

= Blackadder II =

Blackadder II is the second series of the BBC sitcom Blackadder , written by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton , which aired from 9 January 1986 to 20 February 1986 . The series is set in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558 ? 1603) , and sees the principal character , Edmund , Lord Blackadder , as a Tudor courtier attempting to win the favour of the Queen while avoiding execution by decapitation , a fate that befell many of her suitors .

The series saw a number of significant changes from the format of The Black Adder , notably Ben Elton replacing Rowan Atkinson as the second writer , filming in studio sets , rather than on location , the introduction of the more familiar Machiavellian " Blackadder " character and a less intelligent Baldrick .

= = Plot = =

The series is set during the Elizabethan era (1558 ? 1603) . The principal character , Edmund , Lord Blackadder (Rowan Atkinson) , is the great @-@ grandson of the original Black Adder , and is now a member of the London aristocracy . Unlike his forefather , he is both dashing and intelligent , although he is still scheming and cynical in his outlook . The series follows his attempts to win the favour of the childish Queen Elizabeth I (Miranda Richardson) . As before he is aided , and often hindered , by two less @-@ than @-@ intelligent sidekicks , his servant Baldrick (Tony Robinson) , and Lord Percy Percy (Tim McInnerny) , heir to the Duchy of Northumberland , with whom Blackadder has a grudging friendship .

Throughout the series , Blackadder 's chief rival is Lord Melchett (Stephen Fry) , the Queen 's pretentious and grovelling Lord Chamberlain . Melchett is himself in fear of upsetting the Queen , and thus attempts to outdo Blackadder by supporting the Queen in whatever current fad she is interested in . Comic relief in the Court is provided by the Queen 's rather demented former nanny , Nursie (Patsy Byrne) .

Baldrick , who in the first series was the most intelligent of the main trio , became more stupid , an idea proposed by Ben Elton to make him " the stupidest person in the history of ... human beings " , and to act as a foil to Blackadder 's new @-@ found intelligence . The series was also the originator of Baldrick 's obsession with the turnip , although this apparently arose from a botanical error on the part of Elton , who confused the vegetable with the " amusingly shaped " parsnip .

Lord Percy remained similar in character to the original series , as a foolish sidekick in Blackadder 's plots and predicaments . In this respect , McInnerny has stated that the character bears a resemblance to Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Shakespeare 's Twelfth Night . Indeed , as with The Black Adder , the series featured many tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek references to Shakespeare 's plays ; Shakespeare is mentioned a number of times as a contemporary Elizabethan , and many of his famous quotations are twisted for comic effect . In particular the first episode " Bells " , follows a similar plot to Twelfth Night .

= = Episodes = =

The series aired for six episodes broadcast on Thursdays on BBC One at 9.30pm between 9 January 1986 and 20 February 1986 .

" Head " was originally intended to be the first episode , and was first to be filmed . This resulted in the small continuity error of Lord Percy still having a beard in " Head " which he shaves off in " Bells " . In addition , during the early scenes of " Head " , the principal characters are introduced to the audience with Baldrick 's stupidity highlighted .

= = Production = =

= = Development = =

Due to the high cost of the first series , Michael Grade (the then controller of programming of BBC One) was reluctant to sign off a second series without major improvements and cost @-@ cutting , leaving a gap of three years between the two series .

Rowan Atkinson did not wish to continue writing for the second series , so writer and stand @-@ up comedian Ben Elton was chosen to replace him . According to producer John Lloyd , Ben Elton was particularly keen on the choice of the Elizabethan age for the series , because it was " a sexy age that the kids can relate to . " As a stand @-@ up comic , Elton often acted as the studio warm @-@ up comic to amuse the audience before filming began . The scripts were also tightened up during principal rehearsals with the actors ? according to Richard Curtis , a whole script for a murder mystery ? style episode was dropped because the writers felt it did not work .

= = = Filming = = =

To make the show more cost @-@ effective , it was principally filmed on specially designed small sets at BBC Television Centre created by designer Tony Thorpe . The sets were de @-@ constructed and rebuilt during the period of studio filming , as was normal for studio series then . In particular , the Queen 's throne room and Blackadder 's front room were featured in every episode , with only two further unique sets per episode , including an execution chamber in " Head " and a Spanish dungeon in " Chains " . Only one outside location shoot was used in the whole series , which took place before principal filming on Thursday 30 May 1985 at Wilton House , Wiltshire . These outdoor scenes were Blackadder 's courting scene in " Bells " and the end title sequences . Studio recordings shot in front of a live audience began on Sunday 9 June 1985 with the recording of " Head " . Subsequent episodes were filmed on a weekly basis in the sequence " Bells " , " Potato " , " Money " , " Beer " and " Chains " . Director Mandie Fletcher was keen for the action to be shot spontaneously and was averse to complex costume changes or special effects which required recording to be halted . She is reputed to have said filming it was " a bit like doing Shakespeare in front of an audience - it 's not at all like doing sitcom . "

= = = Cast = = =

The size of the principal cast was reduced compared to the previous series , with a fixed number of characters appearing in every episode . Richard Curtis has been quoted as saying that due to the familiar cast , the series was the happiest for him to work on , comparing it to a " friendly bunch of school chums " .

Rowan Atkinson as Lord Edmund Blackadder

Tim McInnerny as Lord Percy Percy , Heir to the Duchy of Northumberland

Tony Robinson as Baldrick

Miranda Richardson as Queen Elizabeth I of England

Stephen Fry as Lord Melchett , the Lord Chamberlain

Patsy Byrne as Nursie

The series also featured at least one significant cameo role per episode , with notable appearances from Rik Mayall , playing the debonair Lord Flashheart in " Bells " , two figures famous for their roles in science fiction series - Tom Baker and Simon Jones - in " Potato " , Miriam Margolyes , who had appeared in the previous series , as the puritanical Lady Whiteadder , and Stephen Fry 's comedy partner Hugh Laurie appearing twice , first as the drunken Simon Partridge in " Beer " and in the final episode as the evil Prince Ludwig . Laurie was later given a larger role as George in the next two series . Also " Bob " , played by Gabrielle Glaister , a former classmate of Ben Elton 's , made " his " first appearance . Several of the characters were seen in similar guises in later series .

= = = Music and titles = = =

The opening titles are accompanied by a mock @-@ Elizabethan arrangement of Howard Goodall

's Blackadder theme played on a recorder and an electric guitar , and feature a black snake slithering about on a marble table . The snake , noncompliant to the wishes of its handler , is eventually removed and replaced with something related to the episode title , which in this series is always a single noun . The opening ominous string crescendo and imagery are a parody of the opening credits of the 1976 BBC television adaptation of Robert Graves ' I , Claudius .

The closing titles use a different arrangement of the theme , sung by countertenor Jeremy Jackman , with lyrics (usually insulting Blackadder) that reflect the events of the preceding episode . The song is played over a shot of Blackadder strolling through a formal garden and being annoyed by the lute @-@ wielding minstrel (Tony Aitken) . This sequence was incorporated as a separate subplot , with Blackadder constantly attempting to apprehend the musician each time with limited success . At the end of the final episode , Blackadder catches the minstrel and repeatedly dunks him in a fountain .

= = Releases = =

The complete series of Blackadder II is available as a Region 2 DVD from BBC Worldwide , as well as in a complete box @-@ set with the other series , most recently as a remastered edition including a commentary on selected episodes . An earlier VHS release of the series was also produced in 1996 . The series is also available in Region 1 DVD in a box @-@ set of the complete series . In addition , an audio recording taken from the television episodes is available on cassette and compact disc .

= = = VHS releases = = =

In about October 1989 , BBC Enterprises Ltd released all 6 episodes of Blackadder II on two single videos and on 7 September 1992 all 6 episodes of Blackadder II were re @-@ released on ' Complete ' double VHS releases . All 6 episodes were re @-@ released on a single video release on 2 October 1995 .

= = = DVD releases = = =