

= Inside No. 9 =

Inside No. 9 is a British dark comedy anthology television programme written by Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton and produced by the BBC . The first series was broadcast between 5 February and 12 March 2014 on BBC Two , and a second series aired from 26 March to 29 April 2015 . Each half @-@ hour episode is a self @-@ contained story with new characters and a new setting , and all star at least one (usually both) of Pemberton and Shearsmith . Aside from the writers , each episode has a new cast , allowing Inside No. 9 to attract a number of well @-@ known actors . The stories are linked only by the fact that each takes place at a number 9 , whether this is a suburban house , a gothic mansion or a barn . Pemberton and Shearsmith took inspiration for Inside No. 9 from an episode of Psychoville , a previous project , which was filmed in a single room . This episode was , in turn , inspired by Alfred Hitchcock 's Rope . Inside No. 9 was also a reaction to Psychoville , which featured a long overarching story realised over multiple series .

Themes and tone varied from episode @-@ to @-@ episode , but all have elements of comedy and horror . The first series contained six episodes . " Sardines " concerns a game of sardines at an engagement party . " A Quiet Night In " , an episode almost entirely free of dialogue , follows a pair of hapless burglars breaking into a modernist house . In " Tom & Gerri " , an aspiring novelist invites a homeless man into his flat . " Last Gasp " sees a popstar die while blowing up a balloon at a sick child 's birthday party . In " The Understudy " , an understudy in a West End production of Macbeth longs for the lead role . The series 's final episode was " The Harrowing " , a gothic horror story in which a schoolgirl housesits a mansion belonging to a brother and sister . An online @-@ only episode composed of cinemagraphs , " The Inventors " , was also released by the BBC , but was not written by Pemberton and Shearsmith . The second series also contained six episodes . " La Couchette " follows a group of passengers on a French sleeper carriage , while " The 12 Days of Christine " tells the story of a young woman 's life . " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " is a period piece concerning a witch trial in a 17th @-@ century village . " Cold Comfort " follows a number of characters working at a crisis hotline call centre . " Nana 's Party " involves family secrets being revealed during a grandmother 's birthday party . The final episode , " Séance Time " , begins with a young woman visiting a medium . A third series has been commissioned .

Inside No. 9 as a whole has been very well received by critics , who have praised the humour and creativity of the scripts , as well as the talent of the featured actors . The programme was variously described as " never less @-@ than @-@ captivating " and " consistently compelling " . Inside No. 9 won the Sketch and Comedy prize at the 35th annual Banff World Media Festival Rockie Awards , and was nominated for the Best TV Sitcom prize at the 2014 Freesat Awards , the Broadcast Award for Best Original Programme , and at the 2014 British Comedy Awards for both the Best New Comedy Programme and the Best Comedy Drama . However , sympathetic critics have suggested that the programme may be an acquired taste ; despite generally high acclaim , some journalists were highly critical of Inside No. 9 , and the viewing figures were comparatively low . The first series was released on DVD on 17 March 2014 , with a second series DVD being released on 4 May 2015 .

= = Format = =

Inside No. 9 is an anthology series , with each episode featuring a new story , with a new setting and new characters . Episodes last around half an hour , with the self @-@ contained story reaching a conclusion . The stories are linked only by the fact that each takes place in number 9 , be that a mansion , a dressing room or a flat . Every episode stars at least one of Shearsmith or Pemberton , and normally both . Each episode is effectively a short play , and could easily be performed on stage . Most episodes take place in real @-@ time , following half an hour in the lives of the characters .

As is typical of Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton 's work , the scripts address dark topics , with , for instance , the first episode touching upon incest , child sexual abuse and murder . The plotlines make use of twists and surprises of various sorts , though in some cases the surprise is the lack of twist . In an interview , Pemberton said that " there is always a desire to wrong @-@ foot the

viewer . That 's what you strive to do " . The tone varies episode @-@ by @-@ episode . For example , while gothic horror was a major component in one case , other times slapstick comedy was used extensively ; the humour , however , is typically dark and British . The episodes generally begin with scenes of " utter banality " , before the darker elements are revealed . Inside No. 9 is somewhat more grounded and realistic than the writers ' previous work , such as Psychoville and The League of Gentlemen . Pemberton said that they decided not to mix the worlds of Inside No. 9 and their previous work , but nonetheless include the occasional reference ; for example , a character called " Ollie " is mentioned in one Inside No. 9 episode , and the writers imagined that this was Ollie Plimsoles of Legz Akimbo , a character from The League of Gentlemen . Despite the various episodes featuring unrelated plots and characters , one reviewer said that they are all linked " by a mercurial synthesis of morbid comedy , wicked social commentary and a genuine creepiness " .

= = Production and development = =

In 2012 , after the cancellation of their Psychoville , writers Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith were commissioned to produce two series for the BBC by controllers Janice Hadlow and Cheryl Taylor , partially in response to Sky beginning to produce comedy . At the time , it was unclear whether this would be two series of Inside No. 9 , then known by the working title Happy Endings , or a series of Inside No. 9 and a series of some other programme . Inside No. 9 was to be produced by a BBC team , which was later revealed to be David Kerr (director) , Jon Plowman (executive producer) and Adam Tandy (producer) .

Pemberton and Shearsmith took inspiration for Inside No. 9 from " David and Maureen " , episode 4 of the first series of Psychoville , which was in turn inspired by Alfred Hitchcock 's Rope . This episode took place entirely in a single room , and was filmed in only two shots . The writers were keen to explore other stories in this bottle episode or TV play format , and Inside No. 9 allowed them to do this . At the same time , the concept of Inside No. 9 was a " reaction " to Psychoville , with Shearsmith saying that the two of them had " been so involved with labyrinthine over @-@ arcing , we thought it would be nice to do six different stories with a complete new house of people each week . That 's appealing , because as a viewer you might not like this story , but you 've got a different one next week . " Elsewhere , Shearsmith explained that the pair returned to writing macabre stories as they " always feel slightly unfulfilled if [they] write something that 's purely comedic , [as] it just feels too frivolous and light " . During the filming Inside No. 9 , Shearsmith professed excitement to be working on the programme , saying that " [b] eing in the middle of filming a third series of Psychoville would be utterly depressing " . Pemberton and Shearsmith aimed for a simpler experience with Inside No. 9 than they had experienced with Psychoville , describing " Sardines " , Inside No. 9 's first episode , by saying that it was " just about some good actors in a wardrobe with a good story . "

The anthology series is currently a rare genre for British television programmes . Previous horror anthologies include Tales of the Unexpected , The Twilight Zone and Alfred Hitchcock Presents ; while these would sometimes utilise comedic elements , they are more prominent in Inside No. 9 . Murder Most Horrid followed a similar format , but was far more comedic than horrific . Other anthology @-@ like series on British television include Seven of One and Comedy Playhouse , though these programmes lacked horror elements , and , unlike Inside No. 9 , served as pilots for potential series . For Pemberton , the 1970s and 1980s were " full of " anthology shows ; other examples included Play for Today , Beasts and Armchair Thriller . More recently , anthologies have become less popular with television executives , but the writers hope that they may be able to contribute to a " renaissance " for the genre . According to journalist and broadcaster Mark Lawson , this is because anthologies can fail to motivate viewers to stay with a series , and , further , new sets and casts must be paid for each episode , meaning that a six @-@ part anthology series will generally be more expensive than a six @-@ part series in a more standard format . For Lawson , Inside No. 9 was able to overcome these problems through the " pleasing coherence " offered by the fact each episode was set in a number 9 , and " the wit and inventiveness " of the opening episodes

, which could sufficiently engage viewers . Pemberton and Shearsmith had originally considered alternative ways to link the stories , such as all the settings having a shared post man , but then decided that such a strong relationship between stories was not needed .

Inspiration and production varied from instalment to instalment , and each was filmed separately , taking less than a week per episode . After Shearsmith and Pemberton had decided that each episode would be about confinement , and having written some of the later episodes , they were inspired by a wardrobe in their working space for " Sardines " . The writers were keen to see how confined they could make the characters , aiming to induce feelings of claustrophobia in viewers . The anthology format allowed Pemberton and Shearsmith to revisit prior ideas , which is what they did with " A Quiet Night In " and " Tom & Gerri " . The former was inspired by the writers ' efforts to include a long segment without dialogue in an episode of Psychoville . Both episodes followed break @-@ ins . The Pinteresque " Tom & Gerri " was based upon a play written by Pemberton and Shearsmith while the pair were living together and job seeking . The setting was based upon their own flat , while the character Tom 's development evoked the experience of job @-@ hunting . " Last Gasp " was inspired by a person Pemberton had seen on Multi @-@ Coloured Swap Shop who collected jars of air , as well as the death of Michael Jackson and the death of Amy Winehouse . " The Understudy " , the plot of which is partially based upon and concerns Macbeth , took longer to write than any other episode ; the writers rewrote the script several times , as they were unsure of whether the characters should be amateur or professional actors . " The Harrowing " was the writers ' attempt to produce a gothic horror episode . They made use of more horror tropes than previous episodes , but the setting allowed them to include modern elements .

The BBC ordered a second series of Inside No. 9 before the first episode had aired . The second series was written in 2014 , and then filmed from the end of 2014 into early 2015 . The writers were permitted two sets for the second series , and so a fake train compartment and a fake flat (for " La Couchette " and " The 12 Days of Christine " respectively) were built at Twickenham Studios . The other episodes were filmed on location ; for example , " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " was filmed in a barn at the Chiltern Open Air Museum . David Kerr was unable to stay on as director for the second series . Guillem Morales and Dan Zeff each took on directorial duties for two episodes , and Pemberton and Shearsmith , in addition to continuing to write and star in the episodes , jointly directed the other two . The writers had hoped to direct for some time , and this represented a good opportunity to make their directorial debut . While writing for the series , the pair did not know which episodes they would be directing ; in an interview , Shearsmith said that the pair had considered directing episodes in which they did not appear much , but scheduling concerns left them with " Cold Comfort " and " Nana 's Party " ; the episodes feature the writers quite heavily .

The six episodes of the second series derived inspiration from a variety of sources . " La Couchette " aimed to explore the intimacy of sleeper carriages ; specifically , the unusual problems associated with sleeping in close proximity to strangers . " The 12 Days of Christine " follows a woman over the course of 12 years , with scenes displaying key moments in her life . " The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge " was inspired by genuine witch trials , some transcripts of which Pemberton and Shearsmith had read as part of the writing process . " Cold Comfort " began with the idea of a call centre , and was filmed in the style of a CCTV feed . With " Nana 's Party " , the writers aimed for a feeling of suburban darkness , reminiscent of the work of Alan Ayckbourn . " Séance Time " began with the idea of a séance , an idea the writers had wanted to explore for some time .

A third series was commissioned in October 2015 by the BBC . Pemberton has said that he would be interested in an online spin @-@ off , perhaps called No. 9A , with less experienced comedy writers . In an interview , he said " The format has so many opportunities and can incorporate so many styles , as long as you stick to the small cast , single location constraint . I think it 's really important to bring through fresh voices . "

= = Episodes = =

= = = Series 1 (2014) = = =

=== Online episode ===

A special online @-@ only episode of Inside No. 9 , " The Inventors " , was launched by the BBC on 12 February 2014 . " The Inventors " stars Tom Verall and Dan Renton Skinner as brothers who lost their mother in the Great Storm of 1987 . The story is told through a series of cinemagraphs with dialogue . The episode is interactive , advancing only with input from the viewer . " The Inventors " was developed by media agency Kanoti , and produced by Jon Aird , who had previously produced BAFTA @-@ winning online content for Psychoville , with executive producer Will Saunders . It was directed by Martin Stirling .

=== Series 2 (2015) ===

== Cast ==

As each episode of Inside No. 9 features new characters , the writers were able to attract actors who may have been unwilling to commit to an entire series . The writers ' reputation also helped attract writers , with journalist David Chater saying that they " have developed such a track record over the years that many of the finest actors in the country jump at the chance to appear in their dark imaginings " . The fact that Pemberton and Shearsmith only played a single character in each story was a change for them ; in The League of Gentlemen , the pair have played some 30 characters each , while , in Psychoville , they had played around five each . Though Pemberton and Shearsmith generally starred in each episode , they did not necessarily take on the main roles . Shearsmith explained this by saying that they " didn 't write this for us to be in . We wrote the stories first then thought , could we be in them ? "

=== Series 1 ===

=== Series 2 ===

== Distribution ==

The first series of Inside No. 9 was shown in the UK on BBC Two (and BBC Two HD) between 5 February and 12 March 2014 . It was aired in Australia on BBC First , premiering on 5 January 2015 . The second series aired in the UK from 26 March to 29 April 2015 , and aired in Australia from 27 July 2015 .

The first series was released on DVD on 17 March 2014 . In addition to the six episodes , the DVD featured the making of feature " Inside Inside No. 9 " , including unseen interviews with Pemberton , Shearsmith and Kerr , and a photo gallery with previously unreleased photos . Published by 2 Entertain , the DVD was rated 18 by the British Board of Film Classification . To publicise the DVD , the writers appeared at the Oxford Street , London , branch of HMV for a signing event on 20 March . The DVD was reviewed by David Upton for webzine PopMatters , who gave the main feature an 8 / 10 rating , and the extras a 5 / 10 rating , and Ben Walsh for The Independent , who gave the DVD overall 4 / 5 . Phelim O 'Neill , reviewing the release for The Guardian , described the boxset as " very lendable " , suggesting that it would help Inside No. 9 reach a wider audience . South African newspapers The Sunday Times and The Star both published positive reviews of the DVD , with The Star 's anonymous review saying the DVD " makes a great prezzie for cynics , so if you know any lawyers or journalists ... " . The second series was released on DVD on 4 May 2015 . A review in the Leicester Mercury awarded it four out of five stars .

= = Reception and performance = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Many critics responded very positively to Inside No. 9 . After the final episode , comedic critic Bruce Dessau said on his website that the series " really set an early benchmark to beat for comedy of the year . It has been consistently compelling as each week we entered an entirely different world . " On the same day , David Chater , writing in The Times , said of the series as a whole that " [i] t 's hard to know which to admire more ? the rich and perverse imaginations of Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith or the extraordinary range of acting talent that has brought this strange and memorable series to life . " Chater had previously described " A Quiet Night In " , the second episode of Inside No. 9 , as " the funniest , cleverest , most imaginative and original television I have seen for as long as I can remember ? one of those fabulous programmes where time stands still and the world around you disappears " . Mark Jones (The Guardian) considered the whole series , saying that the Inside No. 9 was " never less @-@ than @-@ captivating " , while a review in the Liverpool Echo described every episode as " intriguing and lovingly @-@ crafted " , though it was felt that the first three episodes were stronger than the latter three . In December 2014 , Metro television critic Keith Watson named Inside No. 9 the twentieth best television programme of 2014 , and in January 2015 , Daily Star Sunday columnist Garry Bushell named Inside No. 9 the best comedy TV programme of 2014 .

Writing before Inside No. 9 was televised , broadcaster and journalist Mark Lawson suggested that , among anthology series , the programme possessed " the potential to be remembered as a singular achievement " . Commending both the acting and writing of Inside No. 9 , New Statesman television critic Rachel Cooke offered a positive verdict of the programme after seeing the first half of the series . Cooke expressed particular admiration of Pemberton and Shearsmith 's ability to squeeze " perfectly formed narratives ? characters with proper backstories , scenarios that are complicated and unwind relatively slowly ? into just 30 minutes " . Also writing mid @-@ series , journalist Gareth Lightfoot called Inside No. 9 " hands down the best , freshest thing on [television] at the moment " in the Evening Gazette , though he doubted whether it could truly be considered comedy .

Donal Lynch , of Irish newspaper the Sunday Independent , suggested that , like the previous work of Pemberton and Shearsmith , Inside No. 9 may be something of " a cult hit / acquired taste " . Barry Didcock , of The Herald , expressed a similar sentiment , calling Inside No. 9 " probably the most Marmitey programme on television " . The Times published a response to a complaint received from a viewer , who was unhappy with Chater 's positive reviews of Inside No. 9 , suggesting that " A Quiet Night In " was more traumatic than humorous . Sam Wollaston , television critic for The Guardian , noted that humour is extremely personal , and though he could appreciate much about Inside No. 9 , he had never liked Pemberton and Shearsmith 's work : " I 'm sure I 'll be crucified ? probably quite rightly ? but I don 't love Inside No 9 . " Some tabloid columnists also expressed dissatisfaction with the programme . Virginia Blackburn , of the Daily Express , wrote a highly critical review of " Last Gasp " . Blackburn considered Inside No. 9 an example of the weakness of contemporary television comedy , saying that the episode is " not funny , it 's not clever and is so utterly , irredeemably , naffly silly that it ends up being incredibly irritating and nothing else " . Another journalist unimpressed was the Daily Mirror columnist Kevin O 'Sullivan , who dismissed the programme by saying simply " BBC2 's alleged comedy Inside No. 9 : didn 't even smile " .

Cooke observed the difficulty in reviewing Inside No. 9 as a whole due to the fact that each episode is different from the last . " Sardines " was commended for its cast and acting , as well as the scripting , but critics had a mixed response to the twist ending . " A Quiet Night In " was a change in approach , relying on physical comedy , but it was well received as funny , and inventive . " Tom & Gerri " was less comedic but darker than previous episodes ; critics commended the plot , but disagreed about the portrayal of mental illness in the episode . Less horrific than other episodes in the series , " Last Gasp " dealt with themes of celebrity culture and fandom , and was considered a

weaker instalment . Critics called " The Understudy " a " return to form " . While it was based upon Macbeth , a knowledge of the play was not necessary for enjoyment , and the plot 's divergence from the play was praised . " The Harrowing " was the most horrific episode of the series , and was considered genuinely scary by critics .

= = = Viewing figures = = =

Despite the generally positive reception among critics and viewers , the viewing figures for the series were poor . The average viewing figures for the series were 904 @, @ 000 people , or 4 @. @ 9 % of the audience , lower than the slot average of 970 @, @ 000 (5 @. @ 1 % of the audience) . The series had a strong start , with 1 @. @ 1 million viewers , which was 5 @. @ 6 % of the audience , watching " Sardines " . The series low was the fifth episode , " The Understudy " , which attracted 720 @, @ 000 viewers (4 @. @ 1 % of the audience) .

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

Thanks to their work on Inside No. 9 , Pemberton and Shearsmith jointly won the 2014 / 2015 Royal Television Society Programme award for best comedy performance . The other nominees were Harry Enfield , for his performance in Harry and Paul 's Story of the Twos , and Sarah Hadland , for her performance in The Job Lot . The pair were also jointly nominated for the 2015 British Academy Television Craft Award for comedy writer for their work on Inside No. 9 , but lost to Mackenzie Crook for his work on Detectorists . Arthur Matthews and Matt Berry (Toast of London) and Mathew Baynton and James Corden (The Wrong Mans) were the other nominees . The following year , Guillem Morales was nominated for the Television Craft Award for Breakthrough Talent for his work on " The 12 Days of Christine " , but lost to Michaela Coel , who wrote Chewing Gum . The other nominees were D. C. Moore (Not Safe for Work) and Marcus Plowright (Muslim Drag Queens) .

At the 2013 / 2014 Royal Television Society Craft and Design Awards , Lisa Cavalli @- @ Green was nominated for the " Make Up Design ? Drama " award for her work on Inside No. 9 , but lost to Davy Jones , for his work on In the Flesh . Loz Schiavo (Peaky Blinders) was the other nominee . Due in part to her role in " The Harrowing " , Aimee @- @ Ffion Edwards was shortlisted for WalesOnline 's " Daffta " award for best actress , but lost to Eve Myles . The Dafftas celebrate Welsh television talent and prizes are awarded based on a public vote .

Inside No. 9 itself won the Sketch and Comedy prize at the 35th annual Banff World Media Festival Rockie Awards . The other nominees were Do I Have to Take Care of Everything ? , It 's a Date , Tiny Plastic Men , Gangsta Granny and The Revolution Will Be Televised . In response to the nomination , Shearsmith tweeted that he was " [t] hrilled " , joking that the programme was " in ' Comedy ' . I knew it was one " . Inside No. 9 was also nominated for Best TV Sitcom at the 2014 Freesat Awards , which celebrate the best of free British television . The programme lost to BBC2 's The Wrong Mans , as determined by a panel made up of television experts and commentators . The other nominees were Birds of a Feather , Mrs. Brown 's Boys and Toast of London . In November 2014 , it was announced that Inside No. 9 had been shortlisted for the 2015 Broadcast Award for Best Original Programme . The other nominees were Crackanory , Glasgow Girls , Release the Hounds , Suspects and The Island with Bear Grylls . At the award ceremony in London on 4 February 2015 , Glasgow Girls was granted the award , but Inside No. 9 was highly commended . Inside No. 9 won the TV award at the 2015 Chortle Awards . The programme was longlisted for the Best Comedy prize in the 2015 TV Choice Awards .

At the 2014 British Comedy Awards , Inside No. 9 was nominated in the Best New Comedy Programme and the Best Comedy Drama categories . In the former category , it lost to Toast of London . The other nominees were The Wrong Mans and Man Down . In the latter category , it lost to Rev , and the other nominees were The Wrong Mans and Uncle . For Chater (The Times) , the comedy drama category was the strongest of the awards , but for Ben Williams (Time Out) , Inside No. 9 should have won . Writing in The Independent , journalist Alice Jones said she was " sorry to see the relentlessly innovative Inside No 9 go unrewarded " .

