

Editor's Chin-wag

Hello all and I hope this issue of *The Insider* finds you well. I ask your indulgence in this installment as I dedicate it to the recent loss of one of British comedies' true greats: John Inman (Mr. Humphries of *Are You Being Served?*). For me, and I am assuming for many, this one hits close to home and the heart.

In my humble opinion, never has so much Britcom talent, and enjoyment, ever been embodied in one single actor. That was John. The venerable John Inman in his role as Mr. Humphries, along with others, made *AYBS* the success that it was, and still is.

For those who missed it, John passed away in March after a long bout with hepatitis. Until very near the end, he was a constant presence during the panto season in UK, among other appearances. A true professional and gentleman in every sense of the word, he will be missed. This issue of *The Insider* is dedicated to his memory and the joy he brought so many people.

N. Scott Jones, Editor

John Inman:

The Britcom World Mourns the Loss of a True Great

John Inman, who passed way in a London hospital this past March at age 71, belonged to an era of comedy which shunned satire for broad slapstick and sexual innuendo. But any criticism of Mr. Humphries, the camp, sharp-tongued sales assistant in *Are You Being Served?* was overwhelmed by public popularity.

Inman won *BBC TV* personality of the year in 1976 and was voted funniest man on television by *TV Times* readers. The show attracted up to 22 million viewers and his shrill "I'm free!" hardly faded from the public's imagination.

Frederick John Inman was born on 28 June, 1935, in Preston, Lancashire. At the age of 13 he appeared at the South Pier in Blackpool and he went on to make hundreds of stage and screen appearances.

Inman's West End debut was in the musical *Ann Veronica* at the Cambridge Theatre, followed by a stint as Lord Fancourt Babberley in *Charley's Aunt* at the Adelphi Theatre. But he also performed in more than 40 pantomimes and was one of the country's best-loved pantomime dames.

Are You Being Served? began life as part of the *BBC's Comedy Playhouse* strand. But disruption to the 1972 Munich Olympics meant it was moved to fill gaps in the prime time schedule.



John Inman as Mr. Humphries

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He stayed for its entire 13-year run, alongside Wendy Richard, who went on to play Pauline Fowler in *EastEnders*, as well as Molly Sugden, Frank Thornton and Trevor Bannister.

Seven years after the final episode, five of the characters returned for a sequel - *Grace and Favour* - in which they tried to run an old house as a hotel.

Inman also appeared in *ITV's Odd Man Out* as Neville Sutcliffe, the owner of a Blackpool fish and chip shop who inherited his father's factory, but the show only ran for seven episodes in 1977.

He next starred alongside Rula Lenska as a male secretary in *Take a Letter*, Mr Jones for six episodes in 1981.

More recently, he returned to the *BBC* for *Revolver*, a 2004 sketch show in which he played an antiques-shop owner who got carried away when explaining the history of objects for sale.

At the end of that year Inman, who suffered from hepatitis type A, cancelled the opening of a London pantomime because of the disease.

In December 2005 he and his partner of 35 years, Ron Lynch, took part in a civil partnership ceremony at London's Westminster Register Office. **BBC**



Editor.: *John, you will be missed. When you were called home, I have every confidence you responded, "I'm free!"*

The Insider welcomes all correspondence, story ideas and requests for contributed articles. Send letters via e-mail to Editor N. Scott Jones at scott@bbcinsider.net or by snail mail to: The Insider, c/o Kate Livo, BBC Worldwide Americas, Sixth Floor 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



PBS and BBC British Comedies

I had the privilege recently to spend some time, on-air at one of our nation's leading *PBS* stations doing what I love, talking about British comedies. It has been a while since I have been "in-studio" during those all important pledge drives that make Britcoms possible on *PBS*.

For me, it was an important reminder of how important support of our local *PBS* stations really is in bringing us the comedies we all love. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I have been guilty of rolling my eyes when I tuned in to watch my favorite comedy, only to find a program director pitching for dollars.

But it is so much more. This is a dedicated group of people, who work in the non-profit sector, with limited budgets – all so that we can receive quality programming like *BBC's* British comedy line-up. For every 1,000 sets of rolling eyes, there is one volunteer, who trudged to the station to answer phones, eat donated food and stay until the wee hours to ensure funding is available for quality programming on *PBS* stations across the country.

I had a special night, in that I got to talk to this station's viewers about *The Insider*, co-host the pledge breaks during airing of the final two episodes of the *Vicar of Dibley* and take questions from those who called in to pledge their support. Lofty? Glamorous? Not even. Moving. Moving to watch a dedicated band of volunteers working hard to preserve what we treasure – the frequent airing of British comedies on America's *PBS* airwaves.

To all who volunteer their time, and pledge their monetary support for *PBS*, we salute you.

N. Scott Jones. Editor
The Insider



ViewerPoints: From and For Viewers Like YOU

Absolutely Fabulous: Please Pass the 'Bolli Stoli'



Absolutely Fabulous grew from a French & Saunders sketch called *Modern Mother and Daughter*, which starred Jennifer Saunders as the mother and Dawn French as the daughter. Contrary to persistent popular belief, the show has no connection, other than the character's name, to the earlier film *Eddie Monsoon: A Life?*, a comedy play written by Saunders' husband Adrian Edmondson in 1984 for the TV series *The Comic Strip Presents....* The name Eddie Monsoon is derived from Edmondson's name and is a nickname.

Edina Monsoon and Patsy Stone are two immature, prosperous, but preposterous substance-abusing fashion and fad-obsessed Londoners who value fame and style over substance (unless they are controlled substances). Saffron, Edina's daughter, provides the persistently dour voice of Monsoon and Stone's super-ego. Edina and Saffy live in a house in Holland Park, with Patsy spending most of her time there as well.

The program circles around Eddy's constant struggle to achieve fame and success amidst the disapproval of her daughter and the constant presence of her increasingly senile mother. Throughout, Patsy is at her side encouraging the behaviors that are constantly causing her conflict. Much of the comedy of the show is physical, usually derived from Edina and Patsy's drunken and/or stoned states, with their favorite drinks

being "Bolli Stoli" (a cocktail of Bollinger champagne and Stolichnaya vodka) and later "Veuve & Bourb" (a mix of Veuve Clicquot champagne and bourbon). The mutual loathing between Saffy and Patsy as each tries to guide Edina's behavior also makes for many comic situations. A recurring gag found new ways for Edina to fall headfirst out of cars, windows, or down her kitchen stairs at least once every series.

The Characters

Eddy

Edwina Margaret Rose Monsoon was born on 6 August 1951 in London. She later changed her name to Edina and is nearly always called Eddy; only her mother, and once Justin, calls her Edwina. She owns a public relations firm whose only steady client is 1960s pop singer Lulu, who is barely hanging on by a thread. In later years, this was switched to model Twiggy and former Spice Girl Emma Bunton, who also went to school with Saffy. Though failing in her business, Edina is desperate to give off the aura of success, wealth and fabulousness, even as her outrageously mismatched and poorly-fitted wardrobe belies this. In an early episode, Edina says that she has always voted Labor, but she notes her disdain for New Labor in the fourth series.

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John Inman: Moments in Pictures



ViewerPoints In The Post



In the "As Time Goes By" reunion special Rocky was going line dancing but there was no mention of his wife, the lovely Madge. I have seen the program at least three times so far and have never heard of a mention of Madge. What happened to her? Will research and let you know. ED

Jim K.
Somewhere in America

BritQuotient Trivia Answers

In a recurring plot line in 'Allo 'Allo, what are the titles of the two famous paintings everyone wants to sell after the war?

ANSWER: The "Fallen Madonna With the Big Boobies" by Van Clomp and "Cracked Vase With the Big Daisies" by Van Gogh

What is the typical greeting one can hear from Officer Crabtree (who struggles to speak French) upon his entering Rene's café?

ANSWER: "Good Moaning"

What is the typical greeting one can hear from Michelle of the Resistance when she gives briefing to Rene and his café staff?

ANSWER: "Leesen very carefully, I shall say zees only wonce."

Whenever Italian Captain Bertorelli sticks his foot in his mouth, or bungles something, he can be heard to say this?

ANSWER: "What-a mistake-a to make-a."

Lieutenant Gruber is quite proud of his mode of transportation – what does he call it?

ANSWER: "My little tank."

Submit your questions and answers to scott@bbcinsider.com and read them here in the next issue of *The Insider*.

Series Overview

Only Fools and Horses

Not Just for Plonkers

“Rawdneey, you plonker,” says Dell Boy as he and younger brother Rodney are in perpetual pursuit of the next get-rich-scheme that invariably fails. Along the way, funny situations, touching moments and hope spring eternal irrespective of the challenges. The series earned honors as Britain’s best comedy a few years back – well worth the watch...

Derek "Del Boy" Trotter (played by David Jason), a fast-talking, archetypal cockney market trader, lives in a council flat in a high-rise tower block, Nelson Mandela House, in Peckham, South London - though it was actually filmed in Harlech Tower in Acton and later Bristol - with his much younger brother, Rodney (Nicholas Lyndhurst), and their elderly Grandad (Lennard Pearce). Their mother Joan died when Rodney was young, and their father Reg absconded shortly after his wife's death, effectively making Del Rodney's surrogate father and the family patriarch. Despite the difference in their ages, the brothers share a constant bond throughout.



“The Trotters: Dell Boy, Rodney and Grandad”

The situation focuses primarily on their futile attempts to get rich - "This time next year, we'll be millionaires" is a frequent saying of Del's - through buying and selling a variety of low-quality and illegal goods, such as Russian Army camcorders, luminous yellow paint and sex dolls filled with an explosive gas. They own an unregistered company, *Trotters Independent Traders*, trade primarily on the black market and generally neither pay taxes nor claim money from the state; as

Del says "the government don't give us nothing, so we don't give the government nothing". Most of their deals are too dodgy to succeed and usually end up backfiring, an important factor in generating sympathy for the characters. They also drive a grubby three-wheeled van, and are regulars at their local pub, *The Nag's Head*.

Initially, Del Boy, Rodney and Grandad were the show's only regulars, but gradually the likes of dopey road sweeper Trigger (Roger Lloyd Pack), snobbish used car salesman Boycie (John Challis) and his wife, Marlene (Sue Holderness), Nag's Head landlord Mike (Kenneth MacDonald), youthful spiv Mickey Pearce (Patrick Murray) and lorry driver Denzil (Paul Barber) were added to the cast, becoming popular in their own right and contributing to the humor and the plots, although the show always centered around the Trotters.

As the series progressed, the scope of the plots expanded, leading to the larger regular cast, with writer John Sullivan unafraid to mix comedy with drama. Many early episodes were largely self-contained, with few plot-lines mentioned again, but the show developed a story arc and an ongoing episodic dimension. The character of Grandad was killed off following the death of Lennard Pearce, and the brothers' long-lost Uncle Albert (Buster Merryfield) emerged to restore the three generations line-up. After years of fruitless searching, both Del and Rodney found long-term love, in the form of Raquel (Tessa Peake-Jones) and Cassandra (Gwyneth Strong) respectively; Del also had a son with Raquel, Damien (played by five actors, most recently Ben Smith). Rodney and Cassandra married, separated and then got back together again. Uncle Albert died. Cassandra miscarried, but then she and Rodney eventually had a baby. Rodney found out who his real father was. The Trotters finally became millionaires, before losing it again, and then gaining some of it back.

The humor comes from several sources. The interaction between Del and Rodney is key, with each an ideal comic foil for the other in both personality and appearance. Much is made of the traits of individual characters, such as Del's lack of cultural refinement, despite his pretensions, best seen in his misuse of French phrases or his claims to be a yuppie; Rodney's gormless nature, resulting in him being labeled a "plonker" or a "dipstick" by Del; the general daftness of Grandad and Trigger, and the rampant snobbery of Boycie.

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There are also several running gags, including Trigger's constant reference to Rodney as "Dave", Uncle Albert's "during the war..." anecdotes, Del's supposed long-time affair with Marlene and the dilapidated Reliant Regal van.

Mid-way through the filming of the fifth series, David Jason told John Sullivan at a dinner that he wanted to leave the show in order to further his career elsewhere. Sullivan thus wrote "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire", which was intended to be the final episode and would see Del accepting a friend's offer to set up business in Australia, leaving Rodney and Albert behind. Plans were made for a spin-off entitled Hot-Rod, following Rodney's attempts to survive on his own with help from Mickey Pearce, but leaving open the prospect of Del's return. Jason ultimately changed his mind, and the ending of the episode was changed to show Del rejecting the offer.

Sullivan had a tendency to write scripts that were too long, meaning pages of material had to be cut. Shortly before filming of the sixth series began, he requested that the show's time slot be extended and it was agreed to extend its running time to 50 minutes. This coincided with the show becoming one of the BBC's most popular programs, according to producer Gareth Gwenlan, and allowed for more pathos in the series and an expansion of the regular cast.

The seventh series, which was to be the last, was aired in early 1991. Sullivan and the major actors were all involved with other projects, and it was confirmed that there were no plans for a new series. The show continued in Christmas specials in 1991, 1992 and 1993, followed by a three year break. Sullivan wanted a "final" episode to tie up the show and see the Trotters finally become millionaires; this was later extended to three one hour episodes, all to be broadcast over Christmas 1996. All three were well received, and given the happy ending it was widely assumed that they were to be the last. After a five year break, however, the show returned again in 2001 with another Christmas special, followed by two more in 2002 and 2003. There are currently no further plans for Only Fools and Horses to return, though a fan fiction community continues to exist.



Quotable Quotes

Only Fools and Horses' Dell Boy Lingo Decoded

General Lingo

cop - to receive something, or a police officer.
cosmic - outstanding; exceptional
cushty - great; brilliant
dipstick - a fool
el-bow - also 'the Spanish fiddler', to end a relationship
enemy - wife, missus
Gandhi's revenge - a dodgy stomach
heave-ho - another way of saying 'el-bow'
hump - to be annoyed
humpty-dumpty - to perform sexual relations
jacksie - the posterior
lovely jubbly - brilliant, great, cushty
mutton - deaf, hard of hearing
noofter - a gay man
plonker - an idiot
pukka - great, perfect
ruby - Indian takeaway cuisine
schtum - to keep quiet, keep a secret
sort - a woman, or bird
stoke on trent - a gay man
stone me - an exclamation of anguish
stuke - a difficult situation
this immortal curl - the world
triffic - great, wonderful
twonk - a plonker or dipstick
wally - a twonk, a plonker, or a dipstick

Money Lingo

boracic or brassic - lacking in funds, skint
century - £100
douce in bunce - £200
earner - a profitable business transaction
grand - £1000
kosher readies - unlaundered money
monkey - £500
pony - £25
potless - to be skint
score - £20



(Absolutely Fabulous continued from page 3)

She collects hefty alimony payments from her two ex-husbands, Justin and Marshall. Justin, Saffy's father, is gay and for a time had a boyfriend named Oliver. Her first husband, Marshall Turtle, the father of her gay and almost perpetually off-screen son Serge, later marries scheming New-Age Californian Bo Chrysalis. She claims to be a Buddhist but by taking her lifestyle into account, one can assume she is merely paying it lip service and making it look fashionable. She claims to be a Vegetarian although she is seen eating meat on a few occasions.

Patsy

Eurydice Colette Clytemnestra Dido Bathsheba Rabelais Patricia Cocteau Stone, always called Patsy, is an outrageous, nymphomaniacal, chain-smoking, past-her-prime fashion model who drinks like a fish. She shares a codependent parasitic existence with her old school friend Eddy. This relationship usually results in hilarious, albeit dysfunctional, behavior and over-the-top conflicts. Unlike Eddy, she is always stylishly dressed, and had a well-paying, do-nothing job with a fashion magazine, which she received after sleeping with the publisher. She then went on to work in "Jeremy's" an exclusive high street fashion store, with clients such as Minnie Driver. Patsy was born in Paris, and her birthday is 30 October. Although her actual age is never clearly divulged, she often states herself to be "39," "41," "42," or "43," and in one episode ("Christmas Special Cold Turkey") a nurse says that she is 65 years old. Her mother was very promiscuous and neglected Patsy, treating her more as a rival than a daughter. There are several none-too-subtle hints that during the 1970s Patsy underwent a sex change and briefly lived as a man; however, as Eddy reveals, "it fell off". Patsy also has an older sister, Jackie, whom Eddy abhors and who once tried to kill Patsy. In two earlier episodes ("Door Handle" and "The Last Shout"), it is revealed that Patsy lives in the storeroom above Oddbins, a chain of UK off-licenses.

Saffy

Edina and Justin's daughter Saffron was born on 17 March 1975 in London. Although most people call her "Saffy", she is also frequently referred to by Eddy as "sweetie", "darling", or "sweetie darling" and (by Patsy) as "the bitch troll from hell" or "the bitch daughter". She is the perfect foil for Eddy and Patsy, depicted as the ever-virtuous high-minded intellectual who endures bombastic abuse and immature snideness from both, especially with regard to sex. She is the voice of reason, a thankless job in the Monsoon

household. After completing her education, she takes up writing in series four; at one point, she becomes involved with New Labor, and says her role model is Cherie Blair. In series five, when she returns home pregnant from a stint of humanitarian work in Africa, Eddy is at first aghast at the prospect of being a grandmother; that is, until she learns that the father is black, making the baby multiracial and, as such, an utterly fabulous fashion accessory ("A mixed race baby is the Chanel of babies!"). Saffy later gives birth to a daughter called Jane, although Eddy persists in referring to her as 'Lola'. Saffy is the legal owner of the house.

Gran/Mrs. Monsoon

Edina's mother, Mrs. Monsoon, is a good-natured, senile woman despised by her daughter but much loved by her granddaughter Saffy. She has a strange relationship with her daughter. She seems to give all her motherly devotion to Saffy, and regards Edina with indifference. She never seems to be affected by Edina's insults and usually manages to drop a few hard-hitting but humorous insults of her own. Most of the time she recognizes the eccentricities of Edina, Patsy and visitors to the house. At times she even seems to see the dysfunctional qualities in Saffy. She is a sort of surrogate mother to Patsy after her own mother despises her. She and Patsy have an ambiguous relationship. Patsy seems to show her some respect, even helping her and calling her 'Mrs. M.' But she is not warm. When Mrs. Monsoon's husband dies ('Death') Patsy attempts to comfort her by saying, 'I condole you', and telling her that Mr M. 'chose the right time to die, because black is like in.'Mrs., Monsoon refers to Patsy, even in her presence, apparently unaware that she is there, as 'poor sad old Patsy.' In the first few series, she is a valuable ally for Saffy in her struggle for domestic control, often mentioning embarrassing facts from Eddy's and Patsy's early lives. After series three, however, her mental faculties begin to decline and she increasingly inhabits a strange world of her own. Eddy addresses her, usually indirectly, as "The Old Woman", never as "Mum", "Mummy", or even "Mother". In only one scene throughout the entire run of the show are the two alone together, and it's an awkward experience for them both. When Gran's husband, affectionately known as "Daddy", dies during series 2, Eddy infuriates Saffy by responding to the news with a blank stare and the question "Did he leave a will?"; Gran, however, doesn't seem to care much either. She appears in flashbacks of Edina's past wearing the stereotypical housewife's clothing of the 1960s.

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Series Profile

Last Summer of Wine



Last of the Summer Wine, written by Roy Clarke, is the longest ever running British television sitcom. As of 2007 it is about to begin its 28th series and remained the longest-running comedy series in the world. The continuing focus of *Last of the Summer Wine* is a trio of retired men, whose differing views of life provide much of the comic tension. Until the death of Compo in 2000 (following the death of actor Bill Owen), the trio consisted of lower-class "Compo" Simmonite, middle-class Norman Clegg (Peter Sallis) and a "third man". The character in the role of third man varied over the years, but he was always an authoritarian figure, playing the ring-leader in the escapades of the friends.

The show's working title was *The Library Mob*, reflecting the library being one of the main trio's regular haunts when the series began. A spin-off series, *First of the Summer Wine*, used different actors to follow the exploits of the main characters in their youth. In 2004 the series came 14th in a high profile *BBC* poll to find *Britain's Best Sitcom*.

Now in its twenty-eighth series, with another currently in pre-production, it is filmed in and around Holmfirth, Yorkshire, and revolves around the adventures of three elderly, unmarried friends: Norman Clegg or "Cleggy" (Peter Sallis), a shy and self-effacing widower; William "Compo" Simmonite (Bill Owen), sly, small, scruffy and amorous towards one of the women, the ever-frumpish Nora Batty (Kathy Staff), and a third member, who varies through the series. This third member generally acts as an unofficial - and pompous - leader of the more mischievous Compo and Clegg, who usually mock their companion. However, on the occasions where Compo and Clegg were left to their own devices, they would usually find themselves bored and in need of someone to take them on an adventure. The original third member was Cyril Blamire (Michael Bates 1973-1975), who always wanted to better himself and was embarrassed by Compo's poor personal hygiene; then - and most famously - Walter "Foggy" Dewhurst (Brian Wilde 1976-1985), a pompous and boastful ex-army corporal; then the ineffectual eccentric would-be inventor Seymour Utterthwaite (Michael Aldridge 1986-1990), the brother of Edie Pegden (Thora Hird); then a return by Foggy Dewhurst (1990-1997); and currently retired police officer Herbert "Truly" Truelove (Frank Thornton).

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After the death of Bill Owen in 1999, Owen's real life son, Tom Owen, joined the cast, playing Tom Simmonite, Compo's long-lost son. It was intended that he would fill the gap in the trio left by his father, but this did not work out and he was eventually paired with Smiler (Stephen Lewis), working for Auntie Wainwright (Jean Alexander). After a couple of series, the 'third man' role was filled by Billy Hardcastle (played by Keith Clifford who had made a couple of one-off appearances previously), who tried to emulate - and claimed to be descended from - Robin Hood.

The series was praised for portraying older people in a positive and active light, and not just a stereotypical representation of the retired. It was also praised for its clever and, at times, philosophical writing, and for being a family-friendly show in terms of viewing.



Call For Contributed Articles

Yes, I am at it again! Once again I am asking all you suppressed writers and lovers of British comedies to submit a contributed article on your favorite British comedy. What's in it for you, you ask ??? Well once again I have obtained an actual cup and saucer from England in the notorious Hyacinth Bucket's "Royal Doulton with hand-painted periwinkles."

You have seen it, heard about it and you know you love it from the British comedy hit *Keeping Up Appearances*. This cup and saucer, along with a small tin of Earl Grey will go to the writer whose submission is selected to run in the next issue of *The Insider*.

So don't be shy. 500-700 words on your fave comedy could get you in the social strata of the Bucket residence! Deadline for submission is March 15, 2007.



Editor's Note: All submissions become the property of *BBC Worldwide Americas* for its unrestricted use, and free of copyright. Submissions selected are at the sole discretion of *BBC Worldwide Americas* and editors of *The Insider*.

Actor Profile In Depth

Patricia Routledge: From Stage to Pretension to Sleuth



Katherine Patricia Routledge CBE (born 17 February 1929) is a Tony Award-winning English actress who is best known to television audiences for her role of Hyacinth Bucket in the television comedy series *Keeping Up Appearances*. Prior to *Keeping Up Appearances*, Routledge had a prolific career in theatre, particularly in musical theatre in the UK and the US during the 1960s and 1970s. The honor of the OBE was bestowed upon her in 1993, and in 2004, Routledge was promoted to CBE.

Routledge was born in Birkenhead, Merseyside in 1929. She was educated at Birkenhead High School, an independent girls' school, and the University of Liverpool. She trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and launched her acting career at the Liverpool Playhouse.

Routledge has appeared in many stage productions, including West End productions of *Little Mary Sunshine*, *Cowardly Custard*, *Noises Off*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *The Solid Gold Cadillac*, as well as a number of less successful vehicles. In 1980, she played Ruth in the Joseph Papp production of *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Delacorte Theatre in New York City's Central Park, one of the series of Shakespeare in the Park summer events. The show was a hit and transferred to Broadway, opening on January 8, 1981, but Estelle Parsons replaced Routledge there. In recent years, Routledge played the

role of Aunt Nettie to great acclaim in the 1993 production of *Carousel*; more recently, in a 2006 production of *The Best of Friends* (based on a book by Hugh Whitmore) at the Hampstead Theatre, Routledge portrayed Dame Laurentia McLachlan, OSB. The play focused on her friendships with Sir Sydney Cockerell and George Bernard Shaw.

She made her Broadway debut in 1968 in the musical *Darling of the Day*, for which she won a Tony Award as Best Actress in a Musical, sharing the honor with Leslie Uggams of *Hallelujah, Baby!* which she received from Groucho Marx. In the *New York Times*, Walter Kerr wrote that Routledge gave "the most spectacular, most scrumptious, most embraceable musical comedy debut since Beatrice Lillie and Gertrude Lawrence came to this country." He added, "I understand there are some insane people going around this town saying that they didn't care all that much for *Darling of the Day*. I'd stay away from them if I were you. I warn you: if you don't catch her act now, you'll someday want to kill yourself."

Following *Darling of the Day*, Routledge had roles in several more unsuccessful Broadway productions, including a musical called *Love Match*, in which she played Queen Victoria; the legendary 1976 Leonard Bernstein flop, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, in which she portrayed every First Lady from Abigail Adams to

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Eleanor Roosevelt; and a 1981 musical called *Say Hello to Harvey*, based on the Mary Coyle Chase play *Harvey*, which closed in Toronto before reaching New York. Perhaps because of this ill-starred career, she did not follow the 1993 West End production of *Carousel* when it traveled to Broadway in 1994.

Routledge's screen credits include *To Sir, with Love* and *Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the River*.

Her early television appearances, including roles in *Coronation Street* and several *BBC* drama serials, brought her little notice until the 1980s, when she appeared in both Victoria Wood's comedy series and Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads* series of short plays. She also appeared in the "Seance in a Wet Rag and Bone Yard" episode of *Steptoe and Son* in 1974.

In 1990, Routledge landed the high-profile role in the comedy series *Keeping Up Appearances*, in which she starred as Hyacinth Bucket, a one-time working-class woman with social pretensions (insisting her surname be pronounced "bouquet") and visions of grandeur (her often-mentioned but never-seen "candlelight suppers" apparently were legendary only in her own mind).

In 1996, she accepted the lead in another long-running series, the mystery drama *Hetty Wainthropp Investigates*, which co-starred rising star Dominic Monaghan as her assistant. She has also played several real-life characters on television, including Barbara Pym and Hildegard of Bingen.

In 2001, Routledge starred in *Anybody's Nightmare*, a fact-based television drama in which she played a piano teacher who served four years in prison for murdering her elderly aunt but was acquitted following a retrial.

Her radio credits include the *BBC* dramatization of Carole Hayman's *Ladies of Letters*, in which she and Prunella Scales play elderly women who exchange humorous correspondence over the course of several years.



Series At-a-Glance

Short-Lived Series Struck Chord With US Britcom Fans

"Dad"



A generation-gap comedy that contrasted the relationship of Alan Hook and his father Brian, and Alan's relationship with his own son, Vincent.

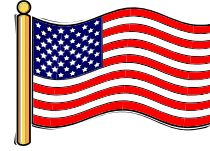
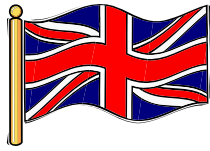
Brian Hook (played by George Cole pictured above) is a well-meaning chap but his values, habits, likes and dislikes were developed in the 1950s and his outlook and personality clash badly with his son's. They had drifted apart for many years but Brian's recent illness has brought them close again, and Alan sees this as a second chance to really get to know his father, despite the fact that Dad tends to drives him mad. Vincent, meanwhile, is a bright enough typical teenager, who feels as distant from Alan as Alan does from Brian.

These mirror-image, cross-generation clashes formed the central basis of *Dad*. Cole was in fine form once more as the solid senior citizen set in his ways, and McNally ably suggested the mixed emotions confusing his character. Julia Hills (who had appeared in Marshall's *2 Point 4 Children* had little to do as Alan's wife but turned in her usual winning performance all the same.

Dad was not wholly successful, but while the premise, in the hands of another writer, might have resulted in something altogether too soft, in Marshall's - a writer unafraid to explore the darker areas of an idea - it was imbued with a pleasingly quirky edge. **BBC**



New DVD/Video Releases



Waiting For God: Season 2

Release Date: 6/12/2007

At the Bayview Retirement Village the elderly are expected to grow old gracefully, enjoying their final years in peace, quiet and comfort...but not if Tom (Graham Crowden) and Diana (Stephanie Cole) have anything to do with it! Meet two elderly eccentrics who refuse to put up with the appalling food and condescending staff; in the hilariously cynical BAFTA-nominated comedy series that won Stephanie Cole a British Comedy Award in 1992.

EPISODE 1 - Tom and Diana, rebel senior citizens determined to squeeze the most from life, decide to take up counselling for the dying!

EPISODE 2 - Feeling lonely, Tom convinces Diana to move into his quarters, but when she erects a partition between them, somehow it wasn't what Tom had in mind.

EPISODE 3 - The divide between Tom and Diana continues. Meanwhile, there's a newcomer to Bayview and she's managed to take control already.

EPISODE 4 - There are mysterious thefts at Bayview. Inquisitive duo Tom and Diana embark on some sleuthing, but Tom ends up in hot water with the law.

EPISODE 5 - Tom decides that honesty is the best policy, but his quest to tell the truth at all times is tested by the arrival of Diana's niece, alias 'The Clapham Strangler'.

EPISODE 6 - Diana has a serious accident and ends up in hospital, but her main concern is getting out in time to ruin her niece's wedding!

EPISODE 7 - When Diana accepts a bet to enter a Glamorous Granny Competition, she tries her hand at being nice. Surely it can't be that hard?

EPISODE 8 - Loathsome Bayview manager Harvey's attempts to cut costs even further lead to chaos and a fracas on the croquet lawn!

EPISODE 9 - The unimaginable occurs, young people come to Bayview! Whilst Diana is thrilled about their visit, Harvey schemes even harder to get her thrown out.

EPISODE 10 - Tom is proud of his son Geoffrey for finally having the courage to leave his wife, but when he moves in with Tom, Diana decides enough is enough.

My Hero: Season 2

Release Date: 8/4/2007

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's health-food shop-owner George Sunday, alias the world's most famous superhero, Thermoman!

Thermoman, a down-to-earth superhero in love, is back for another series of out-of-this world comedy adventures. In Series Two, Janet tells her parents who George really is, which causes more problems than it solves; a long-lost fiancée and an enemy from planet Ultron cause trouble; cousin Arnie steals the Crown Jewels; and wedding plans are afoot now that Janet is to have Thermoman's baby.

Includes the following episodes:

- Parents
- Girlfriend
- Car
- Nemesis
- Pregnant
- Wedding

Find these titles and more at Shop BBC America, www.bbcamerica.com





BritCom LaughLinks

Are You Being Served? Forever

<http://www.minki.net/aybs>

One of the best “indie” sites I have seen on a show. Its content is robust and resourceful. If you love the show, its characters and background, this is a site truly worth the visit. In addition to useful information, there are several links to other sites for those who just can’t get enough of the Grace Brothers’ fare. FAQs, forums, images and all, if the fit isn’t perfect for you – we certain it will ride up with wear!

Rating: 5 out of 5 mouse clicks

Absolutely Fabulous Site

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/abfab/>

All things AbFab can be found here. Fashion, episode guides, quotes and many, many other resources can be found on this robust site. Definitely a must for any AbFab fan. Beeb sites for highly popular shows have undergone an extensive overhaul – the results can be seen on this site.

Patsy and Edina provide hours of comic material to delight the avid Britcom fan. Check it out!

Rating: 5 out of 5 mouse clicks

Only Fools and Horses

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/onlyfools>

Dell Boy would be proud of this site, and want a cut of any profits (laughing). This another great BBC repository on the highly popular series profiled in this issue of *The Insider*. Extensively overhauled, this site offers a comparable level of news, trivia and resources on the series voted the UK’s most popular British comedy in 2004.

Rating: 5 out of 5 mouse clicks

Shop BBC America

<http://www.bbcamerica.com/shop>

A great stop to find the latest DVDs, Britcom collectibles and other information on favorite shows. While it may be self-promoting to list it here, it is definitely worth checking out for upcoming releases and pre-orders. Great information on your favorite BBC programs.

Rating: 5 out of 5 mouse clicks



Bubble

Eddy's secretary, Bubble, is a charming disaster. She is completely incompetent at her job and often has trouble even remembering what her job is. Her inability to remember the names of the most common of objects (television, fax machine, etc.) or understand the most basic of concepts (the fact that the year goes up by one at New Year's) are often the basis of much humor. Edina can often be seen painfully trying to drag vital information from her, a feat which is aggravated by her complete inability to recall the simplest of facts.

Her sole purpose in Edina's PR company is to make Edina look good by comparison. Despite her utter daftness, Bubble shows rare glimpses of genius and special abilities. She seems to have some psychic abilities (for instance in knowing Patsy's sister's name, Jackie); however, it is not clear that this is simply luck combined with previously known facts surfacing in her mind. She is also fluent in French, but in one episode is heard uttering French sounding gibberish. She is inexplicably made editor of *Vogue* magazine, but she soon returns to Edina and it is not clear that she ever took up her new position. In fact she leaves Edina's employ on two other occasions. Edina tries to fire Bubble for gross incompetence, but Bubble sues - and wins - the right to keep her job. Unfortunately for her, the details of her job were not specified, so Edina makes Bubble her maid. Later, Bubble abandons Edina when her PR company is on the verge of being taken over by Claudia Bing.

During the last series, Bubble's character changes somewhat. Still mad as ever, she assumes an affected and insulting snobbery, looking down on Edina and Patsy, and even big celebrities, like Elton John and Minnie Driver. She occasionally rebukes Edina for her irresponsibility, and annoys her with her mad but hard-hitting insights into the celebrity-driven society Edina moves in. From the beginning she is insulting to Patsy, subtly exposing her superficiality. But in later episodes she is not so subtle. Bubble is also Katy Grin's cousin.

Sarah

Saffron's best friend, Sarah, has followed Saffron from high school. In the beginning of the show, she was quiet and shy, but often tempted Saffron to try drinking alcohol. In this respect Sarah is like Patsy in tempting the Monsoon women to drink, albeit on a substantially

smaller scale. Because of her shy, quiet demeanor, Sarah is often the subject of Edina's derision and physical abuse. Edina consistently refers to her as Titicaca ('Tity-ca-ca') and once set her hair on fire with a candle. This triggered Sarah to seek professional counseling, which seemed to drive her into a deeper state of imbalance. In the 4th and 5th series, Sarah starts to lose it, becoming more and more unstable, and eventually starts stalking Emma Bunton, a friend of Saffron's. Saffron realizes her friend Sarah needs more professional help and reports her to the police.

Justin

Justin is one of Edina's ex-husbands and is Saffron's father. He is gay and is often seen with his partner, Oliver, on the show. Justin tries hard to be the best father he can to Saffron and the two of them have what is probably the healthiest relationship out of everyone on the show. Justin and Edina put up with each other for Saffron's sake but are not always successful in carrying out this charade. Patsy and Justin have a variable relationship. They often act antagonistically toward each other, but other times seem to get along well. Justin runs an antique shop and is Canadian.

Absolutely Fabulous first aired on 12 November 1992, and ran for three series until 4 May 1995, when the sixth episode of series 3 was billed as the last-ever episode. However, the following year in November 1996, two specials, called "The Last Shout", were broadcast and were also billed as the last-ever episodes. Both 'last episodes' featured end sequences with flashes to the future. However, after writing *Mirrorball*, Jennifer Saunders decided she had more ideal, and on 31 August 2001 the fourth series premiered. A further series and three specials followed, the last of which aired on 25 December 2004. In July 2005, Saunders announced she would not be writing or playing Edina again, stating "The 6am calls to go to make-up and all the promotional work wear you down. I would like to write and direct — that would be my joy".



Recipe Reprise – By Viewer Request

Annette's Traditional English Trifle

Ingredients

Two butter pound cakes (think *Sara Lee*)
3 T. brandy per pound cake loaf
2 cups prepared white chocolate pudding
2 cups prepared chocolate pudding
1 cup each blackberries and raspberries
½ cup walnuts
1 8 oz. whipped cream

Preparation

In large trifle bowl or other dish, cut first cake into bite-sized pieces and drizzle with half of brandy. Layer with half of white chocolate pudding, half of chocolate pudding, half of walnuts and half of berries. Add second cake cut into bite-sized pieces, drizzle with remaining brandy and repeat layers. Refrigerate for three to 24 hours before serving. The longer it sits, the better it gets. Top with whipped cream before serving. Serves about 12 generous portions.

Sheela's Curdelicious Bread Pudding

Ingredients

Jar of Lemon, Lime or Orange Curd
7 thick slices of white Bread
3 cups Milk
3 Eggs
1/4 cup of Sugar
1/4 teaspoon Salt
1/2 cup Raisins
1/2 teaspoon Vanilla
1/3 cup fine Coconut (optional)

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350 degrees (F) Spread the Curdelicious Lemon, Lime or Orange Curd onto each slice of bread, and then cut the slices into quarters. Place the bread into a baking dish in layers, and sprinkle raisins on top of each layer before adding the next layer. In a mixing bowl, beat together the milk, eggs, sugar salt and vanilla to make a wet mix. Now pour the mix evenly over the bread, ensuring that all the bread is covered. Sprinkle the coconut on top.

Place the dish with the ingredients in a pan of hot water, and bake for 40 minutes or until the pudding is firm at the center.

OPTIONS: (1) While the pudding is still hot, spread more Curdelicious Curd on the top. (2) Replace some of the milk with cream to make a richer pudding. Serve hot with custard.

Mollie Sugden's Lemon Meringue Pie

Mollie says her late husband William Moore married her for this pie!

Ingredients

10 oz. caster sugar (superfine)
Pinch of salt
3 eggs
½ lb. butter
1½ oz. corn flour (cornstarch)
Juice and rind of one lemon
½ pint boiling water

Preparation

Line two 8-inch flan tins with short crust pastry. Prick all over with a fork and bake blind*.

Beat the yolks of the eggs with corn flour, salt, 6 oz. of the sugar and the rind and juice of the lemon and mix thoroughly.

Pour on the boiling water, stirring all the time, then put into a saucepan and cook gently for a few minutes. Stir in the butter until it is melted and combined, then pour into the pastry cases.

For the meringue, beat the whites of eggs with 4 oz. of the sugar and spread over the top of the lemon pies leaving it in fairly rough peaks. Then bake in a moderate oven (350°) until slightly brown.

**Bake blind: baking an unfilled pastry crust by weighting it with rice, beans, baking beads, etc., to keep the crust from shrinking.*

