

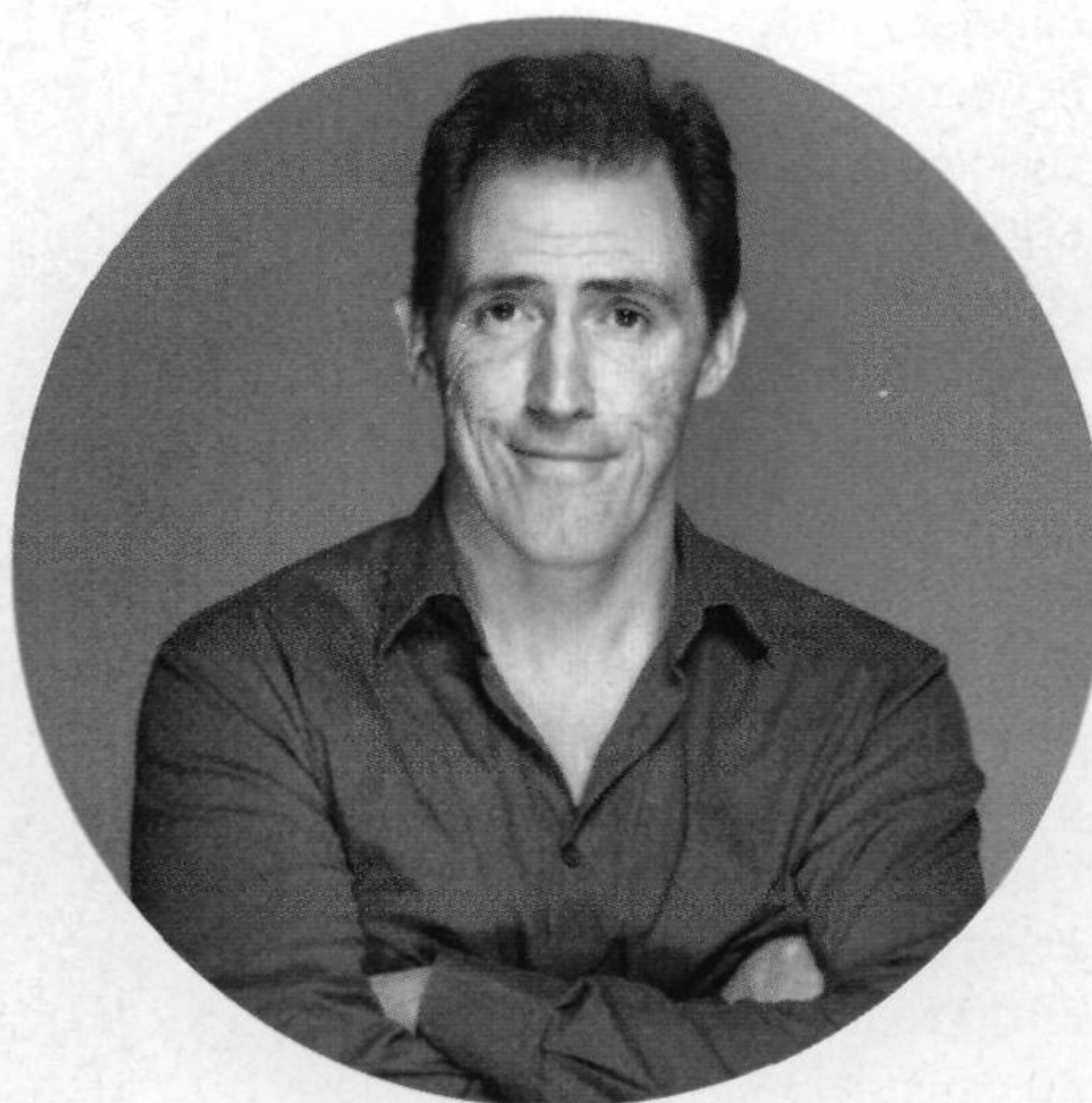
In Wales, everyone knows everyone, whether it's Bonnie Tyler's dad or Richard Burton's brother

ROB BRYDON

"CATHERINE AND MICHAEL are home!" We're driving along near Swansea Airport, Mum, Dad and me, about a year ago. My mother is telling me that a private jet touched down recently, carrying none other than Swansea's most celebrated daughter and her husband Michael Douglas, on one of their commendably frequent visits to the "lovely, ugly town". Now of course we don't actually *know* Catherine or Michael, but this doesn't stop us referring to them on a casual, nay *intimate*, first-name basis.

This overfamiliarity comes, I think, from living in a small country; all hug a mug on top of each other. Not just a small country but a small country with an unusually high quotient of people with a thespian leaning. Everyone knows everyone. I recently returned to Port Talbot to give a talk at a charity lunch; in the audience was none other than Michael Sheen's mother. Michael Sheen's mother! Hello, good evening, and welcome! His parents are friendly with my parents — that's the way we roll. If you don't like it, you know what you can do.

As a teenager, I caught the bus from Baglan to Porthcawl every day, on my way to school. An uneventful journey was enlivened by a well-dressed, white-haired gentleman who I would chat to. He turned out to be none other than Bonnie Tyler's father. This was at a time when Bonnie



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had gone a bit quiet and wasn't setting the charts alight in the way that she once had. I'll always remember her father telling me she'd been "in America working with Jim Steinman, the man who does Meatloaf".

I was impressed, and looked forward to enjoying the fruits of their labours — but nothing could have prepared me for the power chord majesty of "Total Eclipse Of The Heart". If I'd had bright eyes, I would indeed have turned around.

I know what you're thinking. "Michael Sheen's mother, Bonnie Tyler's father. Where can you possibly go from here?" Ladies and gentlemen, I offer up for your entertainment, Richard Burton's brother!

On the evening after the charity lunch, my dad drove me the few miles from Baglan to Cwmavon and the home of Graham Jenkins, younger brother and from some angles spitting image of Richard Burton. Graham was very close to his famous brother, and even doubled for him in some of his films. He told story after story of the heady days when Richard and Elizabeth Taylor were movie royalty, the biggest stars in the world. Graham is also a big fan of Gavin & Stacey, so while he regaled me with tales from the set of The VIPs, I gamely offered up hilarious stories of the time I forgot my lines in Gwen's kitchen.

The evening drawing to a close, Graham disappeared, before returning with a bottle of wine for me. It was from a hamper sent over to the family by Dame Elizabeth Taylor each year at Christmas. I can see the scene now. "Nice wine, Rob." "Yes! Elizabeth sent it..." As it should be. **E**

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