



## **The Funny Thing About...**

*The Funny Thing About...Journalists*

### **Jeremy Paxman:**

Good evening. If the autocue was working I could now read you something but as it isn't I can't.

### **Derek Matravers:**

Comedy from journalists comes from the fact that they have to do two things which are sort of contradictory because on the one hand they have to tell the truth, they're supposed to be our access to the news to the truth and on the other hand...

they are competing against other journalists so they have to be entertaining and that's why I think people are sometimes cynical about journalists

Music: out

### **Journalist:**

I'm here at the "Askolopia Hospital" in Athens and what we're being told here tonight is that the head of the surgical team treating the 59 year old woman at the centre of this unfolding drama Doctor Astoprofanopolis will come out of that door that you can see behind me down the ramp and then make a statement to the waiting media any moment now.

Presenter in studio:

And do we know what he's likely to say in that bulletin?

### **Journalist:**

Well Francis, not at this stage no. And it may well be that we don't know what he's going to say until he's saying it.

Presenter in studio: And Will when you say that at the moment we don't know what he's going to say...

### **Derek Matravers:**

Before it just becomes absurd you watch it and you think yeah, ok, well, maybe nothing's happening but he sounds as if he's saying stuff to you. And then you think about it and he's not saying anything at all.

### **Journalist:**

At this stage we don't even know if Dr Astoprofanopolis is a man or indeed a woman.

### **Derek Matravers:**

The danger with 24 hour news is you have all this time to fill. You can get a story which...

...in the old days might have had a bit of a life and then died and the story tends to run and run or a story gets prominence which it wouldn't otherwise have got.

A lot of jobs in the media are real skivvy jobs...and you can end up doing a long apprenticeship making coffee before you do anything particularly interesting.

David Mitchell: You'll need these. The blackberries in case anyone needs a latte or something urgently so you can come straight up and the canary to tell you if the mine's filling up with poisonous gas 'cos if it is it'll start to die.

### **Robert Webb:**

Right ok. I mean, obviously I really want this job it's just...

### **David Mitchell:**

Look this is TV. Maybe one day in a few years time you'll be researching on 'Any Dream Will Do'. But before that there's a hell of a lot of mining to get through.

**Derek Matravers:**

What you've got there is this enormous imbalance where somebody quite reasonably wants a job and yet the capacity of somebody exploiting them is legion because if they don't do it there's a queue of people who would do it. I can write my books, I write my books and nobody reads them, I don't really make much of a difference but if you're a journalist you can uncover a story about exploitation you can put that on the television or in the newspaper and write it in a way that people will just stand up and say we ought to take notice of this.

Music: in

...so you can take the skills the Arts faculty will teach you which are the ability to analyse argument, the ability to sift through evidence, the ability to communicate your ideas both in written form and verbally and really put them to good use to make a difference in the world.