Donuts); The Puffy Shirt; The Library (in which Jerry is busted by the library for keeping “Tropic of Cancer” out since 1971); The Bubble Boy; The Virgin (Jerry dates a virgin, played by *>Frasier*’s Jane Leeves, and all looks good, until Elaine tells her about how men behave after sex); The Chicken Roaster; Fusilli Jerry and The Marine Biologist; The Fix-Up; The Outing (in which Jerry and George are mistakenly believed to be a gay item; Jerry’s father homophobically blames his mother, saying, “It’s those shorts you made him wear when he was four!”... “We’re not gay,” protests George, adding, “Not that there’s anything wrong with that.”); The Fix Up; The Note.



◀◀ Much
ado about
nothing,
NBC's sitcom
sensation
Seinfeld.

A SHOW CALLED FRED

UK 1956, 6 x 30m, bw ITV. Associated Rediffusion.

DR Dick Lester. **WR** Various, including Spike Milligan, John Antrobus, Dave Freeman. **CAST** Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, Kenneth Connor, Valentine Dyall, Patti Lewis, Max Geldray.

Derived from radio's *The Goon Show*, via Peter Sellers' *Idiot Weekly*, *Price 2d*, to present an enjoyable half-hour of studio zaniness. Sample: a theater audience watches the stage curtain open – to reveal an audience looking at them. Sellers and Spike Milligan led the team, which carried on the foolery in *Son of Fred* (1956). The director of both shows was Dick Lester, later to helm the Beatles' films.

THE SIMPSONS

USA 1989–, 200+ x 30m, col Fox. Gracie Films/20th Century Fox Television. UK tx 1990– Sky1.

CR Matt Groening. **EXEC PR** Various, including James L. Brooks, Matt Groening, Sam Simon, Al Jean, Mike Reiss, Josh Weinstein. **PR** Various, including George Meyer, Richard Sakai, David Silverman, Jon Vitti, John Swartzelder, Frank Mula, David Sacks, Bill Oakley, Josh Weinstein. **DR** Various, including Rich Moore, David Silverman, Jim Reardon, Wes Archer, Mark Kirkland, Susie Dieter. **WR** Various, including John Swartzelder, Adam I. Lapidus, Conan O'Brien, Greg Daniels, Jay Kogen, Al Jean and Mike Reiss, Jon Vitti. **MUS** Danny Elfman. **CAST** (voices) Homer Simpson/Krusty the Clown Dan Castellaneta Marge Simpson Julie Kavner Bartholomew J. "Bart"

Simpson Nancy Cartwright Lisa Simpson Yeardley Smith Mrs. Krabappel Marcia Wallace Mr. Monty Burns/Principal Skinner/Ned Flanders/Waylon Smithers/Otto the Bus Driver Harry Shearer Moe/Chief Wiggum/Dr. Nick Riviera Hank Azaria. Video Fox.

Ay carumba! Animated events in the life of a dysfunctional blue-collar American family that became the first cartoon since >*The Flintstones* to become a prime-time hit.

The immediate Simpsons clan (who had just four digits per hand, yellow skin, and hailed from Springfield) were: pop Homer, aka "Bonehead," who worked as the safety inspector at the local nuclear power plant; his wife Marge (voiced by Julie Kavner from >*Rhoda*), possessor of an enormous blue beehive; ten-year-old Bart (an anagram of brat), a spiky-haired underachiever; his sister Lisa, the resident baritone sax-playing intellectual; and Maggie the baby, who crawled everywhere with a pacifier in her mouth.

The Simpsons were dreamed up by "Life in Hell" cartoonist Matt Groening (who swore the characters were not autobiographical, even though his parents and two sisters had the same names as the Simpsons), and debuted as inserts in >*The Tracey Ullman Show*. The show was developed into a series of its own by Fox – through the agency of comedy deity James L. Brooks – to become one of the

Doh!



▲▲▲ "Why you little"... Homer and Bart display family (dis) harmony in *The Simpsons*.

phenomena of all TV time. (Tracey Ullman later sued to the tune of £1.5 million for a share of the profits, claiming "I breast-fed those little devils." She lost.) Celebrities queued for guest voice spots; Maggie's first word was uttered by Liz Taylor, and others who loaned their vocal chords included Danny De Vito, Ringo Starr, The Ramones, Kirk Douglas, Meryl Streep, Leonard Nimoy, Kelsey Grammer, Joe Frazier, Buzz Aldrin, Dustin Hoffman,

Bob Hope, and Tom Jones. David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson voiced their *X-Files* characters in the "Springfield Files" episode, when Homer, having drunk ten pints of Duff at Moe's Tavern, saw an "alien."

In the beginning the show centered on Bart and his pranks and fired off witty though irrelevant gags, but then subtly shifted its focal point to food-mad Homer – a man who once sold his soul to the devil for a single donut. (He also ate spoiled meat from Apu's Kwik-E-Mart because it was on sale. Twice.) The show simultaneously deepened characterization,



not just of the Simpsons, but of the other inhabitants of Springfield, such as Mr. Burns, the 104-year-old owner of the nuclear plant; his yes-man, gay assistant Smithers; and neighbor Ned Flanders; the genius was in the detail. The show also began to lampoon everything in sight: politics, the movies (references to *Citizen Kane* were legion), the TV domestic sitcom – even the all-American nuclear family itself. The moral establishment showed its irritation in President George Bush's slogan, "We need a nation closer to the Waltons than the Simpsons." Bart replied: "We're just like the Waltons – we're praying for the Depression to end, too." (To put the comedic knife in even more, *The Simpsons* later had a storyline in which ex-president Bush moved onto the Simpsons' street, and Bart wrecked his memoirs.) Yet, as Fox's research showed, people liked the imperfect Simpsons because they were "a family like us." *The Simpsons* had realistic get-by-as-best-as-you-can values, epitomized by Homer's loving advice to son Bart: "Never say anything unless you're sure everyone else feels exactly the same way." Homer's other words of wisdom include: "Son, when participating in sporting events, it's not whether you win or lose, it's how drunk you get."

When, in the mid-nineties, the show suffered a dip in interest, Groening penned a storyline – inspired by *Dallas* – that set the TV nations talking. This was the summer 1995 shooting of Mr. Burns. The answer to the whodunnit "Who Shot Mr. Burns?" was revealed in the opening episode of the new season; it was an accident caused by the Simpsons' baby, Maggie. Mr. Burns, like J. R., survived. The show has been awarded ten Emmys.

In Britain, the Simpsons were first seen on

satellite TV after the BBC, having bought *The Tracey Ullman Show*, decided that the little yellow people from Springfield were not funny – and cut them out. It was several years before they were finally broadcast by the BBC.

Doh!

Simpsons trivia: in the episode "The Front," the scene inside the writers' room features caricatures of *The Simpsons*' own writers; Bart's hit single, "Do the Bartman," was anonymously penned by Michael Jackson; Bart's voice belongs to Nancy Cartwright – a 38-year-old woman! – but "Don't have a cow"; in 1990, *The Simpsons* became the top-rated show in America, ousting the previously untoppable *Cosby Show*; the T-shirt with Bart's slogan "Underachiever and Proud of It" was banned in American schools; each *Simpsons* episode cost \$200,000 to make.

SLEDGE HAMMER!

USA 1986–8, 41 x 30m, col ABC. A New World International Production. UK tx 1987–9 ITV.

CR Alan Spencer. **EXEC PR** Alan Spencer, Robert Lovenheime. **DR** Various, including Bill Bixby, Thomas Schlamme, Jackie Cooper, Martha Coolidge, Reza Badiyi, Seymour Robbie, Charles Braverman, Charles Dubin, David Wechter. **WR** Various, including Mark Curtis and Rod Ash, Chris Ruppenthal, Al Jean and Mike Reiss, Mort Rich and Brian Pollack, Alan Spencer, Jim Fisher and Jim Staal. **CAST** Det. Sledge Hammer David Rasche Off. Dori Doreau Anne-Marie Martin Capt. Trunk Harrison Page.

Enthusiastic parody of the tough-guy crime genre, featuring square-jawed, brain-free cop Sledge Hammer ("Trust me, I know what I'm doing"). His cases were usually solved by his blond female sidekick, Detective Doreau, the macho man himself being too busy caressing his .44 Magnum – or "Gun," as he cooingly called it – and shooting off same at any "lowlife" he took a right-wing prejudice to. Captain Trunk was his headache-plagued boss.

Inconsequential, but fun. As creator Alan Spencer put it, "Ultimately what the show is about... is half an hour." The dreadful punning episode titles – "Hammer Gets Nailed," "Brother, Can You Spare a Crime," "Over My Dead Bodyguard" – gave a fair clue as to the level of humor inside. Among the guests was Heather Lupton ("Here's to You, Mrs. Hammer"), who was star David Rasche's wife in real life.

THE SMOTHERS BROTHERS COMEDY HOUR

USA 1967–9, 1970, 1975, Approx 100 x 60m, col CBS/ABC/NBC.

PR Saul Illson, Ernest Chambers, Chris Bearde, Allan Blye. **MUS** Various, including Nelson Riddle and his Orchestra. **CAST** Various, including Tom Smothers, Dick Smothers, Pat Paulsen, Leigh French, Mason Williams, Bob Einstein, Jennifer Warnes, John Hartford.

and Dick Smothers, a duo who mixed folk music and comedy and who the network determined had under-thirties appeal. Although the Smothers Brothers had failed in a sitcom (about an apprentice angel) two years previously, their new show was enormously successful. Indeed, it was too successful.

Dick played the bass and the straight man to guitarist Tom, a stuttering dunce who opined inanely but genially on anything that took his fancy. For the most part, though, the show poked fun at such sacred American institutions as government, church, and the establishment. And that was the rub. CBS constantly pressured the Smothers Brothers to tone down their antiwar bent – it was the time of Vietnam – and politically tuned humor. Skits were censored by CBS, one of them ironically enough dealing with film censorship. Also left on the cutting-room floor was Harry Belafonte singing before a montage of the riots at the 1968 Democratic Convention, Pete Seeger singing a protest song ("Waist Deep in the Big Muddy"), and an interview with Dr. Benjamin Spock.

To no one's great surprise, CBS yanked the show – reputedly at the behest of Nixon and the Republicans – in 1969, even though its ratings were still high. The replacement show was *Hee Haw*. The Brothers came back on ABC the following year, and were revived by NBC in 1975, but to no great watching shakes – the moment had passed. But for two years at the end of the sixties, *The Smothers Brothers* chimed with the changing times more than just about anything on American TV, with the possible exception of NBC's *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*. A 1988 revival, also entitled *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, lasted but a bare year.

In an attempt to dethrone oater show *Bonanza* from the top of the Nielsens, CBS turned to Tom

SOAP

USA 1977–82, 93 x 30m, col ABC. Witt-Thomas-Harris Productions. UK tx 1978–82 ITV.

CR Susan Harris. **EXEC PR** Tony Thomas, Paul Junger Witt. **PR** Susan Harris. **DR** Various, including Jay Sandrich, J. J. Lobue. **WR** Various, including Susan Harris. **CAST** Jessica Tate Katherine Helmond Chester Tate Robert Mandan Corrine Tate Diana Canova Eunice Tate Jennifer Salt Billy Tate Jimmy Baio Benson Robert Guillaume The Major Arthur Peterson Mary Dallas Campbell Cathryn Damon Burt Campbell Richard Mulligan Jodie Campbell Billy Crystal Danny Campbell Ted Wass Father Timothy Flotsky Sal Viscuso Dutch Donnelly Rhodes Det. Donahue John Byner Carlos "El Puerco" Valdez Gregory Sierra.

Outrageous prime-time satire of American daytime soaps that provoked storms of protest while still in production after magazine reports accurately listed its themes as adultery, transvestism, impotency, premarital sex and homosexuality. Religious groups organized campaigns to ban the program and sponsors were urged to boycott it (which some did). The furor only subsided after ABC promised to tone down future episodes.

Soap, however, was pure irreverent spoof, whose subjects were sent up, not promoted. Revelling in the show's intentionally incomprehensible storylines, each episode started with a cast snapshot and plot summary that ended "Confused? You will be!" Featured were two sisters and their families, residents of Dunns River, Connecticut,

Jessica Tate and Mary Campbell. The delightfully dim Jessica was married to super-rich stockbroker Chester, a chronic philanderer. Their children were sexy Corinne, quiet Eunice, and Billy, a fourteen-year-old wisecracking brat. The Tate household was completed by Jessica's father, "The Major," who wore a uniform and believed that he was still living in the war, and sardonic black butler Benson, who habitually insulted his employers and refused to cook anything he didn't like (an act so successful that Robert Guillaume left for his own spin-off show, *>Benson*).

Across town lived Jessica's sister, Mary Campbell, together with her blue-collar second husband Burt. Burt had some difficulty in relating to gay ventriloquist stepson Jodie (Billy Crystal) and racketeer stepson Danny, the latter having a shotgun marriage to a Mafia boss's daughter. This might have all seemed unusual stuff to the viewer, but the inhabitants of *Soap* were blasé about it. A typical *Soap* joke had Mary Campbell catching her gay son trying on her dress and rebuking him, "I've told you a hundred times that dress fastens at the back."

As with the soaps the show aped, ever more far-fetched fare was to come. First there was the murder of Burt's lothario tennis-pro son Peter (Robert Urich, later *Spenser for Hire*), for which Jessica was convicted. Chester, however, turned out to be the real culprit and was sent to prison, but escaped with Dutch. Chester then lost his memory, and wandered out west, leaving Dutch to elope with Eunice, and Jessica to fall in love with Detective Donahue, the man she had hired to find Chester. Meanwhile, Burt was cloned by aliens, and Corinne

Tate's baby turned out to be the spawn of the Devil (literally), which required a quick exorcism. Jessica then had another steamy entanglement, this time with a South American revolutionary, "El Puerco."

Having redrawn the boundaries of the situation comedy, creator Susan Harris went on to move them again with *Golden Girls*, a sitcom about aging women.

Harris's husband, Paul Junger Witt, was executive producer on *Soap*.

▼▼ Confused? You were if you watched *Soap*.

SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM

UK 1973–8, 19 x 30m, 3 x 50m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Raymond Allen, Michael Crawford. **PR** Michael Mills. **WR** Raymond Allen. **CAST** Frank Spencer Michael Crawford Betty Spencer Michele Dotrice Mr. Lewis Glynn Edwards.

Misadventures of an accident-prone genial simpleton in beret and mac. Throughout every DIY disaster, antisocial malaprop, loss of



employment, his patient wife, Betty, supported. Their daughter, born in the 1973 season, was Jessica (Emma Ware).

A throw-back to the slapstick style of the silent films era, with a campy, nerves-twitching, “harrassed” characterization by Michael Crawford. It proved the laugh of the land. For the 1978 episode in which Frank and Betty had to move from their council house because it was unfit for habitation (and Frank fell into a barrel of tar), 20 million tuned in, taking the show to the top of the BARB ratings. Crawford performed all his own stunts (his previous service in the swashbuckler series *Sir Francis Drake* presumably standing him in good stead) – and they were truly, breathholdingly brilliant.

Ooh Betty...

SOUTH PARK

USA 1996–, 24+ x 30m, col Comedy Central.
Comedy Central. UK tx 1998– Sky1.

CR Trey Parker and Matt Stone. **PR** Anne Garefino.
WR Trey Parker and Matt Stone, Dan Sterling, Philip Stark. **MUS** Adam Berry, Matt Stone. **CAST** (voices) Stan/Eric Trey Parker Kenny/Kyle Matt Stone Chef Isaac Hayes.

>> The following program contains coarse language, and, due to its content, it should not be viewed by anyone...

Animated adventures of four foul-mouthed brats – Waspy Stan, confused Jew Kyle, fat boy Eric Cartman, the permanently hooded Kenny – who lived in the snow-swept Colorado town of South Park. Something like *Peanuts* on acid, its storylines featured anal probes inserted by extraterrestrials, turds that talked, farting – in other words, normal kiddie things. In every episode, Kenny got killed, usually by being eaten alive by rats. But he always came back next week. The four traded insults – “Dildo”; “I saw your mother on the cover of crack whore magazine” – and earned huge piles of money for their backers, the low-rated cable company, Comedy Central. Celebrities queued to play guest spots, with George Clooney settling to play gay dog Sparky (he only got to woof).

Aside from the four eight-year-old boys, other regular characters included goody-two-shoes Wendy Testaburger (with whom Stan was in lurve, but he was so shy he puked at the mere sight of her); class teacher Mr. Garrison (who wore a puppet, Mr. Hat, on his hand); Stan’s militia-man uncle; and soulman school caterer and coach Chef (voiced by Isaac Hayes), who was inclined to tell his diminutive charges to “hold the football like you wuz holding yo’ woman.”

South Park originated as an animated Christmas card, commissioned by Fox TV executive Brian Graden from twentysomething animators Matt Stone and Trey Parker in 1995. The resultant “Spirit of Christmas,” which featured the South Park boys and a Christmas showdown between Jesus and Father Christmas (plus a storm of expletives, e.g., “Dudes, don’t say ‘pig-fucker’ in front of Jesus”), became an underground hit, and Comedy Central

» *hold the football like you wuz holding yo' woman.* «

called soon after. Although the drawings were rude and crude, they formed an effective counterpoint to scripts which could be witty, even exhilaratingly dangerous, about the darker recesses of childhood.

"Omigod, they killed Kenny!"

SPIN CITY

USA 1996–, 12 x 30m, col NBC. UBU/Lotery Hill/Dreamworks. UK tx 1997–, C4.

CR Gary David Goldberg. **EXEC PR** Gary David Goldberg, Michael J. Fox. **PR** Walter Barnett, Linda Nieber, Jeff Lowell. **DR** Various, including Lee Shallat Chemel, Thomas Schlamme. **WR** Various, including Gary David Goldberg and Bill Lawrence, Kirk J. Ruddell and Bill Lawrence, Michelle Nader, Amy Cohen, Richard Childs, Michael Craven. **MUS** Shelly Parker. **CAST** Michael Flaherty Michael J. Fox Mayor Randall Winston Barry Bostwick Ashley Schaeffer Carla Gugino Stuart Bondek Alan Ruck Paul Lassiter Richard Kind Nikki Faber Connie Britton James Hobert Alexander Gaberman Janelle Victoria Dillard Stacey Paterno Jennifer Esposito Helen Winston Deborah Rush Carter Heywood Michael Brahman.

His movie career having apparently stalled, the tiny, boyish Michael J. Fox returned to the medium that made him in this hit sitcom from Gary David Goldberg – the producer who had originally discovered Fox for *>Family Ties*. Here, Fox played Michael Flaherty, deputy mayor of New York, a man

whose job had less to do with governing than extricating his inept boss from gaffes and japes (like saving the last dance at the ball for his mistress). Likeable and brisk, it gave Fox the perfect opportunity to show off his immaculate skills of delivery, especially in his romantic one-to-ones with costar Carla Gugino. The political satire, though, was passé, and it stretched credulity to the breaking point to have a WASP mayor of New York in the nineties. There was one good political joke: an ironic cameo from former Clinton aide George Stephanopolous – the diminutive spin doctor whose metaphorical clothes Fox had borrowed for the show.

SPITTING IMAGE

UK 1984–96, 122 x 30m, 2 x 60m, col ITV. Central TV/Spitting Image Productions.

CR Peter Fluck and Roger Law (from an idea by Martin Lambie-Nairn). **PR** Jon Blair, John Lloyd, Geoffrey Perkins, David Tyler, Bill Dare, Giles Pilbrow. **DR** Various, including Bob Cousins, Peter Harris, Sean Hardie, Richard Bradley, John Stroud. **WR** Various, including Ian Hislop, Rob Grant, Doug Naylor, Steve Punt, Hugh Dennis, Moray Hunter. **CAST** (voices) Various, including Steve Nallon, Chris Barrie, Steve Coogan, Harry Enfield, Jan Ravens, Pamela Stephenson, Rory Bremner, Enn Reitel, Jon Glover, Jessica Martin, John Sessions.

The latex puppets of the carefully pronounced Fluck and Law debuted in 1984, immediately winning *Spitting Image* a reputation for cruelly accurate satire. Yet, at best, the topical scripts (from

among others, Ian Hislop, later *Have I Got News for You*, and future *>Red Dwarf* creators Rob Grant and Doug Naylor) were variable; the show's true turn-on was its utter and complete disrespect. It mercilessly parodied the British Royal Family (previously virtual comedic untouchables), portraying the Queen Mother as an alcohol-guzzling, horse-racing fanatic; Prince Charles (voiced by Chris Barrie) as a huge-eared hippie; while fun-loving Fergie and Andrew were so removed from their children that they kept asking them "What's your name?" Equally fair latex game was provided by politicians of all rank and party: Norman Tebbit was portrayed as a skinhead, John Major was gray and had an obsession with eating peas, Kenneth Baker was a slug, Peter Mandelson a snake.

Towards the end of the show's run, as it tended to broaden its remit to include popsters, media-folk, movie stars (Arnie Schwarzenegger: "Ja, my villy ist tiny") and jive-talking pontiffs, it lost direction and shambled around like a toothless dog. But a handful of classic skits, songs and images from the eighties remain: a fascistic Margaret Thatcher singing "Tomorrow Belongs to Us" in the 1987 Election Special; Philip Pope's antiapartheid ditty, "I've Never Met a Nice South African" ("cos we're a bunch of murdering bastards/who hate black people"); the search for President Reagan's brain; the reworking of the Police song "Every Breath You Take" into "Every Bomb You Make"; the *Sun* journalist pigs; Liberal leader David Steel living in David Owen's pocket (which produced the popular misconception that the former was physically smaller than the latter; a testament to the show's influence); and, of course, "The Chicken Song,"

which spoofed the Costa del Brit hit, "Agadoo" by Black Lace... "Though you hate this song, you'll be humming it for weeks."

An American version for NBC never caught on, despite two pilots.

STEPTOE AND SON

UK 1964–73, 55 x 30m, 2 x c45m, bw/col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. **PR** Duncan Wood, David Croft, John Howard Davies, Graeme Muir, Douglas Argent. **DR** Various, including Douglas Argent. **WR** Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. **MUS** Ron Grainger, Dennis Wilson. **CAST** Albert Steptoe Wilfred Brambell Harold Steptoe Harry H. Corbett. Video BBC.

Created by *>Hancock's Half-Hour* scriptwriters Ray Galton and Alan Simpson, this situation comedy about a malicious rag-and-bone man and his frustrated son premiered as a 1962 one-off play, *The Offer*, in the BBC's fertile *Comedy Playhouse* slot. From the outset, the show broke most of the rules of TV comedy, ebbing with pathos (even tragedy), rather than laughs. The central characters were the tattered-mitten-wearing father, Albert ("you dirty old man"), and his 38-year-old son, Harold ("you great lummo"). It was Harold's dream to

'arold!



▲▲ Harry H. Corbett and Wilfred Brambell in the blackly comic *Steptoe and Son*.

better himself, and to this end he read such tomes as G. B. Shaw's *Everybody's Political What's What* and listened to classical music on the gramophone in the cluttered sitting room. He even sought to

introduce his father to the joys of Fellini in "Sunday for Seven Days." Yet every time he tried to escape the yard his petty jealous father blackmailed him ("arold... I think I'm 'aving an 'art attack, 'arold!") into staying. The ties of blood were simply too strong to escape. And beneath the bickering and hate, there was love and mutual need: "He's not a bad



boy," Albert tells the old burglar who hides out with them in "Desperate Hours," with real pride on his face. (This classic episode featured Leonard "Rising Damp" Rossiter as the old burglar's partner, and the burglars' relationship mirrored that of Steptoe and Son.) If the humor was dark, it struck a chord at a time when many believed the nation trapped in decline, and it topped the ratings in 1964, helped by the faultless acting of Dublin-born Brambell and Harry H. Corbett (one of Britain's few true method actors). In the general election of that year, Labour leader Harold Wilson persuaded BBC Director-General Hugh C. Greene to postpone airing of *Steptoe and Son* until after the polls closed, a move Wilson thought won him thirteen extra seats and victory. Greene was later knighted.

The episodes from the fifth season (1970) onwards were transmitted under the title *The Return of Steptoe and Son*, the fourth season having ended in 1965. A radio version ran from 1966 and lasted for fifty-two episodes.

The series spawned two feature films, *Steptoe and Son* (1972) and *Steptoe and Son Ride Again* (1973), and was remade in America as *Sanford and Son* (with the black cast of Redd Foxx and Desmond Wilson, 1972–7, NBC).

Among the classic *Steptoe and Son* episodes are: Desperate Hours/The Piano/The Holiday/Oh, What a Beautiful Mourning/Loathe Story (in which Harold's girlfriend is played by Joanna Lumley)/And So to Bed (in an attempt to go upmarket, Harold buys a water bed)/Porn Yesterday.

◀◀ Taxi was a rare example of an American blue-collar comedy.

SYKES

UK 1960–5, 1971–9, Approx 78 x 30m, bw/col
BBC/BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Eric Sykes. **PR** Various, including Dennis Main Wilson, Sydney Lotterby, Philip Barker, Roger Race. **WR** Eric Sykes, Johnny Speight. **CAST** Eric Eric Sykes Hattie Hattie Jacques.

Much-loved British sitcom in which the ever-seeking-to-better-himself Sykes and his twin sister Hattie (Hattie Jacques, wife of John Le Mesurier from *>Dad's Army*) shared a house at 24 Sebastapol Terrace, Suburbia. Initially, the weekly plots were prompted by the arrival of new gadgets or goods, the episodes being aired as "Sykes and a –," but later seasons settled down into more standard domestic crises. Often to be found on the periphery of the plot was Mr. Brown, the belittling neighbor, and Corky (Deryck Guyler from *>Please Sir!*), the pompous policeman.

The episode "Sykes and a Plank" was expanded into a classic Monsieur Hulot-like silent comedy film, released by Associated London Films in 1964 as *The Plank*.

TAXI

USA 1978–83, 113 x 30m, col ABC. John Charles Walters Productions. UK tx 1980–5, BBC2.

CR James L. Brooks, Stan Daniels, David Davis, Ed Weinberger. **EXEC PR** James L. Brooks, Stan Daniels, David Davis, Ed Weinberger. **PR** Glen Charles, Les Charles. **DR** Various, including James Burrows,

Noam Pitlik, Danny De Vito, Harvey Miller, Richard Sakai, David Lloyd, Michael Zinberg. **WR** Various, including James L. Brooks, Stan Daniels, David Davis, Ed Weinberger, Glen Charles, Les Charles, Earl Pomerantz, Barry Kemp, Holly Holmberg Brooks, Ken Estin, Sam Simon, Dari Daniels, Michael Leeson. **MUS** Bob James ("Angela" theme). **CAST** Alex Rieger Judd Hirsch Louie DePalma Danny De Vito Elaine Nardo Marilu Henner Bobby Wheeler Jeff Conaway Jim Caldwell Igatowski Christopher Lloyd Tony Banta Tony Danza Latka Gravas Andy Kaufman Simka Dahblitz Gravas Carol Kane Zena Sherman Rhea Perlman John Burns Randall Carver Jeff Bennett J. Alan Thomas.

The aspirations and frustrations of the staff of New York's Sunshine Cab Company was the focal point of this comedy, created by ex-MTM staffers James L. Brooks, Stan Daniels, David Davis, and Ed Weinberger. Having spent some years on MTM's shows about single, middle-class women (>*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Phyllis*, >*Rhoda*), the group wanted to do a blue-collar comedy about "guys." The principal character of the show was Alex (Judd Hirsch, *Delvecchio*), a philosophical cabbie, and the only sensible person in the garage. Louie DePalma (Danny De Vito) was the malevolent, dwarfish dispatcher, who sat in the cage giving orders. Latka (Andy Kaufman) was the mechanic, and possessor of only the most fractured English. Reverend Jim (Christopher Lloyd), a mind-warped ex-hippie; Bobby, a bit actor; Elaine (Marilu Henner, later >*Evening Shade*), an art gallery assistant; Tony, a boxer; and John, a student, were all part-time drivers who used the garage as a way station

on the road to better things (or so they hoped). In the 1980–1 season, Latka married a daffy woman from his homeland by the name of Simka. Although the show finished its first two seasons in the top twenty, it slid down the ratings thereafter. ABC unceremoniously canceled the show, despite critical acclaim for its scripts and ensemble acting (among other Emmys, it won three straight Emmys for Outstanding Comedy Series, plus acting Emmys for Hirsch and De Vito, and a directing and a writing Emmy). In 1981, the NBC network picked up the series for a year, but were unable to revive its ratings fortunes. Popular taste was changing, and the show's sympathy for its misfit characters just did not fit Reaganite times. Guest actors included Rhea Perlman (who married De Vito on set, during a lunchbreak) and Ted Danson, who did a turn as an egotistical hairdresser in "The Unkindest Cut." Both went on to star in >*Cheers*, the next work of *Taxi* producers Les and Glen Charles. As did another *Taxi* guest, George Wendt, who appeared in the segment "Latka the Playboy."

TERRY AND JUNE

UK 1979–87, 65 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR John Kane. **PR** Peter Whitmore, John B. Hobbs, Robin Nash. **DR** Various, including David Taylor, Peter Whitmore. **WR** Various, including John Kane, Colin Bostock-Smith, Jon Watkins, Dave and Greg Freeman. **CAST** Terry Terry Scott June June Whitfield Sir Dennis Hodge Reginald Marsh Miss Fennel (secretary) Joanna Henderson Beattie Rosemary Frankau.

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

UK 1962–3, 36 x 50m, 2 x c60m, bw BBC. BBC TV.

CR Ned Sherrin. **PR** Ned Sherrin. **DR** Ned Sherrin.
WR Various, including John Cleese, David Frost, Malcolm Bradbury, Bernard Levin, Lance Percival, Millicent Martin, William Rushton, Anthony Jay, Gerald Kaufman, Roy Hudd, Eleanor Bron, Al Mancini, David Kernan, Kenneth Cope, John Wells, Timothy Birdsall, Peter Tinniswood, Peter Lewis, Charles Lawson, Dennis Potter, Jack Rosenthal, Robert Gillespie, David Nathan, Christopher Booker, Willis Hall, Keith Waterhouse, Brian Glanville. **CAST** David Frost, William Rushton, Kenneth Cope, Lance Percival, Al Mancini, David Kernan, Bernard Levin, Timothy Birdsall, John Wells, Eleanor Bron, Roy Hudd, Roy Kinnear, John Bird.

Or TW3, as it came to be abbreviated. The show grew out of the boom in British political satire in the early sixties (the founding of Peter Cook's Establishment Club, *Private Eye* magazine), a movement rocket-fueled by the Profumo scandal. TW3 took the new satire to TV, with a team of presenters – led by David Frost – who gleefully but skillfully filleted and ridiculed the week's political nonsense and pomposities in sketches, reports, and songs (these trilled by Millicent Martin). It courted controversy, and found it, with Tory MPs requesting the Postmaster-General to censor the show. He declined. Highlights included "A Consumer's Guide to Religion"; David Frost's listing of the remnants of Britain's Empire ("and not forgetting Sweet Rockall"); and his coolly savage attack on the

Suburban sitcom about marital ups and downs set in Purley, Surrey, with Terry Scott and June Whitfield playing Terry and June Medford. The series was a virtual TV synonym for blandness; the crises from which *Terry and June* made dramas included visits from Terry's boss, looking after a neighbor's dog, and Terry's misunderstanding about his wife's "infidelity." Throughout all these innocent misadventures, tubby Terry (played to overgrown schoolboy perfection by Scott) blustered, and June smiled knowingly. Although not described as such, the show was a sequel to *Happy Ever After* (1974–8), in which Scott and Whitfield played the Fletchers, trying to get along together after their children had flown the nest.

June Whitfield, archetypal sitcom woman, originally came to prominence as Eth, the fiancée of Ron Glum in radio's *Take It From Here*. She first worked with Terry Scott in 1969 in *Scott On*, and among her other small-screen appearances are *Beggar Thy Neighbour*, *Idiot Weekly*, *The Best Things In Life*, *The Fossett Saga*, the nurse in the >*Hancock's Half-Hour* "Blood Donor" sketch, and more recently, >*Absolutely Fabulous*. Terry Scott's other television credits include *Hugh and I* and *Son of the Bride*.

Terry and June was later spoofed by camp comic Julian Clary (>*Saturday Live*, *Sticky Moments with Julian Clary*) in *Terry and Julian* (1992, 6 x 30m, C4) which posited Clary as a homeless Channel 4 celebrity who moves in with a South London lad for innuendo, decorating, and flat-sharing bliss. And robbing the Bank of England. June Whitfield even did it the honor of a guest appearance. The writers were Clary, Paul Merton, and John Henderson.



probity of Home Secretary Henry Brooke, “the most hated man in Britain” (ended, as per his other verbal lashings, with trademark sign-off, “Seriously, though, he’s doing a grand job”). John Cleese, Dennis Potter, Anthony Jay (later >*Yes, Minister*), Jack Rosenthal, David Nobbs (>*The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*), and Keith Waterhouse were among the writers. The ratings were tall, the influence broad, but an American version, also with

▲▲▲ *David Frost (right) and the cast of That Was the Week That Was.*

Frost, plus Buck Henry, Henry Morgan, and all (1964–5, NBC), never took off. Meanwhile, back in Britain, the BBC pulled *TW3* before the election year of 1964, fearing that the show might influence the electorate.

Seriously, though, they were doing a grand job.

TILL DEATH US DO PART

UK 1966–74, 53 x 30m, 1 x 45m, bw/col BBC1.
BBC TV.

CR Johnny Speight. **PR** Dennis Main Wilson, David Croft. **DR** Douglas Argent, Colin Strong. **WR** Johnny Speight. **MUS** Dennis Wilson. **CAST** Alf Garnett Warren Mitchell Else Dandy Nichols Rita Una Stubbs Mike Anthony (Tony) Booth; plus John Junkin, Roy Kinnear, Joan Sims, Pat Coombes.

W Dandy Nichols takes a well-earned break from Alf Garnett in *Till Death Us Do Part*.

The monstrous caricature of an East End working-class Tory that was Alf Garnett (played by former Radio Luxemburg D.J. Warren Mitchell), West Ham supporter and hater of “yer coons,” first appeared in a 1965 BBC *Comedy Playhouse*. There the family was known as the Ramseys, and Gretchen Franklin (later *EastEnders*) played the “silly moo,” otherwise known as wife Else. In translation to a regular series, the cast stabilized as Mitchell, Dandy Nichols (aka Daisy Nichols) as Else, Una Stubbs as daughter Rita, and Anthony Booth (father of Cherie, the wife of PM Tony Blair) as son-in-law Mike, the “randy scouse git.” To Alf’s



eternal ire, Mike had longish hair (occasioning the epithet "Shirley Temple"), was a Trotskyist, and a reader of *Keep Left* newspaper. Week after week, docker Alf treated his family to rants on whatever happened to catch his fancy, delivering the diatribes from the armchair below the flying ducks and pictures of "yer Majesty" and Winnie Churchill in the sitting room of their house in Wapping High Street. Particular targets were blacks, the permissive society, women, Edward Heath (for taking Britain into the Common Market and for going to a public school, not a "proper" Tory training ground like Eton). The series attracted numerous complaints – not least from moral guardian Mary Whitehouse, who once counted seventy-eight "blaadys" in one episode – and from those who failed to see that Garnett was an ironic portrait, not a role model. His creator was Johnny Speight, a former East Ender himself, and an ex-member of the Communist Party. Mitchell's performance was a tour de force, perfect in every word and physical gesture, but the rest of the superlative cast was indispensable as comic foils and counterpoints.

In 1981, ATV tried a revival show *Till Death...* (set in Eastbourne), which was followed in 1985 by a BBC sequel to *Till Death Us Do Part*, called *In Sickness and In Health* (1985–92, 46 x 30m, BBC1). In both of these only Mitchell appeared regularly (although Nichols was cast as Else, the actress was in failing health) and both were

Silly moo!

mediocre compared with the original. Also, the fact that a right-wing Conservative government was in power made Alf's outrages difficult to pull off with plausibility, while his particular prejudices seemed dated. A more telling parody of working-class conservatism in the eighties was Harry Enfield's >*Saturday Live* character, Loadsamoney.

The format of *Till Death* sold to America as >*All in the Family*, another sitcom colossus, and the show also became popular in Germany, where the Garnetts were known as the Tetzlauffs.

There were two feature films, *Till Death Us Do Part* (1969) and *The Alf Garnett Saga* (1972), both made by Associated London Films/Black Lion.

TO THE MANOR BORN

UK 1979–81, 21 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx 1982 Syndicated.

CR Peter Spence. **PR** Gareth Gwenlan. **WR** Peter Spence, Christopher Bond. **MUS** Ronnie Hazlehurst. **CAST** Audrey Fforbes-Hamilton Penelope Keith Richard De Vere Peter Bowles Mrs. Plouvicka (De Vere's mother) Daphne Heard Marjory Frobisher Angela Thorne Brabinger (the butler) John Rudling.

Popular British sitcom (it topped the ratings for three consecutive seasons) built around the British comedic perennial: class. Penelope Keith (>*The Good Life*) starred as snobbish Audrey

Up the 'ammers

Forbes-Hamilton, whose widowed penury obliged her to sell her 400-year-old country pile, Grantleigh Manor, to nouveau riche grocer Richard DeVere (Peter Bowles, the *Irish RM*, *Only When I Laugh*). Moving into the gatehouse, she then endured a love/hate relationship with the gaffing DeVere, until love triumphed and she moved back into Grantleigh as Mrs. D.V. Throughout, Audrey's friend Marjory was an absolute brick. The setting was the fictional Somerset village of Cricket St. Thomas.

Originally intended for radio, but diverted to the small screen by the BBC, the show finally aired on its intended medium in 1997, with Keith Barron (from holiday romp *Duty Free*) as DeVere.

THE TRACEY ULLMAN SHOW

USA 1987–90, 52 x 30m, col Fox. 20th Century Fox/Gracie Films. UK tx 1988, BBC2.

CR James L. Brooks. **EXEC PR** James L. Brooks, Heide Perlman, Ken Estin, Jerry Belson, Sam Simon.

CAST Tracey Ullman, Dan Castellaneta, Joe Malone, Julie Kavner, Sam McMurray, Anna Levine.

O riginally a chorus dancer for Les Dawson (a job from which she was sacked after forgetting to attire herself in underwear for one performance), Tracey Ullman first came to notice in *Three of a Kind* (1981–3, BBC1, with Lenny Henry and David Copperfield). Stints on *A Kick Up the 80s* and *>Girls on Top* followed, before she headed to Hollywood and her own skit/playlet series, *The Tracey Ullman Show*. Created by James L. Brooks,

this allowed Ullman's talent for characterization and mimicry to bloom; yuppie Sarah Downey, Tina the postal worker, anthropologist Ceci (who lived in darkest Africa with her monkeys), South African golfer Kiki Howard-Smith, and nervous spinster Kay all became US TV favorites. The show was awarded a 1990 Emmy, but in retrospect her supporting cast (which included Julie Kavner and Dan Castellaneta) seems underused and the material patchy. History is likely to suggest that the main contribution of *The Tracey Ullman Show* to the general comic well-being of humanity was as the launch pad for *>The Simpsons*, shown in animated segments between the live-action skits.

THE TWO RONNIES

UK 1971–86, 68 x 30m, 4 x 60m, col BBC1/2. BBC TV.

EXEC PR James Gilbert, Michael Hurll. **PR** Various, including Peter Whitmore, Paul Jackson, Marcus Plantin. **DR** Various, including Marcus Plantin.

WR Various, including Gerald Wiley (aka Ronnie Barker), John Cleese, Spike Milligan, David Nobbs, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, John Sullivan. **CAST** Ronnie Barker, Ronnie Corbett.

H ere Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett (who had first worked together on *>The Frost Report*), were in a sketch-and-gag show of unchanging format: mock news items, some skits, a transvestite musical number, a song from a guest Middle-of-the-Road chanteuse, Corbett in a sit-down monologue, and the tag sign-off line, "It's

goodnight from me – and it's goodnight from him." Perhaps the favorites were the Barker routines where he masticated the English language into glorious innuendoes and malapropisms while retaining the straight-faced persona of a bank manager or similar. The spoof serials – Spike Milligan's *The Phantom Raspberry Blower of Old London Town*, and the Charley Farley and Piggy Malone private investigations – also hit the humor spot. Milligan, John Cleese, John Sullivan, David Nobbs, Michael Palin, and Terry Jones were all to be found toiling in the show's writing room.

UP POMPEII!

UK 1969–70, 14 x 35m (inc pilot), col BBC1. BBC TV.

CR Talbot Rothwell. **PR** Michael Mills, David Croft, Sydney Lotterby, Paul Lewis. **WR** Talbot Rothwell, Sid Collin. **MUS** Alan Braden. **CAST** Lurcio Frankie Howerd Senna Jeanne Mockford Plautus William Rushton Ammonia Elizabeth Larner Nausius Kerry Gardner Ludicrus Max Adrian/Wallis Eaton/Mark Dignam Erotica Georgina Moon. Video BBC.

Ancient Roman costume romp, loosely derived from the plays of Plautus (via *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*), featuring Frankie Howerd as Lurcio, the slave to the household of philandering senator Ludicrus Sextus. The double entendres in this TV orgy of bad taste, with household slave Lurcio playing middle-aged Cupid to everyone from Sextus' nymphomaniacal daughter Erotica to his effete, lovelorn son

The Prologue...

Nausius, were considered daring at the time. Legend has it that the puns even caused the veteran ex-music hall star to "blink a bit." In between matchmaking, cynical Lurcio commentated on the bawdiness around him in asides to camera ("breaking the fourth wall") and tried to deliver his "The Prologue." Among the other characters seen was the mad soothsayer, Senna, always prophesying the town's doom.

As the seventies progressed, the show became tagged as sexist, although its nudge-nudge, seaside postcard-like humor actually poked fun at sex, rather than treating women as sex objects. A feature film version was produced by EMI in 1971. With the close of the show in 1972, Howerd moved on to *Whoops Bagdad!* (1973, 6 x 30m, BBC1), in which he played Arabian servant Ali Oopla – which was merely a change of setting for the same jokes. Howerd's Lurcio returned briefly in a 1975 Easter Monday special, *Further Up Pompeii!*

In the early nineties, Howerd (and thus *Up Pompeii!*) was rediscovered by a new generation of TV watchers, and the "weary camel" (as Howerd described himself) achieved a revered status in youth circles. In response, London Weekend Television commissioned a 1991 pilot (unsuccessful) for a new version of the show entitled *Up Pompeii, Missus*. Following Howerd's

►► "Titter ye not"... Frankie Howerd stars as Lurcio in *Up Pompeii!*



death in 1992, the British satellite station UK Gold aired the BBC series *Then Churchill Said to Me*, in which Howerd played one of the minions (Private Percy Potts, the batman to Lt. Col. Robin Witherton, as played by Nicholas Courtney) in Churchill's wartime bunker. Originally made in the early eighties, the series had been shelved during the Falklands conflict, and never previously screened.

The catchphrases of *Up Pompeii!* were: "Titter ye not, missus" and "Nay, nay, thrice nay."

VIC REEVES' BIG NIGHT OUT

UK 1990-2, 28 x 30m, 1 x 60m, col C4. Channel X.

EXEC PR Alan Marks, Robert Jones. **PR** Peter Orton.

DR Peter Orton. **WR** Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer.

CAST Vic Reeves, Bob Mortimer.

▼▼ "You wouldn't let it lie!" Another moment of inanity in Vic Reeves' Big Night Out.



What's on the end of the stick, Vic?

An almost uncategorizable – although Northern Dadaist variety show might do – entertainment featuring velvet-suited Vic Reeves (born Jim Moir) and ex-solicitor sidekick Bob Mortimer. Developed from a stage show, *Big Night's* novel creations (Les, Wavy Davy, Graham Lister, the Slitherer – the latter being Paul Whitehouse in his TV debut) and cultural parody (Novelty Island, the Wheel of Justice) earned it a devoted late-night audience, with its catchphrases “What’s on the end of the stick, Vic?” and “You wouldn’t let it lie” becoming playground favorites. The nonsense continued, in somewhat watered-down fashion, in the more mainstream *The Smell of Reeves and Mortimer* and the game show spoof *Shooting Stars*.

WAYNE'S WORLD

UK 1992, 8 x 10m, col BBC2. NBC. US tx 1988–94 (as segment of *Saturday Night Live*), NBC.

CR Mike Myers. CAST Wayne Campbell Mike Myers Garth Angar Dana Carvey.

The excellent! adventures of two Heavy Metal teens, smart-arse Wayne (British comedian Mike Myers) and gimpy Garth, as they present a local cable program from a mid-American basement, with guest star interviews, “slut court,” and omnipresent air guitar playing. And

indulgences in pubescent fantasy, like an in-bed with a fetishistically dressed Madonna. Schwing!

Mirth quotient? Maximum. For nerds. Originally screened as vignettes in >*Saturday Night Live*, *Wayne's World* spun off a 1992 \$100 million-grossing movie (directed by Penelope Spheeris), with its idiosyncratic humor briefly entering the zeitgeist. Echos of *Wayne's World* continued down the TV nineties in such shows as >*Beavis and Butt-head* and the British DIY TV series, *The Adam and Joe Show*, presented from a Brixton apartment.

WELCOME BACK, KOTTER

USA 1975–9, 95 x 30m, col ABC. The Komack Co/Wolper Productions. UK tx 1981, ITV.

CR Gabe Kaplan and Peter Myerson. PR David Wolper, James Komack. MUS John B. Sebastian (“Welcome Back” theme). CAST Gabe Kotter Gabriel Kaplan Julie Kotter Marcia Strassman Vinnie Barbarino John Travolta Arnold Horshak Ron Palillo Freddie “Boom Boom” Washington Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs Juan Luis Pedro Phillipo de Huevos Epstein Robert Hegyes Mr. Michael Woodman John Sylvester White Beau De Labarre Stephen Shortridge Verna Jean Vernee Watson-Johnson Judy Borden Helaine Lembeck Todd Ludlow Dennis Bowen.

Americanized >*Please Sir!* in which Jewish teacher Gabe Kotter (played by cocreator Gabe Kaplan), at Brooklyn’s James Buchanan High School, has comic problems keeping his class misfits – known as the “Sweat hogs” – under control.

The part of star “Sweat hog” Vinnie Barbarino

rocket-launched the career of John Travolta, who began leading in such movies as *Saturday Night Fever* while still playing in *Welcome Back*. By the 1978 season, most of the “Sweat hogs” had taken part-time jobs, and the camera followed their life in work as well as inside school. Much of the show’s realism was based on Kaplan’s personal experience; he had once been a student in an inner-city remedial class himself.

Up your nose with a rubber hose

WHO DARES WINS

UK 1984–8, 24 x 30m, col C4.

PR Andy Hamilton. **DR** Sandy Johnson, John Stroud. **WR** Rory McGrath, Philip Pope, Jimmy Mulville, Tony Robinson. **CAST** Tony Robinson, Julia Hills, Rory McGrath, Philip Pope, Jimmy Mulville.

Sketch show. It recalled >*Not the Nine O’Clock News* in its brashness (signaled both by the comic use of the SAS motto as its title and performer Tony Robinson’s stark-naked appearances), but was less tied to politics than its alternative comedy contemporaries. A sequence of skits featuring two zoo pandas, variously plotting their escape (under the alias of a Belgian dentist) and abusing “Tojos” (Japanese tourists), were solid comedic platinum. All the cast went on to other things, and from the show evolved the influential TV independent company Hat Trick.

WHOOOPS! APOCALYPSE

UK 1982, 6 x 30m, col ITV. London Weekend TV.

CR Andrew Marshall and David Renwick. **PR** Humphrey Barclay. **DR** John Reardon. **WR** Andrew Marshall and David Renwick. **CAST** President Johnny Cyclops Barry Morse Premier Dubienkin Richard Griffiths Kevin Pork Peter Jones The Deacon (US Security Advisor) John Barron Commissar Solzhenitsyn Alexei Sayle Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Palmer Lacrobat John Cleese Jay Garrick Ed Bishop.

Black comedy about the globe plunging into World War III, thanks to the machinations and miscalculations of US President Johnny Cyclops (a lobotomized ex-actor from Omaha), Premier Dubienkin of the USSR, and British Prime Minister Kevin Pork. The incident which precipitated the crisis was the attempt to restore Shah Mashiq Rassim to the throne of Iran by use of the Quark bomb – except that, unfortunately, Israel got blown up instead...

Similar in its dark, mad appeal to *Dr. Strangelove* and considered by many at the time to be too possible for comfort.

THE WONDER YEARS

USA 1988–93, 115 x 30m, col ABC. New World International. UK tx 1989–95, C4.

CR Neal Marlens and Carol Black. **EXEC PR** Bob Brush. **PR** Neal Marlens and Carol Black, Michael Dinner. **DR** Various, including Neal Marlens and

Carol Black, Michael Dinner, Peter Baldwin, Steven Miner, Arlene Sanford, Peter Horton, Daniel Stern. WR Various, including Carol Black and Neal Marlens, David M. Stern, Matthew Carlson. MUS Joe Cocker ("With a Little Help from My Friends" theme). CAST Kevin Arnold Fred Savage/Daniel Stern (adult voice) Wayne Arnold Jason Hervey Jack Arnold (Dad) Dan Lauria Norma Arnold (Mom) Alley Mills Karen Arnold Olivia D'Abo Paul Pfeiffer Josh Saviano Winnie Cooper Danica McKellar Coach Cutlip Robert Picardo.

Sitcom about growing up in suburban America between 1968 and 1973, as seen through the eyes of teen Kevin Arnold (an effortlessly brilliant Fred Savage) as he goes through the years at the Robert F. Kennedy Junior High School. Narrating the series was the voice of his adult self (Daniel Stern). Use of news clips and music from the age of flower power gave the show a strong nostalgia value, but in general it avoided gratuitous wallowing in golden memories of yesteryear in favor of domestic drollery (even poignancy) as it followed Arnold's relations with his siblings, parents, and friends, particularly best buddy Paul and girlfriend Winnie. Robert Picardo (*China Beach*, later *Star Trek: Voyager*) played the school's Coach Cutlip, while the directors' list included, as well as Stern, Peter Horton, better known as professor Gary Shepherd in the contemporaneous *thirtysomething*.

» **Growing up happens in a heartbeat. One day you're in diapers: the next day you're gone.** «

WRKP IN CINCINNATI

USA 1978–82, 48 x 30m, col CBS. MTM Enterprises. UK tx 1981–2, ITV.

CR Hugh Wilson. **PR** Various, including Hugh Wilson, Max Tash, Rod Daniel, Blake Hunter. **DR** Various, including Jay Sandrich, Frank Bonner, Will MacKenzie, Asaad Kelada, Michael Zinberg. **WR** Various, including Hugh Wilson, Blake Hunter. **MUS** Tom Wells. **CAST** Arthur Carlson ("Big Guy") Gordon Jump Andy Travis Gary Sandy Johnny Caravella ("Dr. Johnny Fever") Howard Hesseman Gordon Sims ("Venus Flytrap") Tim Reid Les Nessman Richard Sanders Herb Tarlek Frank Bonner Jennifer Marlowe Loni Anderson Mama Carlson Sylvia Sydney/Carol Bruce Bailey Quarters Jan Smithers.

Sitcom, set in a small and ailing Cincinnati radio station, that followed the lives of the station's staff, principally modernizing program director Andy Travis, incompetent station manager Arthur Carlson, nerdy reporter Les Nessman, jive-talking jock Dr. Johnny Fever, laid-back black D.J. Venus Flytrap, and sexy blond secretary Jennifer Marlowe.

Picture > *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in the setting of a small-time rock radio station and you have it. Plus a touch of "jiggle TV" in the buxom shape of actress Loni Anderson. The show – which came from Moore's MTM company – was amusing enough to last four years, having caught a fair slice of the under-thirties audience (its intended target), but a 1991 syndicated version with three of the original characters – Nessman, Tarlek, and Carlson – flopped.

YES, MINISTER

UK 1980–2, 1 x 45m, 21 x 30m, col BBC1. BBC TV. US tx 1982, *The Entertainment Channel*.

CR Anthony Jay and Jonathan Lynn. **PR** Stuart Allen, Sydney Lotterby, Peter Whitmore. **WR** Anthony Jay and Jonathan Lynn. **CAST** Rt. Hon. James Hacker Paul Eddington Sir Humphrey Appleby Nigel Hawthorne Bernard Wooley Derek Fowlds. Video BBC.

Satirical sitcom featuring the Right Honorable James Hacker (Paul Eddington, >*The Good Life*, d. 1995), the newly appointed government minister for administrative affairs, whose idealistic schemes were undone by his double-talking, all-powerful civil servant, Sir Humphrey Appleby (Nigel Hawthorne), the Mephistopheles of Whitehall.

The erudite, finely detailed scripts from Jonathan Lynn (>*Liver Birds*, >*Doctor in the House*) and Anthony Jay (who had seen deep into the wormy can of British politics during a spell on *Tonight*), with their elaborate exchanges of dialogue, attracted praise from public and TV industry alike, winning three BAFTA Awards for Best Comedy and selling to over forty countries. Even politicians liked it, despite being pictured as supine idiots in the control of the bureaucracy; indeed, such was the admiration of the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher that she enacted a scene with Eddington in *Yes, Minister* character at the National Viewers and Listeners Association Awards in 1984. Presumably this close encounter gave Lynn and Jay ideas, for by 1986, Jim Hacker had been elevated to the premiership in *Yes, Prime Minister* (1986–8, 16 x 30m). Accompanying him to Number 10 Downing Street

was Sir Humphrey, now promoted to Cabinet Secretary; also returning was the put-upon Private Secretary Bernard Wooley (Derek Fowlds, late of *The Basil Brush Show*). The new show lost one of the central comic principles of *Minister*, which was Hacker's inbuilt fear of damaging his prospects for advancement. Nevertheless, it provided a half-hour of hilarity way above the norm of the British sitcom in the eighties. Not the least recognition of this was that Eddington and Hawthorne both received CBEs in the 1987 Honors List, while Anthony Jay was knighted in the same year.

THE YOUNG ONES

UK 1982–4, 12 x 35m, col BBC2. BBC TV.

PR Paul Jackson. **DR** Paul Jackson, Geoff Posner. **WR** Ben Elton, Rik Mayall, Lise Mayer. **MUS** Peter Brewis. **CAST** Rick Rik Mayall Neil Nigel Planer Vyvyan Ade Edmondson Mike Christopher Ryan Jerzy Balowski Alexei Sayle. Video BBC.

Along with Channel 4's >*The Comic Strip Presents*, this was one of the first TV appearances of "alternative comedy" in Britain. The movement began in 1980 when Peter Richardson opened "London's newest anarchic cabaret" above Raymond's Revue Bar in Soho. The nucleus of the new club were three partnerships who had previously performed at the Comedy Store: the Outer Limits (Peter Richardson and Nigel Planer), 20th Century Coyote (Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson), and Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders. The club was neither from Oxbridge nor



▲▲▲ Rick, Mike, Neil, and Vyvyan were The Young Ones.

the Northern working-men's institute circuit, and shared little other than an iconoclastic humor. Word spread, however, and TV networks came calling; Channel 4 commissioned the first > *The Comic Strip Presents* for screening in 1982, while the BBC

bought *The Young Ones*.

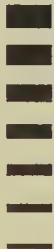
Although it took its title from a Cliff Richard song, *The Young Ones* was far from Christian sweetness. Its characters, all essentially based on routines worked out at the Comedy Store and the Comic Strip, were four students in a shared house: Spotty Rick, who, although a Cliff Richard admirer, was a

violent vegetarian; Vyvyan, the headbanging punk with studs in his forehead and spikes in his hair and a pet hamster called "Special Patrol Group"; Neil, a lentil-eating hippie with lank hair down to his waist; and Mike, a Bogartian wise guy with delusions of the paranoid conspiratorial variety. This unattractive bunch regularly indulged in cartoon-style violence, kicking each other, the house, and where possible the dominant ideology. Porkpie-hatted Jerzy Balowski (who, along with the rest of his family, was played by Alexei Sayle) was the landlord.

Out of this anarchy and squalidness came a humor that was infantile, slapstick, but also surreal: the food moved, new lands – even different eras – appeared outside the front door, and rock bands dropped in to play in the front room. Highly

successful, the show spawned three best-selling books and two hit records by Planer as Neil (whom the actor described as "an unpleasant, self-pitying bastard"). It also launched high-profile careers for its stars. Mayall, Edmondson, and Planer went on to star in >*Filthy Rich and Catflap*, while Mayall and Edmondson also starred together in >*Bottom*, with Mayall alone going on to >*The New Statesman*. Planer tried light comedy in *King and Castle*, then invented the advice-giving thespian *Nicholas Craig – The Naked Actor*, narrated *The Magic Roundabout*, and starred as French teacher Laurence Didcott in *Bonjour la Classe*.

... which was nice



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179 ITV / BFI
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233 BBC BFI
237 BBC / Pictorial Press
238 Channel 4 / BFI
243 BBC / BFI

INDEX

- A. J. Wentworth, BA 18
 Abbott, Bud 12
 Abbott and Costello Show, The 12
 Abbott, Kevin 104, 110
 Abbott, Norman 173
 Abrahams, Jim 197
 Absolutely 12-13
 Absolutely Fabulous 13-15
 Abuger, Jeff 110
 Ackerman, Andy 53
 Ackerman, Harry 30, 39, 101, 143
 Ackroyd, Dan 214
 Adam, Paul 22
 Adams, Don 99, 100
 Adams, Douglas 118
 Addams, Charles 15
 Addams Family, The 15-16
 Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, The 17
 Adventures of Pete and Pete, The 17
 Adventures of Tugboat Annie, The 18
 Aherne, Caroline 81, 173
 Alas Smith and Jones 18-19
 Albert, Eddie 111
 Alda, Alan 155, 156
 Alderton, John 183, 196, 197
 Alexander, Danielle 179
 Alexander, David 47, 96
 Alexander, Jason 74, 216
 Alexander, Paul 202
 Alexei Sayle's Stuff 19
 Alf 19-20
 Alice 20
 All in the Family 21-2
 All Gas and Gaiters 21
 Allen, Dave 64
 Allen, Debbie 79, 92
 Allen, Jack 27
 Allen, Keith 57
 Allen, Ray 20
 Allen, Raymond 223
 Allen, Stuart 21, 46, 150, 179, 188, 242
 Allen, Tim 120, 121
 Allerdice, James 173
 Allison, Judy D 44
 'Allo, 'Allo 22-4
 Alsberg, Arthur 101, 124
 Altman, Jeff 186
 Amateau, Rod 152, 178
 Ames, Leon 146
 Ammonds, John 167
 Amos, Emma 108
 Amos, John 110
 Amos 'n' Andy 24-5
 Anderson, Clive 18
 Anderson, Eddie 130
 Anderson, Harry 181
 Anderson, John Maxwell 68, 152
 Anderson, Jon C. 163
 Andrews, Harry 18
 Andrews, John 34
 Andy Griffith Show, The 25-6
 Angell, David 89
 Angus, Robert 17
 Aniston, Jennifer 95
 Antonio, Lou 192
 Antrobus, John 27, 218
 Applegate, Christina 152
 Apps, Edwin 21
 Apted, Michael 150
 Archer, Wes 218
 Are You Being Served 26-7
 Argent, Douglas 84, 148, 226, 233
 Arkush, Alan 166
 Armitage, Charles 88
 Armstrong, Curtis 166
 Army Game, The 27-8
 Arnaz, Desi 125
 Arnold, Danny 31, 39
 Arnold, Jack 47, 102
 Arnold, Roseanne *see* Barr, Roseanne
 Arnold, Tom 210
 Arthur, Bea 104, 104, 158
 Ash, Leslie 161
 Ash, Rod 220
 Asher, William 39, 101, 124, 125
 Askey, David 66, 69, 183
 Asner, Ed 154
 Asquith, Robin 46
 Astin, John 15, 127
 Astrof, Jeffrey 95
 At Last the 1948 Show 28-9
 Atkinson, Geoff 145
 Atkinson, Rowan 41, 42, 171, 171, 184, 185
 Auer, Chris 58
 Auerbach, Arnold 195
 Auf Wiedersehn, Pet 29-30
 Austin, Karen 181
 Avedon, Barbara 39, 101
 Averbach, Hy 96, 155, 200
 Avery, James 92
 Aylmer, Felix 187
 Bachelor Father 30-1
 Backus, Alice 30
 Baddiel, David 155
 Baden-Semper, Nina 150
 Badiyi, Reza 197, 220
 Baer, Parley 17
 Baer, Richard 96, 173
 Baerwald, Joshua 51
 Bagdad Café 31
 Bain, Conrad 68
 Baker, Roy Ward 77
 Bal, Jeanne 30
 Baldwin, Peter 36, 106, 114, 175, 179
 Ball, Lucille 125, 126
 Ballentine, Jim 204
 Balsam, Martin 21
 Balzer, George 130
 Bamford, Roger 29
 Banks, Morwenna 12
 Banner, John 119, 119
 Bannister, Trevor 27
 Baranski, Christine 61
 Barbeau, Adrienne 158
 Barbera, Joseph 87
 Barclay, Humphrey 66, 69, 183, 240
 Bare, Richard L 111
 Barker, Philip 229
 Barker, Ronnie 96, 129, 191, 199, 235
 Barnett, Walter 225
 Barney Miller 31-3, 32
 Baron, Lynda 191
 Barr, Roseanne 210
 Barrie, Barbara 33
 Barrie, Chris 49, 52, 202, 225
 Barron, Fred 51
 Barron, John 78
 Barrymore, Michael 215
 Bartell, Paul 57
 Bartlett, John 108, 180
 Barton, Charles 24, 79
 Bass, Alfie 27
 Bateman, Justine 79
 Bates, Michael 140
 Battley, David 213
 Bavier, Frances 25
 Baxter, Ronnie 150, 179, 209
 Baxter-Birney, Meredith 79
 Beadle, Gary 57
 Bearde, Chris 221
 Beasley, Allyce 166
 Beaton, Norman 66
 Beaumont, Hugh 143
 Beavis and Butt-head 34-5
 Beckett, Keith 35
 Beckinsale, Richard 150, 199, 209

- Belbin, Susan 188
 Belion, Ed 130
 Bell, Alan 106
 Bell, Alan J. W. 118, 140, 206
 Bellamy, Earl 25, 30, 173, 192
 Belson, Jerry 187
 Beluce, Meeno 37
 Belushi, John 214
 Belyeu, Faye Oshima 51
 Benaderet, Bea 87, 194
 Benben, Brian 71
 Bendix, William 145
 Benedict, Tony 87
 Benjamin, H. Jon 70
 Bennett, Harold 27
 Bennett, Richard 60
 Bennett, Ruth 79
 Benny Hill Show, The 35-6
 Benny, Jack 130-1
 Bensfield, Dick 187
 Benson 36-7
 Benson, Andrew 180
 Benson, Robby 75, 76
 Bentine, Michael 129
 Berg, Alec 216
 Bergen, Candice 175
 Berger, Gregg 74
 Bergman, Alan 79
 Berkley, Ballard 84
 Berlinger, Robert 61, 186
 Bernhard, Lee 181
 Bernhardt, Lee 31
 Berry, Adam 224
 Berry, Ken 96
 Berry, Mike 27
 Berwick, James 183
 Besser, Joe 12
 Best of the West 37-8
 Beverly Hillbillies 38-9, 38
 Bewes, Rodney 146, 147
 Bewitched 39-41, 40 ♦
 Beyt, Peter 104, 186
 Bialik, Mayim 45
 Bickley, William S 114, 192
 Bigelow, Joe 122
 Billingsley, Barbara 143
 Bingham, Charlotte 183
 Birch, Peter 29
 Birkin, John 91, 171
 Birt, John 135
 Bishop, Debby 52
 Bishop, Phil 127
 Bixby, Bill 44, 175, 177, 220
 Black Adder, The 41-3, 42
 Black, Carol 75, 240
 Blackwood, Vas 145
 Blair, Jon 225
 Blanc, Mel 87
 Blebin, Susan 189
 Bless This House 43-4
 Blitzler, Barry 87, 195
 Bloodworth-Thomason, Linda 65
 Blossom 44-5
 Bluel, Richard 96
 Bluthal, John 179, 179
 Blye, Allan 221
 Blye, Rita Rogers 92
 Bob Newhart Show, The 45-6
 Bochco, Stephen 70
 Boden, Richard 41
 Bogart, Paul 21, 31, 99, 104
 Bogert, Vincent 195
 Bolam, James 146, 147
 Bonaduce, Danny 192
 Bonaduce, Joseph 101
 Bonerz, Paul 19
 Bonerz, Peter 45, 95, 120, 175
 Bonet, Lisa 58
 Booth, Connie 84, 85
 Booth, Tony 233
 Boothroyd, Basil 18
 Borgnine, Ernest 159
 Borowitz, Andy 92
 Borowitz, Susan 92
 Bosley, Tom 114
 Bostock-Smith, Colin 18, 185, 230
 Bostrum, Arthur 24
 Bostwick, Barry 225
 Bottle Boys, The 46
 Bottom 46-7, 47
 Bouchard, Loren 70
 Bough, Arthur 26
 Bowles, Peter 234
 Bowman, John 92
 Bowman, Rob 192
 Boyd, Jimmy 30
 Braben, Eddie 167
 Bradbury, Malcolm 231
 Bradley, Richard 225
 Brady Bunch, The 47-9, 48
 Brady, Terrence 183
 Bragin, Rob 175
 Braine, Tim 70
 Brake, Elinor 204
 Brambell, Wilfred 226, 227
 Braun, Zev 31
 Braverman, Charles 220
 Brecher, Irving 145
 Bremner, Rory 225
 Bresslaw, Bernard 27
 Brewer, Jameson 15
 Bridges, Todd 68
 Briers, Richard 108, 109
 Bright, Kevin S. 71, 95
 Brigstocke, Dominic 137
 Brillstein, Bernie 19, 129
 Brinckerhoff, Burt 175
 Brint, Simon 91
 Brisebois, Danielle 21
 Brittias Empire, The 49-50
 Britton, Pamela 177
 Britton, Tony 209
 Brody, Ronnie 64
 Brooke, Hillary 12
 Brooke-Taylor, Tim 28, 106, 107, 153
 Brookes, Mel 99
 Brooks, James L. 60, 153, 205, 218, 229, 230, 235
 Brown, Arnold 185
 Brown, Charlotte 205
 Brown, Georg Stanford 197
 Brown, Ian 72
 Brown, Kristofer 34
 Bruckman, Clyde 12
 Brush, Bob 240
 Bryan, Zachery Ty 120
 Bullock, Harvey 20
 Bullock, J. M. J. 20
 Bunting, Rosie 182
 Burke, Delta 65
 Burke, Kathy 116
 Burns, Allan 153, 205
 Burns, George 162
 Burns, Jack 174
 Burns, William 162
 Burrows, James 37, 51, 53, 89, 95, 141, 153, 181, 205, 229
 Burstyn, Neil 163
 Busby, Zane 44
 Butkus, Dick 179
 Butler, Brett 110
 Butler, Robert 67, 166
 Butt, Ray 26, 56, 148, 189
 Butterflies 50
 Buzzi, Ruth 20, 211
 Bye, Ed 46, 104, 202
 Cabot, Sebastian 79
 Cadell, Simon 117
 Cadiff, Andy 120
 Calhoun, Monica 31
 Callay, Peter 76
 Cameron, Ray 135
 Camp, Bob 204
 Campbell, Duncan 52
 Canova, Diana 222
 Canterbury, Bill 74
 Car 54, Where Are You? 50-1, 51
 Cardiff, Andrew 179, 186
 Carey, Joyce 81
 Carey, Ron 33
 Cargill, Patrick 81, 82, 113
 Carling, Elizabeth 108
 Carne, Judy 211
 Carney, Art 122
 Caroline in the City 51-2
 Caron, Glenn Gordon 166
 Carr, Robin 18
 Carraher, Harlan 101
 Carroll, Bob 20, 125
 Carroll, Bob, Jr. 125
 Carroll, Diahann 132
 Carrott, Jasper 52
 Carrott's Lib 52
 Carry on Laughing 53
 Carsey, Marcy 58, 61, 210
 Carter, Dixie 65
 Carvey, Dana 239
 Casey, Peter 89
 Cason, Barbara 130
 Cassidy, David 192, 193
 Cassidy, Ted 15
 Casson, Phil 196
 Castellaneta, Dan 218, 235
 Chambers, Ernest 221
 Chapin, Lauren 83
 Chaplin, Ben 97
 Chapman, Graham 28, 69, 153, 164
 Chappell, Eric 209
 Charkham, Esta 182
 Charles, Craig 202
 Charles, Glen 53, 156, 229, 230

- Charles, Les 53, 156, 229, 230
 Charles, Tony 180
 Chase, Chevy 214
 Chatfield, Les 148, 150
 Cheek, Molly 116, 130
 Cheers 53-6, 54, 230
 Cherones, Tom 51, 75, 216
 Cherry, Stanley Z 30, 67, 102, 152, 163
 Chertok, Jack 177
 Chesney, Ronald 188, 201
 Chevillat, Dick 111
 Childress, Alvin 24
 Childs, Richard 225
 Citizen Smith 56-7, 56
 Clark, Jacqueline 64
 Clarke, Roy 134, 140, 191
 Clary, Julian 231
 Claver, Bob 169, 192, 205
 Cleese, John 28, 69, 84, 85, 96, 153, 164, 165, 231, 235
 Clement, Dick 29, 146, 184, 199
 Cleveland, Carol 164
 Clews, Colin 167
 Climie, David 187
 Clunes, Martin 161
 Coffey, Vanessa 204
 Cohen, Amy 51, 225
 Cohen, Dan 44
 Colasanto, Nicholas 53
 Coleman, Gary 68
 Colin, Sid 27, 150
 Colleary, Bob 31
 Collins, John D. 22
 Collins, Pauline 148, 183
 Coltrane, Robbie 57
 Comic Strip Presents, The 57-8
 Conn, Eileen 71
 Connelly, Joe 143, 173
 Conner, Betty 101
 Connor, Kenneth 24, 218
 Considine, Tim 178
 Conway, Dick 143, 173
 Conway, Tim 159
 Coogan, Jackie 15
 Coogan, Steve 64, 137, 225
 Cook, Peter 184
 Cooke, Brian 81, 97, 151, 209
 Coolidge, Martha 220
 Coons, Hannibal 15
 Cooper, Bernie 29
 Cooper, Hal 47, 76, 124, 158
 Cooper, Jackie 155, 220
 Cooper, Trevor 88
 Cope, Kenneth 231
 Coppage, Marc 132
 Corbett, Harry H. 226, 227
 Corbett, Ronnie 96, 235
 Corcoran, Noreen 30
 Cornes, Lee 46
 Cornwall, Judy 134
 Correll, Charles 24
 Cosby, Bill 58
 Cosby Show, The 58-9, 59
 Cosby, William H., Jr. 58
 Costello, Lou 12
 Costello, Pat 12
 Cotter, Tom 88
 Cottle, Matthew 97
 Coupland, Diana 43
 Cousins, Bob 225
 Cox, Courteney 95
 Crabtree, Dave 178
 Cragg, Steven 70
 Craig, Wendy 50, 183
 Cramer, Barbara Blachot 152
 Crane, Bob 119, 119
 Crane, David 71, 95
 Crane, Harry 122
 Crapston Villas 60
 Craven, Michael 225
 Crawford, Michael 223
 Crenna, Richard 25
 Critic, The 60
 Croft, David 22, 26, 61, 117, 127, 226, 233, 236
 Croft, Mary Jane 17
 Crosbie, Annette 188
 Cryer, Barry 28, 53, 135
 Csiki, Tony 19, 158
 Csupo, Gabor 74
 Curran, Kevin 152
 Curtin, Jane 133
 Curtis, Mark 220
 Curtis, Richard 41, 171, 185
 Cybill 61
 Dad's Army 61-3, 62
 Daily, Bill 45, 124
 Daily, E. G. 74
 Dalton, Abby 33
 Dames, Rob 36
 Daneman, Paul 183
 D'Angelo, William P 20
 Daniel, Jay 61, 166
 Daniels, Greg 136, 218
 Daniels, Marc 125
 Daniels, Stan 37, 153, 229, 230
 Danson, Ted 53, 230
 Dante, Joe 197
 Dare, Bill 225
 Daria 63-4
 Darling, Joan 70, 155, 205
 Dartland, Dottie 51, 110
 Dauterive, Jim 137
 Dave Allen at Large 64
 Davenport, William 124
 David, Larry 216
 Davidson, Bruce 116
 Davidson, Ian 49
 Davies, Andrew 97
 Davies, Geoffrey 69
 Davies, John Howard 21, 77, 84, 106, 108, 164, 171, 226
 Davies, Richard 46, 196
 Davies, Windsor 127
 Davis, Anne B. 48
 Davis, Bernadette 97
 Davis, David 45, 153, 205, 229, 230
 Davis, Madelyn 20
 Davis, Ned E. 175
 Dawber, Pam 169
 Day, Linda 133, 152
 Day, Robert 31
 Day, Simon 81
 Day Today, The 64-5
 De Caprio, Al 195
 de la Tour, Frances 209
 De Vito, Danny 230
 Deayton, Angus 19, 139, 188
 Debendictis, Lisa 75
 DeCamp, Rosemary 145
 DeCarlo, Yvonne 172, 173
 DeCordova, Fred 130, 178
 DeFore, Don 17
 DeGeneres, Ellen 75
 D'Elia, Bill 70
 Demetral, Chris 71
 Dennis, Hugh 155, 225
 Dennis, Martin 161
 Denoff, Sam 67
 Denver, Bob 102, 152
 Derman, Lou 162
 Designing Women 65-6
 Desmond's 66
 Deuel, Peter 101
 Devaney, Pauline 21
 Dey, Susan 192
 Dhondy, Farukh 183
 Diamond, Bill 175
 Diamond, Lon 192
 Diamond, Selma 181
 Dick Van Dyke Show, The 67-8, 67
 Dieter, Susie 218
 Diff'rent Strokes 68-9
 Dillon, Denny 71
 Dinner, Michael 240
 Dixon, David 118
 Dobie Gillis 152
 Dobkin, Lawrence 173
 Docherty, Jack 12
 Doctor in the House 69
 Dodson, Jack 25
 Dolenz, Mickey 163, 183
 Donahue, Elinor 25, 83
 Donner, Richard 99
 Doogie Howser, M.D. 70
 Dotrice, Michele 223
 Dougherty, Pat 76
 Douglas, Donna 38
 Douglas, Jack 53
 Doumanian, Jean 214
 Dow, Tony 182, 189
 Downes, Johnny 187
 Dr. Katz, Professional Therapist 70
 Draeger, Justin 21
 Dream On 71-2, 71
 Drebren, Stan 96
 Driscoll, Mark 75
 Driscoll, Robin 171
 Driver, Harry 43, 98, 150, 179
 Drop the Dead Donkey 72-4, 73
 Dubin, Charles 155, 220
 Duckman 74-5
 Dukane, Sy 89, 175
 Duncan, Robert 72
 Dungan, Frank 33
 Dunn, Clive 61, 129
 Dyall, Valentine 218
 Dyson, Noel 81

- East, Robert 64
 Eastman, Brian 131
 Eberhard, Leslie 89
 Eberhardt, Thom 192
 Ebersol, Dick 214
 Ebsen, Buddy 38
 Eddington, Paul 108, 109, 242
 Eden, Barbara 124
 Edmondson, Adrian 46, 47, 57, 86, 242
 Edwards, Glynn 223
 Edwards, Rob 92
 Eichler, Glenn 34, 64
 Eilbacner, Randy 178
 Ellen 75-6, 75
 Elliot, Peggy 187
 Ellis, James 182, 182
 Ellison, Bob 153
 Elphick, Michael 29
 Elson, Andrea 19
 Elton, Ben 41, 86, 171, 215, 242
 Emberg, Ella 35
 Emery, Dick 27, 129
 Empty Nest 76
 Enfield, Harry 116, 161, 225
 Eng, John 74
 Engel, Stephen 71
 English, Arthur 27
 English, Diane 175
 Erdman, Dennis 139
 Eschley, Norman 97
 Esmonde, John 100, 108, 196
 Eton, Peter 27
 Evans, Barry 69
 Evans, Lissa 83
 Evans, Marcus 18
 Evans, Michael 110
 Evening Shade 76-7
 Evigan, Greg 179
 Exton, Clive 131
 F Troop 96-7
 Fabrizi, Mario 27
 Fairbank, Christopher 29
 Fairfax, Ferdinand 131
 Fairly Secret Army 77
 Falcon, Ellen 65, 92, 210
 Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin 77-8
 Family Affair 79
 Family Ties 79
 Fanaro, Barry 104
 Fanelli, Alison 17
 Fast Show, The 80, 81
 Father Dear Father 81-2, 82
 Father Knows Best 83
 Father Ted 83-4, 84
 Fawlty Towers 84-6
 Faye, Herbie 195
 Faylen, Frank 152
 Fedderson, Don 79, 178
 Fegen, Richard 49
 Fein, Bernard 119
 Fein, Irving 130
 Feiner, Ben 146
 Feldman, Edward H. 119
 Feldman, Marty 27, 28, 153
 Feldon, Barbara 99
 Felton, David 34
 Fenton-Stevens, Michael 139
 Ferber, Mel 114, 153
 Ferguson, Jay R. 76
 Fern, Sheila 97, 146
 Ferrett, Eve 46
 Field, Sally 101
 Fields, Sid 12
 Filthy Rich and Catflap 86
 Fincham, Peter 64, 137
 Finestra, Carmen 120
 Finn, Herbert 87, 122
 Fisher, Bob 124
 Fisher, Gregor 201
 Fisher, Joely 75
 Fitzalan, Marsha 180
 Flaherty, Paul 139
 Fletcher, Diana 77
 Fletcher, Mandie 50, 189
 Fletcher, Mandy 41, 66
 Flett, Anne 133
 Flett-Giordano, Anne 89
 Fleyming, Gordon 27
 Flicker, Theodore J. 31, 124
 Flintstones, The 87-8
 Flippen, Ruth Brooks 101
 Flower, Gilly 84
 Fluck, Peter 225
 Flynn, Joe 159
 Ford, Faith 175
 Ford, Paul 195
 Fordyce, Ian 28
 Forster, Brian 192
 Forsythe, John 30
 Foster, Warren 87
 Fowlds, Derek 242
 Fowler, Keith 15
 Fox, Michael J. 79, 225
 Francis, Stan 18
 Frank, Sandy 92
 Frank Stubbs Promotes 88
 Frankau, Nicholas 22
 Franklin, Jeff 130
 Franklin, Jim 106, 206
 Fraser, Bill 27
 Fraser, Bob 36
 Fraser, Liz 77
 Frazier 89-91, 90
 Frawley, James 163
 Frawley, William 125
 Frazer-Jones, Peter 97, 151, 209
 Frazier, Ronald E 37
 Frears, Stephen 57
 Frederick, Malcolm 183
 Freeman, Dave 43, 209, 218
 Freeman, Everett 30
 Freinberg, Nina 104
 French, Dawn 57, 91-2, 93, 104
 French and Saunders 91-2, 93
 Fresh Prince of Bel Air, The 92-5
 Friday Night Live 215
 Friedberg, Billy 195
 Friendly, Ed 211
 Friends 94, 95-6
 Fritzell, Jim 156
 Front, Rebecca 64, 137
 Frost, David 28, 96, 231, 232
 Frost Report, The 96
 Frost, Steve 52
 Fry, Stephen 131
 Fryman, Pamela 51, 89, 95
 Fuest, Robert 184
 Fusco, Paul 19
 Gable, June 33
 Gabor, Eva 111
 Gadenia, Vincent 21
 Gail, Maxwell 33
 Galton, Ray 112, 226
 Game On 97
 Gammon, James 31
 Gard, Cheryl 92
 Garden, Graeme 69, 106, 107
 Garefino, Anne 224
 Garner, Anthony 29
 Garrett, Betty 21
 Garrett, Lila 178
 Garrison, Greg 30
 Gauberg, Joe 169
 Gaughan, Shannon 92
 Geeson, Sally 43
 Gelbert, Larry 155, 156
 Geldray, Max 218
 Geller, Nancy 70
 Gelwaks, Jeremy 192
 Gene, Richard Benjamin 200
 George and the Dragon 98-9
 George and Mildred 97-8, 98
 Gerber, David 101, 200
 Gernon, Christine 49
 Gery, Brad 129
 Get Smart 99-100, 100
 Get Some In 100-1
 Gets, Malcolm 51
 Getty, Estelle 76
 Ghost and Mrs Muir, the 101
 Gibson, Richard 22
 Gidget 101-2
 Gilbert, Colin 201
 Gilbert, James 96, 140, 184, 235
 Gilliam, Terry 164
 Gilligan's Island 102, 103
 Gilman, Ian 64
 Girls on Top 104
 Glass, Ron 33
 Gleason, Jackie 122, 123, 145
 Glennister, John 88
 Glickman, Jennifer 51
 Glover, John 225
 Gold, Missy 36
 Goldberg, Gary David 79, 225
 Goldberg, Whoopi 31
 Golden Girls, The 104-6, 104
 Goldstein, Josh 44
 Gomer Pyle, USMC 106
 Gomez, Jim 204
 Gonshaw, Francesca 22
 Gonzalez, Alvaro J. 64
 Good Life, The 108, 109
 Good Times 110
 Goodall, Howard 185
 Goodies, The 106-8, 107
 Goodman, John 210
 Goodnight Sweetheart 108-10
 Goodwins, Leslie 96

- Gordon, Andrew 71
 Gordon, Colin 187
 Gorton, Mark 173
 Gosden, Freeman 24
 Gosfield, Maurice 195
 Gottlieb, Alex 12
 Gould, Harold J. 206
 Grace Under Fire 110–11
 Grady, Don 178
 Grady, Mike 56
 Grafe, Judy 17
 Grammer, Kelsey 89
 Gran, Maurice 108, 180
 Grandstaff, Tracy 34, 64
 Grant, Bob 188
 Grant, Merrill 133
 Grant, Peggy 187
 Grant, Rob 18, 52, 202, 225
 Grau, Doris 60
 Gray, Billy 83
 Green Acres 111–12, 111
 Green, Katherine 152
 Green, Sid 167
 Greenbaum, Everett 156
 Greene, John L. 177
 Greenlaw, Verna 183
 Greenstein, Jeff 71
 Greenwood, Joan 104
 Greenwood, Laurie 182
 Gregory, Benji 19
 Gregory, James 33
 Gretchell, Robert 20
 Grey, Brad 139
 Griffith, Andy 25
 Griffiths, Richard 240
 Groening, Matt 218
 Gross, Ayre 75
 Gross, Michael 79
 Grossman, Budd 68
 Grossman, Terry 104
 Guarnieri, Terri 58
 Gugino, Carla 225
 Guillaume, Robert 36, 36
 Gunther, Sherry 74
 Gurman, Richard 152
 Guyler, Deryck 229
 Guzman, Claudio 67, 124, 192
 Gwenlan, Gareth 50, 77, 189, 234
 Gwynne, Fred 50, 51, 172, 173
 Gwynne, Haydn 72
 Haaland, Bret 60
 Hagman, Larry 124
 Haig, Jack 22
 Hale, Alan, Jr. 102
 Hale, Gareth 112
 Hale and Pace 112
 Hall, Andrew 50
 Hall, Cheryl 56
 Hall, Kevin Peter 116
 Hall, Willis 209
 Hamilton, Andy 72, 185, 240
 Hamilton, Rex 199
 Hampton, James 76
 Hancock, Sheila 201
 Hancock, Tony 113, 113
 Hancock's Half-Hour 112–14, 113
 Handle, Irene 113
 Hanna, William 87
 Hanner, Marilu 76
 Hanson, Charlie 66, 112, 183
 Happy Days 114–16, 114, 142
 Hardie, Sean 184, 225
 Hardwick, Johnny 137
 Hare, Robertson 21
 Hargrove, Brian 51
 Harper, Graeme 180
 Harper, Valerie 206
 Harris, Jeff 68
 Harris, Neil Patrick 70
 Harris, Peter 225
 Harris, Susan 36, 76, 104, 186, 222
 Harry Enfield's Television Programme 116–17
 Harry and the Hendersons 116
 Hartman, Kim 22
 Hartmann, Edmund 79
 Hartnell, William 27
 Hawn, Goldie 211
 Hawthorne, Nigel 242
 Hayes, Isaac 224
 Hayes, Melvyn 127
 Hayes, Patricia 35, 113
 Hayter, James 27
 Hayward, Chris 31
 Haywood, Pippa 49
 Healy, Tim 29
 Heard, Daphne 234
 Heisler, Eileen 75
 Heline, Deanne 75
 Helmond, Katherine 222
 Hemsley, Sherman 21
 Henderson, Florence 48
 Hendries, James 202
 Henner, Marilu 230
 Henning, Carol 15
 Henning, Linda Kaye 194
 Henning, Paul 38, 111, 194
 Henry, Buck 99, 200
 Henry, Emmaline 127
 Henry, Lenny 145, 215
 Henson, Jim 174
 Herskowitz, Brian 44
 Hervey, Jason 241
 Hervey, Winifred 104
 Hesseman, Howard 241
 Hey, Stan 145
 Heydorn, Nancy 19
 Hi-De-Hi 117–18
 Hickman, Dwayne 152
 Higgins, David Anthony 75
 Higgins, Joel 37
 Higson, Charles 81, 116
 Hiken, Nat 50, 195
 Hill, Benny 35
 Hill, Rose 22
 Hiller, Arthur 15
 Hills, Dick 167
 Hills, Julia 240
 Hindman, Earl 120, 121
 Hines, Connie 162
 Hines, Ronald 183
 Hirsch, Judd 230
 Hislop, Ian 52, 225
 Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The 118–19, 118
 Hoare, Ken 209
 Hobbs, John B. 22, 50, 230
 Hodge, Stephanie 186
 Hodge, Sue 24
 ♦ Hogan's Heroes 119–20, 119
 Holder, Ram John 66
 Holiday, Polly 20
 Holland, Todd 139
 Holloway, Ann 81, 82
 Holloway, Jean 101
 Holmes, Michelle 108
 Holton, Gary 29
 Home Improvement 120–22, 121
 Honeymooners, The 122–4, 123
 Hooley, Joan 66
 Hoopes, Wendy 64
 Hopper, Jerry 15
 Horigan, Sam 111
 Horrocks, Jane 13, 60
 Horsley, John 78
 Horwitt, Arnold 152
 Howard, Ron 25, 114, 114
 Howells, Ursula 81
 Howerd, Frankie 236, 237
 Howland, Beth 20
 Hubert-Whitten, Janet 92
 Hughes, Nerys 148, 149
 Hughes, Terry 104, 186
 Hunt, Peter H. 200
 Hunt, Richard 175
 Hunter, Moray 12, 225
 Hurdle, Jack 122
 Hurl, Michael 235
 Hurran, Nick 88
 Hurwitz, Mitchell 104
 Huss, Toby 17
 Hutton, Gunilla 194
 I Dream of Jeannie 124–5, 124
 I Love Lucy 125–7, 126
 Iannucci, Armando 64, 137
 Idels, Robb 71
 Idelson, Ellen 51
 Idle, Eric 96, 164, 213
 Ilson, Saul 221
 I'm Dickens, He's Fenster 127
 In Sickness and in Health 234
 Ingels, Marty 127
 Inman, John 26
 Innes, Neil 213
 Insana, Tino 197
 Isaacs, David 53
 It Ain't Half Hot, Mum 127–9, 128
 It's Garry Shandling's Show 129–30
 It's a Square World 129
 Izzard, Bryan 188
 Jack Benny Show, The 130–1
 Jackson, Paul 52, 86, 104, 242
 Jacob, Judith 183
 Jacobs, Michael 179
 Jacobs, Ronald 67, 106
 Jacoby, Coleman 195
 Jacques, Hattie 229
 James, Polly 148, 149

- James, Sid 43, 44, 53, 98, 113
Janis, Conrad 169
Janson, David 100
Janus, Samantha 97
Jaques, Hattie 113
Jason, David 189, 190, 191
Jay, Anthony 242
Jayne, Billy 192
Jean, Al 60, 218, 220
Jeeves and Wooster 131
Jenkin, Guy 72, 185
Jenkinson, Philip 153
Jensen, Shelley 92
Jeup, Dan 60
John K. *see* Kricfalusi, John
John-Jules, Danny 202
Johnson, Arte 211
Johnson, Bruce 169, 200
Johnson, Douglas 65
Johnson, Sam 34
Johnson, Sandy 240
Johnstone, Bruce 169
Jones, Anissa 79
Jones, Carolyn 15
Jones, Davy 163
Jones, Gordon 12
Jones, Griff Rhys 18, 185
Jones, Hilary Bevan 88, 202
Jones, Peter 118, 201, 240
Jones, Quincy 92
Jones, Shirley 192
Jones, Simon 118
Jones, Terry 96, 153, 164, 206
Joyce, Yootha 97, 98
Judge, Mike 34, 136, 137
Juhl, Jerry 174
Julia 132
Julian, Arthur 96
Jump, Gordon 241
Junge, Alexa 95
Junger, Gil 44, 75
Junkin, John 153
Kahn, Bernie 178
Kalish, Austin 96, 101
Kalish, Irma 96, 101
Kane, Joel 152, 163
Kane, John 148, 230
Kanter, Hal 132
Kaplan, Gabe 239
Kaplan, Vic 75
Karlin, Miriam 201
Karrell, Matia 70
Kate and Allie 132-134, 133
Katz, Allan 44
Katz, Jonathan 70
Kauffman, Marta 71, 95
Kavner, Julie 206, 218
Kaye, Gordon 22, 23
Kean, Jane 122
Keating, Bernie 74
Keating, Larry 162
Keating, Tracy 97
Keegan, Robert 148
Keenan, Mary Jo 186
Keeping up Appearances 134-135
Keill, Ian 213
Keith, Brian 79
Keith, Gerren 110
Keith, Penelope 108, 109, 234
Keller, Sheldon 187
Kelley, David E. 70
Kellman, Barnet 175
Kelly, April 169
Kelly, Eamon 179
Kelly, Frank 83
Kelly, Sam 22
Kelton, Richard 200
Kendal, Felicity 108, 109
Kennedy, Gordon 12
Kennedy, Sarah Anne 60
Kenny Everett Video Show, The 135-136, 135
Kenny, Jack 51
Kern, James V 125
Kerr, Bill 113
Kessler, Bruce 163
Kessler, Peter 173
Keyes, Paul W. 211
Khan, Brigitte 29
Kilby, John 18, 117, 127, 139
Kimbrough, Charles 175
Kimpton, Lolli 57
Kinane, Terry 108
Kincaid, Aaron 30
King of the Hill 136-137, 136
Kinon, Richard 192
Kirk, Joe 12
Kirkland, Dennis 35
Kirkland, Mark 218
Klasky, Arlene 74
Klein 181
Klein, Howard 136
Klemperer, Werner 119, 119
Klugman, Jack 187
Knight, Ted 154
Knot, Gary 58
Knotts, Don 25
Knowing Me, Knowing You... with Alan Partridge 137-139, 138
Kobin, Sherry 133
Kogen, Jay 218
Komack, James 99
Krasny, Paul 166, 197
Kreski, Chris 34
Kricfalusi, John 204
Kudrow, Lisa 95
Kukoff, Bernie 68
Kwapis, Ken 139
Kyan, Terry 49, 185
KYTV 139
La Frenais, Ian 29, 146, 199
La Marche, Maurice 60
Lachman, Mort 31, 133
Ladd, Diane 20
LaMotta, John 20
Lancashire, Geoffrey 150
Lander, David L. 141
Landesburg, Steve 33
Landis, John 71
Lane, Carla 43, 50, 148
Laneuville, Eric 70, 71
Lanfield, Sidney 15, 159
Langdon, Sue Anne 30
Lange, Hope 101
Langham, Chris 185
Langton, Simon 131
Lapidus, Adam I 218
Larbey, Bob 100, 108, 196
Larner, Elizabeth 236
Larrecq, Harry 173
Larroquette, John 181
Larry Sanders Show, The 139-140
Larsen, Regina Stewart 76
Last of the Summer Wine 140-141
Lathan, Stan 129
Laufenberg, Gene 74
Laurie, High 131
Laurie, John 61
Laver, Bob 101
Laverne and Shirley 141-143, 142
Lavin, Linda 20, 33
Law, John 129, 184
Law, Roger 225
Lawrence, Bill 225
Lawrence, Joey 45
Lawrence, Scott 31
Lawrence, Vernon 209
Layton, George 69, 127, 188, 209
Lazer, David 174
Le Mesurier, John 61, 98
Lear, Norman 21, 110, 158
Leave It To Beaver 143-145, 143
Leavitt, Ron 152
LeBeauf, Sabrina 58
LeBlanc, Karen 70
LeBlanc, Matt 95
LeBow, Will 70
Lederer, Helen 47
Lee, Benny 129
Lee, David 53, 89
Lee, Joanna 87
Lee, Johnny 25
Leeds, Howard 47, 68, 101
Leeson, Michael 58
Leeves, Jane 89
Lehman, Michael 139
Leisure, David 76
Lembeck, Harvey 195
Lembeck, Michael 95
Lemon, Wayne 110
Lenny Henry Show, The 145
Leonard, Sheldon 25, 67, 106, 177
Leslie, Phil 15
Lessac, Michael 110
Lester, Dick 218
Levin, Bernard 231
Levine, Ken 53
Levy, David 15
Levy, Ralph 125, 130
Lewis, Al 173
Lewis, Albert E. 187
Lewis, Bill 17
Lewis, Clea 75
Lewis, Milo 27
Lewis, Patti 218
Lewis, Robert Lloyd 192
Lewis, Stephen 188
Life with Father 146

- Life of Riley, The 145–146
 Likely Lads, The 146–148, 147
 Linden, Hal 31, 32, 33
 Lindsay, Ian 161
 Lindsay, Robert 56, 56, 100, 182, 182
 Linehan, Graham 83
 Lipp, Stacie 152
 Little Bit of Wisdom, A 148
 Little, Cleavon 31
 Liver Birds 148–150, 149
 Livingston, Mary 130
 Livingston, Stanley 178
 Lloyd, Christopher 89
 Lloyd, David 37, 153
 Lloyd, Jeremy 22, 26
 Lloyd, John 41, 184, 225
 Lobue, J. J. 222
 Lobue, John L. 179
 London, Jerry 192
 London, Marc 174
 Long, Shelley 53
 Loring, Lisa 15
 Lorre, Chuck 61, 110
 Lotterby, Sydney 50, 140, 148, 191, 199, 229, 242
 Lotterstein, Rob 51
 Louis-Dreyfus, Julia 216
 Louise, Tina 102
 Love Thy Neighbour 150–151
 Lovenheime, Robert 220
 Lovers, The 150
 Lovitz, Jon 60
 Lowe, Arthur 18, 61, 62
 Lowell, Jeff 225
 Lowney, Declan 83
 Lubin, Arthur 162
 Lumley, Joanna 13, 14
 Lupino, G. B. 129
 Lupino, Ida 101, 102
 Lupus, Peter 199
 Lurcuck, Len 209
 Lutes, Eric 51
 Lutler, Alfred 20
 Lux, Ron 74
 Lynch, Joe 179, 179
 Lyndhurst, Nicholas 50, 108, 189, 190
 Lynn, Jonathan 69, 188, 242
 Lynn, Susie Lewis 64
 M*A*S*H 155–158, 157
 McCarthy, Neil 148
 McClanahan, Rue 104
 McCormick, Maureen 48
 Macdonald, Aimi 28
 McDonald, Graeme 27
 McDowell, Paul 64
 McFadzean, David 120, 210
 McGee, Henry 35
 McGrath, Jeff 74
 McGrath, Joe 129, 184
 McGrath, Rory 18, 240
 McHale's Navy 159–161, 160
 MacKay, Fulton 199
 McKean, Michael 141
 McKee, Gina 145
 McKenna, Bernard 180, 209
 Mackenzie, Will 51, 166
 McKeown, Allan 29
 Mackian, Doon 57
 Mackichan, Doon 64, 137
 MacLane, Roland 143
 McLean, Ian 66
 McLynn, Pauline 83
 McMullen, Lauren 60
 MacMurray, Fred 178
 MacNaughton, Ian 164, 209
 McNear, Howard 25
 McNicol, Kirsty 76
 McNight, Tom 145
 MacRae, Sheila 122
 McRaven, Dale 169
 McRobb, Will 17, 204
 Macy, Bill 158
 Madden, Dave 20
 Madoc, Ruth 117
 Maffeo, Gayle S. 120
 Mahoney, John 89
 Makin, Paul 108, 182
 Malick, Wendie 71
 Mallett, David 135
 Malone, Joe 235
 Maltese, Mike 87
 Man About the House 151
 Mancuso, Gail 95, 210
 Mandabach, Caryn 61
 Mandan, Robert 222
 Manoff, Dinah 76
 Mansfield, Sally 30
 Mansi, John Louis 24
 Mantle, Clive 18
 Manulis, Martin 152
 Manusco, Gail 75
 Many Loves of Dobie Gillis, The 152
 Marber, Patrick 64, 137
 Marcil, Chris 34
 Marcus, Russell 192
 Margolis, Jeff 210
 Maria, Eve 166
 Markle, Fletcher 146
 Markowitz 74
 Markowitz, Michael 74
 Marks, Alan 238
 Marks, Hilliard 130
 Marks, Laurence 108, 180
 Marks, Lawrence 119
 Markus, John 58
 Marlens, Neal 75, 240
 Marner, Richard 22
 Maronna, Mike 17
 Marquette, Jack 173
 Marr, Pati 173
 Married... with Children 152–153
 Marsh, Reginald 230
 Marshall, Andrew 19, 185, 240
 Marshall, Garry 114, 141, 169, 187
 Marshall, Tony 169
 Martin, Anne-Marie 220
 Martin, Dick 45, 211
 Martin, Jessica 225
 Martin, Millicent 231
 Martinson, Leslie H. 68
 Marty 153
 Marx, Marvin 122
 Mary Tyler Moore Show, The 153–155, 154
 Mary Whitehouse Experience, The 155
 Masters, Billy 51
 Mastrogeorge, Harry 153
 Mathers, Jerry 143
 Mathie, Marion 18
 Matthews, Arthur 83
 Matthews, Larry 67
 Matura, Mustapha 183
 Maude 158–159, 159
 Maude, Mary 28
 Mauldin, Nat 31
 May, Juliet 145, 202
 Mayall, Rik 46, 47, 86, 180, 180, 242
 Mayberry, Russ 163, 192
 Meadows, Audrey 122
 Meara, Anne 20, 21
 Medina, Benny 92
 Medwin, Michael 27
 Megahy, Francis 29
 Mekka, Eddie 141
 Melman, Jeff 89, 92
 Melvin, Allan 21
 Men Behaving Badly 161–2
 Merrill, Howard 96
 Merryfield, Buster 189, 190
 Mervyn, William 21
 Metcalfe, Burt 155
 Meyer, George 218
 Meyers, Ari 133
 Michaels, Lorne 214
 Michelle, Vicki 22
 Mikeon, Philip 20
 Milkis, Edward K. 114, 141
 Millan, Tony 19, 49
 Miller, Didney 177
 Miller, Gary H. 92
 Miller, Harvey 187
 Miller, Mary 153
 Miller, Paul 129, 214
 Miller, Sidney 39
 Miller, Thomas L. 114, 141
 Milligan, Spike 218, 235
 Mills, Michael 18, 100, 153, 223, 236
 Minster, Hilary 22
 Misch, David 74
 Mister Ed 162
 Mitchell, Shirley 30
 Mitchell, Warren 113, 233
 Mockford, Jeanne 236
 Moffat, Jordan 31
 Moliarno, Al 187
 Monkees, The 163–4, 163
 Monsoon, Edina 13
 Montagne, Edward J. 159, 195
 Montagu, Felicity 19
 Monte, Eric 110
 Montgomery, Belinda 70
 Montgomery, Elizabeth 39
 Monty Python's Flying Circus 164–6, 165
 Moonlighting 166–7
 Moore, Del 30
 Moore, Dudley 184
 Moore, Mary Tyler 67, 67, 153–155, 154
 Moore, Rich 60, 218
 Moore, Tim 24
 Moore, Tom 53, 61

- Moorehead, Agnes 39
Mordente, Tony 79
Morecambe, Eric 167
Morecambe and Wise Show, The 167-8
Morgan, Dermot 83
Morgan, Harry 155
Morgan-Witts, Max 27
Mork and Mindy 169-70, 169
Morris, Christopher 64
Morris, Howard 25
Morris, Linda 89
Morrisey, Neil 161
Morrow, Neil 130
Morse, Barry 240
Morse, Hollingsworth 96, 101
Mortimer, Bob 238
Mortimer, Johnnie 81, 97, 150, 151, 209
Mortimer, Marcus 19, 155
Mosher, Bob 143, 173
Moss, Denise 89, 175
Mount, Peggy 98
Moye, Michael G. 152
Mr Bean 171
Mrs Merton Show, The 173
Muir, Frank 69
Muir, Graeme 183, 226
Mula, Frank 218
Mulhare, Edward 101
Mullen, Marjorie 153
Mulligan, Richard 76
Mulville, Jimmy 18, 240
Mumford, Thad 156
Munroe, Carmen 66
Munsters, The 172, 173-4
Muppet Show, The 174-5
Murdoch, George 33
Murphy, Brian 97, 98
Murphy Brown 175-6, 176
Murphy, Joey 61
Murray, Harry 110
Music, Lorenzo 45, 205
Musquiz, Raymie 74
My Favourite Martian 177-8, 177
My Mother the Car 178
My Three Sons 178-9
My Two Dads 179
Myers, Mike 239
Myerson, Alan 45
Myerson, Peter 239
- Mylod, Mark 81
- Nabors, Jim 25, 106
Nader, Michelle 225
Nail, Jimmy 29
Najimy, Kathy 137
Nallon, Steve 225
Napier, Charles 60
Nash, Robin 108, 230
Nathan, Mort 104
Naylor, Doug 18, 52, 202, 225
Nedwell, Robin 69
Nelson, Dave 17
Nelson, Don 101
Nelson, Eric 17
Nelson, Gary 101
Nelson, Gene 124
Nelson, Harriet Hilliard 17
Nelson, Jerry 175
Nelson, Kris 17
Nelson, Ozzie 17
Nemec, Corin 192
Nesmith, Mike 163
Neufeld, Mace 200
Never Mind the Quality, Feel the Width 179-80, 179
New Statesman, The 180-1, 180
Newhart, Bob 45
Newland, John 30
Newman, Paul 70
Newman, Rob 155
Newman, Tracy 75
Nicholls, Sue 78
Nichols, Charles 87
Nichols, Dandy 233, 233
Nichols, David 51
Nickerson, Charles 20
Nickolds, Andrew 145
Nieber, Linda 225
Nielsen, Leslie 199
Night Court 181
Nightingales 182-3, 182
Nimmo, Derek 21, 187
Nixon, Alan 12
No Problem 183
No-Honestly 183
Nobbs, David 77
Noble, James 36
Nodella, Burt 99
Nolas, Lloyd 132
Normal, Henry 137
- Norman, Christina 34
Norris, Pamela 65
Norris, Andrew 49
North, Alan 199
Not in Front of the Children 183-4
Not the Nine O'Clock News 184-6, 185
Not Only... But Also... 184
Nurses 186
Nyby, Christian I 166
Nye, Bud 152
Nye, Simon 88, 161
- Oakley, Bill 218
O'Brian, Bob 162
O'Brien, Conan 218
O'Connor, Carroll 21
Odd Couple, The 187
Oddie, Bill 69, 106, 107
O'Donnell, Steven 46
O'Donoghue, Denise 97, 116
O'Donoghue, Michael 214
Oh Brother! 187-8
O'Hanion, Ardal 83
Oldroyd, Liddy 66, 72
Oliver, Lin 116
On the Buses 188-9, 189
One Foot in the Grave 188
O'Neill, Ed 152
Only Fools and Horses 189-91, 190
Open All Hours 191-2
Oppenheimer, Jess 99, 125
Orenstein, Bernie 133
O'Riordan, Shaun 98
Orkin, Harvey 195
Orlton, Peter 112
Orr, William T. 96
Orton, Peter 238
Osborn, Ron 74
O'Sullivan, Richard 151, 209
Owen, Bill 140
Owens, Gary 211
Oz, Frank 174, 175
- Pace, Norman 112
Page, Harrison 220
Palin, Michael 96, 153, 164, 206, 207
Palmer, Geoffrey 50, 77
Pardee, John 61
Paris, Jerry 67, 114, 187
- Park, Nira 57
Parker, Anthony 150
Parker Lewis Can't Lose 192
Parker, Trey 224
Parsons, Nicholas 35
Partridge, Alan 137-139, 138
Partridge Family, The 192-194, 193
Pasquin, John 79, 120, 210
Passaris, Lex 104
Patchett, Tom 19
Paterson, Bill 29
Patterson, Hank 111
Patterson, Ray 87
Pattison, Ian 201
Paulsen, Pat 221
Peacock, Daniel 57
Pearce, Lennard 189, 190
Penn, Leon 17
Pennette, Marco 51
Pentland, Bill 210
Percival, Lance 231
Periman, Rhea 230
Perkins, Geoffrey 83, 97, 116, 139, 215, 225
Perlman, Heide 53
Perrin, Nat 15
Perrin, Sam 130
Perry, Jimmy 61, 117, 127
Perry, Mathew 95
Persky, Bill 67, 133
Perzigan, Jerry 89, 152
Peterman, Steven 175
Petticoat Junction 194
Pevney, Joseph 173
Pew, Joseph de 38
Phil Silvers Show, The 195-196, 195
Philbin, Jack 122
Phillips, Arthur 87
Phillips, Clyde 192
Phillips, Lee 101, 192
Phillips, Nic 66
Pierce, David Hyde 89
Pierce, Maggie 178
Pietz, Amy 51
Pilbrow, Giles 225
Pilsworth, Michael 180
Pitlik, Noam 31, 230
Planer, Nigel 57, 86, 185, 242
Plantin, Marcus 235
Plato, Dana 68

- Platt, Edward 99
 Please Sir! 196–197, 197
 Pleshette, Suzanne 45
 Plowman, Jon 13, 19, 91
 Poeti, Paolo 76
 Police Squad! 197–199, 198
 Pollack, Jeff 92
 Pomerantz, Earl 37
 Pons, Beatrice 50
 Pope, Philip 185, 240
 Porridge 199–200
 Porter, Don 101
 Posner, Geoff 52, 116, 145, 215
 Potter, Andy 145
 Powell, Noshier 57
 Powell, Vince 43, 46, 98, 150, 179
 Prady, Bill 51
 Prager, Stanley 50
 Pratchett, Tom 45
 Proft, Pat 197
 Pugh, Madelyn 125
 Punt, Steve 155, 225
 Purcel, Richard 204
 Pyl, Jean Vander 87
 Pyne, Natasha 81, 82

 Quark 200–201
 Quark, Adam 200
 Quentin, Caroline 161
 Quinn, Bill 21

 Rab C. Nesbitt 201
 Race, Roger 148, 153, 229
 Radnitz, Brad 47
 Rafelson, Bob 163
 Rafkin, Alan 25, 39, 45, 124, 129, 177, 205
 Rag Trade, The 201–202
 Ranberg, Chuck 89, 133
 Randall, Tony 187
 Randell, Bob 133
 Randolph, Joyce 122
 Randolph, Lillian 25
 Ransohoff, Martin 38
 Rasche, David 220
 Rashad, Phylicia 58
 Raskin, Carolyn 211
 Ratzenberger, John 53, 54, 76
 Rauseo, Vic 89
 Ravens, Jan 19, 225
 Rawis, Hardy 17

 Rawle, Jeff 72
 Ray, Leslie 92
 Raymond, Jack 87
 Raynis, Richard 60
 Raznicka, Deborah 169
 Read, Alan 87
 Reardon, Jim 218
 Reardon, John 240
 Red Dwarf 202–204, 203
 Reding, Nick 88
 Reed, Ralph 146
 Reed, Robert 47, 48, 100
 Reeves, Vic 238
 Regalbuto, Joe 175
 Reiner, Carl 67
 Reiner, Rob 21, 114
 Reiser, Paul 179
 Reiss, Mike 60, 218
 Ren and Stimpy 204–205
 Renard, Gail 209
 Reno, Jeff 74
 Renwick, David 19, 188, 240
 Reo, Don 44, 155
 Revell, Nick 72
 Reynolds, Burt 76
 Reynolds, David 180
 Reynolds, Gene 44, 101, 119, 155, 173, 178
 Reynolds, Marjorie 145
 Rhoda 205–206, 205
 Rhymer, Don 76
 Riback, Billy 120
 Rich, John 21, 31, 36, 47, 67, 102, 106
 Richards, Michael 216
 Richardson, David 76
 Richardson, Donald 173
 Richardson, Patricia 120
 Richardson, Peter 57, 185
 Richens, Pete 57
 Rigg, John 139
 Riley, Jeannine 194
 Ripping Yarns 206–208, 207
 Rising Damp 208, 209
 Rix, Jamie 18, 139
 Roach, Pat 29
 Robbie, Seymour 96, 220
 Robbins, John 35
 Robbins, Michael 77
 Roberts, Renee 84
 Robertson, Sid 81
 Robin's Nest 209–210
 Robinson, Peter 77

 Robinson, Tony 41, 42, 240
 Robolledo, Julian 64
 Rocas, Cleo 135
 Rock, Blossom 15
 Rodger, Christine 28
 Rodney, Eugene B 83
 Rogers, Doug 153
 Rogers, Peter 53
 Rogers, Wayne 156
 Rolle, Esther 110
 Roman, Phil 60, 136
 Romero, Victor 183
 Rondeau, Charles 96, 173, 187
 Roper, Tony 201
 Rose, Adele 43, 209
 Rose, Si 159
 Roseanne 210–211
 Rosen, Arnie 99, 195
 Rosen, Sy 31
 Rosenberg, Alan 61
 Rosenthal, David 75
 Rosenthal, Jack 150
 Rosenthal, Lisa 92
 Ross, Joe E. 50, 51
 Ross, Michael 21
 Rossiter, Leonard 78, 208, 209
 Rotenberg, Michael 136
 Rothwell, Talbot 236
 Routledge, Patricia 134
 Rowan, Dan 211
 Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In 211–213, 212
 Rowe, Fanny 183
 Rowland, Daryl 75
 Rowley, Laurie 185
 Ruben, Aaron 25, 38, 106
 Rubin, Aaron 195
 Rubin, Stanley 101
 Ruddell, Kirk J. 225
 Ruddy, Albert S. 119
 Ruppenthal, Chris 220
 Rushton, William 231, 236
 Ruskin, Coby 106
 Russell, Andy 122
 Russell, William D. 79, 83
 Rutland Weekend Television 213–214
 Ryan, Christopher 46, 242
 Ryan, Irene 38
 Ryan, Terry 195
 Ryder, Gerald 100
 Sachs, Andrew 84, 85

 Sackheim, William 101
 Sacks, David 218
 Saffian, R. Allan 87
 Sagal, Katey 152
 Saint James, Susan 133
 St John, Julia 49
 Sakai, Richard 60, 218
 Saks, Sol 39
 Sallis, Peter 140
 Sande, Walter 18
 Sanderson, Joan 196
 Sandrich, Jay 36, 58, 99, 101, 141, 153, 187, 222, 241
 Sands, Billy 159
 Sandy, Gary 241
 Sanford, Arlene 51, 65
 Sanford, Lee 163
 Sanrich, Jay 104
 Sapperstein, Frank 204
 Sargent, Dick 39
 Satenstein, Frank 122
 Saturday Night Live 214–215
 Saunders, Jennifer 13, 14, 57, 91, 93, 104
 Saunders, Lori 194
 Savage, Fred 241
 Savel, Dava 110
 Savel, Daval 75
 Sawalha, Julia 13
 Sax, Geoffery 180
 Sayle, Alexei 19, 57, 242
 Scales, Prunella 84, 85
 Scarpitta, Guy 152
 Schaefer, Racelle Rosett 44
 Schaffer, Jeff 216
 Scharlach, Ed 169
 Schedeen, Anne 19
 Schell, Frank 106
 Schiller, Bob 125
 Schlamme, Thomas 95, 129, 139, 220, 225
 Schmock, Jonothan 44
 Schneider, Bert 163
 Schneider, David 64, 137
 Schreiber, Avery 178
 Schwartz, Lew 148
 Schwartz, Sherwood 47, 102
 Schwarz, Lee 53
 Schwarz, Lew 27
 Schwatz, Elroy 47
 Schwatz, Lloyd 47
 Schwimmer, David 95

- Scott, Evelyn 30
 Scott, Joan 150
 Scott, Sawan 116
 Scott, Terry 230-1
 Seeger, Susan 44
 Segall, Pamela 137
 Seinfeld 216-217, 217
 Seinfeld, Jerry 216
 Selby, Sarah 83
 Sellers, Peter 218
 Sen Yung, Victor 30
 Sessions, John 225
 Shallat, Lee 79, 175, 225
 Shandling, Garry 129, 130, 139
 Shane, Paul 117
 Shapiro, George 216
 Shapiro, Julianne 70
 Shaps, Cyril 179
 Shardlow, Martin 18, 41, 189
 Sharlach, Ed 187
 Sharp, Bernie 43
 Sharp, Phil 195
 Shea, Jack 65, 110
 Sheehan, Tony 31
 Sheldon, James 79
 Sheldon, Sidney 124
 Shepherd, Cybill 61, 166
 Sheridan, Liz 20
 Sherrin, Ned 231
 Shockley, William 31
 Show Called Fred, A 218
 Shuiovsky, Joel 175
 Shulman, Max 152
 Siegel, Don 89
 Sierra, Gregory 33
 Sikking, James B. 70
 Sikowitz, Mike 95
 Silla, Felix 15
 Silver, Ron 36
 Silvera, Carmen 22
 Silverman, David 218
 Silverman, Laura 70
 Silverman, Treva 153
 Silvers, Phil 195-196, 195
 Simms, Paul 139
 Simon, Al 38, 162, 194
 Simon, David Steven 92
 Simon, Neil 195
 Simon, Sam 53, 218
 Simpson, Alan 112, 226
 Simpsons, The 218-220, 219
 Siner, Guy 22
 Singer, Alexander 163
 Singletary, Tony 58, 152
 Slade, Bernard 192
 Slaten, Troy W. 192
 Slatter, George 211
 Sledge Hammer 220-221
 Smack, Hilton 36
 Smart, Jean 65
 Smethurst, Jack 150
 Smith, Elaine C. 201
 Smith, Hal 25
 Smith, Jim 204
 Smith, Liz 60
 Smith, Mel 18, 184, 185
 Smith, Nicholas 27
 Smith, Paul 49
 Smith, Will 92
 Smith, Yeardley 218
 Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour 221
 Smothers, Dick 221
 Smothers, Tom 221
 Snee, Dennis 76
 Snoad, Harold 61, 134
 Soap 222-223, 223
 Soklon, Sidney 15
 Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em 223-224
 Sommers, Jay 111
 Soo, Jack 33
 Sothorn, Ann 178
 South Park 224-225
 Spall, Timothy 29, 88
 Sparkes, John 12
 Sparks, Robert 30
 Spavia, Tam 47
 Speer, Kathy 104
 Speight, Johnny 229, 233
 Spence, Peter 234
 Spencer, Alan 220
 Spicer, Bryan 192
 Spiers, Bob 13, 19, 57, 61, 84, 91, 106, 127
 Spin City 225
 Spitting Image 225-226
 Spriggs, Elizabeth 131
 Sprung, Sandy 152
 Staci, Keanan 179
 Stallworth, Winifred Hervey 92
 Standeven, Richard 88
 Stanley, Florence 179
 Stapleton, Jean 21, 31
 Stark, Jonathan 75
 Stark, Philip 224
 Starr, Ben 47, 162
 Steadman, Alison 60
 Steele, Austin 64, 187
 Steele, Brian 116
 Steen, Nancy 197
 Steen, Steven 60
 Stein, Jeff 31
 Steinberg, David 216
 Stephens, Larry 27
 Stephens, Mike 22, 49
 Stephenson, Pamela 185, 185
 Steptoe and Son 226-227, 227, 229
 Sterling, Dan 224
 Stern, Daniel 241
 Stern, Elliot 120
 Stern, Leonard 99, 122, 127, 195
 Steuer, Jon Paul 110-11
 Stevens, Ronnie 18
 Stewart, Charles 194
 Stewart, Horace 25
 Stewart, Mel 21
 Stewart, Robin 43, 88
 Stewart, William G. 43, 81
 Stillman, Joe 34
 Stockridge, Sara 57
 Stone, Ezra 173
 Stone, Matt 224
 Stone, Walter 122
 Storch, Larry 96
 Storm, Howard 37, 141, 169, 205
 Strassman, Marcia 239
 Strauss, Jeff 71
 Street, John 35, 129, 184
 Stringer, Nick 180
 Stroud, John 97, 139, 225
 Struthers, Sally 21
 Stuart, Mark 35, 196
 Stubbs, Una 233
 Stuke, Neil 97
 Sugden, Mollie 26
 Sullivan, John 56, 189
 Sullivan, Steven 76
 Sultan, Arne 99
 Summer, Geoffrey 27
 Summers, Hope 25
 Susskind, David 20
 Sutton, Frank 106
 Swackhamer, E. W. 101, 124, 192
 Swartzelder, John 218
 Sweeney, Bob 25
 Swift, Clive 134
 Swit, Loretta 156
 Swope, Mel 192
 Sykes 229
 Sykes, Eric 229
 Sylvester, Ward 163
 Synder, Tom 70
 Tabori, Kris 70
 Tackaberry, John 130
 Talbot, Lyle 17
 Tambarelli, Danny 17
 Tarrant, Alan 53, 98
 Tarses, Jay 45
 Tash, Max 192, 241
 Taxi 228, 229-30
 Tayback, Vic 20
 Taylor, Baz 29
 Taylor, David 230
 Taylor, Gwen 213
 Taylor, Myra 43, 148
 Taylor, Ronnie 148
 Temple, Renny 76
 Tennant, Andy 192
 Tenowich, Tom 169
 Terhule, Abby 34
 Terrell, Steven 146
 Terry and June 230-1
 Tewksbury, Peter 83, 178
 That Was The Week That Was 231-2, 232
 Thomas, Betty 71
 Thomas, Danny 67
 Thomas, Dave 110
 Thomas, Ellen 145
 Thomas, Gerald 53
 Thomas, Janice 13
 Thomas, Tony 36, 44, 76, 104, 222
 Thomason, Harry 65
 Thomerson, Jean Tim 200
 Thompson, Bernard 140, 148
 Thompson, Emma 52
 Thompson, Lea 51
 Thompson, Neil 197
 Thompson, Rob 71
 Thompson, Tommy 65, 76
 Thomsett, Sally 151
 Thorkelson, Peter H. 163
 Thornton, Frank 26, 129
 Thorpe, Harriet 19
 Thorpe, Richard 38



3 9999 03538 613 3

- Threlfall, David 182, 182
 Tibbles, George 15
 Till Death Us Do Part 233-4, 233
 Tischler, Bob 76
 To The Manor Born 234-5
 Tobin, Julia 29
 Todd, Bob 35
 Todd, LaVerne 76
 Tokar, Norman 143
 Tolan, Peter 139
 Tomlin, Lily 211
 Tompkins, Steve 60
 Tong, Sammee 30
 Took, Barry 27, 153, 164
 Tork, Peter 163
 Torres, Liz 21
 Tovey, Roberta 183
 Tracey Ullman Show, The 235
 Tracy, John 179
 Travolta, John 239
 Trogdon, Miriam 110
 Troughton, Michael 180
 Tucci, Michael 130
 Tucker, Forrest 96
 Tummings, Chris 183
 Turner, Bill 69, 183
 Turtletaub, Saul 133
 Tuttle, Lurene 146
 Tuttle, Mark 38
 Two Ronnies, The 235-6
 Tyler, David 12, 225
- Uger, Alan 79
 Ullman, Tracey 104, 215, 235
 Up Pompeii! 236-8, 237
 Urecal, Minerva 18
- Valley, Jim 104
 Van Dyke, Dick 67, 67
 Van Dyke, Jerry 178
 Vance, Vivian 125
 Vanzo, Greg 204
 Varney, Reg 188, 189, 201
 Vela, Norma Stafford 65
 Vertue, Beryl 161
 Vertue, Sue 171
 Vic Reeves' Big Night Out 238-9, 238
 Vieller, Anthony 18
 Vigoda, Abe 33
 Vincent, Peter 49, 64
- Virgien, Norton 74
 Viscardi, Chris 17
 Vitti, John 218
 Vosburgh, Dick 53
 Vosburgh, Marcy 152
- Wade, Ernestine 25
 Waldman, Frank 124
 Walian, Werner 92
 Walker, Arnetia 186
 Walker, Jimmie 110
 Walker, Nancy 206
 Walker, William Lucas 89
 Waller, Vincent 204
 Wallerstein, Herb 192
 Walling, Mike 49
 Walston, Ray 177
 Walton, Trevor 104
 Ward, Preston 15
 Waring, Richard 183, 209
 Warren, Michael 192
 Warrington, Don 209
 Wass, Ted 44, 45
 Watkins, Carlene 37
 Watkins, Jon 148, 209, 230
 Watson, Paul 64
 Wax, Ruby 104
 Wayne, John 212
 Wayne's World 239
 Weatherwax, Ken 15
 Webster, Donald 153
 Webster, Tony 195
 Weege, Reinhold 31, 181
 Weiland, Paul 171
 Weinberger, Ed 58, 153, 229, 230
 Weinstein, Josh 218
 Weis, Don 114, 155
 Weiskopf, Bob 125
 Weiskopf, Kim 152
 Weisman, Sam 79, 166
 Weiss, Bob 197
 Weiss, Jonathan 61
 Welcome Back, Kotter 239-40
 Wendle, Kevin 92
 Wendt, George 53, 54
 Werner, Peter 166
 Werner, Tom 58, 210
 Wesson, Dick 194
 West, Billy 204
 West, Howard 216
 Weyman, Andrew 179, 210
 Weyman, Andy 61
- Whately, Kevin 29
 Whelan, Geoff 34
 Whipple, Randy 178
 Whipple, Sam 31
 Whitaker, Johnnie 79
 Whitcomb, Dennis 173
 White, Betty 104, 104
 White, Frances 148
 White, Joshua 216
 White, Michael 57
 Whitehouse, Paul 81, 116
 Whitmore, Peter 64
 Whitesell, John 210
 Whitfield, June 13, 113, 230-1
 Whitmore, Peter 230, 235, 242
 Who Dares Wins 240
 Whoops Apocalypse 240
 Whorf, Richard 38
 Wilcox, Den 156
 Wilcox, Paula 150, 151
 William, Sioned 97
 Williams, Cindy 141
 Williams, Graham C. 12
 Williams, Spencer, Jr. 24
 Williams, Kate 150
 Williams, Kenneth 113
 Williams, Maiya 92
 Williams, Matt 58, 120, 210
 Williams, Samm-Art 92
 Williamson, Malcolm 72
 Willimas, Robin 169
 Willis, Bruce 166
 Wilson, Dave 214
 Wilson, Dennis Main 56, 153, 201, 229, 233
 Wilson, Hugh 241
 Wilson, Paul 130
 Wilson, Richard 188
 Wimbush, Mary 131
 Windsor, Barbara 53, 201
 Wing-Davey, Mark 118, 118
 Wingreen, Jason 21
 Winkler, Harry 15
 Winkler, Henry 114, 114
 Wisdom, Norman 148
 Wise, Ernie 167
 Withers, Bernadette 30
 Witt, Paul 36, 44, 76, 104, 192, 222
 Woddell, Pat 194
 Wolfe, Ronald 188, 201
- Wolper, David 239
 Wonder Years, The 240-1
 Wood, Duncan 96, 112, 187, 226
 Wood, Helen Atkinson 139
 Woodey, Nick 112
 Woody, Russ 175
 Woolf, Henry 213
 Wopat, Tom 61
 Worrell, Trix 66
 Wray, Bill 204
 Wright, Max 19
 WRKP in Cincinnati 241
 Wuhl, Robert 197
 Wyatt, Jane 83
 Wyatt, Tessa 209
- Yarborough, Jean 12, 15
 Yates, Pauline 78
 Yeager, Ed 110
 Yes, Minister 242
 York, Dick 39
 Yorkin, Bud 21
 Yothers, Tina 79
 Young, Alan 162
 Young Ones, The 242-4, 243
 Young, Robert 77, 83, 131
- Zacharias, Steve 200
 Zappa, Dweezil 74
 Zelinka, Sydney 87, 122
 Ziegler, Matilda 171
 Ziegler, Ursula 76
 Ziffren, John 44, 139
 Zlotoff, Lee 175
 Zucker, Danny 110
 Zucker, David 197
 Zucker, Jerry 197
 Zuckerman, David 92
 Zuckerman, Stephen 76, 95
 Zweibel, Alan 129, 130
 Zwick, Joel 141

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Modeled after a British sitcom, *All in the Family* was rejected twice by ABC before CBS picked it up and it became the highest rated series in the U.S. for five years.

The concept for *Fawlty Towers* came from a less-than-ideal stay by the Monty Python team at a hotel (the proprietor threw Eric Idle's briefcase into the street for fear that it contained a bomb).

The Flintstones was the first animated TV sitcom, and the first animated series to feature human characters.

Gilligan's first name, never used in the series but later revealed by Bob Denver, was "Willy."

Barney Miller's jail cell door, the Fonz's leather jacket, and Archie Bunker's armchair now reside at the Smithsonian Institution.

Barbara Billingsley (June Cleaver on *Leave It To Beaver*) always wore a string of pearls to hide a deep wrinkle on her neck.

Guest actor Rhea Perlman married Danny DeVito on the set of *Taxi* during a lunch break.

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