

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Mini-Episode 20: British Comedy

(Brief intro music)

Rachel: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a reader's advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I am Rachel, purportedly. The podcast's other host, Leah, is—very much like myself—churning out mini-episode after mini-episode to keep you entertained while the library building is closed. At time of recording, our Governor's Safe at Home order has been extended to just about the end of May 2020. Please continue to practice social distancing and healthy hygiene, listeners. We have been promoting a slew of digital resources on our website and social media channels, so visit [oakcreeklibrary.org](http://oakcreeklibrary.org) or look for us on Facebook @oakcreeklibrary. You can also contact us weekdays between 9:00 and 5:00 in case you have any questions that need answering. Leave a message on our voicemail by calling 414 766-7900, and feel free to email us by using the address [library@oakcreekwi.org](mailto:library@oakcreekwi.org). We also do our best to respond quickly on Facebook Messenger, should you prefer that line of communicate. As for Not Your Mother's Library, we are continuing to share some of our favorite things with you. There are no limits to the types of media we consume on the daily. This month, I have been delving into different genres, so let's wrap up May with something lighter—something filled with laughter. We are going to take a quick peek at British comedy. Ricky Gervais supplied an article for Time.com describing the difference between American and British humor. For those who don't know, Gervais wrote and starred in the original version of "The Office" as well as a few other comedies over the years, and he is a standup comedian in his own right. Almost everyone has watched and enjoyed the U.S. version of "The Office," as it is generally considered one of the most highly rated sitcoms of all time, and its popularity has helped to make Gervais a millionaire—no joke. In the article, he writes, "Americans don't hide their hopes and fears. They applaud ambition and openly reward success. Brits are more comfortable with life's losers. Failure and disappointment lurk around every corner. Our brashness and swagger is laden with equal portions of self-deprecation. This is our license to hand it out. I guess the biggest difference between the U.S. version and the U.K. version of 'The Office' reflected this. We had to make [the main character] a slightly nicer guy. He could still be childish, and insecure, and even a bore, but he couldn't be too mean. Network America has to give people a reason to like you, not just a reason to watch you." And that sums it up, listeners. Brits hone dry humor and sarcasm into a fine art, but they're still uncomfortable and awkward underneath it all. American comedies tend to be a bit more on the nose because they don't depend on that internal cringe factor. Neither version is better than the other, they're just a bit different. And with that confusing explanation aside, I will move onto my top five recommendations for humor-laden Brit sitcoms. Join me, will you, on this fantastic journey into the realms of comedy. Number one: "Black Books." Normally, I don't list my favorites in order, because that's like picking a preferred child, but I have to say, "Black Books" occupies a very special place in the cockles of my heart. Starring Dylan Moran, Bill Bailey, and Tamsin Greig, this series is about a misanthropic book salesman, his optimistic employee, and the shop owner next door. The plots are outlandish and exude a vibe exclusive to the early noughties, which is, of course, the time period in which they were filmed in front of a live studio audience. "Black Books" seems to jump back and forth between being available on Netflix and Hulu, and due to its age and semi-cult following it can be difficult to find DVD versions that will work on American disc drives. There is currently

only one copy of the complete set available through Milwaukee County Libraries, so put it on hold to have it sent to your local branch before all of your friends catch on and try to get it for themselves.

Number two: “Spaced.” This series actually came out just before “Black Books” at the end of the ‘90s and ran into the early 2000s. A pair of friends pretend to be dating in order to rent out an affordable couples-only flat, and, in addition to their own strange friends, they meet some downright weird new neighbors. It stars a young Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, and Jessica Hynes. There are only 14 episodes, so bingeing won’t make too much of a dent in your normal routine. It’s on Hulu at the moment, and DVDs are available through some Milwaukee libraries.

Number three: “The IT Crowd.” I almost have to wonder if three is the secret to success when it comes to the number of leads in these comedies. Starring Richard Ayoade, Chris O’Dowd, and Katherine Parkinson, “The IT Crowd” follows a group of basement-dwelling IT workers at a large company. It came out in the mid-2000s but feels almost timeless compared to the other’s I’ve mentioned. Plus, Ayoade is one of the funniest people in the world, so if you need one very good reason to watch, it’s him. He’s the reason. For now, “The IT Crowd” is available on Netflix and, like the others, you can put physical copies of each season on hold once the library opens back up again.

Number four: “Green Wing.” This is probably the most ‘American’ out of the lot in terms of blatant silliness, but it still has that special English charm. Taking place in a hospital and following a much larger ensemble cast, “Green Wing” stars a few familiar faces, including Tamsin Greig from “Black Books,” and Mark Heap who plays a side character on “Spaced.” There’s also Stephen Mangan in most excellent form; the utterly crazy and fantastic Michelle Gomez; and one of my personal favorite actors, Julian Rind-Tutt. While “Green Wing” can be streamed on Hulu, it is not actually available through the Milwaukee County Public Library system. However, that means this is a perfect excuse to plug our Inter-Library Loan system. For items that can’t be requested through the CountyCat catalog—which is what we use—you can ask a librarian to see if it’s available as an ILL. We check a worldwide catalog and can place items on hold for you through that service, although there are some more restrictions. For example, after ILL hold is placed, the item usually takes two to six weeks to arrive at the library. The loan period belongs to the owning library, which you won’t find out about until after the item is actually in-hand. Sometimes—rarely, but sometimes—an item that we see listed as available through other libraries can go missing or is unable to be found. If that happens, you’ll receive a postcard in the mail saying so; that way you won’t be left in the dark about its status. Through us here at Oak Creek Public Library, you can have five ILL items out at any given time, but we do not offer hold lists. Also, there is a \$1.00 per day fine for overdue ILL items; be aware that there is no cap on that. All that being said, it’s an excellent way to check out the odd item that might not be in our collection, so next time you are at Oak Creek Public Library, stop by the second-floor service desk and ask about Inter Library Loans.

Is “Green Wing” worth it? Well, I obviously think so. Moving onto number five: “The Office” and “Extras.” Yeah, I’m doing a combo—sue me. I have already talked a little about the U.K. version of “The Office,” which is worth watching even if you’ve seen the American version multiple times over. Right after Gervais’s original version came out in the early noughties, he followed it with “Extras.” This show also casts him as the lead, this time as an unlucky TV and movie extra who wants more than anything to become a fully-fledged actor. There are a lot of famous guest stars, but what does it for me is the heart. Remember that article I quoted earlier? Well, Gervais also wrote that “Brits almost expect doom and gloom, so to start off that way but then have a happy ending is an unexpected joy.” And yeah, the ridiculous things these characters go through in all of the TV series I just recommended make you laugh. But the way the characters are grounded as human beings amplifies our connection with them. That makes their successes, no matter how small in the face of their constant

embarrassment, so much more meaningful. Alright, that's enough of my blathering. I may have studied the English language, but I am not very eloquent. Basically, these comedies will make you laugh so hard that you will cry, so watch 'em. Everything will be listed in the show notes, as usual. You can reach out to us through OCPL's website or Facebook page. Use the #notyourmotherslibrary, and be so kind as to subscribe and/or rate the podcast if you like what you hear. Thanks for listening, m'dears. Until next time, happy reading.

(Brief outro music)