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# LAUGH

The Comedy Magazine

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**Inside:**  
**Mae West**  
**On The Buses**  
**Spike Milligan**  
**"Weird Al" Yankovic**  
**The Mavis Bramston Show**  
**Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh**

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## BACK ISSUES

**LAUGH #1** Barry Humphries/Jack Benny On Television/Monty Python On Disc/The Young Ones/Band Waggon

**LAUGH #2** Steptoe & Son/Not Only... But Also/The Marx Brothers On Disc/Police Squad/George Wallace/Craig Ferguson On Disc

*The above two issues are now sold out*

**LAUGH #3** The Goodies/Roy Rene, 'Mo'/Tom Lehrer/The 'Doctor' Movies/Eddie Cantor On Radio & TV

**LAUGH #4** Norman Gunston/The 'Doctor' TV Series/Bob Newhart On Disc/Not The Nine O'Clock News/Fred Allen

**LAUGH #5** The Black Adder/Take It From Here/Victor Borge/Yes, What?/Abbott & Costello

**LAUGH #6** Lenny Henry/Dad's Army/Jimmy Durante/John Clarke/Steve Martin

**LAUGH #7** Ronnie Barker/Stan Freberg/Billy Connolly/Graham Kennedy

**LAUGH #8** The Amnesty Concerts/Danny Kaye/Britcoms Down Under/Jasper Carrott/Phyllis Diller

**LAUGH #9** Paul Hogan/The Honeymooners/Allan Sherman/The Rag Trade/Beyond Our Ken

**LAUGH #10** Sid James on TV/Shelley Berman/The Burkiss Way/Flanders & Swann/1980s Aussie TV Comedy

## BACK ISSUES

# MAE WEST

by Peter Tatchell

**M**AE West can probably be regarded as the greatest comedienne ever captured on film ... an 1890s gal who set 1930s Hollywood ablaze with her 1960s morality. A handful of years after the movies had learnt to talk, Mae's self-penned dialogue was coaxing laughs out of bellies and sending puritans to their soapboxes.

Her antics saved Paramount Pictures from bankruptcy but in the process led to an industry-organized code of censorship that so diluted her later performances she eventually deserted the big screen and returned to the live theatre.

Mae was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1893 and for much of her career found inspiration in the style of the era affectionately known as the "gay nineties". As a youngster she appeared in various amateur and church run theatrical productions, before graduating to the vaudeville stage in her teens.

She appeared on Broadway from 1911 in a succession of musical comedies and revues which didn't exploit her talent to its full potential. By 1926 Mae decided to write her own plays, on topics in which she was interested and found entertaining.

Sex was high on that list, and in fact was chosen as the title of her first production. It was immensely successful and ran for almost a year but its mocking of society's morals finally resulted in Mae (and two dozen cast members) being arrested on an obscenity charge.

No one could find anything offensive to quote at the trial but to use Mae's own words ... "It isn't what I do, but how I do it. It isn't what I say, but how I say it, and how I look when I do it and say it". As a result, she was fined and sentenced to a token ten day jail term.

The notoriety of the situation subsequently inspired her to write a series of even more outrageous plays dealing with such taboos as homosexuality, drug use and white slavery. Mae also created a character which would become a virtual alter-ego for the rest of her career and propel her to movie stardom a handful of years later ... *Diamond Lil*.

In 1932, Hollywood beckoned with a featured role in the George Raft feature *Night After Night*. Allowed to contribute her own dialogue for the role, she created a sensation. Raft commented that she "stole everything but the cameras". In one celebrated scene a hat-check girl praised her jewellery with the line "Goodness, what lovely diamonds". Mae responded "Goodness had nothing to do with it, dearie!".

Paramount quickly signed her for a starring role in *She Done Him Wrong* and with its release the name Mae West catapulted to the top ranks of movie stardom. Overnight, her style and sayings were the talk of the entertainment world and the studio produced a series of follow-ups, eventually paying her \$400,000 a film (and making her the highest-paid star in Hollywood).

Mae's playful openness about sexual matters did not find favour with everyone, however. Various self-appointed protectors of morality saw her as a decidedly bad influence and did everything they could to have her thrown out of pictures. Eventually Paramount agreed to tone down her storylines and

remove certain sections of dialogue. (Two censored lines were "I wouldn't let him touch me with a ten-foot pole" and "I wouldn't lift my veil for that guy".)

Mae was also in trouble on another front. In December 1937, she guested on the top-rating Sunday night radio programme *The Chase And Sanborn Hour* with Edgar Bergen (and his dummy Charlie McCarthy). A sketch set in the Garden of Eden lit up the switchboards and caused a furore across the nation. Like her Broadway performance ten years earlier, it wasn't what she said, but how the lines were delivered. As a result, the networks decided she was persona non grata on the airwaves, and Mae didn't return to the medium until the late 1940s.

Censorship of her movie roles had lessened their sting and in 1939 she switched to Universal to star in *My Little Chickadee* with W.C. Fields. Half a century later it's a delight to watch the two legends sparring for screen space, but at the time it wasn't considered a success. Mae signed with Columbia in 1943 for *The Heat's On* but the modern setting didn't suit her old-world style and she decided to regain more control over her performances by going back to the stage.

She returned to Broadway in the play *Catherine Was Great* and later staged a revival of *Diamond Lil* (which also toured Britain). The 1950s found her in Las Vegas with a night-club act supported by a company of muscle-built Mr. Universes.

Soon after, Decca Records signed her to record an LP of her popular 1930s songs and by the end of the decade, Mae had written a very entertaining autobiography *Goodness Had Nothing To Do With It* which quickly made it to the bestseller lists.

Now in her sixties, Mae made several guest-shots on television including a Dean Martin special and the 1958 Academy Awards Ceremony when she sang a song with Rock Hudson. A pre-filmed interview on *Person To Person* was cancelled at the last moment however when producers got cold feet. And in 1963 she starred in an episode of the popular *Mister Ed* series in what proved to be an amusing romp for all concerned.

The 1960s also saw a new stage production *Sextette* and several more record albums (of contemporary compositions). Despite a number of offers though, Mae consistently refused to return to the big screen.

Finally, in 1970, she did agree to appear in the controversial movie adaptation of Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge*. Though generally regarded as a cinematic mess, Mae's scenes as the sultry theatrical agent (complete with dialogue she herself had written) were the film's only bright spot.

The nostalgia boom saw her thrust back into the spotlight as one of the few legends still around to glory in the applause for an era of show business long gone. As she entered her eighties, Mae was determined her career was nowhere near its conclusion.

Her next venture was a film version of her stage play *Sex-tette*, though getting the financial backing for a project with an octogenarian in the starring role was not easy. Eventually the movie was made (with a lineup of motion picture greats in featured roles) but it ended up a strange mixture of Hollywood kitsch and campy production numbers and enjoyed only a limited release.

Mae's further plans were put on hold, and soon after her health began to falter. A series of strokes in mid-1980 incapacitated her and she died several months later.

# *In the words of Mae West...*

When I'm good, I'm very good, but when I'm bad, I'm better.

She's the kind of girl who climbed the ladder of success, wrong by wrong.

It's about a girl who lost her reputation but never missed it.

Too much of a good thing can be wonderful.

A man in the house is worth two in the street.

It's better to be looked over than overlooked.

Between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before.

Is that a gun in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me?

A gold rush is what happens when a line of chorus girls spot a man with a bankroll.

Give a man a free hand and he'll try to put it all over you.

Gentlemen may prefer blondes — but who says that blondes prefer gentlemen?

Some women pick men to marry — and others pick them to pieces.

Too many girls follow the line of least resistance — but a good line is hard to resist.

I didn't discover curves — I only uncovered them.

A thrill a day keeps the chill away.

When a woman goes bad — men go right after her.

I always say, keep a diary and some day it'll keep you.

That guy's so crooked he uses a corkscrew for a ruler.

Women with "pasts" interest men because men hope that history will repeat itself.

He who hesitates is last.

It's not the men in my life that counts — it's the life in my men.



## Films

**Night After Night** (Paramount 1932) 70m

**She Done Him Wrong** (Paramount 1933) 66m

songs: Frankie And Johnnie

A Guy What Takes His Time

Easy Rider

**I'm No Angel** (Paramount 1933) 87m

songs: They Call Me Sister Honky Tonk

No One Loves Me Like That Dallas Man

I Found A New Way To Go To Town

I Want You — I Need You

I'm No Angel

**Belle Of The Nineties** (Paramount 1934) 75m

songs: My American Beauty

When A St. Louis Woman Comes Down To

New Orleans

Troubled Waters

My Old Flame

**Goin' To Town** (Paramount 1935) 74m

songs: Love Is Love

He's A Bad Man

Now I'm A Lady

My Heart At Thy Sweet Voice

**Klondike Annie** (Paramount 1936) 80m

songs: Occidental Woman

Little Bar Butterfly

It's Better To Give Than To Receive

Cheer Up, Little Sister

My Medicine Man

Mister Deep Blue Sea

**Go West, Young Man** (Paramount 1936) 82m

songs: On A Typical Tropical Night

I Was Saying To The Moon

Go West, Young Man

**Every Day's A Holiday** (Paramount 1938) 80m

songs: Flutter By, Little Butterfly

Every Day's A Holiday

Along The Broadway Trail

Jubilee

Mademoiselle Fifi

**My Little Chickadee** (Universal 1940) 83m

song: Willie Of The Valley

**The Heat's On** (Columbia 1943) 80m

songs: Stranger In Town

Hello Mi Amigo

**Myra Breckinridge** (20th Century Fox 1970) Colour 94m

songs: You Gotta Taste All The Fruit

Hard To Handle (both deleted before release)

**Sextette** (Crown International 1978) Colour 91m

song: Happy Birthday 21

Baby Face

After You've Gone

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by Mae West

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**Goodness Had Nothing To Do With It**

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by Mae West

(W.H. Allen, London. 1975)

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(Tower Publications paperback, New York. 1976)

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by Fergus Cashin

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by George Eells and Stanley Musgrove

(William Morrow And Company, New York. 1982)

**Mae West: Empress Of Sex**

by Maurice Leonard

(Harper Collins. 1992)

**Mae West — When I'm Bad, I'm Better**

by Marybeth Hamilton

(Harper Collins paperback. 1993)

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# Discography

I Like A Guy What Takes His Time/I Wonder Where My Easy Rider's Gone  
Brunswick 78rpm 6495 (Feb 7 1933)

I'm No Angel/I Found A New Way To Go To Town  
Brunswick 78rpm 6675 (Oct 3 1933)

They Call Me Sister Honky Tonk/I Want You — I Need You  
Brunswick 78rpm 6676 (Oct 7 1933)

\* the above six vocals are included on:

**Ethel Merman/Lyda Roberti/Mae West**  
Columbia LP CL 2751

\* all except I Want You — I Need You are included on:

**Mae West And W.C. Fields — Side By Side**  
Harmony LP HS 11405

My Old Flame/Sing You Sinners (Duke Ellington instrumental)  
Biltmore 78rpm 1014, Cosmopolitan 78rpm 7501

Come Up And See Me Sometime/Frankie And Johnny  
Mezzotone 78rpm 100

That's All Brother, That's All/Imaginary Love  
Mezzotone 78rpm 101

My Man Friday/Page 54  
Mezzotone 78rpm 102

## Mae West Songs

Mezzotone 10" LP 1

Come Up 'N' See Me Sometime/That's All Brother, That's All/My Man Friday/Frankie And Johnny/Imaginary Love/Page 54

## Mae West Songs

Mezzotone 10" LP 21

Pardon Me For Loving And Running/Put It Off Until Tomorrow/Slow Down/A Guy That Takes His Time/He's A Bad Man/non-West vocal: Men

## The One And Only Mae West

Monogram Supertone EP MEP 111

features four of the above Mezzotone recordings:

Come Up And See Me Sometime/Page 54/Put It Off Until Tomorrow/That's All, Brother, That's All

\* eight of the above Mezzotone vocals are included on:

**W.C. Fields — His Only Recording, Plus 8 Songs By Mae West**

Proscenium LP 22

also issued as:

**W.C. Fields And Mae West**

American LP AAT 120

Frankie And Johnny/My Man Friday/Page 54/That's All, Brother/Pardon Me For Loving And Running/Put It Off Until Tomorrow/Slow Down/Come Up And See Me Sometime

Frankie And Johnny/All Of Me  
Decca 78rpm 29452 (Nov 26/Nov 29 1954)

## The Fabulous Mae West

Decca LP DL (7)9016, M.C.A. 2053E

\* also released as:

Decca 91537/8/9 (three EP set)

Love Is The Greatest Thing/I'm In The Mood For Love/Pecado/My Daddy Rocks Me/All Of Me/The Call Me Sister Honky Tonk/Frankie And Johnny/I Want You — I Need You/Havana For A Night/A Guy What Takes His Time/If I Could Be With You/Criswell Predicts  
(Nov 23, 26 and 29 1954)

## Way Out West

Tower LP T 5028

Treat Him Right/When A Man Loves A Woman/You Turn Me On/Shakin' All Over/If You Gotta Go/Lover, Please Don't Fight/Day Tripper/Nervous/Twist And Shout/Boom Boom/Mae Day

Day Tripper/Treat Him Right  
Tower single 260

If You Gotta Go/Shakin' All Over  
Tower single 261

## Wild Christmas

Dagonet LP DG-4

also issued as:

**Under The Mistletoe:** Round LP RS 100  
and

**Mae In December:** A.E.I. LP AEI 2104

Merry Christmas, Baby/Santa Baby/Santa, Come Up To See Me/Put The Loot In The Boot, Santa/Santa Claus Is Back In Town/My New Year's Resolutions/Santa, Bring My Baby Back To Me/With Love From Me To You

Put The Loot In The Boot, Santa/With Love From Me To You  
Dagonet single DG 6A

## Great Balls Of Fire

M.G.M. LP SE 4869

Great Balls Of Fire/Men/The Naked Ape/The Grizzly Bear/Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On/Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen/After The Lights Go Down Low/Light My Fire/How Miss West Won World Peace/Rock Around The Clock

Great Balls Of Fire/The Naked Ape  
M.G.M. single K 14491

Hard To Handle/You Gotta Taste All Of The Fruit  
20th Century Fox single 45-6718  
(out-takes from the movie Myra Breckinridge)

Am I Too Young?/He's A Bad, Bad Man  
Plaza single 45-506



**Mae West — Original Voice Tracks From Her Greatest Movies**

Decca LP DL (7)9176

dialogue and songs from her Paramount and Universal films: Sayings Of Mae West/Mae West Uncensored/Mae West And Friends/Around The World With Mae West/Mae West Has The Last Word/Mae West And W.C. Fields Together/Mae West And "Friend" (includes song I Want You — I Need You)/Mae West Teaches Class/A Swingin' Sermon (includes song Little Bar Butterfly)/Personal Appearance/Mae West Sings (includes Frankie And Johnny, Mister Deep Blue Sea and My Old Flame)

**Mae West — Original Radio Broadcasts**

Mark 56 Records LP 643

Adam And Eve sketch (from The Chase And Sanborn Hour of December 12 1937)/Frank Bresee Talks To Mae West (1970)/Frankie And Johnny (from The Rudy Vallee Show of February 2 1933)/Frank Bresee Talks To Mae West (1971)/Frank Bresee Talks To Mae West (1972)

**Mae West On The Air**

Sandy Hook LP and CD SH 2098

My Old Flame (unreleased April 23 1934 studio recording)/Romeo And Juliet (from The Chesterfield Supper Club of January 1949)/Little Red Riding Hood (from The Chesterfield Supper Club of February 16 1950)/Mae West And Dean Martin (from a 1950s telecast)/Mae West and Red Skelton (from The Red Skelton Show of March 1 1960)

**Mae West On The Chase And Sanborn Hour**

Radiola LP MR-1126

features the complete NBC radio broadcast of December 12 1937

**Sixteen Sultry Songs Sung By Mae West "Queen Of Sex"**

Rosetta LP RR 1315, CD RRCD 1315

features soundtrack vocals from She Done Him Wrong (Easy Rider), Belle Of The Nineties (Memphis Blues/My Old Flame/St. Louis Woman), Klondike Annie (Mister Deep Blue Sea/I'm An Occidental Woman In An Oriental Mood For Love) and Everyday's A Holiday (Mademoiselle Fifi) plus 1950s studio vocals for Decca (They Call Me Sister Honky Tonk/A Guy What Takes His Time/My Daddy Rocks Me) and Mezzotone (Come Up And See Me Sometime/Slow Down/Pardon Me For Loving And Running/Put It Off Until Tomorrow/Frankie And Johnny/That's All Brother, That's All)

**Come Up And See Me Sometime**

Mastersound CD DFCDI 113

features six Brunswick vocals (I'm No Angel/I Found A New Way To Go To Town/I Want You — I Need You/They Call Me Sister Honky Tonk/A Guy What Takes His Time/(I Wonder Where) My Easy Rider's Gone) + Paramount Movie Parade radio promotion for Belle Of The Nineties + two extracts from The Chase And Sanborn Hour (December 12 1937) + five Mezzotone vocals (Frankie And Johnny/Come Up And See Me Sometime/My Man Friday/Imaginary Love/That's All Brother, That's All)

# MUCH-BINDING- IN-THE-MARSH

by Mark McKay

It is an unusual occurrence for one half of a highly successful comedy duo to go on to enjoy similar popularity in a new partnership. Yet this is exactly what happened to Richard Murdoch, who had achieved fame, and indeed created radio history, through his association with Arthur Askey in the first BBC comedy show, *Band Waggon*. Its run was brought to an end by the war, with Dickie joining the Air Force. Still in London, he was able to broadcast for the Overseas Recorded Broadcasting Service, responsible for making shows for the troops in the Middle East. On one of these occasions the compère was Wing Commander Kenneth Horne, who introduced him as the Station Commander of the R.A.F. outpost at Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh. The seeds of a radio classic were sown.

Kenneth, like Dickie a Cambridge graduate sans degree, had a civilian job as Sales Manager for Triplex Safety Glass. Whilst serving in the Anti-Aircraft & Barrage Balloon corps, he was chosen at random to compère a programme called *Ack-Ack, Beer-Beer* (named after the RAF abbreviation for the unit). In 1943 he was posted to the Air Ministry in London, with a vacant position for a Squadron Leader in his department. Over lunch after that fateful ORBS broadcast, he offered the job to Richard Murdoch. Together, they became responsible for the supply of spitfires to Russia, but being not exactly inundated with work, they could devote a lot of their energies towards ideas for a new radio show.

The setting they chose was a remote, decrepit Air Force base with only one plane, the Cabbage White Mark II. Murdoch was the genial, dithering C.O. and Horne played the slow-witted and incompetent A.O.C. *Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh*, the R.A.F. station in Laughter Command, first 'took the air' in *ENSA Half-Hour* on 4th January 1944. A few months later it was being presented every six weeks in *Mediterranean Merry-Go-Round*. This was a services show presented to the men and women of the forces 'in khaki and two shades of blue', meaning that it alternated weekly between Army, Navy and Air Force editions.

In 1945, eccentric BBC producer, Leslie Bridgmont took over *Merry-Go-Round*. In an attempt to raise the standard of the programme, he decided each service would be represented by a fixed show. Thus *HMS Waterlogged* with Eric Barker became the Navy's contribution, Charlie Chester's *Stand Easy* represented the Army, and Horne and Murdoch wrote and starred in *Much-Binding* for the Air Force.

The 'Binding' of the title derived from the war-time Air Force slang for 'complaining'. And chief 'binder' was Leading Aircraftman Sam Costa, who had started in show business as a pianist and singer with dance bands. Later he decided that he would be well suited to comedy, and had a chance to demonstrate this in the early *ITMA* shows. After joining up he recorded for ORBS, where he found himself playing stooge to Dickie Murdoch. Soon he was shooting to fame as the con-



stantly grumbling 'other rank', expressing his gripes with a muddle of malapropisms ("There's one law for the rich and a mother-in-law for the poor!"). Like Jimmy Edwards in *Take It From Here*, his bushy black moustache became a natural prop for gags.

Horne and Murdoch devised a number of regular features for their editions of *Merry-Go-Round*. A parody of forces' concerts provided an opportunity for Dickie's fast little songs with nonsense lyrics, written to famous tunes like *Ballet Egyptienne* or *Entry of the Gladiators*.

Kenneth became quiz-master of the genuine competition, 'Double or Quits', which was also featured in the Army and Navy versions. The prizes stopped way short of a latest model Mercedes — four questions gave contestants the chance of taking home a half crown, 5s, 10s or top prize, one pound!

The fondly remembered little song, introduced as 'a little thing that goes something like this...' was first heard around this time; later it was to become their signature tune, closing every episode. In 1946 it was published by Campbell and Connelly, but to include all the lyrics would have filled a book, as four new verses were written each week. Often these were devised only a couple of hours before the broadcast, so as to include any topicalities. Here's an example:

At Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh,  
The price of vegetables is quite appalling,  
At Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh,  
It goes up every day instead of falling.  
We think that our greengrocer must be absolutely green,  
He never has potatoes, Brussels sprouts are seldom seen,  
But he can't be overcharging 'cos he never has a bean.  
At Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh.

Years later Dickie was visiting 20th Century Fox studios in Hollywood, and walking on a set, heard a familiar tune being whistled. It was the *Much-Binding* song, and the phantom whistler none other than Richard Burton!

After the war *Merry-Go-Round*, like so many men and women in the forces, was demobbed and the three different contributions became shows in their own right. *Much-Binding* returned in 1947, with the aerodrome converted into a country club, membership one! It was in this series the very talented voice man Maurice Denham was first heard (on and off initially due to his film commitments). Maurice, another *ITMA* graduate, could produce a cornucopia of accents — human and animal. The former covered everything from a refined



gentleman to a cockney charwoman. The latter included, as described in the script, 'the noise of an infuriated yak'.

Maurice's most famous character was the likeable silly-ass Dudley Davenport. Dudley sported a distinctive laugh, written in the script as "keogh, keogh, keogh!", and a couple of popular catchphrases: the apologetic "Oh, I say — I am a fool!" and his cheery greeting "Jolly D to see you!" Maurice also supplied voices for Ivy Clingbine ("Oh! What 'ave I sayed!"), Mr. Blake the sexton (geddit?) and Fred (pronounced 'Fraid') Larkin, the man with the 'comical anecdotties'.

Other character parts were supplied by the ladies of the cast, most notably Barbara Valerie, Maureen Riscoe and Diana Morrison (the stern 'Miss Hotchkiss' in *ITMA*). Two which escaped them were those of Costa and Horne's 'better halves', Emily (always in trouble with her 'twinges') and Bessie ("Not a word to Bessie about this, Murdoch!"). Despite being regularly mentioned in every episode, they never actually made an appearance before the microphone.

Work for each week's show began on the previous Sunday, when Ken made the trip to Dickie's house for a scriptwriting session. After tossing ideas back and forth, they finally produced thirty pages of handwritten script in a school exercise book. This was delivered to Leslie Bridgmont's secretary who typed the foolscap copy, translating abbreviations along the way. These covered catchphrases — Murdoch's greeting "Ah, good morning, sir. It is good to see you" became "AGMSIIGTSY" in Horne-Murdoch shorthand — and common little exchanges between characters. Sam Costa's grumbles and tangled clichés (termed 'Costaisms') were left blank for him to provide on the day of recording. Also omitted to be supplied later, was Dickie's opening spot, in which he described noteworthy events in the village that week.

Rather than being a collection of jokes, the programme made use of regular little 'stunt' dialogues to emphasise the players' characteristics. For instance, Horne was typically slow on the uptake whenever Murdoch let loose a whimsicality. When he did react, it would invariably be in response to an earlier joke, a few pages back in the script. Another gimmick was to delay character entrances so their catchphrases took on a different context:

MURDOCH: Well, we'll get Costa in and ask him, Sir. (*Calling*) Costa! By the way, Sir, have you seen anything of Edward Wilkinson lately?

HORNE: Well, I should imagine he's gone abroad because about a week ago I was in a travel agency (*Door opens*) and he came in and said —

COSTA: Good morning, Sir. Was there something?

Edward Wilkinson was in fact an old Air Force buddy of Horne's, whose name was thrown into the scripts as an in-joke. Later, whenever the fellow was introduced to someone, the reaction was usually "Oh, are you the Edward Wilkinson



from *Much-Binding?*" — despite the fact the poor man had no connection with the show whatsoever!

Dickie's little quips which failed to register with his senior officer were frequently an excuse for old chestnuts or groan-inducing puns. In one episode Horne explains that seafood is available at a London restaurant: "It means you can get a crustacean." Murdoch: "Really Sir, Charing Crustacean or Kings Crustacean?" Sometimes a surrealistic quality crept in to the humour, as with this wireless police message: "There was a nasty incident at the corner of Balls Pond Road today when a speaker ran over the events of the past year."

Meanwhile, one day in 1948 Dickie received a phone call supposedly from a lady-in-waiting at Buckingham Palace. Knowing Kenneth's penchant for practical jokes over the phone, he was initially rather sceptical. But the call turned out to be a genuine request for a royal visit to the Paris Studio where the show was recorded. So that Tuesday twelve seats were reserved for a party which included the Queen, Princess Margaret and — their first appearance since the birth of their new son — Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. Dickie's cry of "Good old Charlieee!" at the end of the song seemed particularly apt.

More often the celebrities were on the other side of the microphone. In the tenth show of the third series, which featured broadcaster Richard Dimbleby in 'Up Your Alley' (a



parody of his show, *Down Your Way*), there was a guest appearance by American tough guy Alan Ladd. He was given lines riddled with all the favourite *Much-Binding* catchphrases. At rehearsals he started to paraphrase these into something more natural to his delivery style, and was most surprised when Leslie Bridgmont insisted he mustn't change a word!

Another historic event was the first television edition, broadcast live from Lime Grove in 1947. The viewers were eager for more, but Kenneth found it hard to tear himself away from business meetings to attend rehearsals, so only a few episodes were made.

Towards the end of the fourth series, Richard Murdoch was in hospital with mumps, and Kenneth Horne was left to carry on alone. However Dickie was back for the final show, in which they hosted a farewell party and reprised their version of the Quartet from *Rigoletto*, a hit with listeners back in 1948. In hindsight, the finality seems ill-timed since it was only a couple of months before Horne and Murdoch were back in the saddle, increasing their bank balances with a £50,000 series for Radio Luxembourg.

This series, representing the most lucrative contract to date in British radio, was sponsored by Mars Bars. The novelty of commercial breaks comes an unexpected surprise to Ken in the first instalment; Dudley Davenport thinks them the best part of the show. In another episode, a great myth is debunked. The cast are stranded in the African desert after a plane crash, with Ken admitting unfamiliarity with their whereabouts. Much to his embarrassment, it turns out that they have arrived at the scene of the A.O.C.'s great wartime adventures, lovingly recounted with the preface "Did I ever tell you about the time I was in Sidi Barrani?"

The Luxembourg season achieved international sales but was not considered a success ("Even my mother said it was rotten," Dickie later recalled). It also created ill-will back at the BBC, who regarded their desertion to the 'other side' as an act of disloyalty. Clearly the wounds were soon healed, as the team were back with the Beeb the following year for a series entitled *Over To You*. Then on Kenneth's birthday, February 27th, in Coronation year, Horne and Murdoch took part in a radio command performance in the presence of Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh. They included a special verse of the famous song which outlined their plan to view the coro-

nation in the disguise of a pantomime horse costume: "We'll be shouting 'Good old Charlie!' from inside a Windsor grey."

Later that year work began on their last series, simply renamed *Much-Binding*. The action takes place in the office of a local newspaper, which has been left to Murdoch by his uncle. The paper is renamed 'The Weekly Bind', but the first edition goes to print as 'Tho Wookly Bind', as Mr. Bobble the compositor (Maurice Denham) has run short of letter 'e's. Sam Costa is hired as a radio critic, and he also contributes poems under the pseudonym Prudence Gush; Dudley Davenport's twin brother Maurice is responsible for a weekly comic strip. Ear-basher Dora Bryan becomes fashion editor Gladys Plum, requiring instructions in the

techniques of photography: "Do you know what a negative is, Miss Plum?" — "No" — "That's right".

And so the curtain fell on the weekly goings-on at the village of Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh. Both Richard Murdoch and Kenneth Horne went on to again star in other successful radio shows, but working independently with different teams.

Then in 1970, after Ken's death, came a revival of sorts — Dickie and Sam Costa appeared in a regular five minute slot in *Frost on Sunday*, giving a topical news-oriented rendition of the *Much-Binding* theme song. More recently there has been a resurgence of interest; after Dickie's passing in 1990, BBC Radio 4 played a short run of the programmes, and soon afterwards a double cassette was released, containing four classic episodes. Allowing new fans to enjoy a comedy show which can list amongst its devotees such diverse names as King George VI, Lord Reith and John Major.

## Episode Guide

### Merry-Go-Round

General Forces Network, Fridays.

**Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh** broadcasts:

Every six weeks from 31 March 1944 to 28 September 1945; thereafter every three weeks to 1 February 1946 (20×60mins) Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa (from 27 October 1944)

The following episodes are known to survive:

19.1.45 Doing the accounts/The Brains Trust

13.4.45 Horne learns of war/Aircraftmen Work Wonders

### Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh

**Series #1**

Light Programme, Thursdays.

2 January to 18 September 1947 (38×30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa, Marilyn Williams, Maurice Denham (regularly from 3 July), Dick Griffin, Vivienne Chatterton

The following episodes are known to survive:

1/11 Club meeting/Have You Seen Any Good Films Lately?

1/12 Song writing competition/The Plug-It-In wireless

## Series #2

Light Programme, Wednesdays.

26 November 1947 to 16 June 1948 (30×30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa, Janet Davis, Maurice Denham, Barbara Valerie, Gwen Catley

The following episodes are known to survive:

- 2/? Buttercup, the horse/Mr. Blake's farm/Farm animals
- 2/? Lady Davenport's car/Driving lesson
- 2/? Train journey from London/Reprimanding Fifi
- 2/? Shaving machine/Costa on trial/Singing lesson

## Series #3

Light Programme, Tuesdays.

21 September 1948 to 12 July 1949 (43×30mins)

Special: Sunday 25 December 1949 (30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa, Maurice Denham, Maureen Riscoe, Helen Hill

The following episodes are known to survive:

- 3/1 Holidays/Sing-Song
- 3/10 Richard Bumblepuppy's 'Up Your Alley'
- 3/15 (*Royal Visit*) Costa & Dudley run store/Sing-Song
- 3/20 Bindbourne Festival preparations/Rehearsal
- 3/21 Horne's trousers/Mr. Blake's mystery bus trip
- 3/38 Holiday at the seaside
- 3/43 Breaking-up party

## Series #4

Light Programme, Wednesdays.

15 March to 13 September 1950 (not broadcast or a repeat substituted on one of these dates) (26×30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa, Maurice Denham, Diana Morrison, Barbara Leigh

The following episodes are known to survive:

- 4/7 Murdoch arrives at London office/Secretary interviews
- 4/8 Flowers/Horne's glasses/Double Bass/Baby sitting
- 4/9 Horne's home perm/Saxophone/PAYE income tax forms
- 4/10 Dictating machine/Lost silkworm/Elocution lessons
- 4/15 In the Waggoner's Arms/On the Cartwrights' farm
- 4/20 Horne's electric shaver/Running Hamphridge's store
- 4/25 Preparations for party/Ninth Programme broadcast
- 4/26 Farewell party

## Luxembourg Series

Radio Luxembourg, Sundays.

29 October 1950 to 17 June 1951 (34×30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Maurice Denham, Sam Costa, Diana Morrison, Patricia Hughes (replaced by Barbara Leigh from 4 Mar 1951)

The following episodes are known to survive:

- 1. 'Stopatwinge' on Costa's mo/Introduction to sponsor
- 2. Taking a photo/Tour around rival studio
- 3. Horne's cold/Bindbourne Festival preparations
- 4. At the motor show/Mrs. Hartley-Manners' play
- 5. Casting for play/Dinner at 'Samley's'/White Sago
- 6. Riding Buttercup to station/Train journey to London
- 7. At Horne's club/Luigi's restaurant/At the circus
- 8. Paying off taxi/Chess game/Satellite town plan protest
- ?. Taking camel to Cairo Zoo/Sidi Barrani
- 17. Horne's medical examination
- 18. Loose door handle/Visit from Americans
- 20. Horne's visit to cinema/Horne's Memoirs of the Desert
- 25. Turning club into roadhouse/Miss Flybelow
- 26. The American couple & the haunted house
- 27. (*First ½ only*) Buying & driving a bus
- 28. (*First ½ only*) Detective agency/Murder at Spagthorpe

## Over To You

Light Programme, Sundays, later Home Service, Mondays.

30 September 1951 to 23 March 1952 (not 10 February 1952) and 31 March to 14 April 1952 (28×30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa, Maurice Denham, Diana Morrison

## Much-Binding

Home Service, Fridays, later Tuesdays.

31 July to 25 September 1953 and 29 September 1953 to 23 March 1954 (35×30mins)

Starring Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa, Maurice Denham (replaced by Nicholas Parsons from 5 Jan 1954), Dora Bryan

The following episodes are known to survive:

- 1. Murdoch is left a paper/Staff recruitment/Radio criticism
- 2. Toast/First copy is printed/Next week's issue
- 5. Darkroom/Fashion designer/Crumpet-holer
- 6. How to run up a fancy dress/Scottish sheepdog trials
- 19. Costa & circulation manager/Christmas novelty factory
- ?. School for salesmen/Holiday on the continent/Air show

## Discography

### Jubilee Festival Album

Davjon DJ RAFA 1 (1968)

Richard Murdoch & Kenneth Horne appear on one track, singing the *Much-Binding* song live from the Victoria Palace, 31 Mar 1968

### BBC 1922–1972 50 Years Of Broadcasting

BBC 50A & B (Double LP) (1972)

Contains short extracts from *Merry-Go-Round* (19 Jan 1945) and *Ack-Ack, Beer-Beer*

### 50 Years Of Radio Comedy

BBC REC 138M (LP) (1972)

Contains an extract from *Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh* (17 May 1950)

### Much Binding In The Marsh

ZBBC 1197 (Double cassette) (1991)

Contains four complete broadcasts (21 Sep, 23 Nov, 28 Dec 1948 and 1 Feb 1949)

## Bibliography

### Much Binding In The Marsh (pbk)

by Richard Murdoch & Kenneth Horne

### The Chronicles of Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh

by Richard Murdoch

appeared in 6 monthly instalments in *The Strand Magazine* (Jan — Jun 1948)

How we got the gutter mended/Costa has an omen/Application for supplementary/The smell on the landing/The author regrets/Dispatch from the henhouse

### Leslie Bridgmont Presents (Falcon hbk 1949)

by Leslie Bridgmont

contains chapters on *Merry-Go-Round* & *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh*

# “WEIRD AL” YANKOVIC

by Peter Tatchell

**I**N the 1940s music silliness was the domain of Spike Jones. Twenty years later Allan Sherman cornered the market with a swag of clever parodies. In the music video era of the 1980s and 1990s, the name “Weird Al” Yankovic is synonymous with offbeat interpretations of the current hits.

Just out of high school, Al first came to public attention on Dr. Demento’s radio show and overnight was launched on a career of live appearances supporting rock performers and a string of successful singles.

The coming of the music video (which Al himself helped pioneer) further consolidated his success and even led to a starring role in a feature film.

## Discography

Dr. Demento Presents The Greatest Novelty Records Of All Time:

**Volume IV** (The 1970s)

features My Bologna (first version)

**My Bologna/School Cafeteria**

Capitol single 4816 (1979)

**Another One Rides The Bus** Placebo EP 3626

Another One Rides The Bus/Happy Birthday/Gotta Boogie/Mr. Frump In The Iron Lung

**Another One Rides The Bus/Gotta Boogie**

TK single 1043 (Sept 14 1980)

**Ricky/Buckingham Blues**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 03849 (1983)

**I Love Rocky Road/Happy Birthday**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single ZS4 03998 (1983)

**Weird Al Yankovic**

Rock ‘N’ Roll LP PZ 38679, Scotti Bros CD 5206-2-SB (April 1983)

Ricky/Gotta Boogie/I Love Rocky Road/Buckingham Blues/Happy Birthday/Stop Draggin’ My Car Around/My Bologna/The Check’s In The Mail/Another One Rides The Bus/I’ll Be Mellow When I’m Dead/Such A Groovy Guy/Mr. Frump In The Iron Lung

**Weird Al In 3-D**

Rock ‘N’ Roll LP FZ 39221, Scotti Bros CD 5207-2-SB (Feb 1984)

Eat It/Midnight Star/The Brady Bunch/Buy Me A Condo/I Lost On Jeopardy/Polkas On 45/Mr. Pompeil/King Of Suede/That Boy Could Dance/Theme From Rocky X111/Nature Trail To Hell

**Eat It/That Boy Could Dance**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 04374 (1984)

**King Of Suede/Nature Trail To Hell**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 04451 (1984)

**I Lost On Jeopardy/I’ll Be Mellow When I’m Dead**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 04469 (1984)

**Dare To Be Stupid**

Rock ‘N’ Roll LP FZ 40033, Scotti Bros CD 5208-2-SB (June 1985)

Like A Surgeon/Dare To Be Stupid/I Want A New Duck/One More Minute/Yoda/George Of The Jungle/Slime Creatures From Outer Space/Girls Just Want To Have Lunch/This Is The Life/Cable TV/Hooked On Polkas

**This Is The Life/Buy Me A Condo**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve ZS4 04708 (Nov 1984)

**Like A Surgeon/Slime Creatures From Outer Space**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 04937 (1985)

**I Want A New Duck/Cable TV**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 05578 (1985)

**One More Minute/Midnight Star**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 05606 (1985)

**Polka Party**

Rock ‘N’ Roll LP PZ 40520, Scotti Bros CD 5209-2-SB (Oct 1986)

Living With A Hernia/Dog Eat Dog/Addicted To Spuds/One Of Those Days/Polka Party!/Here’s Johnny/Don’t Wear Those Shoes/Toothless People/Good Enough For Now/Christmas At Ground Zero

**Living With A Hernia/Don’t Wear Those Shoes**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) ZS4 06400 (1986)

**Like A Surgeon/King Of Suede**

Rock ‘n’ Roll reissue single ZS8 06435

**Christmas At Ground Zero/One Of Those Days**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single ZS4 06588 (1986)

**Even Worse**

Rock ‘N’ Roll LP FZ 44149, Scotti Bros 5210-2-SB (Apr 1988)

Fat/Stuck In A Closet With Vanna White/(This Song’s Just Six Words Long/You Make Me/I Think I’m A Clone Now/Lasagna/Melanie/Alimony/Velvet Elvis/Twister/Good Old Days

**Fat/You Make Me**

Rock ‘n’ Roll single (with picture sleeve) PO 6

**Fat/You Make Me/Eat It**

Rock ‘n’ Roll 12" single (with picture sleeve) PZ 6



**Jurassic Park/Frank's 2000" TV**

Scotti Bros. CD single

**The Food Album**

Scotti Bros 75421-2

Fat/Lasagna/Addicted To Spuds/I Love Rocky Road/Spam/Eat It/The White Stuff/My Bologna/Taco Grande/The Rye Or The Kaiser (Theme From Rocky XIII)

**Headline News/Christmas At Ground Zero**

Scotti Bros CD single 72392 78011-2 (Sep 1994)

**Permanent Record — Al In The Box**

Scotti Bros 4CD boxed set 72392-75451-2 (Sep 1994)

1. My Bologna/Another One Rides The Bus/Happy Birthday (EP version)/ I Love Rocky Road/Ricky/Polkas On 45/Midnight Star/Eat It/Mr. Pompeil/I Lost On Jeopardy/Buy Me A Condo/King Of Suede

2. Yoda/This Is The Life/Like A Surgeon/One More Minute/I Want A New

Duck/Dare To Be Stupid/Hooked On Polkas/Addicted To Spuds/Dog Eat Dog/Here's Johnny/Living With A Hernia/Christmas At Ground Zero

3. Lasagna/Good Old Days/Fat/Melanie/I Think I'm A Clone Now/You Make Me/Alimony/U.H.F. (single version)/Money For Nothing (Beverly Hillbillies)/The Biggest Ball Of Twine In Minnesota/Spam/ Generic Blues

4. Polka Your Eyes Out/You Don't Love Me Anymore/Smells Like Nirvana/When I Was Your Age/I Can't Watch This/Trigger Happy/Taco Grande/Bedrock Anthem/Harvey The Wonder Hamster/Achy Breaky Song/Livin' In The Fridge/Frank's 2000" TV/Jurassic Park/Headline News

**Greatest Hits — Volume 2**

Scotti Bros CD 72392-75456

Headline News/Bedrock Anthem/You Don't Love Me Anymore/Smells Like Nirvana/Achy Breaky Song/U.H.F./Money For Nothing (Beverly Hillbillies)/Jurassic Park/This Is The Life/Polka Your Eyes Out/Yoda/Christmas At Ground Zero

\*\*\* promotional copies of most of the Rock 'n' Roll singles were also issued (with the same release number) featuring track A on both sides of the disc

**Videos**

**The Compleat Al**

C.B.S./Fox video 7034, laser disc 7084-80 (1985)

lighthearted 102 minute documentary featuring the following songs:

Ricky/I Love Rocky Road/Eat It/I Lost On Jeopardy/This Is The Life/Like A Surgeon/One More Minute/Dare To Be Stupid

**U.H.F./Original Motion Picture Soundtrack And Other Stuff**

Scotti Bros LP SZ 45265, CD 72392-75237-2 (Jul 1989)

Money For Nothing (Beverly Hillbillies)/Gandhi II/Attack Of The Radioactive Hamsters From A Planet Near Mars/Isle Thing/The Hot Rocks Polka/UHF/Let Me Be Your Hog/She Drives Like Crazy/Generic Blues/Spatula City/Fun Zone/Spam/The Biggest Ball Of Twine In Minnesota

**U.H.F.???**

Scotti Bros. single (Jul 1989)

**Greatest Hits**

Scotti Bros CD 5211-2-SB

Fat/Eat It/Like A Surgeon/Ricky/Addicted To Spuds/Living With A Hernia/Dare To Be Stupid/Lasagna/I Lost On Jeopardy/One More Minute

**Peter And The Wolf/Carnival Of The Animals (Part 2)**

C.B.S. LP FM 44567, CD FMT 44567

**Off The Deep End**

Scotti Bros CD 72392-75256-2 (Apr 1992)

Smells Like Nirvana/Trigger Happy/I Can't Watch This/Polka Your Eyes Out/I Was Only Kidding/The White Stuff/When I Was Your Age/Taco Grande/Airline Amy/The Plumbing Song/You Don't Love Me Anymore

**Smells Like Nirvana/The Waffle King**

Scotti Bros. CD single 866 957-2

**Alapalooza**

Scotti Bros CD 75415-2 (Oct 1993)

Jurassic Park/Young, Dumb And Ugly/Bedrock Anthem/Frank's 2000" TV/ Achy Breaky Song/Traffic Jam/Talk Soup/Livin' In The Fridge/She Never Told Me She Was A Mime/Harvey The Wonder Hamster/Waffle King/Bohemian Polka

# SPIKE MILLIGAN ON TELEVISION

by Peter Tatchell



**S**PIKE Milligan revolutionized British comedy in the 1950s with his radio series **The Goon Show**. Since then, most of his work has appeared on television, with a number of highly original, though at times uneven, sketch comedy shows.

In the mid-1950s Britain's newly-arrived commercial TV tried to capture the lunacy of the Goons with Sellers and Milligan taking part in such programmes as **Idiot Weekly Price 2d.**, **A Show Called Fred** and **Son Of Fred**, but the venture wasn't entirely successful. An antipodean special **The Gladys Half Hour** (made during one of his earliest visits down under in 1958) was also in the same vein.

By the 1960s Milligan could be seen on the B.B.C. with an occasional special and heard voicing his old radio characters for their puppet equivalents **The Telegoons**. He appeared in two seasons of commercial television's **Milligan's Wake** (the first batch featuring scripts by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson) and when BBC2 was launched he hosted a mixture of poetry and jazz called **Muses With Milligan** and was at the helm of **The World Of Beachcomber**.

His 1969 series **Q5** provided inspiration for the soon-to-begin Monty Python team and, apart from occasional unsuccessful forays into the sitcom field with shows like **Curry And Chips** (scripted by Johnny Speight) and the shelved **Melting Pot** and **Jewel In The Crown** projects, the format for Milligan's later work was set.

Though perhaps format is too strong a word for the farago of sketches, links, unrelated jokes and ad-libbing that contributed to the shows. It was definitely a hit-and-miss approach, but at times the lunacy was heaven sent.

**Oh In Colour**, the subsequent **Q** series and **There's A Lot Of It About** (so titled when the B.B.C. refused to accept **Q10**) were all scripted by Milligan and Neil Shand and featured a regular repertory company of performers and friends like John Bluthal, David Lodge and piano-player Alan Clare.

By the 1980s the B.B.C. considered the idea played out, and Spike retreated to his career of one-man stage shows, chat-show appearances and writing a veritable library of books.

**The Goon Show** will always be his major claim to fame, but his contribution to television should not be underrated.

## Major television work

### **Idiot Weekly Price 2d.**

Associated-Redifussion February 24 to April 6 1956 (not Mar 30)(6x25m)  
with Peter Sellers, Eric Sykes, Graham Stark, Valentine Dyall, June Whitfield, Kenneth Connor, Patti Lewis

### **A Show Called Fred**

Associated Redifussion May 2 to 30 1956 (5x25m)  
with Peter Sellers, Valentine Dyall, Kenneth Connor, Graham Stark, Patti Lewis, Max Geldray

### **Son Of Fred**

Associated Redifussion September 17 to November 5 1956 (8x25m)  
with Peter Sellers, Valentine, Dyall, Kenneth Connor, Graham Stark, Patti Lewis, Max Geldray, Johnny Vyvyan, Cuthbert Harding, Mario Fabrizi

### **The Gladys Half Hour** (30m)

A.B.C. (Australia) October 17 1958

### **Spike Milligan Offers A Series Of Unrelated Incidents At Market Value** (30m)

B.B.C. September 5 1961  
with Graham Stark, Bill Kerr, Mario Fabrizi, Valentine Dyall, Alec Bregonzi, Bob Todd

### **The Telegoons**

featuring the voices of Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan (reperforming their original radio scripts)  
Series #1: B.B.C. October 5 to December 28 1963 (not Nov 9 or 30)(11x15m)  
The Ascent Of Mount Everest/The Lost Colony/The Fear Of Wages/Napoleon's Piano/The Last Tram/China Story/The Canal/The Hastings Flyer/The Mystery Of The Marie Celeste - Solved!/The International Christmas Pudding/The Choking Horror

Series #2: BBC1 March 28 to August 1 1964 (not Jun 20 or Jul 4, 11 and 25)(15x15m)

Scradje/The Booted Gorilla/The Underwater Mountain/The Dreaded Batter-Pudding Hurler (Of Bexhill-On-Sea)/Tales Of Old Dartmoor/Lurgi Strikes Britain/Captain Seagoon R.N./The First Albert Memorial To The Moon/The Whistling Spy Enigma/Tales Of Montmartre/The Africa Ship Canal/The Affair Of The Lone Banana/The Nadger Plague/The Siege Of Fort Night/The Terrible Revenge Of Fred Fu-Manchu

### **Milligan's Wake**

with John Bluthal  
Series #1: A.T.V. September 5 to 26 1964 (4x25m)  
Series #2: A.T.V. July 3 to August 14 1965 (7x25m)

### **Muses With Milligan**

BBC2 December 25 1964 (40m) and January 6 to March 24 1965 (12x30m)

### **The World Of Beachcomber**

Series #1: BBC2 January 22 to April 22 1968 (13x30m)  
with George Benson, Clive Dunn, Hattie Jacques, Patricia Hayes, Julian Orchard, Sheila Steafel, Frank Thornton  
Series #2: BBC2 September 22 to October 27 1969 (6x30m)  
with Julian Orchard, Frank Thornton, Ann Lancaster, Leon Thau, Paul McDowell, Josephine Gordon, Thelma Taylor

### **A Tale Of Men's Shirts**

Thames August 8 1968  
with Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, John Cleese

### **Q5**

BBC2 March 20 to May 5 1969 (7x30m)

### **Curry And Chips**

London Weekend November 21 to December 26 1969 (6x25m)  
with Eric Sykes, Norman Rossington, Kenny Lynch, Geoffrey Hughes, Fanny Carby

### **Oh In Colour**

BBC2 September 27 to November 1 1970 (6x30m)  
with John Bluthal

### **The Marty Feldman Comedy Machine**

A.T.V. October 1 1971 to January 14 1972 (14x50m)  
with Marty Feldman, Orson Welles, Bob Todd

### **Spike Milligan Takes A Made Up Look At Australia (35m)**

A.B.C. (Australia ) January 26 1972

### **Carry On Spike In Australia**

Nine Network (Australia) March 24 1972 (50m)  
with John Laws, John Meillon, Little Patti, Buster Fiddess, Maggie Grey, Wendy Blacklock

**Milligan In ... Autumn:** BBC2 October 1 1972 (30m)

**Winter:** BBC2 December 24 1972 (30m)

**Spring:** BBC2 May 13 1973 (30m)

**Summer:** BBC2 August 27 1973 (30m)

with John Bluthal, John Antrobus, Patricia Ridgeway, Alan Clare

### **Parkinson Meets The Goons (75m)**

BBC1 October 28 1972

### **The Last Goon Show Of All (40m)**

BBC1 December 26 1972

### **The Last Turkey In The Shop Show (35m)**

BBC2 December 23 1974

### **The Melting Pot (30m)**

BBC1 June 11 1975

with John Bird, Peter Jones, Harry Fowler

### **Q6**

BBC2 November 6 to December 11 1975 (6x30m)

with John Bluthal, Robert Dorning, Peter Jones

### **Q7**

BBC2 January 3 to February 21 1978 (not Feb 2)(7x30m)

with John Bluthal, Robert Dorning, Alan Clare, David Lodge

### **Q8**

BBC2 April 4 to May 9 1979 (6x30m)

with John Bluthal, Bob Todd, David Lodge, Alan Clare

### **Q9**

BBC2 June 17 to July 22 1980 (6x30m)

with John Bluthal, Bob Todd, David Lodge, Alan Clare, Keith Smith

### **There's A Lot Of It About**

BBC2 September 20 to October 25 1982 (6x30m)  
with John Bluthal, Keith Smith, David Lodge, Alan Clare

### **Spike Milligan Live In Perth (90m)**

A.B.C. (Western Australia only) August 1984

### **Famous Last Words - Spike Milligan (30m)**

BBC2 June 29 1986

### **Without Walls - The Obituary Show ((30m)**

CH4 December 10 1991

## **Books**

### **Q Annual**

scripts from the Q series by Spike Milligan and Neil Shand  
(Michael Joseph and M & J Hobbs, London, 1979)

### **Get In The Q Annual**

more scripts by Spike Milligan and Neil Shand  
(Michael Joseph and M & J Hobbs, London, 1980)

### **There's A Lot Of It About**

scripts from the series by Spike Milligan and Neil Shand  
(with additional contributions by Andrew Marshall, David Renwick and John Antrobus)  
(M & J Hobbs and Michael Joseph, London, 1983)

### **The Melting Pot**

scripts from the series by Spike Milligan and Neil Shand  
(Published by Robson Books, London, 1983)

## **Recordings**

### **Milligan's Wake**

Pye LP NPL 18104

soundtrack excerpts from the first series, with Spike Milligan and John Bluthal

### **The Olympic Team/Epilogue**

Pye single 7N 15720

### **Muses With Milligan**

Decca LP LK 4701, SCLA 7087

soundtrack excerpts from the series, wherein Milligan reads poetry

### **The World Of Beachcomber**

Pye LP NPL 18271

soundtrack excerpts from the first series

### **Q5 Piano Theme/Ning, Nang, Nong**

Parlophone single R 5771

### **Spike Milligan And Ed Welsh Sing Songs From Q8**

United Artists LP UAG 30223

Q8 Theme/Woe Is Me/Love To Make Music By/Silly Old Baboon/I Don't Have A Song About Jesus/Living Again/Taken You For Granted/One Sunny Day/Lady/I Couldn't Wait To Tell You/The Carpet's Always Greener (Under Someone Else's Bed)/I've Got That Photograph Of You/Q8 Theme (reprise)

### **One Sunny Day/Woe Is Me**

United Artists single UP 36489

## **Video**

### **Spike Milligan In The Best Of Q**

BBC Video 4061

features 87 minutes of highlights from Q6, Q7, Q8 and Q9

# ON THE BUSES

by Peter Tatchell



**T**HE reallocation of commercial television franchises in the late 1960s resulted in a new wave of sitcoms for British viewers. Coupled with the introduction of colour, they reflected the “swinging 60s” attitudes to sex, the youth culture and a more open lifestyle. London Weekend signed a cast of unknowns from this younger generation for **Doctor In The House** and **Please Sir**, but relied on established names from theatre and television for its third major comedy offering **On The Buses**.

Writers Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney reunited with former **Rag Trade** and **Beggar My Neighbour** colleague Reg Varney, who played the lead character, Stan Butler, a London double-decker bus driver. The show centred on Stan’s life at home and at the bus depot, thus allowing two sets of supporting players to interact in each storyline.

At work he and conductor Jack (played by Bob Grant) are at loggerheads with bus company inspector Blake (Stephen Lewis) who continually keeps an eagle eye on the duo. After hours, Stan lives with his widowed mother (musical comedy great Cicely Courtneidge in the first series, but replaced by Doris Hare from the second season) and his dowdy married sister Olive and her layabout husband Arthur (Anna Karen and Michael Robbins).

Plots regularly centred on Stan and Jack’s lecherous pursuit of female companionship, their ongoing battle with “Blakey” as they try to gain extra money or unauthorized perks, and Olive and Arthur’s marital bickering at the meal table. **On The Buses** may not have been classic comedy with wit and style but it proved extremely popular with the viewers from the start.

In early 1971 (after four seasons and some three dozen episodes), Hammer Films decided to capitalize on the programme’s success by transferring the characters to the big screen. **On The Buses** (the movie) was released that August

with all the original TV cast, the only major concession to the change being that the buses were no longer green (as in the London Weekend version) but repainted red, in keeping with the tourist’s idea of how they should look.

The motion picture became one of the year’s top money-spinners and not only led to two sequels (**Mutiny On The Buses** and **Holiday On The Buses**) but inspired a major film industry trend to launch big-screen versions of TV favourites. As a result, cinema translations of **Steptoe And Son**, **Father Dear Father**, **Bless This House**, **Up Pompeii**, **Please Sir** and many others kept British film studios gainfully active throughout most of the 1970s.

Meanwhile, **On The Buses** continued back on the small screen with actors Grant and Lewis (and **Doctor In The House** players George Layton and Jonathan Lynn) taking over the scriptwriting duties towards the end of the fifth season. Wolfe and Chesney returned to wrap up the show’s run with a seventh series in early 1973, by which time two of the principals had decided they had been with the programme long enough.

Michael Robbins bowed out before filming began, with his absence explained in a hastily arranged divorce for Olive and Arthur in the first episode. By edition #67, Reg Varney left to conquer new fields and his character Stan was written out to get a factory job “up north”. To ensure the storylines maintained a bus company link with the Butler household of Olive and her Mum, it was decided to have Inspector Blake move in with them as a boarder.

And that’s how the production ceased at the end of the thirteen-episode season, although Stephen Lewis subsequently went on to a spinoff series called **Don’t Drink The Water** which followed Inspector Blake to his retirement in Spain, and Anna Karen reprised her Olive character in the revival run of **The Rag Trade** several years later.



# Episode Guide

## On The Buses

unless noted, all scripts by Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney

Series 1 (black and white): February 28 to April 4 1969 (6x25m)

1. *The New Conductor*

Stan isn't looking forward to having to work with a new conductor

2. *Olive Takes A Trip*

Olive applies for a job of conductress at the bus depot but her first journey is a disaster

3. *Bus Driver's Stomach*

Stan is convinced he has fallen victim to a work-related illness but is unwilling to visit the doctor

4. *The New Inspector*

Stan is the only applicant for an assistant inspector's job

5. *The Canteen*

As head of the depot's canteen committee, Stan hires an Indian cook but Mum and Olive end up taking over

6. *The Darts Match*

Stan and Jack are challenged to a game of darts by a couple of clippies

Series 2 (black and white): May 31 to July 5 1969 (6x25m)

1. *Family Flu*

With the womenfolk unwell, Stan and Arthur are forced to do the cooking and the housework

2. *The Used Combination*

Arthur buys a 1920s vintage motor cycle

3. *Self Defence*

When Stan is roughed up by hooligans, Blakey organizes self defence classes at the bus depot

4. *Aunt Maud*

Aunt Maud visits and the Butler household is thrown into turmoil by her great dane

5. *The Early Shift*

Stan inadvertently causes a strike and has to take a stand when Blakey threatens to assume driving duties

6. *Bon Voyage*

Stan has to use the holiday money to pay for a replacement uniform

Series 3: January 2 to April 3 1970 (13x25m)

1. *First Aid*

Stan and Jack have to help a passenger who is about to give birth

2. *The Cistern*

Having Stan install the Butler household's new toilet proves to be a bad idea

3. *The Inspector's Niece*

Stan and Jack both fancy the new clippie, unaware Blakey is her uncle

4. *Brew It Yourself*

Stan's homemade beer is a powerful brew and leads to Blakey giving him a breath test

5. *Busmen's Perks*

When Arthur and Olive's bedroom needs brightening up, Stan offers to get some paint from the bus company

6. *The Snake*

A snake belonging to an Indian waitress at the depot canteen causes all sorts of trouble for Stan

7. *Mum's Last Fling*

Mum uses the housekeeping money to try and look young and beautiful for her new flame.

8. *Radio Control*

Stan and Jack aren't keen on the 2-way radio Blakey has installed in their bus and a crossed line causes havoc

9. *Foggy Night*

Stan takes the family when he and Jack are given a country run but they become stranded overnight in a thick fog

10. *The New Uniforms*

Stan and Jack aren't in favour of their new outfits until two Swedish blondes change their minds

11. *Going Steady*

Stan has fallen for the inspector's niece but inviting the two of them home for tea isn't a good idea

12. *The Squeeze*

To raise urgently needed money, Arthur tries to sell his decrepit motor bike to Blakey

13. *On The Make*

When a clippie needs somewhere to stay, Stan unwisely suggests the Butler household's spare room

Series 4: Nov 27 to Dec 25 1970 and Jan 10 to Feb 21 1971 (13x25m)

1. *Nowhere To Go*

With Arthur and the womenfolk away, Stan and Jack plan a passionate weekend with a couple of clippies

2. *The Canteen Girl*

Stan and Jack are delighted when Blakey fall for a canteen girl and plans to leave the depot until they encounter his replacement

3. *Dangerous Driving*

Stan is concerned when he sees a newspaper article that points out conductors are likely to live longer than drivers

4. *The Other Woman*

The Butler family isn't pleased when Arthur spends all of his time at a bus company social with an attractive woman

5. *Christmas Duty*

The Butlers' Christmas dinner is disrupted when illness at the bus depot forces Stan and Jack to fill in at the last moment

6. *The L Bus*

When Stan is rostered on the training bus he sees it as a great time to meet new clippies and to deliver Arthur's new bed

7. *The Kid's Outing*

With Stan, Jack and the Butler household in charge of a children's bus trip, disaster is sure to follow

8. *The Anniversary*

Olive's tenth wedding anniversary dinner is thrown into disarray by the intervention of a pet poodle from Aunt Maud

9. *The Cover Up*

Stan decides to scrounge bus company material to repair the Butler parlour chairs

10. *Safety First*

Blakey's office falls victim when Stan attempts to follow the new safety regulations

11. *The Lodger*

Mum decides to rent out the spare room to raise money but Stan isn't pleased when furniture is borrowed from his room

12. *The Injury*

When Stan has a nasty fall at home, Jack suggests making it appear it happened at work to get compensation

13. *Not Tonight*

Stan falls for canteen girl Stella until her motives for the relationship become clearer

Series 5: Sep 19 to Dec 26 1971 (15x25m)

1. *The Nursery*

Olive gets a job looking after clippie's babies but things soon become a shambles

2. *Stan's Room*

Stan can't get any privacy to entertain ladyfriends so he decides to move out, but Blakey's place is no improvement

3. *The Best Man*

When the inspector's niece is to be married, Stan has to organise the bachelor party for his busman colleague

4. *The Inspector's Pets*

Stan agrees to mind Blakey's dog and goldfish to ensure he goes away to Brighton for the weekend

5. *The Epidemic*

Stan and Jack foresee lots of overtime money during the flu season but things don't go according to plan

6. *The Busmen's Ball*

It is proposed a stripper be engaged for the bus depot's ball to take the men's minds off drinking

7. *Canteen Trouble*

The inspector isn't pleased when Stan and Jack appear to be getting preferential treatment in the canteen

8. *The New Nurse*

A bus company nurse boards with the Butlers and has a marked effect on Olive and Arthur

9. *Lost Property*

Stan and Jack are reprimanded for helping themselves to some fish and chips left on their bus but it is only a prelude to a more serious incident involving a misplaced item

10. *Stan's Uniform*

When Stan ruins his uniform at home, Blakey tells him it will cost 24 pounds for a replacement

11. *The Strain*

Whilst lifting a plump clippie, Stan injures his back and is forced to wear a corset

12. *The New Telly*

Stan buys a colour TV and tries to unload his old one on Inspector Blake

13. *Vacancy For Inspector* (by Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis)

Jack takes on an inspector's job and the position soon goes to his head

14. *A Thin Time* (by Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis)

With the electricity bill to pay, Stan desperately needs some overtime money

15. *Boxing Day Social*

The arrival of Arthur's mother and sister leads to Olive going on a vodka binge at the busmen's social

Series 6: Feb 20 to Apr 2 1972 (7x25m)

1. *No Smoke Without Fire* (by Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis)

Jack wagers Stan he can't give up smoking, but his attempts at indulging in an unnoticed puff lead to a fire

2. *Love Is What You Make It* (by George Layton and Jonathan Lynn)

Olive and Arthur go to a marriage guidance counsellor

3. *Private Hire* (by Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis)

To make some money on the side, Stan and Jack agree to use their bus to help a clippie move house

4. *Stan's Worst Day* (by Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis)

Stan recalls the black days when Arthur moved in as a lodger and Blakey was made an inspector

5. *Union Trouble* (by Bob Grant and Stephen Lewis)

Stan goes on a one-man strike to demand the reinstatement of a canteen woman

6. *Bye, Bye, Blakey* (by George Layton and Jonathan Lynn)

When Blakey applies for work with a rival company, Stan and Jack misunderstand a conversation they overhear at the doctor's surgery

7. *The Prize* (by George Layton and Jonathan Lynn)

Mum has won a holiday for two on the Costa Brava, but who will accompany her?

Series 7: Feb 25 to May 20 1973 (13x25m)

(Michael Robbins left the series at this point)

1. *Olive's Divorce*

When Arthur runs off with another woman, Stan's home life is forced to suffer

2. *The Perfect Clippie*

With Stan now the sole moneysaver for the household he insists Olive either get a new husband or a job

3. *The Ticket Machine*

To raise cash, Mum and Olive get involved in a dubious mail order scheme which threatens to land them in court

4. *The Football Match*

The depot's football team is so short of players Blakey has to rope in Stan, Jack and even Olive to make up the numbers

5. *The Recruitment Poster*

Jack and Olive try to improve the way Stan looks to help him win a 100 pound prize for appearing on a company poster

6. *On The Omnibuses*

An historical exhibition at the depot causes Stan to have dream about driving a horse-drawn bus before the First World War

7. *Goodbye Stan*

Stan leaves the depot and the family to get a higher paid job in a factory up north

(Reg Varney left the series at this point)

8. *Hot Water*

Jack convinces Blakey to let him fix the Butler's hot water unit which has broken down

9. *The Visit*

Mum and Olive are soon regretting they invited Inspector Blake's mother to come to stay

10. *What The Stars Foretell*

Though Olive has been made redundant by the bus company, she is sure things will brighten up when a second marriage is predicted

11. *The Allowance*

A militant clippie wants the girls reimbursed every time they have to pay to go to the loo

12. *Friends In High Places*

When Mum gets a job as bus depot cook, she finds she knows the area manager

13. *Gardening Time*

Blakey's prize-winning flowers are pilfered from his company window box so he lets loose his horticultural pursuits in the Butler garden



## Don't Drink The Water

starring Stephen Lewis as ex-Inspector Cyril Blake  
Pat Coombs as his spinster sister Dorothy  
and Derek Griffiths as Carlos the porter

scripts by Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney (unless noted)

Series 1: Jul 27 to Sep 7 1974 (7x25m)

1. *Home From Home?*

Inspector Blake spends his life savings on a flat in Spain where he can spend his retirement with his sister Dorothy

2. *The Food* (by Jon Watkins)

Settling in to a life of retirement on foreign soil has problems for the Blakes

3. *Dry Run* (by Jon Watkins)

Blakey suffers a breakdown of the lorry delivering fresh water

4. *The Lift*

A shopping expedition is interrupted when Cyril and Dorothy become trapped between floors

5. *Careful What You Eat*

The Blakes are forced to make do when the electricity is cut off

6. *The Fuse*

Blakey's attempt to rewire the apartment meet with official resistance

7. *The Smell*

Cyril and Dorothy are being driven mad by a foul odour

Series 2: Nov 1 to Dec 6 1975 (6x25m)

1. *What? No Telly?*

details unknown

2. *The Romance*

details unknown

3. *A Helping Hand*

Cyril and Dorothy offer to help a girl who has been stranded following the collapse of a travel agency

4. *The Neighbours*

The Blakes visit the Germans next door to watch a soccer match between England and Germany

5. *Fred*

Dorothy decides an economy drive is needed to curb her brother's extravagances

6. *Keeping Fit*

Cyril's exercising rivalry with the German leads to a slipped disc

## Movies

*On The Buses*

(Hammer/MGM/EMI, 1971. 88 minutes)

The employment of women drivers causes trouble at the bus depot

*Mutiny On The Buses*

(Hammer/Anglo/EMI, 1972. 88 minutes)

When Arthur is sacked he tries to get a job as a driver at the depot and Stan is put in charge of a special tour bus at a safari park

*Holiday On The Buses*

(Hammer/Anglo/EMI, 1973. 85 minutes)

with guests Wilfrid Brambell and Henry McGee

Stan, Jack and Blakey are sacked from the bus depot and get jobs at a holiday camp

## Magazine

*On The Buses* (TV Times Extra colour souvenir)

Independent Television Publications, 1971. 56 pages

## Video

*On The Buses* (Video Collection Vc 6156, Comedy Club LC 0005)

contains *The Snake/Mum's Last Fling/Foggy Night*

**In the next issue of**

**LAUGH**

**A special career tribute to  
Peter Cook**

# THE MAVIS BRAMSTON SHOW

by Peter Blight

ON the night of November 11 1964, Australian television — then just a naive eight-year-old — grew up fast. That was the night all of Sydney were glued to their screens for the premiere of ATN's outrageous **Mavis Bramston Show**.

Inspired by Britain's highly successful satirical series of the early '60s **That Was The Week That Was**, Mavis was also a descendent of Digby Wolfe's Australian productions **Revue 61** and **Revue 62**. When Wolfe departed for America (where he helped create Laugh-In), ATN filled the void with a variety show called **Studio A** which featured (among others) writer and performer Jon Finlayson.

Finlayson was eventually promoted to executive status at the station and with co-producer James Fishburn was allocated a budget of a thousand pounds to come up with a replacement programme. Drawing on his experience in intimate revue (then popular at Sydney's Phillip Street Theatre) a lengthy period of writing, casting and preparation ensued.

Popular stage and revue performer Gordon Chater was an obvious choice for the venture, despite his initial lack of confidence in the expertise associated with Australian television at the time. When approached by Carol Raye (then working as an ATN7 executive along with Finlayson and Fishburn) Chater remembered her successful theatrical career in Britain in the late 1940s, and immediately suggested that she too appear in the show.

Chater's misgivings about the medium appeared to be realized when script delays continued to plague rehearsals, and in desperation he contacted Rupert A. Henderson, head of the station. Henderson had taken a personal interest in the programme and agreed with Chater's suggestion that respected radio and television producer Michael Plant should be brought in to produce the show.

Chater and Raye were joined by popular revue artists Barry Creyton and Noeline Brown for the pilot programme to be performed in the old Macquarie Auditorium (by then renamed the Playbox Theatre) in late September 1964. Seven's executives were ecstatic, and **Mavis** was given the go ahead for an initial series of six episodes. (Although the pilot was never broadcast, much of the material was used again in episode one).

Originally planned to go to Sydney audiences only, it was thought a lot of media coverage for the show could see it go national, so Finlayson and an ATN sales executive devised a publicity stunt to highlight to proceedings. The two decided to exploit the notorious Australian show business practice of rolling out the red carpet when lesser-known or "has been" overseas performers travelled 'down under', and prepared a phony biographical dossier about an entirely fictitious English artiste named Mavis Bramston. (There is conjecture as to the actual origins of the name — the most popular theory being that it was theatre slang to indicate the presence of a particularly unresponsive audience ... "Mavis Bramston's out front".)



The spurious Mavis (played originally by Noeline Brown with her blonde hair disguised by a bushy brunette wig) flew into Sydney airport to be greeted by supposedly adoring fellow cast members egging on the large press contingent, who were unaware they were being duped. Footage of the arrival together with a mock interview with the lady (conducted by Finlayson) and an incompetent rendition of *I Could Have Danced All Night* were included in the first telecast.

Prior to its debut, speculation about the show was rife within the industry. One unfounded suggestion was that the show was simply a reaction to Dave Allen's success on another network, another that its sophistication would put it above the understanding of the average viewer. The truth was that Bramston had no real predecessor on Australian television, and this was obvious right from its first airing in Sydney at the end of 1964.

The first three minutes of episode one introduced several key elements which became synonymous with the name **Mavis Bramston**: the theme *Welcome, Welcome, Welcome*; the show's first team consisting of Gordon Chater, Carol Raye and Barry Creyton; and the *Oz Magazine* segment, incorporating the song *Togetherness*, into which satirical spoken verses depicting the week's news events were inserted.

The material itself had an edge, verging on the sick, for which the show became justly notorious. In the first episode, guest June Salter's performance of *I Lost Him In The Autumn Leaves At Leura*, a lament for a (literally) lost love, in many ways stole the show. Several instances of the **Bramston** bravado exist in this first show, one sketch closing with Chater mouthing the expletive "fucking", a word still not commonly heard on television today in a comedy context.

By far its funniest and most enduring item was Chater's energetic rendition of the ludicrous *Mad About A Custard Pie*, a tour de force of self-inflicted slapstick (which he had previously performed in revue) in which he bombards himself with an array of foodstuffs. Chater performed the song a further two times on **Mavis**, despite receiving initial public condemnation for "debasing his talent"!

Following the success of the six Sydney-only editions in 1964, Ampol stepped in as national sponsor and the way was clear for Australia-wide coverage from the start of 1965. Wisely avoiding being forever type-cast as Mavis Bramston, Noeline Brown left the show at this point, replaced in the role by Maggie Dence.

Thirty years on it is difficult to believe that the word "bum", as uttered on-air in 1965 by Gordon Chater, could make national headlines. In traditionally conservative Melbourne, episodes were frequently edited (or, more accurately, censored), phrases like *'ken oath* usually being bleeped or excised.

More uproar followed the airing of possibly **Bramston's** most controversial sketch, *The Flower Arrangement*, by John

Michael Howson. It depicted a censor (Chater) trained to find filth in everything arriving home to discover his wife (Raye) reading a copy of Constance Spry's standard text-book on flower arranging. Determined to prove that the book is pornographic, he reads verbatim a "disgusting" section relating to the placement of stalks! The sketch was a clever comment on the idiocy of censorship containing, in reality, nothing of an offensive nature, and creating another huge public stir.

Even without the notoriety and high ratings **Mavis Bramston** attracted, the show would still have been successful from a creative standpoint alone. This was due to the determination of station executives — notably Rupert Henderson and James Oswin — to remain totally uninvolved in the show's creative processes, a rare situation in commercial television. Unhindered and unpressured from above, **Bramston's** producers and writers were free to scale new heights — or, in the view of some, to plumb new depths.

According to Jon Finlayson, without the input of ATN general sales manager Sid Piddington the show would never have got off the ground. Clearly, though, **Bramston's** exceptionally talented script editor, writer and executive producer Michael Plant played the most valuable creative role. It was largely Plant's own judgment and taste which set the tone of the show, always teetering on the edge of bad taste without ever lapsing into it. Highly gifted yet privately troubled, his untimely death (thought to be suicide) at the age of 34 on July 11 1965 came a day before **Bramston** was named the most watched show on Sydney television.



Further upsets in 1965 included Carol Raye's departure (she was to return and leave two more times during the show's run), and Finlayson's resignation as a result of ATN7's alleged broken promise to rest the show after thirteen editions. On the positive side, English actress Miriam Karlin (best known as Paddy in **The Rag Trade**) became a regular guest. She and Chater dove-tailed brilliantly, notably in the *two old people on a park bench* series of sketches which continued until mid-1966 (by which time Ronnie Stevens and Neva Carr Glynn had taken over the characters).

Other points of interest were Chater's monologues as the messy meat-pie-eating Aussie character in singlet, hat and Bombay shorts, and the introduction, in various social settings, of the permanently-pissed Marcel Sludge and his lovely wife Nola (Chater and Raye respectively). During 1965 June Salter, James Kenney and Brigid Lenihan became regulars, with Judi Farr, Arlene Dorgan and Hazel Phillips all appearing as guests.

Chater's decision to leave the show — amid a flurry of custard pies — after the 1965 series not only signalled the end of the truly classic period of **Bramston** but also necessitated the search for a replacement. The producers, seemingly unaware they were making a total mockery of the original premise of **Mavis Bramston**, hired a British actor, Ronnie Stevens, to fill the void. Stevens, wisely making no attempt to be Gordon Chater, in fact proved more than competent as the show's main star, and also more than comfortable in drag, his most successful characterisation arguably being that of the Queen Mother.

Almost symbolically, Maggie Dence left the show at the end of 1965, taking the persona of Mavis Bramston with her. The coast was now clear for erstwhile Mavis Noeline Brown to rejoin the cast, this time in a variety of roles. Writer Ron Frazer emerged as an on-screen regular along with Arlene Dorgan, June Thody and Neva Carr Glynn, joining mainstay Barry Creyton.

From a purely technical standpoint, the look of the show improved significantly as the bite and relevance of its material proportionally diminished. Even so, the introduction of new characters retained audience interest, and it was here that Ron Frazer came to the fore with a gallery of characterisations.

Incredibly, the travesty of bringing out British talent for an Australian show — the same cultural cringe **Bramston** had originally lampooned — again occurred, apparently unnoticed, in mid-1966 when John Bluthal replaced Ronnie Stevens as front-man. (In turn, the even less well-known Peter Reeves replaced Bluthal in 1967.) In reality it was Ron Frazer who was the real star of the show, his Australian background apparently preventing him from receiving top-billing until mid-1967. He remained with **Bramston** until the end, appearing in more episodes than any other performer.

1968 was undoubtedly **Bramston**'s most troubled year, with a virtual revolving door of cast members and timeslots. Some spurious additions — Bruce Barry and Bryan Davies, talented people in their respective ways, totally out of place in revue, were two — contributed to the show's demise. The shady lady's days were numbered, and she finally spluttered to a halt in September, a shadow of her former satirical self.

In Sydney, **Mavis Bramston** was repackaged as **Anything Goes**, with Reg Livermore (a **Bramston** refugee) and Nancye Hayes (named as the new star of **Bramston** just prior to its axing). Screened only in some states, **Anything Goes** lasted

only until the end of 1968. Some time later the network's desire for a **Bramston** lookalike took form in 1970 as **A Hard Day's Week** with Barry Creyton, June Salter and a rather too large supporting cast.

In subsequent years, two **Mavis Bramston** revival specials were aired, in 1971 and 1973. To date, the last **Mavis** reunion occurred during the 1989 Logie Awards when Gordon Chater, Carol Raye and Barry Creyton — in a short segment fraught with technical problems — performed some less than impressive new material by former **Bramston** writer Ray Biehler.

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## Episode guide

### The Mavis Bramston Show

Screened by the Seven Network

#### Series #1:

November 11 to December 16 1964 (6 episodes)  
starring Gordon Chater, Carol Raye, Barry Creyton, Noeline Brown and June Salter (as a guest in three editions)

#### Series #2:

February 17 to December 22 1965 (45 episodes)  
starring Gordon Chater, Carol Raye (until Aug 11), Barry Creyton, June Salter (with a break mid-year), Miriam Karlin (from Aug 18), Maggie Dence, James Kenney, Brigid Lenihan and Lucky Starr

#### Series #3:

February 9 to December 14 1966 (45 episodes)  
starring Ronnie Stevens (until Jul 20), John Bluthal (from Jul 27), Barry Creyton, June Salter, Ron Frazer, Noeline Brown, Arlene Dorgan, June Thody and Neva Carr Glynn

#### Series #4:

February 15 to December 20 1967 (45 episodes)  
starring Peter Reeves (until Jun 21), Carol Raye (until Sep 6), Dawn Lake (from Sep 13), Ron Frazer, Johnny Lockwood, Andonia Katsaros and Barbara Angell

#### Series #5:

January 31 to October 2 1968 (36 episodes)  
starring Ron Frazer, Barbara Angell, Johnny Lockwood, Andonia Katsaros, Bryan Davies, Bruce Barry, Penny Ramsay, Barbara Wyndon and Ann Salisbury

#### Special #1:

April 21 1971  
starring Gordon Chater, Ron Frazer, Noeline Brown, Johnny Lockwood and Neva Carr Glynn

#### Special #2 (*Gough Save Us, Here's Mavis*):

July 11 1973  
starring Ron Frazer, June Salter, Lois Ramsay, Andrew Harwood and Sue Walker

# What's New

## COMPACT DISCS

### The Ultimate Monty Python Rip Off

Virgin CD CDV 2748

Introduction/Finland/Travel Agent/I Like Chinese/French Taunter/Australian Table Wines/Spanish Inquisition/Galaxy Song/Every Sperm Is Sacred/Grim Reaper/Sit On My Face/Argument/Mary Queen Of Scots/Four Yorkshiremen/Lumberjack Song/Albatross/Nudge Nudge/Parrot/Bruces - Philosopher Song/Fish Licence/Eric The Half A Bee/Spam Song/Big Nose/Stoning/Link 1/Welease Wodger/Link 2/Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life/Spanish Inquisition (ending)

### The Instant Monty Python CD Collection

Virgin 6CD Boxed Set

contains 8 Python LPs: Another Monty Python Record, Monty Python's Previous Record, Monty Python's Matching Tie And Handkerchief, Monty Python Live At Drury Lane, Monty Python And The Holy Grail, Monty Python's Contractual Obligation Album, Life Of Brian, Meaning Of Life

\*\*\* The Pythons' 25th anniversary also saw a mass of other memorabilia including calendars, coffee mugs, diaries and a songbook.

### Austen Tayshus - Alive And Shticking

Laughing Stock CD LAFCD 18

This Is Not Rugby + What Are You Mate?/Beached In Bali + I Love Your Work/Queensland Cop/Let's Get Blind + Fark/Earthquakes 'n' Shazza/Is There A Jew In The House?/Jack Thompson For The Blues/German Cab Driver + Chutzpah/The Pope In Australia/Turn Back The Kurbs/Wogga Wogga/Where Did You Park The Car?/Christianity Shocks/Jesus Christ For Amex/The Inarticulators/Hooked On Smack/How Do You Feel?/Bankrupt, Bondy, Barnsy/Random Dope Test + Blame It On The Budgie/Mupersan/Eat While You Work + Australian Flag/John Laws + Maurie Fields/Australiana (take one)/Australiana (take two)

### Amnesty International - Best Of The Balls

Laughing Stock 2CD LAF CD 15

features highlights from five Amnesty concerts ...

# *A Poke In The Eye (With A Sharp Stick) (1976):*

The Last Supper (Cleese/Lynn)/Telegram (Bennett)/Protest Song (Innes)/Pet Shop (Python)/Miner (Cook)

# *The Secret Policeman's Ball (1979):*

Four Yorkshiremen (Cleese/Palin/Atkinson/Jones)/Interesting Facts (Cook/Cleese)/Balloon (Bron/Cook)/How Do You Do It (Palin/Jones)/ Two Little Boys In Blue (Connolly)

# *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball (1981):*

Royal Australian Postrate Foundation (Humphries)/Road Safety (Atkinson)/Australian Motor Insurance Claims (Carrott)/Had It Up To Here (Wood)/International Weightlifting (Rhys-Jones etc)/What's On In Stoke Newington (Sayle)

# *The Secret Policeman's Third Ball (1987):*

Delbert Wilkins (Henry)/Head To Head (Smith/Jones)/Actors (French/Saunders)

# *The Secret Policeman's Biggest Ball (1989):*

Stand Up (Elton)/Royal Poll Tax (Spitting Image)/Tarzan (Cook/Moore)/William Tell Trick (Coltrane/Edmondson)/Trevor Nettleford (Henry)/Headmaster And Schoolboy Sketch (Fry/Laurie)/Death Of The Parrott (Cleese/Palin)

### Col Elliott - My Favourite Bits

BMG Ariola CD 74321239692

Back Seat Of The FJ/Pull Over Dickhead/Nashville/Are You Regular/Nervous Flyer/Fur Coat/Distinguishing Marks/Tony The Fisherman/Boundry Riders/Non Smoker/Vibrator/The Hump/Cooka/No Bloody Ears/Hey You Bloody Mug/Mario/Hari Kari

### Col Elliott Serves It Up

BMG Ariola CD 74321239682

Mums/Toilets/We All Do It/Supermarkets/Pine Fresh/Kids/Coppers/Virgin Mary/Colonel/Grandad/Julie/Hello Dear Murphy/Parachutist/14 Inch Penis/Chooka Returns/The Missus/English - Irish Wrestling/Padded Cell/Bank Robbers/ESP/Appendectomy/How Much Are Your Nuts

## BOOKS

### Rita Rudner's Guide To Men

by Rita Rudner (Viking/Hodder & Stoughton)

### Nobody's Fool — The Lives Of Danny Kaye

by Martin Gottfried (Simon And Shuster)

### The Official Dick Van Dyke Show Book

by Vince Waldron

### Dave's World — The Unofficial Guide To The Late Show With David Letterman

by Michael Cader

### The Illustrated Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy

by Douglas Adams

### Wuthering Heights According To Spike Milligan

by Spike Milligan

### The Even More Complete Book Of Australian Verse

by John Clarke (Allen & Unwin)

## VIDEOS

### Derek And Clive Get The Horn

Polygram 086 466 3

reissue of the 1979 Peter Cook and Dudley Moore filming session of the Derek And Clive Ad Nauseum LP

### The Comic Strip Presents

Polygram Video

six volumes of episodes from the 1980s (some being reissues)

086 418 3 Bad News/More Bad News

086 420 3 Five Go Mad In Dorset/Five Go Mad On Mescaline

086 480 3 A Fistful Of Travellers Cheques/Gino

086 482 3 The Bullshitters/The Yob

086 484 3 Mr. Jolly/Dirty Movie

087 594 3 Susie/Consuela

### Punt And Dennis — The Milky Milky Tour Live

Polygram Video 086 412 3

### The Jack Benny Program

M.C.A./Universal Home Video (NTSC format)

five volumes of classic episodes from the 1960s ...

81990-3 Johnny Carson Guests/Jack Takes Boat To Hawaii

81993-3 The Peter Lorre - Joanie Sommers Show/The Smothers Brothers Show

81994-3 The Income Tax Show/Jack Adopts A Son

81991-3 Jack On Trial For Murder/Jack Plays Tarzan

81992-3 Jack Is Kidnapped/The Lucille Ball Show

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**BIG LAUGH  
HIT!**

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**REG VARNEY**  
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as the Inspector

Written and Produced by RONALD WOLFE and RONALD OESHEY Directed by HARRY BOOTH  
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laugh  
after  
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**ANNA KAREN** (Guest Star) · **WILFRID BRAMBELL**  
**KATE WILLIAMS** (Guest Star) · **STEPHEN LEWIS** as The Inspector

BBF

COLOR

