

= Mike Bullen =

Michael J. " Mike " Bullen (born 13 January 1960) is an English screenwriter . Bullen grew up in the West Midlands of England , attending the Solihull School and later Magdalene College , Cambridge . He left with a degree in history of art and became a radio producer for the BBC World Service . Unhappy with the quality of British television targeted at people his age , Bullen took a course in screenwriting and developed a one @-@ off comedy drama for Granada Television . This led to the commissioning of Cold Feet , a multiple @-@ award @-@ winning comedy drama that aired on the ITV network from 1998 to 2003 . The series won Bullen the Writer of the Year award at the 2003 British Comedy Awards . He wrote two more series for Granada ; Life Begins , which ran for three years , and All About George , which ran for only one . His works have been described as being " about the intricacies of interpersonal relationships and what happens when they break down " .

Bullen moved with his wife and two children to Australia in 2002 . Two years later he directed his first short film , Amortality Tale . He co @-@ created the Australian / UK television series Tripping Over in 2006 and the writer and director of the Australian television pilot Make or Break in 2007 . He returned to producing work for British television in 2010 with the BBC pilot Reunited , and moved back to the UK in 2011 .

= = Background = =

Bullen was born in Bramhall , Cheshire . Bullen 's father , Alex , was a chemical engineer , and his mother , Joan , was a housewife . Mike and his sister Jane were raised in Solihull , where he attended Solihull School . At the age of 18 he was accepted to Magdalene College , Cambridge , to read economics . He did not enjoy the subject , so switched to history of art . Despite his public school background , Bullen felt out of place at Cambridge among students who did not come from the urban West Midlands , later stating that " Half the students were debutantes who spent a lot of time brushing their hair ; the other half ended up working in Sotheby 's . " His first experiences of writing came when he was a child and wrote a newspaper for his neighbours . At Cambridge , he dramatised a Johann Wolfgang von Goethe novel .

Following his graduation , Bullen began a career as a media planner buyer for an advertising company . The job did not excite him and he has described it as " pretty pointless " . He quit the job to go backpacking in south @-@ east Asia . On his return he applied for a position as a radio producer at Radio Netherlands Worldwide , having previously worked for a hospital radio . He eventually began freelance work for the BBC World Service , where he was a presenter and producer for the magazine programmes On Screen and Outlook .

= = Career = =

= = = 1994 ? 1997 = = =

In 1994 , aged 34 , Bullen began thinking about writing a television script , based on the idea that he could " write crap " on television . He was inspired in particular by the American television series Hill Street Blues (a show he " cancelled [his] social life for ") and Thirtysomething . He began work on scripts for Pie in the Sky and Soldier Soldier but did not complete either . To improve his writing skills , he took a writing course at the National Film and Television School , a comedy course by Anji Loman Field , and attended Robert McKee 's STORY seminar .

He began writing another script , this time drawing on his American television influences . Believing that there was nothing on British television for people in his age group that was not a soap opera or a costume drama , Bullen wrote a script entitled The Perfect Match , about a man who proposes to his girlfriend using the screen at Wembley Stadium during the FA Cup Final . He secured an agent , who managed to sell the script on spec to Andy Harries , controller of comedy at Granada Television

. Harries described the writing as "impressive ? cleverly constructed dialogue , very funny , well observed " and commissioned it as part of his drive to move away from making traditional @-@ style sitcoms . Bullen described the moment he walked onto the set of The Perfect Match as " gobsmacking [?] wandering around a room which had previously only existed in my head " . It was broadcast on ITV in September 1995 to poor reviews .

Harries was pleased enough with Bullen 's work to ask him to pitch some more ideas to The Perfect Match assistant producer Christine Langan , who shared Bullen 's desire to see more television directed at their age bracket . Bullen pitched the idea of a traditional " boy @-@ meets @-@ girl , boy @-@ loses @-@ girl , boy @-@ wins @-@ girl @-@ back " story told from both sides of the relationship but using elements of fantasy and flashback to distort events to fit a character 's point of view . Harries accepted the pitch and Bullen began work on Cold Feet . Initially commissioned as a pilot for ITV 's Comedy Premieres programming strand , the prospect of a full television series was given to Bullen . Cold Feet 's main character , Adam Williams , a lothario character and a serial monogamist , was based on Bullen himself during his twenties . The other main character , Rachel Bradley , was based on a combination of his ex @-@ girlfriends and the " ideal girlfriend " . Harries suggested that if a series were to be commissioned , more characters would be needed . Bullen developed a supporting cast for Cold Feet , basing each character on friends of his . The script for Cold Feet went through " six or seven " drafts before being filmed in 1996 and was broadcast in 1997 . After a hiatus , it was commissioned for a full series . During the hiatus , he wrote a romantic comedy feature film script for Granada and developed a pilot for London Weekend Television , neither of which were picked up . The Writers ' Guild of Great Britain presented to Bullen the award for New Writer of the Year at their awards ceremony in October 1997 .

When he first started writing professionally , Bullen could not structure his scripting in a coherent way , adopting a " mix and match " method ; he began by structuring a script on cards , then typing what he had onto a computer , then returning to the cards . After completing the Cold Feet pilot , he starting writing ten pages of script per day , regardless of the quality of the writing . His own third draft was usually submitted to producers as the " first draft " .

= = = 1998 ? 2003 = = =

Production on the first series of Cold Feet began in January 1998 . Bullen continued his method of developing storylines based on his own life ; he and his wife had their first child in the latter half of 1997 , so he integrated their experiences into the storyline of characters Pete and Jenny , who have their first child in Cold Feet 's first episode . Throughout 1998 , he retained his job at the BBC , working on three radio shows per week at the same time as writing Cold Feet . During the second series he cut back to one show per week . By the time of the third series in 2000 , he felt confident enough that he would have a future in television that he was able to give up radio presenting completely . He moved from his home in London to Cambridge , where he was able to write for two full days a week and at evenings and weekends .

He worked on other projects at the same time as Cold Feet : After watching the 1997 docusoap Holiday Reps , he became interested in what happens in the personal lives of holiday representatives while in foreign countries . Out of this idea he developed Sunburn for BBC One . Sunburn starred Michelle Collins and was broadcast for two series from 1999 to 2000 . Bullen shared writing duties with Lizzie Mickery and Sally Wainwright . His inspiration from American television continued ; following the premiere of The West Wing in 1999 , he began outlining a British version , The Firm , that would be set in Buckingham Palace . The project never moved beyond planning stages because Bullen believed that British political issues such as " cod wars with Spain " are not as " sexy " as the issues covered in The West Wing .

In 1999 , Cold Feet was adapted into a series of the same name for American network NBC . He wrote the screenplay for one of the pilot episodes . At the same time , NBC and Granada Entertainment USA commissioned a pilot script from Bullen entitled Small Beer , which centred on a group of people who take over a microbrewery in the north @-@ western United States .

The third series of Cold Feet (2000) was extended from six to eight episodes by ITV . Bullen

believed that the production team had covered all potential storylines in the first two series , so declined to write any more episodes . A team of five writers was hired by Granada Television , overseen by Bullen as a co @-@ executive producer . Four out of the five writers left the team due to their scripts not being appropriate for the series , leaving only David Nicholls on staff . The writing process had made Bullen think twice about not writing and he began thinking about further storylines , such as mid @-@ life crises and IVF . The same year , he signed a two @-@ year contract with Granada to develop new projects . A fourth series of Cold Feet , also of eight episodes , was commissioned for 2001 . Bullen announced that he did not want to write a fifth series , and that the fourth would be the last . His reasons were that with ITV 's proposed commission of up to 20 episodes a year , the series would become like a soap opera . The popularity of the fourth series persuaded Bullen to write four more episodes that formed the fifth series in 2003 . The fifth series won Bullen the Writer of the Year Award at the 2003 British Comedy Awards .

In 2002 , he began developing Life Begins , a one @-@ hour television series . The following year he conceived George the Third . He moved to Australia in 2002 but continued to work on UK @-@ based series .

= = = 2004 ? 2006 = = =

Life Begins was inspired by Bullen 's re @-@ evaluation of the lives of people around him as they approached 40 years old . During a conversation with a friend he realised that three women he knew had had failed marriages by the time they reached 40 . The series was designed as a vehicle for actress Sarah Lancashire , who had signed an exclusive " golden handcuffs " deal with ITV . Two months after the series was announced , Lancashire left Life Begins , feeling unable to commit to a potentially long @-@ running series . ITV replaced Lancashire with Caroline Quentin . Life Begins concerns Maggie Mee , who believes she is in a loving relationship with her husband Phil (Alexander Armstrong) . When Phil announces on a family holiday that he is leaving her , she realises that she must begin her life again . Bullen wrote the series with John Forte . The first series was broadcast in 2004 . As with Cold Feet , he integrated events from his own life into the storylines ; Maggie 's father suffers from Alzheimer 's disease as does one of Bullen 's own relatives . He researched Maggie 's travel agency job by spending a week at a travel agents ' in Bristol .

In 2003 Bullen made a journey to Perth 's Small Screen Big Picture . On the return leg , after 12 hours of seeing nothing but the Nullarbor Plain through the train window , he began developing a short subject on infidelity at television conferences . The short , entitled Amoral Tale , which marked Bullen 's directorial debut , was screened at various film festivals in 2005 , and was a finalist for the first Rosemount Diamond at the Jackson Hole Film Festival . On the themes of the film , Bullen said , " What has always interested me is the notion of ordinary people and how they react in ordinary situations [?] what fascinated me is the way we arrive at the choices we make . The idea of this film is to say that the choices we make might not lead to the outcomes we expect . " He formerly expressed interest in directing an episode of Cold Feet , but decided against it on the basis that his inexperience would make him " inadequate " and that the job was best left to professional directors . The short was produced by Pommie Granite Productions , a company set up by Bullen after his exclusive contract with Granada ended in September 2004 . At the end of 2004 , he became the seventh person to rewrite the script of the DreamWorks / Aardman Animations film Tortoise vs. Hare . He made at least three drafts .

Alongside the second series of Life Begins , Bullen continued developing George the Third . The title was changed to It Happens until eventually settling on All About George in time for filming in 2005 . All About George starred Rik Mayall as George Kinsey , a builder whose life is changed when six generations of his family move into his home . Initially excited about the series when he attended the cast read @-@ throughs , Bullen 's optimism waned by the time it was broadcast as he felt there were too many characters and the series ' premise unclear . In a 2008 interview , he describes it as one of his worst TV series . Life Begins returned for a third and final series in 2006 . The same year , filming commenced on Tripping Over , a series about intercontinental backpackers in 1976 and 2006 . SeaChange writers Andrew Knight and Andrea Denholm conceived the idea in 2003 and asked

Bullen , a friend of Knight 's , to develop it with them . A co @-@ production between Australia 's Channel Ten and Britain 's Five , Tripping Over was broadcast in both countries at the end of 2006 .

= = = 2007 ? 2012 = = =

In 2007 , Bullen was approached by David Maher , a Fox World producer , who commissioned him to write a television pilot for UKTV . Bullen agreed and spent a " torturous " time trying to come up with an idea for the script . Continuing his trend for taking ideas from real life , he decided to write about a family moving from the UK to Australia . The pilot , entitled Make or Break , was also Bullen 's television directoral debut . British actor Robson Green had recently completed work on " Prayer of the Bone " , a one @-@ off special episode of Wire in the Blood set in the United States . Green and Wire producer Sandra Jobling considered another special episode set in Australia . Green suggested asking Bullen to write the episode and Bullen responded by asking Green if he would like to play the lead in Make or Break . Fox World sent the script to Green and he signed on . As the pilot was Bullen 's first attempt at directing television , he sought advice from the experienced production crew , in particular the director of photography . The pilot was first broadcast in March 2008 . Bullen and Fox World sought financial investment from a UK production company to develop a full @-@ length series .

In 2010 , Bullen wrote his first screenplay for the BBC since Sunburn ; Reunited is a pilot about six friends who once shared a house together reuniting after eight years . Bullen admitted that his career was " declining " before he made Reunited , and he even moved back to the UK for five months while it was produced . He considers Reunited his best work since the end of Cold Feet . The pilot received only 3 @.@ 3 million viewers when it was broadcast , and a series was not commissioned . Bullen has since discussed other projects with Ed Byrne , one of the actors in the pilot .

Bullen and his family returned to the UK in 2011 ; Bullen told The Manly Daily " I realised if I still am going to have a UK @-@ based television career I need to be based in the UK . " As of 2012 , Bullen has three television series in development with British television networks .

= = Personal life = =

Bullen is married to Lisa Bullen , whom he met while working at the BBC . They have two children : Maggie (born 1997) and Rachel (born 1999) . In 2002 the family moved to Avalon , New South Wales . They later moved to Newport , New South Wales and became Australian citizens in 2005 . The family returned to the UK in 2011 .

= = List of works = =