

Editor's Chin-wag

I hope you will all join me in toasting the incredible work of **Michelle Street** on *The Insider* over the past five years. Her dedication, tireless efforts and contributions to the very fabric of what makes British comedies great – passion – has made this publication a credible and consumable dialog on the subject.

Alas, Michelle has decided to take a break from *The Insider* and spend more time in private pursuits and her busy career. While we will miss her, I am really pleased that another die-hard British comedy fan has agreed to jump in the saddle and drive our beloved publication forward. Please join me in welcoming **Scott Jones** as our new editor of *The Insider*. For more than 20 years, British comedies and all things Britain have been a significant part of his life.

One need only spend a short time talking with Scott about Britcoms and his zeal, enthusiasm and subject knowledge become abundantly clear. Scott is an accomplished writer and a nationally recognized expert in public relations and communications. I am excited about his ideas to build on the fantastic foundation we attribute to Michelle. Please welcome him aboard and I know he looks forward to hearing from you. Happy reading!

Julius Cain, BBC Sales Company

“This Isn’t Barcelona!” An Exclusive Interview with Andrew Sachs

The venerable Andrew Sachs, well known for his endearing portrayal of the hapless Manuel in *Fawlty Towers*, made a swing through the U.S. recently to host the pledge portion of a new PBS pledge special for the March 2005 release of *The Funny Blokes of British Comedy*. *The Insider* caught up with Andrew during a stopover in Dallas for a KERA-TV British Comedy Club event. In this exclusive interview, Sachs shares his thoughts on life and laughter.



“My life is a holiday.”

Andrew Sachs
On his experiences and outlook
on life after *Fawlty Towers*

Thoughtful and charming – the impressions one gets immediately upon meeting Andrew Sachs, a talented and versatile actor who, in a mere three months of a 55 year career, created one of the most loveable and indelible characters of classic British comedies. While most well-known as Manuel on television’s *Fawlty Towers*, Sachs’ career over the decades is a fascinating story of stage work, writing, voice talent and the sheer determination of a young German boy’s dream to be famous.

The space available here is insufficient to even begin chronicling all the notable career accomplishments of Andrew Sachs. But for lovers of British comedies, Andrew was generous in sharing behind-the-scenes insights and perspectives on his experiences with *Fawlty Towers* and the talented band of actors who, in 12 short episodes, forever endeared themselves to fans from around the world.

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Editor's Chin-wag – Part Deux

I would like to add my heartfelt thanks to **Michelle Street** for the yeoman's job she has done in making *The Insider* one of the best and most authoritative newsletters on our favorite subject. It is also with great excitement that I seek to live up to the high standards she set for this newsletter.

I am honored, humbled and highly confident there are those of you more expert than me on the subject. It is in this spirit that we all hope to make *The Insider* a two way dialog on the humor, insight, entertainment and enjoyment that are British comedies. While some of the departments may have a new look and name, much of the subject matter you have come to enjoy will remain.

In an effort to stimulate the dialog and enjoyment for all, we have established a new section entitled **ViewerPoints**. This section has been established to provide editorial and opinion contributions from you, the reader. Contributed articles, opinion pieces and letters are welcomed. Ideas for topics you would like to see covered are highly solicited. We have established a direct link to me at bbcinsider@comcast.net. In sum, our goal is to ensure *The Insider* is viewer-centric and provides for participation from all lovers of British comedies.

It is our hope that you will embrace and engage as we explore the many facets of the genre. On behalf of myself, Julius Cain and the *BBC*, we thank you for your continued feedback and readership. Let's get to it and let me hear from you.

N. Scott Jones, Editor

The Insider welcomes all correspondence, story ideas and requests for contributed articles. Send letters via e-mail to Editor N. Scott Jones at bbcinsider@comcast.net or by snail mail to: The Insider, c/o Oliviu Savu, BBC Worldwide Americas, 747 3rd Avenue, New York, NY. 10017 - 2803. All letters are assumed to be for publication unless marked otherwise. *The Insider* reserves the right to edit letters for reasons of space or clarity. Let us know what you think!

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News, Trivia & Naughty Bits



The Results Are In: Reader's Digest Poll Of "Funniest Brits of All Time"

Some of our favorite Britcom stars graced the Top 20 of a recently released *Reader's Digest Poll of the Funniest Brits of All Time*. Out of 2,000 votes cast, here are some familiar names that made the list, and where they ranked:

- **Dawn French** and **David Jason** – Tied for 11th
- **Rowan Atkinson** – Tied with another for 13th
- **Benny Hill** – Ranked 15th
- **Lenny Henry** – Ranked 17th
- **Spike Milligan** – Ranked 18th
- **John Cleese** – Ranked 19th

The list included comedians and TV performers alike and ranked a total of 40. You can see the full list and review the full story online through the Reader's Digest UK site at <http://www.readersdigest.co.uk/magazine/comedians.htm> Check back here each issue for the latest news nuggets on your favorite shows and stars.

Trivia Bits – Did You Know?

- **Andrew Sachs** is actually a German immigrant who escaped Nazi Germany as a young boy and got his acting break in England in 1949.
- In the kitchen fire scene in "The Germans" episode of *Fawlty Towers*, that Sachs was burned so badly he was paid £700 in extra compensation.
- When German television purchased 11 episodes of *Fawlty Towers*, Andrew did his own voice-over for Manuel, speaking in his native German, but with a Spanish accent.
- For about 11 years, a family of foxes has taken up residence in Andrew's home garden where he and his wife have fed and cared for them during this time.



ViewerPoints: From and For Viewers Like YOU

'Funny Blokes' is Coming

What are YOUR Votes for Top 10 Funny Blokes?

Here are mine...

Coming up with a list of only ten top funny blokes in British comedies was much harder than I anticipated. So much talent and so little space here to do it all justice. Mind you, I struggled to narrow down this list. I am VERY sure I have missed someone you love to watch, or think more worthy than my selections. That is why you will not stand for my feeble selection skills and e-mail me YOUR list at bbcinsider@comcast.net. In the February issue, I will share consensus submissions in a follow-up to this article.

This is timely in that the new Britcom PBS pledge show *The Funny Blokes of British Comedy* is scheduled to be released this coming March. And if you are wondering if I have some inside scoop that colored my selections here; I do not. A little birdie has told me that MANY stars were filmed and interviewed and that, as of this writing, no final selections have been made. So my opinions you read here are just that. I am eager to know yours.

The logic of my selection criteria is straightforward. In my list there are what I believe to be three levels of greatness in the British comedy 'bloke' world: Royalty, Lords and Noblemen. **Royalty** are those actors who have not only created substantial character roles, but also played a significant role in developing show concepts, content and writing – true distinction. **Lords** are those actors, whose natural comedic or acting talents uniquely contribute to the characters they have played, making them memorable and enduring. **Noblemen** are those actors who are impeccable in their acting skills, delivering great performances of well-written material and whose presence is widely enjoyed. All included on my list must have played a leading or co-leading role. Subjective as this may all be, here is my list in alpha order and unranked except by "title."

Royalty

Rowan Atkinson

Blackadder, Mr. Bean, The Thin Blue Line. Need I say more? In my mind, his place in Britcom "royalty" is unquestionable. From great writing, to masterful character development to skillful acting – Atkinson has managed to deliver endless entertainment through a variety of characters that *he* created. The depth of his talent successfully carried

him to other roles on the "big screen." But he will be most remembered equally for his roles as a consort to royalty and the oddball who, among other things, gets his head stuck in a turkey's bum.

Ronnie Barker

His body of work is vast and impressive and, when combined with a run of incredible characters, along with substantial writing contributions to the well-known *Two Ronnies* series (1971-1986) makes him worthy. Many Britcom fans remember Barker for his portrayal of Norman Fletcher in the three series run of *Porridge*. Most know Barker for his portrayal of the tightwad shopkeeper Arkwright in the classic Britcom *Open All Hours*. By most any measure, Barker rates.

John Cleese

While recent years for John Cleese have entailed more character roles, voice-over and commercial work, there is no denying the significant catalog of Britcom work embodied predominately in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Fawlty Towers*. Both works classics in their own rite. His contributions to character development and writing are undeniable and in my mind qualify him for the "royalty" category. The British Film Institute once voted *Fawlty Towers* the most popular TV program of all time. My funny bone pines in that there were only 12 episodes.

Lords

Lenny Henry

Yes, Lenny Henry. By virtue of his undeniable talent for comedic content, writing and character development. While likely perceived as a freshman in a class of graduate students here, he has established himself as a credible and natural talent. His portrayal of the ego-maniacal and insecure Gareth Blackstock in *Chef!* sets a high standard for true character portrayal. His affable smile, comedic wit and raw energy, in my book, make Lenny Henry not only worthy, but one to watch.

(Continued on next page)

John Inman

“Are you free? “ Yes, I’m free to include John Inman as one of the “lords” of British comedy by virtue, in part, of his skillful portrayal of the light-loafered Wilberforce Clayborne Humphries in *Are You Being Served?* Readers of *TV Times* once voted him the funniest man on television. His work on stage is extensive and his appearances at many at PBS stations notable. He makes my list for his contribution and delivery of one of the most memorable characters in the Britcom world.

David Jason

Del Boy. Granville. The BBC says “David Jason began his career in 1967, with bit-parts in *Crossroads* and *Do Not Adjust Your Set*. His first major break arrived with a small role in *Porridge*, which led to Ronnie Barker casting him as shop-assistant Granville in *Open All Hours*. Despite nationwide exposure, the part of Derek Trotter in *Only Fools And Horses* almost went to, among others, Oscar-winner Jim Broadbent. Fortunately, the right man got the part. The long-running sit-com has provided some of the funniest moments ever broadcast.” Couldn’t have said it better.

Noblemen

Sir Nigel Hawthorne

Nigel Hawthorne achieved international fame with his portrayal of the scheming public servant, Sir Humphrey Appleby in the much celebrated series *Yes, Minister* and later, *Yes Prime Minister*. This role won the actor four Bafta awards and made him a household name in the UK. With his passing in late-2001, the Britcom world lost the second half of a comedic character duo (with the late Paul Eddington) that will forever grace the Britcom genre.

Nicolas Lyndhurst

“Rawdneey, you plonker.” Just one of many titles Del-Boy (David Jason) bestowed on Lyndhurst’s portrayal of the cock-up artist and naïve younger brother Rodney in *Only Fools and Horses*. He has come a long way since then with his portrayal of Gary Sparrow in the endearing series *Goodnight Sweetheart*. While not as flashy an actor as some of those that made my list, his versatility is notable and in my view, deserves recognition here. Doubtful he will make the *Funny Blokes* program, but he makes my list.

Geoffrey Palmer

While last in the alphabet in this list, Geoffrey Palmer is tops as an actor by most all measures. Supporting work in *The Rise and Fall of Reginald Perrin*, cameos in *Fawlty Towers*, the male lead in *Butterflies* and, most notably, *As Time Goes By* opposite Dame Judi Dench earn Palmer top billing on any funny bloke list. His deadpan wit and hang dog face has made him a favorite around the world, especially in the US. His instant likeability makes him a true master of his craft.

Richard Wilson

Because I love an underdog who works hard to attain success. In the course of 34 episodes and three specials of *One Foot in the Grave*, Richard Wilson masterfully captured the cantankerous and oft-times cynical Victor Meldrew in the series. Following years of bit parts and supporting roles, Wilson forever chiseled a place for himself in the staples of British comedies; in award-winning fashion.

Editor’s Note: Well there you have it, my cut of a top ten. Now let me hear yours. Watch for the outcome of your nominations in a feature article on the release of Funny Blokes in the February issue. Scott



ViewerPoints In The Post



I am VERY excited to see the return of The Insider! I missed having the original content.

Heidi, in Texas

What great news! We have about 500 families in our BritCom Club. There is nothing else out there that gave the kind of quality info The Insider gave. We eagerly look forward to the November issue!

Darla, in Iowa

I am so happy I will be getting the latest scoop on British Comedies again; I hated to see it go – great it will be back!

Richard, in North Carolina

Thanks for making The Insider come alive again! I was going to miss it much and look forward to reading it each and every time.

Kevin, in Connecticut



ViewerPoints: Contributions

Fave British Foods from Our Fave Shows and Stars

By Sheela Kadam

Editor's Note: *Sheela Kadam is a native of England and co-owner of The British Emporium, an English food and gift shop in Grapevine, Texas. You can visit them on the Web at www.british-emporium.com. She and her partner Alexandra Evans are dedicated and frequent volunteers at Dallas PBS station KERA.*

Flake. Curlywurly. Smarties. Nicknames of British comedy characters? No, but you guessed right if you remembered that they're The Vicar of Dibley's favorite British "sweeties" (that's candy to the uninitiated)! You may not have realized, but by watching Britcoms, you've unwittingly been introduced to the delights of Great British Cuisine. And that's nothing to laugh about anymore! Brit food has created quite a buzz in the last few decades. From post war food rationing (remember Dad's Army?) to dire offerings in the 1970's Grace Brothers canteen, it's gone from heavy to hip, cool and happenin'...just ask "Chef"! He'll tell you about the legions of French chefs turning their backs on Paris and moving to London in droves. It's fun to track the development of British cuisine through the ages by watching Britcoms.

From Spam to Curry

It took the Python team to remind us that it was really the Vikings who introduced us to Spam. We Brits remember this famous sketch when it first aired on "Monty Python's Flying Circus" and rather bemusedly thinking while watching it, "I didn't know Vikings liked Spam..."

Remember Blackadder"? The rich may have enjoyed their mediaeval feasts, but Baldrick's monotonous diet of turnips in Blackadder makes us realize that it was the vegetable of choice for peasants through the Dark Ages. Brit cuisine was awakened from the doldrums with the advent of Coffee Houses and Mrs. Miggins' delicious fare in her popular Pie Shoppe, but food rationing during World War II took its toll. Even the Great British Banger was scarce, and you may remember scenes in "Dad's Army" of the butcher sneaking the odd sausage here and there to his favorite lady customers behind the counter when no one is looking.

And the 70's? Blessed are the Cheesemakers! The Python's Cheese Shop sketch reminds us that British cheese is some of the best in the world. Did you know John Cleese's real name is actually 'Cheese', and his obvious relish in naming different types of cheeses in the Cheese Shop.

John Cleese and Connie Booth had a lot of fun with food jokes in Fawlty Towers...Basil freaks out over kippers & veal fillets supposedly being past their prime, gives a discourse to diners on his chef's skilled use of Salad Cream (bottled British salad dressing) and pompously tells an American diner who has the affront to ask for a Waldorf salad that the kitchen is out of Waldorfs. And for goodness sake, don't ask Manuel about the Ratatouille with basil or to start frying the chips! Although I wouldn't have rushed to a Gourmet Night at Fawlty Towers ("Duck's off!"), the Brit food scene did later improve.

Margo in Good Neighbors proved to be the 70's dinner party "hostess with the mostess" and I certainly wouldn't have turned down an invitation to one of her sophisticated suburban gatherings. In this delightful comedy, there are suggestions of British people's love of vegetarianism, organically grown produce and of course the nation's great passion and romance with Indian food - when Margo is out for the evening Jerry delights in eating off the coffee table and wafting forbidden, spicy aromas from his take-out curry in his wife's pristine formal room!

When asked how British cuisine is portrayed in Britcoms, Duane Huey, Senior Producer at Iowa Public Television for shows such as *Funny Ladies of British Comedy* and the new *Funny Blokes of British Comedy* said, "You could be forgiven for thinking that curry seems to be the only thing that British people eat. And if they eat anything else, it is always served on toast!" I would agree on the latter point - not only had I just dined on toast prior to speaking with him, but would add that it is the staple diet of starving British students, particularly served with beans on top. In fact, when recently interviewed for a women's magazine, Joanna Lumley, Patsy in *Absolutely Fabulous*, mentioned that she swears by toast to keep her fab figure! Hey, this could spark off a new trend; move over Atkins, toasty carbs are back in!! Well, I don't think Patsy would agree, she'd prefer a champagne toast as her liquid lunch.

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Special Feature: Where are they now?

Meet the cast of...



Open All Hours

Value priced comestibles? Only if you consider one pence off a sale. The word discount makes this proprietor stutter worse than a “tart in church.” And his nephew can only dream of one day fulfilling his quest of wooing the milk woman. Yes, *Open All Hours* has long been a staple of many British comedy line-ups with varying degrees of acceptance. One can almost be assured that, if you give the series a chance, the characters become endearing, the story line amusing and entertaining through the trials and travails of this tightwad shop keeper and his voluntary, and not-so-voluntary, band of clientele. The object of his desire, Nurse Gladys Emanuel is the only one who seems able to put him in his place. The following is a look at the actors who created this slice of life in an English borough, and what they are up to today. (*Related Story: See Series Profile on Page 8*)

RONNIE BARKER AS ARKWIGHT

Born: September 25, 1929, Bedford, England

Other roles: Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett signed contracts with the BBC to record a series of shows called *The Two Ronnies*. Ronnie Barker estimates that he wrote around 75 per cent of the material for each weekly show, as well as taking an active part in the editing. *The Two Ronnies* ran from 1971 to 1986 when Barker finally decided to retire, and was a flagship show in the BBC's schedule with an average audience of around 15 million viewers. Whilst between shows both men continued on solo projects and 1973 saw perhaps Ronnie Barker's most successful series of 'one-off' comedies, *Seven of One*. The first two shows in the *Seven of One* series were *Open All Hours*, and *Prisoner and Escort* which would later become *Porridge*.

Something you may not know about him: At the age of 58 Ronnie Barker retired to run an antiques shop in Chipping Norton.

You can see him now: Selling antiques in his shop in Chipping Norton.

Seek out: Ronnie Barker in the series *Porridge*. Rent it, find it, it's worth it.

DAVID JASON AS GRANVILLE

Born: February 2, 1940, Edmonton, England

Other roles: Most famously known for his role in *Only Fools and Horses* (1981) as Del Boy. He made his debut as Del back in 1981 and was still playing the same role up to the Christmas special in 2002. His big break came in the 1967 children's comedy show *Do Not Adjust Your Set* (1967) starring alongside members of the Monty Python team, Terry Jones, Eric Idle and Michael Palin

Something you may not know about him: He made his living working as an electrician prior to acting.

Something else you may not know about him: Enjoys DIY and gardening.

Great Granville moment: Blows himself up trying to make homemade fire lighters.

Seek out: *Only Fools and Horses* – the best work of David Jason and some of the funniest Britcom moments.

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LYNDA BARON AS NURSE GLADYS EMANUEL

Born: March 24, 1942, Manchester, England

Other roles: Various TV and movie roles, most notably *Yentl* (1983), *Hands of the Ripper* (1971)

Great Nurse Gladys moment: When she refuses to continue a relationship with Arkwright unless he buys her a washer and dryer. Throws a fit when she discovers he bought dodgy WW II surplus appliances.

Recent roles: *Diggity*, *A Home at Last* (2001), *Colour Me Kubrick* (2005)

STEPHANIE COLE AS MRS. FEATHERSTONE

Born: October 25, 1941, Warwickshire, England

Other Roles: The cantankerous Diana Trent in *Waiting for God*, numerous characters in TV series

Something you might not know about her: Her childhood ambition and first acting dream was to be a Disney character

Something else you might not know about her: Ms. Cole is divorced and has a daughter, Emma who is in the stage management business.

Great Mrs. Featherstone moment: When she thinks Granville is making amorous advances toward her person and attacks him with her umbrella.

MAGGIE OLLERENSHAW AS MAVIS

Born: Anyone know?

Other Roles: Recurring role in *Last Summer of Wine*.

Something you might not know about her: She has done significant work in audio book narrations and the theater.

Great Mavis moment: When Arkwright grows tired of her indecisiveness and gets creative in his rationale as to why she needs a larger (and more expensive) list of items.

BARBARA FLYNN AS THE MILK WOMAN

Born: August 5, 1948 in Hastings, East Sussex, England

Other Roles: *The Forsyte Saga* (2002) TV mini-series as Emily, *King Lear* (1998) TV as Goneril and numerous other television and film roles and characters. She became better known following her appearances in *The Beiderbecke Affair* (1984), *The Beiderbecke Tapes* (1987), and *The Beiderbecke Connection* (1988), alongside James Bolam.

Something you might not know about her: She was born Barbara Jay McMurray.

Great Milk Woman moment: Granville waits in anticipation to give her some flowers only to find out the customer on the front step is her boss AND boyfriend; also when she gives him a peck on the cheek for the first time.



Series Profile: A Look At 'Open All Hours'



“Granville, Fuh Fuh Fetch Your Cloth”

More times than not, this familiar line marks the opening of the classic British comedy, *Open All Hours* (*OAH*). A stuttering community grocer Arkwright (played by the loveable Ronnie Barker), and his lovelorn nephew Granville (played by the talented David Jason) begin each day by painting the storefront window with the latest insincere sale, and most times Granville greets the milk woman on her early morning rounds. From a comparative standpoint for many, *OAH* can be a “slow burn” in terms of its pace and ability to engage the viewer. Given the chance however, this charming series can be an engaging and humorous look at a slice of life in a tight knit English borough.

With a few exceptions where the scene wanders to a storyline-related destination, the bulk of the series plays out with the comings and goings of various customers in front of, and inside, the store. Save to say, that Arkwright occasionally wanders across the street in his pursuit of the object of his affection, Nurse Gladys Emanuel, a state registered nurse (a voluptuous character ably played by veteran actress Lynda Baron).

These characters form the backbone of what is, quite often, a witty commentary on love, life, work and social examination in and of a small English community unit. To truly appreciate and fully enjoy the subtle humor of *OAH*, one must be familiar with the artful development the writer, and even the actors themselves, bring to these key roles. This is joined by a band of recurring and random customers with comical story lines that make *OAH* an anchor series in many British comedy lineups.

In the baseline story, Arkwright is a stuttering, tight-fisted and somewhat curmudgeonly village grocer set on gleaning every nickel he can from customers. Despite his zeal for profits, Ronnie Barker brings a bit of loveable charm to the character as he spends his day in pursuit of a sale, and by Series 2, his fiancée, Nurse Gladys Emanuel.

Arkwright shares his living accommodations and employs as his slave-errand boy, his abandoned nephew Granville – played by Britcom mainstay David Jason. A day dreamer and always romantically challenged, Granville dreams of being something better someday and to at some time find a date at least, if not a life mate. At the core of his life in the series, is his effort to fulfill his uncle’s work assignment or play out his latest goofy scheme to market his wares. On many occasions he ponders his heritage. Arkwright is quick to point out it is questionable in that Granville’s mother was a bit of a tart and that his father may be a Hungarian met in one of her dalliances.

When Arkwright isn’t chasing the odd pound, he spends much of his time chasing and attempting to woo his love interest, Nurse Gladys Emanuel. Lynda Baron does a charming job playing a state registered nurse who seems to more tolerate than embrace Arkwright’s antics. As the series progresses it is evident that she loves him, but is often exasperated at his frugality, his treatment of Granville and his clumsy romantic advances. What develops for viewers is an amusing chemistry where one just waits for Nurse Gladys to put Arkwright in his place.

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The pilot for *OAH* was originally shown in 1973 as part of Ronnie Barker's series *Seven of One*. It wasn't until 1976 that the first of four series premiered on BBC. Series 1 sets in motion a number of recurring themes and story lines that carry it throughout its run. Arkwright, always in search of a deal, invariably ends up with off market surplus and overstock that he attempts to unload on unwitting customers...items ranging from surplus tins of who-knows-what to bitter English apples. No trick or gimmick is beyond Arkwright to stimulate sales. All the while, Granville shuffles around the shop and is constantly embarrassed their primary form of transportation is a delivery bike. When not pursuing a sale or gimmick, Arkwright is ever mindful of better ways to get closer to Nurse Gladys.

After a nearly four year hiatus, Series 2 ran to seven episodes that aired on the BBC in 1981. The bulk of this run focuses on Nurse Gladys' constant battle with Arkwright over his skin-flint ways. In the premiere episode, Nurse Gladys threatens not to marry Arkwright when she finds out he is too cheap to have a washing machine. To avoid the risk of losing his love, he buys dodgy WW II era machines that make more noise than clean clothes. Nurse Gladys finds out and the sparks fly. She hounds him incessantly on everything including replacing a moth-eaten and decades old suit. Meanwhile he attempts to offload everything from fig biscuits to "inspirational" toilet paper to customers. Some recurring antics and customer characters emerge in this series ranging from a finger eating cash till to a customer who can never seem to make up her mind on exactly what she wants.

The year 1982 brought Series 3 with six new episodes. Also introduced is a recurring customer, Mrs. Featherstone, played by veteran actress Stephanie Cole (*Waiting for God*). Financially, Mrs. Featherstone is Arkwright trapped in a female body – she has a great admiration for his tight wad ways. Arkwright and his customers consistently speculate about the circumstances of her husband's demise. Her oddball character always has a cocked eyebrow and is perpetually bemused with Granville's off-beat musings and dialog. As an almost frigid woman, she is often concerned about any hint of male advances toward her person. In one of the funniest episodes, Granville loses his pants, encounters Mrs. Featherstone on a dark street and she thrashes him with her umbrella thinking he is making his move on her. Of course, nothing could be further from the case.

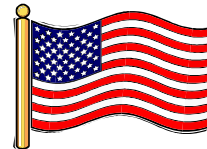
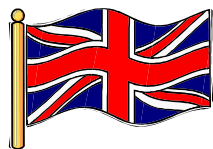
In the fourth and final series transmitted in 1985, *OAH* continues with a number of humorous situations in which Granville seeks to secure that ever elusive date with a woman, and Arkwright continues his quest to get an edge on the competition – and his customers' wallets. In one episode, Granville is desperate for female company, so he decides to resort to advertising. He ends up getting more than he bargained for: what is seemingly a "lady of the evening." In another, Arkwright advertises for a "live-in housekeeper". It's just a ruse to make Nurse Gladys Emmanuel jealous, but then the "Black Widow", Mrs. Featherstone, takes it seriously and insists on being considered for the job. In an especially funny episode, Granville and Nurse Gladys Emmanuel decide that Arkwright needs a lesson in politeness. They convince him that there's a man from the "Good Shop Guide" in the area to look at local shops. Gladys dresses up as a man so that she can witness at first hand the unusual spectacle of Arkwright being polite to customers.

On balance, *OAH* is a wittily written, well acted and amusing Britcom that can sometimes warm the heart, and definitely tickle the funny bone. Many of the core actors either had already had starring roles or went on to star in other mainstays of British comedies. Ronnie Barker played the leads in the classic *Porridge* and his own series *The Two Ronnies*. David Jason became well known as the street smart Del-Boy in *Only Fools and Horses*. And of course, who can forget Stephanie Cole's portrayal of the cantankerous Diana Trent in *Waiting for God*.

If you have a favorite Britcom you would like to see profiled in *The Insider*, drop us a note via e-mail at bbcinsider@comcast.net. In the meantime, if you are new to British comedies, take the time to rent or tune in for series like *Open All Hours*. You will be glad you did.



Collector's Corner & New DVD/Video Releases



Keeping Up Appearances: 'Full Bouquet' and Are You Being Served?: Complete Series

Lovers of the socially hyperconscious Hyacinth Bucket (pronounced boo-kay) and her "Royal Doulton with hand-painted periwinkles" can now own the "Full Bouquet" with the September release of the consolidated DVD set of the same name. Originally, the entire run was only available in two half sets. These have now combined them, with all the extras, into one DVD set. The same goes for Are You Being Served?: Complete Series, which also combines the previous two part set into one. Both were released for retail sale on September 7. You can find or order either set at your local retailer or get it by shopping online at www.bbcamerica.com.

Are You Being Served? Again!: Complete Series

Also released September 7, for sale for the first time are all 12 episodes of the sequel *Are you Being Served?: Again* on DVD. BBC describes as follows: "After the death of beloved department store owner, Young Mr. Grace, the staff of Grace Brothers discovers that their pension fund has been invested in a quaint country inn. Unfortunately, a clause in the contract stipulates that they cannot sell the inn and claim their money back, so Mr. Humphries, Mrs. Slocombe, Captain Peacock, Miss Brahms and Mr. Rumbold all reluctantly agree to become partners and turn the inn into a money-making venture. Will Captain Peacock and Mr. Rumbold be able to leave the rigid hierarchy of the department store behind them and live as equals with their former staff? What will Mrs. Slocombe do when she discovers that the odiferous local farmer is a ghost from her past? And most importantly, how will Mr. Humphries ward off the advances of the buxom farmer's daughter Mavis? These and many other questions will be answered in this two-disc set, featuring all 12 episodes of this classic BBC comedy!"

The Last Summer of Wine: 1995

For lovers of Last Summer of Wine, the 1995 series was recently released in DVD format. Entitled "The Last Summer of Wine: Vintage 1995, with all 10 episodes from that season, the BBC says: "In the world's longest-running sitcom, Britain's oldest (if not wisest) adolescents uncork a barrelful of laughs and make a toast...to life! The picturesque town of Holmfirth in the unspoiled Yorkshire Dales provides a breathtaking backdrop to the hair-brained schemes and incorrigible antics of these three grey-haired geezers."

A Fine Romance: The Complete Collection

Continuing the trend of consolidation, this complete series with the beloved Dame Judi Dench is now also available in a single set. The BBC comments: "You'll know these two middle-aged misfits are perfect for each other long before they do - but watching their relationship travel the rocky road from romance-wary awkwardness to loving companionship provides classic comic entertainment. The incomparable Dame Judi Dench (*Shakespeare in Love*) is Laura, a brainy translator while her real-life late husband Michael Williams (*Educating Rita*) is Mike, a shy landscape gardener. Watch the sparks fly over all 26 episodes of this British comedy classic."

Cool Collectibles & Memorabilia

Check here for the latest Britcom collectibles.

If you like collecting die cast cars, you can get a Collector Set for *Only Fools and Horses* from Corgi at <http://www.corgi.co.uk/CorgiSite/TV%20and%20Film%20Favourites/CC99111.htm> I also have sets from *Fawlty Towers* and *Mr. Bean* that are complete with figurine and the car. I have written to Corgi to see if these are still available and how to get them. *Editor.*



Special Feature

'I Don't Half Fancy You' -- What'd They Say?

British Slang and Expressions from A to Zed

Huh? What? I can't understand what they are saying. That is oft-times the response from new watchers of Britcoms. In fact, it can be a major frustration for newcomers trying to get "the knack." When combined with the rapid-fire delivery that accompanies the dialog, it can be a challenge. The following is a look at the humor behind the humor in the form of decoding the meanings of some common, and not so common, British slang words and phrases. For some of us, these terms are well known, for newbies, not so well. Once understood, these terms make the art and joy of British comedies even more entertaining.

Common Words or Terms

Quid, bob – a slang term for money, "this cost me 20 quid." (pounds)

Bird – a woman, e.g. "I was dating this bird."

Bloke – a man, e.g. "He is an honest bloke."

Toffee-nosed – higher class, stuck-up person, e.g. "She's quite the Toffee-nosed bird."

Cockney – a common English accent, e.g. think East London.

Lorry – a truck, e.g. milkman's lorry.

Belt up – shut up, e.g. "Belt up you lot!"

Bickie – slang for biscuit, a cookie or cracker, e.g. "I prefer to dip my bickie in my tea."

Bog – loo, karzi, lavatory – restroom, e.g. "You will have to use the staff bog."

Braces – suspenders

Bubble and squeak – food, consisting of leftover greens and potatoes and then fried.

Caravan – house trailer or mobile home.

Chips – French-fried potatoes.

Crisps – potato chips.

C. of E. – Church of England.

Conk – slang for beak or nose, also head.

Crumpet – what we call an English muffin, slang word for a desirable woman.

Cuppa – a cup of tea.

Dead cert – slang for a sure thing, e.g. "The sun rising is a dead cert."

Deaf aid – hearing aid.

Debag – to cut someone down to size, literally to pull pants down.

Digestives – a cookie or cracker similar to our Graham crackers.

Dodgy – touch and go, risky, uncertain, e.g. "He is a dodgy character."

Dustbin – garbage can, dustman – garbage man.

Electric fire – an electric heater.

Elevenses – morning coffee or tea break.

(Continued next page)

Fairy cake – cupcake, derogatory when called one.

Flick knife – a switchblade knife.

Fortnight – two weeks time.

Frock – a woman’s dress.

Fruit machine – a slot machine, e.g. in Las Vegas. Commonly found in pubs throughout UK.

Gearbox – vehicle’s transmission.

Git – slang for twit, or someone who is incompetent.

Haberdashery – a shop or department that sells pins, thread, needles, tape and a little of this and that.

High Street – their version of our Main Street, usually referring to the middle of the town or village.

Ices – ice cream novelties, popsicles.

Industrial action – union protest activities.

Invalid carriage – an electric tricycle issued by the Ministry of Health for the disabled.

Knackered – tired, worn out. Knacker’s yard is where animal carcasses are rendered into various products.

Knickers – woman’s under garment.

Lacquer – hair spray.

Ladder – a run, as in panty hose, e.g. “I have laddered my tights.”

Larder – pantry, as in a kitchen.

Lavatory roll – roll of toilet paper.

Layabout – a loafer, lazy person.

Leaving gift or present – a retirement present.

Lie in – to sleep late.

Lodger – someone who rents a room, usually in a private residence.

Lolly – dough, money.

Mac – raincoat.

Mend – to repair something.

Muck – mess, e.g. “He mucked up his room.”

Nappy – a baby’s diaper.

Naturist – a nudist.

Nick – jail or police station. Also means to steal something.

Nicker – slang for currency, e.g. “That cost me 20 nicker!” (pounds)

Notecase – billfold or wallet.

Nutter – a crazy character.

Off license – a package store, a license to sell alcohol.

On appro – on approval, e.g. “I have this new coat on appro.”

Outgoings – expenses.

Pantomime – panto for short – a variety show during the Christmas season, predominately for children.

Pavement – sidewalk.

Pensioner – a senior citizen.

Petrol – gasoline.

Pillar-box – mailbox.

Pinny – an apron.

Pint – beer.

Pissed – blindingly drunk.

Pram – a baby carriage.

Prawn – a small shrimp.

(Continued next page)

Preggers – pregnant, with child.

Poof – a footstool, derogatory term for effeminate.

Queer – queasy, not feeling well.

Queue – to form a line, to wait in line for one's turn.

Rise – an increase in salary.

Roundabout – a traffic circle, child's merry-go-round.

Rubber – an eraser, as in pencil eraser.

Season ticket – a commuter ticket, like on a bus line or commuter train.

Sellotape – scotch tape.

Semi-detached – a two family dwelling.

Shepherd's pie – a food, remainder of a roast, minced, covered with a layer of mashed potatoes and baked in the oven.

Sister – a nurse, not necessarily of religious origin.

Skint – broke, with no money.

Snog – passionate kiss, to make out.

Solicitor – lawyer or attorney.

Stout – strong beer.

Sultana – a white raisin.

Take-away – food to go, a place to pick up food and take home.

Tart -- a pie, or in a derogatory fashion: a loose woman.

Telly – television, also called goggle box.

Toad in the hole – a food, consisting of sausage in a batter.

Torch – a flashlight.

Transport café – truck drivers' all night diner.

Tube – the underground, subway.

Tuck – eats, to eat, e.g. "To have a tuck in."

V.A.T – sales or value added tax.

Wellingtons – rubber boots, wellies for short.

Whip-round – passing the hat, as in taking up donations.

Wide boy – a shady character.

Windscreen – the windshield of a car.

Wireless – a radio.

Some Common Slang Phrases

Get knotted – stop bugging me.

Get your cards – to resign or be fired from a job.

Cop the lolly – to inherit a large sum of money, e.g. "when he goes, she will cop the lolly and all."

Have it off – to have an affair, more directly, to have relations with a partner.

In aid of – what is that for, e.g. "What's this in aid of?"

Keep your eyes skinned – pay close attention, be on the lookout for.

Get your knickers in a twist – to be upset, animated or irritated.

To "nip round" – to stop by, or come over, e.g. "I think I will nip round to the pub for a pint."

Off the peg – ready to wear, off the rack.

Pack it in – to retire, to desist.

Pull one's socks up – to shape up or get going.

Put a bung in it – shut up.

To rabbit on – to jabber, or talk incessantly about.

Ready for the off – ready to leave or go somewhere.

To send to Coventry – to ignore socially, give cold shoulder to.

Set the Thames on fire – to set the world on fire, as in achievement.

To spend a penny – to go to the restroom.

To tart something or someone up – to doll up, make prettier.

Tear a strip off – to bawl someone out, dress down or put in one's place.



Series Update

'Coupling' sans Coyle: "Oh Jeffrey!"



Superior writing along with character twists and turns continue the momentum of this hit show, but... but...

Sigh. Jeff's gone. Is this *NYPD Blue* redux? Anyone remember that American actor David Caruso who didn't want to be "typecast" or felt he would fare better on his own? Hmmmm. But in all seriousness, is there anyone who doesn't miss Jeffrey? Most do. All of the actors in this hit Britcom are excellent in their own rite, BUT – Jeffrey's presence, in many cases, made *them* even funnier.

You've got to give credit to Steven Moffatt and Sue Vertue, the fourth season comes out swinging with a strong series of episodes. One of the most hilarious is an entire episode with all the main characters in a telephone conversation together. *Coupling* is clearly a standout among the field of newer British comedies. The writing is superb and should be credited for maintaining the quality of the series, given the departure of a central character. Lesser series have stalled or even failed under those circumstances.

As disappointed as some viewers may be with Richard Coyle's departure, our missing him will only be a testament to the superior job he did portraying the neurotic and lovelorn Jeffrey. It takes a special actor to play a character who does a strip tease, blindfolded and ends up naked in front of all his friends and parents for a birthday surprise party.

One can only hope that, as the series evolves, we may discover a suitable replacement who brings the wacky comedic element that Jeffrey provided. In any event, *The Insider* is hopeful we will have the chance soon to interview the talented Steven Moffatt and gain some insights on the series going forward. In the meantime, many of us can continue the mourning of Jeffrey's departure while enjoying one of the best new shows.



Hyacinth Wants YOU!

Well, 'The Insider' really wants you

This is not a contest. There are no rules. The selection process is totally subjective and at the sole discretion of the editors of *The Insider*. You participate of your own free will. But . . .

For those who love British comedies and love to take pen to paper, we want to consider your submissions to the *Viewpoints* section for the February issue. A special feature or comical commentary on a Britcom series or episode, profiles of favorite characters or actors – the sky's the limit (within the bounds of good taste).

Two, yes, TWO submissions will be selected (subject to editing) for the February issue. So where does Hyacinth come in, you may well ask? The authors of the two selected submissions will receive, fresh from England – and my personal collection – an authentic "Royal Doulton with hand-painted periwinkles" cup and saucer exactly like the ones used in the actual *Keeping Up Appearances* series. (Pictured below)



A bit of *KUA* trivia. While Hyacinth calls this, her best china, "Royal Doulton..." this pattern, used in the actual show, is actually the Braganza pattern by Colclough. Colclough was bought by Royal Doulton sometime ago – so she stretches the truth just a little. This pattern was discontinued in 1992, and I have only found them in England. So . . .

To stimulate our two way dialog, get those 500 – 750 word submissions to me by January 1, 2005 – and you may find yourself sipping Earl Gray from this fine English bone china cup and saucer, just like Hyacinth Bucket (pronounced *boo-kay*).

Happy writing! NSJ.



BritCom LaughLinks

Reviews by David Darryl Bibb

The Daily Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>

I know, why the heck would I be including the London Daily Telegraph in a bunch of Web reviews on British comedy? Because the Telegraph provides a lot of information on everything from articles about Wallace and Gromit: (Wednesday 8 September 2004 Psychologists look into the eyes of Wallace and Gromit, 17 January 2002: Wallace and Gromit's inventive return on net, 11 January 2002: Man who inspired Wallace dies, 24 September 2000: Angry Kid, son of Wallace & Gromit, slips the net for TV, and 21 October 1996: Wallace and Gromit go missing in New York) to obituaries of famous comedians. For the true fan of British comedy I think the Telegraph is a must! The articles include links to other sites on the Web. The site includes a search engine and a number of color photographs.

Rating: I give it 5 out of 5 mouse clicks

Aardman

<http://www.aardman.com/>

Home of the makers of "Wallace and Gromit" and "Chicken Run" the site offers a collection of information on the old productions and some new ones. The site is a bit confusing and doesn't always provide all of the information one would wish. I located an article dated September 14, 2004 in Digital Spy saying, "Cold Feet star John Thompson, and comic Peter Kay has signed up to provide voices for a new Wallace and Gromit film." I found very little information on the new "Wallace & Gromit Movie: Curse of the Wererabbit." film on the Web site. There was much more information on Wallace and Gromit becoming the new face of Jacobs Cream Crackers and dated 2003.

Rating: I give it 3 out of 5 mouse clicks

Red Dwarf

<http://www.reddwarf.co.uk>

The official Red Dwarf Web page is all that one could ask from a Web Page. It includes information on the cast, crew, television and the upcoming movie. Its Dwarf Tracker is a great way to find when the show will be airing in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. You can now discover when and where your favorite Sci-Fi Spoof is being aired and wish that you actually lived near there. The site even has an online arcade coming soon.

Rating: I give it 5 out of 5 Mouse Clicks

Dictionary of English slang and colloquialisms of the UK

<http://www.peevish.co.uk/slang>

The site describes itself as, "a monster online dictionary of the rich colorful language we call slang... all from a British perspective" and that describes the Web site very well. It offers a large list of words and phrases with a short definition. Interestingly it does include slang that, while in common usage in the UK, originated in the US such as zit. The site offers a simple interface that is LYNX friendly. The Site is updated on a regular basis.

Rating: I give it 4 out of 5 mouse clicks

David Bibb is a Missouri-based British comedy addict.



Andrew Sachs (cont'd. from page 1)

Three Months' Work Had a Lasting Impact

"It is a strange thing, that *Fawlty Towers* came more than half way through my career, I had 25 years beforehand and more than that now. The whole project took three months out of my working life," said Sachs.

A grin comes across his face as he muses, "I once met a man and he somehow recognized me. And all that he knew about me is *Fawlty Towers* and he had no idea about the theater and so forth. And he is very surprised that we only made 12 episodes and that was 25 years ago. The man looks greatly concerned and says, 'My God, 12 episodes 25 years ago – how have you managed since then, it's insane!' I thought he was going to give me 50 pence for a cup of tea!"



"I was on a themed cruise once, giving a lecture, and a man stopped me in the corridor and asked me very seriously: Have you always been a waiter?"

Andrew Sachs today

Many of today's Hollywood types would easily be offended at such recognition. An integral part of Sachs' charm is how good humored he is about it all and how he takes it all in stride. Fear not lovers of Manuel and Andrew Sachs who brought him to life, for it is clear that he has done well for himself and enjoyed a lifetime of accomplishments and successes apart from television.

Early in his career, Sachs said all he dreamed of was being famous like Johnny Weissmuller or Veronica Lake. He thought he would begin acting, and he would "be discovered" as the dream had played out for so many others before him. Andrew Sachs is a classic story of someone who worked hard and paid his dues that in turn created his own opportunities, predominately in the theater. From a stagehand to a stage manager to progressively better parts in better-known acting companies the story goes. Then, a quarter century into his career, as John Cleese once said, "He put on a moustache and this transformation happened, a character emerged with a funny hunched over walk and mannerism. It was quite amazing."

A Graduate of the School of Hard Knocks

Having worked hard to build a career leading up to *Fawlty Towers*, Sachs became a trooper literally enduring hard knocks in the course of the series. As in any physical comedy gags, *things* can happen.

There has been much commentary on an incident where Sachs sustained burn injuries in the kitchen fire scene in "The Germans" episode. Conflicting accounts have led many to believe the injuries happened in the actual fire portion of the scene. Andrew shared the true story...

"The actual fire scene was beautifully handled. The firemen, the spray things, asbestos gloves, everything. I think we pre-recorded the fire scene. Then I come out of the kitchen with my jacket smoking. I had a look from the special effects people on how they were going to do this. And what it was is they had a mild acid and some kind of salt, and the reaction between the two causes the smoke.

They had the jacket on the table and showed me, you could touch it. So I put the jacket on, and they poured the acid on and I went in to do "action" and we did the scene. Halfway through dress rehearsal, I thought, this is very warm. I stopped and asked, are you sure this is alright – it's a bit warm. They said, no it's just the reaction, don't worry. So I went on and it got hotter and hotter. It wasn't pain, it was just heat. So I stopped again and took my jacket off and took my shirt off and my skin was bright red. It looked much more dramatic than it was – no let me play the drama – IT WAS GHASTLY!" he says laughingly.

"They took me to first aid and all the while 'people were having fits' [Ed: read John Cleese being highly concerned about Andrew's safety during the incident]. I came down to do the scene again and they gave me a rubber jacket to wear. The dress rehearsal was in the afternoon. I was getting, as you can imagine, a little bit uncomfortable. By the time we did the live audience that night I couldn't move – I had the rubber jacket, the shirt and the outer jacket. So if you ever watch it, I am fairly stiff moving around, I was in some pain by the time we actually did the live recording." In classic Andrew Sachs style, he recounts this potentially harrowing experience in a matter-of-fact and unembellished manner that is illustrative of his dedication to his craft.

(Continued next page)

Andrew Sachs (cont'd. from previous page)

There were other “gags” that didn’t go as planned in other episodes as well. Some of us cringe at the scene in “Gourmet Night” when Basil takes a dirty spoon, rubs it in Manuel’s hair, pops him on the forehead, then drags it down his face and across his teeth. Andrew shares the experience...

“We didn’t rehearse it like that; I’ll tell you what happened. The gag was that he would just rub my head and bang it. The trouble is we had to re-take it, because there was a camera out of focus or something. So he [Cleese] said, ‘OK, let’s do it again’ and he wanted a good laugh from the audience – he didn’t want a second hand laugh. So he did it without telling me and on the retake he continued by running the spoon down my nose while I was grinning at him and then (surprise, surprise) finishing off with a merry *coup de grace* on my teeth,” Andrew recalls with a wry grin. Not to worry, he assures us his two front teeth survived and are the originals.

In “The Wedding Party” episode, the sound of the metal frying pan against Manuel’s skull when Basil mistakes him for a burglar, though unintended, is real - - no sound effects added. Andrew recalls...

“We go into the studio on a Sunday and stagger through shot by shot, have lunch and do the dress rehearsal in the afternoon. By the time you get to the live recording that night, you are very tired. He picks up a pan that was supposed to be padded on the bottom and he is supposed to stop short about a quarter inch from my head. It was done perfectly except one thing – the quarter inch. So [the impact] you hear – I don’t think there are any sound effects added to that. I heard months later that it actually dented the pan! When I went to the floor in the scene, I really thought I couldn’t get up again. I said to him, you know, John [Cleese] you really shouldn’t do this. John looked at me and said, ‘why are you belly-aching, it’s not a run in the West End, it’s once in your life – now pull yourself together.’ So he forgave me,” Sachs says with a big laugh.

Despite the physical comedy, miscues and unforeseen situations, it is abundantly clear that Sachs has a great love and admiration for Cleese and the “great team” that were Flay Otters, umm Farty Towels, er *Fawlty Towers*. (Ed: I loved those incredibly clever opening title segments.) Sachs characterizes Cleese as “a loving man to the whole team and a great leader of the

pack.” He describes Cleese and his co-writer, former wife and actress Connie Booth as having been very open and receptive to character and punch line development.

Life after Fawlty Towers

Over the years Sachs has kept busy with numerous projects that have ranged from audio guides for museums to writing poetry to his current endeavor of penning a quasi-autobiography about his life’s experiences. In his book, he has pledged to himself to limit the use of the word “I” with the goal of avoiding it being an “ego trip.” In this discussion, he once again displays an element of charm that made him a joy to talk with – humble and at the same time confident in his life’s work. We asked him when it would come out, and he reported he has written only 10,000 words so far. He muses at the fact his wife Melody is also writing a book and is 85,000 words ahead of him.

At age 74 Andrew is a picture of health, intellect and vitality. And while he may have aged gracefully since his portrayal of a younger Manuel, when he smiles and gets that twinkle in his eyes – you can’t help but grin – because you can still see, in that seasoned face, the endearing Barcelonan who has brought much joy and laughter to so many. Yes Andrew Sachs, we thank you for your great work and the hours of enjoyment you have provided us.

Editor’s Note: I want to personally thank Andrew Sachs, Bill Young and all the great people at Dallas PBS station KERA, for their time, courtesy and accommodation that made this article possible. For those of us who love British comedies, this is what it is all about – hearing from the people who have, time and again, entertained us.

Two days after this interview, Andrew and his wife Melody had lunch with John Cleese and his wife Alice Faye, celebrating Alice’s birthday and the launch of John Cleese’s OFFICIAL Web site, www.thejohncleese.com. I asked that he extend our best regards to John from The Insider’s readers here in America.



(Continued from page 5)

Moving on, we can thank Lenny Henry for showing us the great heights that British cuisine has achieved in *Chef!* According to Bill Young, vice president of programming for KERA Dallas Public Television, Henry created the idea for the show and in one fell swoop really changed everyone's perceptions of British food -- "prior to filming, he worked in the kitchen of a five star restaurant to get the feel of the character, who has a great love for pure British ingredients and labors over every detail to create an award winning stellar cuisine. No one had ever before created a sitcom that featured a highly acclaimed British restaurant - it made us all look at British food in a totally different light!" Huey adds, "The fresh ingredients used in British dishes make dishes taste so much better, I love the great English breakfasts of bacon, bangers & sausages and the Pub fare is just fabulous!" Incidentally, both Huey and Young wax lyrical about the to-die-for Shepherds Pie at The Nags Head Pub in London, which is a must for them on every trip to England!

Despite the culinary genius of Gareth Blackstock, however, the writers of *Chef!* still couldn't resist the odd dig -- note the references to The Cheese Police, boil-in-the-bag frozen food or Daddies Sauce (akin to A1 Steak Sauce) as his assistant chef's secret ingredient!!

So what are some of the favorite foods of British Comedy stars? According to Duane Huey, Frank Thornton highly recommended the Roast Beef with Yorkshire pudding (similar to a savory popover) when they met for lunch in England during filming. Mollie Sugden is an accomplished cook and has shared her recipes with many grateful Britcom fans! We adore the chocolate loving Vicar of Dibley - and in real life, Dawn French is a chocoholic, too! I sincerely share her passion, British chocolate is scrumptious, and it contains a higher percentage of cocoa & dairy products in it and doesn't contain additives to stop it melting (it doesn't get very hot in Britain).

"Give British Comfort Foods a Go"

Is British food comforting? In *Open All Hours*, Granville may be a dab hand with his home baked fruit pies, but it doesn't seem to impress the girls. I'd say that it is more a source of comfort, deep in our psyche, or due to the cold weather - it's always cold, windy and raining all at the same time -- hot tea figures in every show (particularly "Father Ted"!). We need warm, stodgy comfort food to keep body and soul together.

We revel in giving recipes enchanting, nursery names. We love our Jam Rolyoly, Toad-In-The-Hole and our puddings and pies.

I for one join fellow British grocer Arkwright in celebrating a healthy passion for great British food. So I encourage you to go out and find a British outpost and try one of your fave Britcom character's fave raves and get yourself a new taste sensation. Like me, don't forget the HP sauce! But unlike Arkwright, I promise that I won't put it back on the shelf for sale after having a dab on my breakfast bangers.

Coming in the February Issue: *Stay tuned for a special feature in which we will share some stars' favorite recipes along with the culture behind, and tips for, putting on a formal "Cream Tea."*



Postscripts

Well. There you have it. A humble stab at a first issue of *The Insider*. New fonts, new graphics, familiar layout, and hopefully some likeable articles. Your feedback is welcomed.

I end where I began -- our goal in continuing *The Insider* is to stimulate and enjoy a two-way dialogue on the fun, enjoyment and art of British comedies. Please let us know what you think, or send suggested improvements -- consideration of such input is a simple e-mail away at bbcinsider@comcast.net. Until the next issue in February, happy viewing!

Scott Jones, Editor

