UK comedian Russell Brand in court to face rape charges

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British comedian and actor Russell Brand arrived at court in central London on Friday to face five charges of rape and other sexual offences.  
  
Brand, 49, who became known internationally as the husband of pop star Katy Perry after forging a career in Britain with his risque comedy routines, was charged last month.  
  
The celebrity, dressed casually in a dark coloured open-necked shirt and gold-framed sunglasses, did not speak as he made his way through a crush of media and onlookers outside Westminster Magistrates’ Court for his first court hearing.  
  
Brand, who is believed to now live in the United States, faces two counts of rape, two of sexual assault and one of indecent assault.  
  
In a video response on X after he was charged last month, Brand denied all the alleged offences and said he was “grateful” for the “opportunity” to defend himself.  
  
“I was a fool before I lived in the light of the Lord. I was a drug addict, a sex addict and an imbecile, but what I never was was a rapist. I’ve never engaged in non-consensual activity,” he said in the video.  
  
The charges relate to offences alleged to have taken place between 1999 and 2005 involving four women.  
  
Prosecutors charged him after a police investigation into allegations following a broadcast of a Channel 4 documentary in September 2023.  
  
London’s Metropolitan Police have said the investigation remains open and urged “anyone who has been affected by this case, or anyone who has any information” to contact officers.  
  
– Millions of online fans –  
  
Brand is charged with the rape of a woman in 1999 in the Bournemouth area on England’s south coast, as well as the oral rape and sexual assault of a woman in 2004 in the Westminster area of central London.  
  
He has also been charged with indecently assaulting a woman in 2001 and sexually assaulting another woman between 2004 and 2005 — both incidents alleged to have taken place in Westminster.  
  
Born in 1975 to working-class parents in Essex, east of London, Brand began his stand-up career as a teenager.  
  
He burst onto the scene as a provocative, often lewd comedian before transforming into a Hollywood star, then an anti-establishment guru and conspiracy theorist who has millions of fans online.  
  
He has almost seven million subscribers on YouTube, 11.3 million on X and 4.8 million on Instagram.  
  
He presented a show on the BBC’s Radio 2 station between 2006 and 2008, but left after an on-air prank when he left a sexually explicit voicemail for “Fawlty Towers” actor Andrew Sachs about his granddaughter.  
  
He also presented a “Big Brother” spin-off show for several years and wrote columns for the left-wing Guardian newspaper and penned two autobiographies.  
  
Brand was married to US star Perry for 14 months between 2010 and 2012.  
  
He is now married to the author and illustrator Laura Gallacher, with whom he has three children.