

= Bedsitcom =

Bedsitcom is a British reality television hoax series that was broadcast on Channel 4 in December 2003 . Pitched as " somewhere between a sitcom and a reality TV show " , the show documented the lives of six young people living in a loft flat in London . Its hook was that its TV audience was aware that three of the participants ? named Mel , Paul and Rufus ? were actually actors being directed by a trio of " writers " in a garage on the ground floor .

Bedsitcom was commissioned by the Channel Four Television Corporation and produced by Objective Productions . Producers auditioned thousands of people to be the show 's genuine contestants and selected from them six young adults to live in the flat with the three actors . These six contestants were told that they would be starring in a new reality TV series called Making Friends , and featured on the show three at a time over a period of eight weeks . The programme ran for a single series of eight episodes and featured various storylines , involving dead goldfish , dodgy dealings , promiscuous mothers and telephone psychics .

The show received largely negative feedback from television reviewers , who criticised the show 's premise as a " deeply offensive " idea . It received a viewership peak of 1 @. @ 2 million with its final episode , giving it an audience share of 8 @. @ 9 per cent . Bedsitcom was not recommissioned for a second series and is currently not available either on DVD or on Channel 4 's on demand service , 4oD .

= = Production = =

= = = Concept = = =

Bedsitcom was created by Peter James and Andrew O 'Connor , and was conceived as a parody of both reality television and the traditional sitcom . It combined these two elements by featuring three members of the public being unknowingly placed in extraordinary situations by three actors being directed by writers . After being commissioned for Channel 4 by Danielle Lux , Bedsitcom was produced by Matt Crook and Kirsty Smith of Objective Productions .

The show was pitched as " somewhere between a sitcom and a reality TV show " and was promoted as " an entirely new genre of television programme " . Its title is a portmanteau of the words " bedsit " ? a British term referring to a form of rented accommodation consisting of a single room and shared bathroom ? and " sitcom " . The title is technically a misnomer : as the accommodation 's bedroom and sitting area were separate , it was not a bedsit .

= = = Casting = = =

Melanie Ash , Paul Gibbon and Rufus Jones were selected as the three actors to feature in Bedsitcom . Jones had previously portrayed the part of Crispin in the 2002 drama White Teeth ; Gibbon had played the lead role of Link in the series Stone Cold . To avoid breaking character , all three used their real names while living in the flat and went through weeks of rehearsals . O 'Connor described the entire process as " exhausting " .

To find suitable candidates to live with the three actors , producers auditioned roughly 10 @, @ 000 people , who were told that they would be taking part in a new reality television programme in London called Making Friends . Six members of the public , named Barrington , Bob , Dave , David , Jessica and Shirine , were selected to feature on the show .

= = = Writing and filming = = =

The plots for Bedsitcom were devised by a team of writers (led by Rob Gibbons , Neil Gibbons and producer Matt Crook) located in a garage on the ground floor of the apartment building that the contestants were staying in . The writers would often appear on screen and explain to the TV

audience what their intention for each episode was . They communicated with Ash , Gibbon and Jones either by ringing them on their mobile phones , or by calling them downstairs to speak to them in person . They would occasionally change their plans for an episode ? in " Worst Case Scenario " , for example , the writers altered their storyline from having Mel bring various animals into the flat to having the group kill Mel 's goldfish after only one night .

Among the team of writers were Jesse Armstrong and Sam Bain , who had created the Channel 4 sitcom Peep Show with O 'Connor earlier that year , plus Rob Gibbons and Neil Gibbons . Filming of Bedsitcom began in May 2003 and lasted for approximately eight weeks . The flatmates were filmed for 12 hours a day , with this footage then being edited down to roughly 25 minutes per week of filming .

= = Episodes = =

Bedsitcom documented the lives of six young adults living in a loft flat in London . Eight episodes in total were created , which were divided into two distinct halves . The first four episodes centred on the lives of Mel , Paul and Rufus , the three actors , as they lived in the flat with Bob , Dave and Shirine , the three unaware members of the public who believed they were taking part in a genuine reality TV show . After Bob , Dave and Shirine had learnt the true nature of the show at the end of episode four , they moved out and were replaced by three new members of the public named Barrington , David and Jessica . These three new cast members remained on Bedsitcom for the final four episodes .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Reviewers gave Bedsitcom generally negative feedback . Some were critical of the storylines that had been devised by the writers , calling them unimaginative and clichéd . Others were critical of the premise of the show itself , describing it as " deeply offensive and manipulative " and " morally reprehensible " ? all three actors , particularly Jones , received criticism for their acting abilities . Frances Traynor of The Daily Record called the show " about as funny as sharing a flat with that German cannibal " and Paddy Sherman of The Liverpool Echo branded the show " intensely irritating " . Paul Hoggart of The Times called it " a show that seemed to have nothing to recommend it whatsoever " , ? after watching the first episode , Charlie Catchpole of The Daily Star simply stated : " It isn 't funny . " Critics on Newsnight Review also spoke harshly about the programme , with Tom Paulin calling it " a disgraceful piece of television " and Jeanette Winterson describing it as " incredibly dull " .

A slightly more positive review came from Joe Joseph of The Times , who suggested that " if [the format] works , [it] could be profitably franchised around the world " . Deborah Bull said that , while it was " a terrible programme " , there were " some funny lines " . Chris Wilson , editor of Collective , similarly wrote that " while the end results are often amusing and tackle some interesting storylines , the whole project smacks of lazy , cruel television " .

In a 2005 interview , series creator Andrew O 'Connor spoke about Bedsitcom and the critical reaction that it had received . He said that he felt that the premise of the show was a " great idea " , but that it did not make " great television " . He also remarked : " We didn 't cast it right and the public didn 't take to the series . "

= = = Ratings and awards = = =

Given the level of exposure and promotion that it had been granted , Channel Four were disappointed by ratings for Bedsitcom . The pilot , shown on 8 December 2003 , generated 1 million viewers , but this figure had fallen to 700 @,@ 000 by 10 December . The ratings rose to 1 @.@ 1

million viewers for the fourth episode , " Fag Ends " . On average , the series attracted an audience share of less than 6 per cent . The final episode , " P.I.G " , gained a viewership of 1 @.@ 2 million with a market share of 8 @.@ 9 per cent , which was its highest audience for the series . Bedsitcom was nominated for a single award at the 2004 Rose d 'Or festival , a European awards show that commemorates achievement in entertainment television . The programme was submitted in the Best Situation Comedy category , but was beaten by Peep Show .

= = Distribution = =

Bedsitcom was distributed by the Channel Four Television Corporation , who broadcast the show on its eponymous channel . It premiered in the UK at 10 : 40 p.m. on 8 December 2003 . Bedsitcom 's eight episodes were ' stripped ' over two weeks : the first four were broadcast nightly until 11 December and the remaining four were shown each night from 15 December . There are currently no plans to revive the series , and it is not available either on DVD or on 4oD , Channel 4 's on demand service .