

= Mongrels (TV series) =

Mongrels is a British puppet @-@ based situation comedy series first broadcast on BBC Three between 22 June and 10 August 2010 , with a making @-@ of documentary entitled " Mongrels Uncovered " broadcast on 11 August 2010 . A second and final series of Mongrels began airing on 7 November 2011 .

The series revolves around the lives of five anthropomorphic animals who hang around the back of a pub in Millwall , the Isle of Dogs , London . The characters are Nelson , a metrosexual fox (voiced by Rufus Jones , performed by Andy Heath) ; Destiny , an Afghan hound (voiced by Lucy Montgomery , performed by Richard Coombs and Sue Beattie) ; Marion , a " borderline @-@ retarded " cat (voiced by Dan Tetsell , performed by Warrick Brownlow @-@ Pike) ; Kali , a grudge @-@ bearing pigeon (voiced by Katy Brand , performed by Iestyn Evans) ; and Vince , Nelson 's friend , a sociopathic foul @-@ mouthed fox (voiced by Paul Kaye , performed by various puppeteers) .

The show is aimed at an adult audience , features " neutering , incontinence , cannibalism and catnip overdoses " and humour styles such as slapstick and farce . For example , the first episode begins with a scene in which Marion , portrayed as desperately trying to revive his deceased owner , learns she has actually been dead for four months , whereupon he casually gives his cat friends permission to eat her . Mongrels has attracted accusations of plagiarism , with claims that Mongrels stole ideas from a similar Channel 4 show called Pets .

On 18 January 2012 it was announced via Twitter that Mongrels had not been renewed for a third series by the BBC due to a decision made by Zai Bennett .

= = Plot = =

Mongrels looks at the lives of five animals that hang around the back of a pub called The Lord Nelson in Millwall , on the Isle of Dogs in the East End of London . The hero of the series is Nelson (Vulpus metrosexualus) , a fox who lives a metrosexual lifestyle . Described as : " The only wild fox in East London with subscriptions to all the major broadsheets (excluding The Sunday Times) , Nelson is , as he never tires of introducing himself at dinner parties ... ' An urbane fox ! ' "

Nelson 's love interest is Destiny , an Afghan hound . However , Destiny has no interest in Nelson . She is the pet dog of Gary (Tony Way) , the landlord of The Lord Nelson . However , like the other humans that appear in the series , he cannot understand what Destiny or what the other animals are saying . Elsewhere there is Marion (Felis retardicus) , an idiotic cat to whom Nelson acts as a father @-@ figure . Marion has been abandoned by several owners and is very corruptible . Then there is Kali (Aves aggravaticus) , a pigeon who likes to revel in the misfortune of others . She has several grudges , including a hatred of all humans and foxes for the way they treat birds . Lastly , there is Vince , Nelson 's older brother (Vulpus c * * * itcus) , a violent , foul @-@ mouthed fox who considers himself a proper animal . Almost all his lines contain at least one swear word that is always bleeped over .

There is no over @-@ riding story arc between episodes , but each episode does contain recurring elements . During each episode there are cutaways from the main plot to create extra gags . Most episodes also feature at least one celebrity appearance and every episode features a comic song .

= = Cast and characters = =

Rufus Jones as the voice of Nelson , an urban fox who has embraced a middle @-@ class , metrosexual lifestyle . Operated by Andy Heath

Dan Tetsell as the voice of Marion , a homeless Persian alley cat . Operated by Warrick Brownlow @-@ Pike

Lucy Montgomery as the voice of Destiny , a beautiful Afghan Hound . Operated by Richard Coombs and Sue Beattie

Katy Brand as the voice of Kali , a cynical , vindictive and street smart pigeon . Operated by Iestyn

Evans

Paul Kaye as the voice of Vince , a violent , foul @-@ mouthed sociopathic fox .

Tony Way as Gary , Destiny 's owner .

Ruth Bratt ? various incidental characters .

= = Creation = =

The show took five years to make . The idea was first suggested between the creator and director of Mongrels , Adam Miller , and the show 's head puppeteer , Andy Heath , when they worked on ITV children 's show Ripley and Scuff .

Miller described Mongrels as : " an adult sitcom , trying to do for puppetry what American shows like The Simpsons have done for animation . Obviously that 's aiming very high . Think [stage musical] Avenue Q meets Family Guy but with puppet animals . " He also said that : " We wanted to make something that had the pace of an American animation but with British sensibilities , that was adult , but not crude , that was based in the realities of the animal world , and that didn 't rely on the puppets to do the comedy . "

The original idea , known as The Un @-@ Natural World was of an urban fox living in Brixton called Nelson , who was so used to living in the city that he had lost any sense of being an animal . It also featured a cat , Marion , who was trying to encourage Nelson to be more animal @-@ like .

While Miller was working on a BBC Three sitcom he pitched the idea to producer Stephen McCrum . McCrum criticised the way Miller ended the first script , which ended with Nelson and Marion leave where they live . McCrum told him it was best to set the series in a single place rather than have the characters move from one place to another . McCrum then suggested taking Nelson and Marion , and writing a script about them . Later , another writer , Jon Brown came in to write and at this time rules were set out with regards to writing the show , such as the animals could not be dressed in clothes unless it was in a flashback sequence or during a song .

The new script was then pitched to the BBC . The pitch tape they made was based on the same pitch used by The Muppet Show . This was done as a tribute to it , with Miller arguing that when The Muppet Show did it , " it just must have just knocked the socks off the people who saw it , because it 's like nothing you 've ever seen before , and we thought : ' Why fix what ain 't broke , so we did our own very British version of that . " The producers liked it but did not fully understand what the show was about . Miller , Brown and a third writer , Daniel Peak began to write scripts over a period of four years . A pilot was eventually filmed and the BBC commissioned a full series , targeted at adults . Despite the adult nature , Miller did not want to make the show too crude . Eight episodes were filmed so as to spread the cost of making the series over each episode .

= = = Character development = = =

When writing for the commissioned series began , the character of Nelson was originally depicted as being brash and obnoxious . This was later changed to make him more metrosexual , middle class and likeable . Developing the character of Destiny , Nelson 's love interest , was a challenge to the programme makers . Kali was created to be a villain , with Miller describing her as a " Hitler @-@ figure " . Vince was partly based on the brash version of Nelson .

In the unbroadcast pilot We Are Mongrels , another character was included called Debbie . Debbie was a suicidal chicken who never left her coop . However , it was decided that the character did not go anywhere and could not be sustained for a full series , so the character was axed . Another chicken character called Wendy appeared in the first broadcast episode as a reference to Debbie . Both characters had the same voice actress , Ruth Bratt , who performed Wendy 's voice in exactly the same manner as that of Debbie .

= = = Casting = = =

Rufus Jones was among the first people auditioned for the role of Nelson . After several other

auditions with other actors , Jones was called upon to play the part . Paul Kaye at one time provided the voice for Nelson before taking the role of Vince .

It was then decided by the creators to make Marion a foreign character and to find an accent that reflected this . There was discussion about Iranian @-@ British comic Omid Djalili playing the role . In the end , Tetsell was cast after auditioning with a poor version of Djalili 's Iranian accent . Tetsell describes the voice as a mixture of , " every accent on the planet " , but with the joke that Marion was meant to be a Persian cat .

= = = Puppets = = =

When the puppet for Marion was first created , he was depicted as having stripy fur , but looked more like a mouse in the eyes of the crew , so his puppet was changed . Marion 's image was based on topless photos of the comic actor James Corden .

The show 's puppeteers claim there are different problems working with different characters . For example , Destiny is the largest puppet and so moving her is more difficult . As Marion spends much of his time sitting on top of a rubbish bin , his puppeteer , Brownlow @-@ Pike , has to stand inside a bottomless bin for long periods of time . Kali is said to be the most difficult puppet to work with , because as she has no hands she is limited to what she can hold .

= = = Recording = = =

The show was originally entitled We Are Mongrels , but the title had to be changed for two reasons : one was that the title was too similar to another BBC Three comedy show , We Are Klang . The other is that none of the characters were mongrels . Therefore new suggestions were called for . Rejected titles included I , Nelson ; Humans ! Everywhere ! ; Undergrowth and Never Been Stroked . The last of these titles was rejected after one of the show 's additional writers , Danielle Ward ; " said it sounded like ' a makeover show for virgins ' . " During this time the crew referred to the show as Mongrels and it eventually became the show 's title .

When writing for Vince the writers blanked out all of the characters swearing like it is done on the show , but when it came to recording the programme the swear words had to be put in for Kaye to read them . During read @-@ throughs of the scripts , a toy horn was honked whenever Kaye swore to give an idea of what it would sound like during the programme .

The show also aims to be environmentally friendly in its production . A report from the BBC 's in @-@ house publication Ariel : " From reusable water bottles filled from tanks of tap water to double @-@ sided scripts , Mongrels is aiming to be the most sustainable production at the BBC . " The production team also use reusable or compostable cutlery in their canteen , reducing any future merchandise packaging to just a barcode , and replacing conventional lighting with fluorescent tube lights . This last move reduced the electricity bill for the second series by a third , saving £ 500 a week .

= = Cancellation = =

On 18 January 2012 , Tetsell revealed on Twitter that Mongrels had been cancelled , saying : " we 've all been sacked now " .

Miller posted another , longer message online saying :

" Mongrels friends , it is my unbearably sad duty to announce that we will not be returning for a third series on BBC Three , a decision that has been made based on the fact that apparently you need more than two people watching a programme to make it successful . Crazy talk . I 'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at BBC Comedy , BBC Three and BBC Worldwide who have supported us so strongly over the years , and helped us put our silly puppet show on the digital screens of the nation . I 'd also like to thank , from the bottom of my heart , all the writers , cast , crew and support team who have made a horribly challenging show such an utter joy to make . This news could not be less of a reflection on your brilliant work . Most of all I 'd like to thank those of you

that loved watching Mongrels as much as we loved making it . It 's wonderfully reassuring to think that we weren 't mad after all , and that what we find funny , other people do too . I 'd like to believe that there 's room on television for a little show like ours ; one that 's not just another sitcom , one that tries to do things a bit differently and that tries to push a few boundaries here and there . Who knows , maybe we 'll find a that room in the future . I hope it has a minibar . Thank you for watching . Both of you . "

= = Reception = =

Mongrels was given mixed reviews , with some considering its quality to be inconsistent , with a reviewer for tvBite.com saying that the show was " a bit hit and miss " but also that , " even the laugh @-@ free moments have a well @-@ written sheen . " and that the work put into the jokes show . Jane Simon of the Daily Mirror wrote : " While most of it is very funny , some of the gags about Harold Shipman completely misjudge the tone . Maybe the age group BBC3 is aimed at reckon anything is fair game for comedy . " The Independent 's Tom Sutcliffe said that : " It does have its laughs , though , because the script isn 't entirely about crass shock value " , but that the sitcom , while aimed at adults , is " not really for grown @-@ ups . " Sam Wollaston of The Guardian was mainly positive about Mongrels , but said that the main reason he thought it was funny was because it depicted " cuddly children 's toys [...] saying things you wouldn 't normally expect cuddly children 's toys to say . Like ' You are such a cock @-@ end ' " , and that , " the novelty will wear off at some point not too far away " .

= = Awards and nominations = =

Mongrels won the Royal Television Society Craft and Design Award 2009 ? 2010 for " Production Design ? Entertainment and Non @-@ Drama " led by production designer Simon Rogers . It was also nominated for the award for " Tape and Film Editing ? Entertainment and Situation Comedy " led by film editor Nigel Williams , but lost to Pete versus Life .

In 2011 , Brown won the BAFTA Craft Award for " Break @-@ through Talent " . The series was nominated for the Ursa Major Award for " Best Anthrompomorphic Dramatic Short Work or Series " in 2010 (series 1) and 2011 (series 2) .

In 2012 , Andy Heath & Iestyn Evans won the Royal Television Society Craft and Design Award 2011 / 12 for special effects in Mongrels Series 2 , beating Downton Abbey and Great Expectations in the process .

= = Appearances in other programmes = =

On 13 August 2011 , the cast of Mongrels took part in the first ever Comedy Prom , in which they performed the song " Middle Class is Magical " from the seventh episode of the first series , " Marion The Superfluous Feed Character " . The performance was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 , and later broadcast on BBC Two on 27 August 2011 .

= = Plagiarism accusations = =

Mongrels has attracted anger from production company Fit2Fill which claimed the BBC " ripped off " their 2001 Channel 4 sitcom Pets . Fit2Fill claimed they received 30 emails from people saying the series were similar , and they once pitched the idea of Pets to then BBC head of comedy Mark Freeland , who also acted as the executive producer of Mongrels .

The producer of Pets , Andrew Barclay said : " We checked the BBC 's Mongrels website this morning and the Beeb do appear to have hired the same puppet builders and puppeteers as Pets . We also notice that Mongrels ' executive producer is Mark Freeland , to whom we did once pitch a Pets follow @-@ up show . "

The co @-@ creator and co @-@ producer of Pets , Brian West , went on to post his views on a

BBC blog post about Mongrels . Following this , a telephone conversation between West and Mongrels producer McCrum took place where McCrum , " claimed that no @-@ one from the BBC production team had watched Pets before or during the development and production of their series . " From this West responded that : " We might therefore conclude that any similarities between the two shows is 100 % coincidental . " West left people to judge for themselves whether Pets had been copied .

Afterwards , Andy Heath , a puppet builder who worked for both Mongrels and Pets , said on the same blog that he met Adam Miller in 2002 after he [Heath] finished working on Pets in 2000 , to work on Ripley and Scuff . Miller then began developing the idea for Mongrels in 2004 . Heath then went on to say :

" Pets was Pets . Mongrels is Mongrels . If , as a viewer , you can sit down and say they are the same , then there is little point of making any new shows , if the slightest similarity (puppets and animals) can be suggested as idea stealing . I am surprised Basil Brush hasn 't been on the blower , as he is a fox , and that must be a copy ! Right ? I worked on both , and know for a fact where they both come from . Two very different ideas . "

= = Merchandise = =

The first series of Mongrels was released on DVD (region 2 and 4) and Blu @-@ ray disc (region B) on 16 August 2010 . The DVD and Blu @-@ ray discs featured the unbroadcast pilot amongst their extras . A planned DVD and Blu @-@ ray release of the second series was cancelled , . The DVD release of series two was later rescheduled for October 2012 . The second series was made available on DVD on the 8th of October 2012 in the UK , available separately or as a boxset with series 1 . A Blu @-@ ray release of series 2 should become available soon , but no official date has been set for such a release as of June 2014 . Both series are now available on iTunes and Netflix .