

# It'll Be Alright on the Night...

## the original 'blooper' show, invented before email or internet

As a starry eyed thirteen-year-old, I was 'over the moon' when, during Christmas 1987, my family purchased a brand new VCR. The very first programme I taped on my cutting-edge, state-of-the-art VHS recorder was LWT's *It'll be Alright on Christmas Night*. Little did I know that, some 15 years later, I would end up producing the world's longest-running clip show.

*It'll be Alright on the Night* was the very first blooper show on the planet and has been running for 37 years. Denis Norden took the idea for an out-takes show to LWT's Director of Programmes, Michael Grade, back in 1977, and within a few minutes the show was green lit. If only the commissioning process was so simple today!

Tapping into the showbiz tradition of compiling a 'funnies' tape to screen to the production staff and crew at the annual Christmas Party, the first *It'll be Alright on the Night* "barely had enough clips to last the show" according to then producer Paul Smith.

Back in those days, the small team included researchers Victoria Poushkin and Paul Lewis who would later go on to become the show's Producer. They had the unenviable task of telephoning (remember there was no email or internet then) as many TV channels and production offices around the world asking for funny out-takes (the show's concept, even today, needs explaining at great lengths to some parts of the world). If the researchers struck gold, they would then have had to wait weeks, possibly months for a screener to arrive.

The best clips were then dubbed off to send to Denis who, from his Soho office, personally selected and categorised every single out-take himself during his 29 year run as writer and presenter. He once joked that after all those years of watching TV he needed "Optrex in an industrial sized vat!". Some of the most respected film researchers in the business have worked on *It'll be Alright on the Night* over the past five decades including Valerie Hetherington, Michael Matwiejczyk, Suzanne Gray, Jo Stones, Mark Tinkler and James Smith.

Although the 1990s brought the advent of multi-channel TV and out-takes now arrived on DVD screeners, the clip-finding process remained very much the same throughout the years. That is, until recently. Fast forward to 2014, and the advent of tapeless workflows.

The *It'll be Alright on the Night* researchers no longer have to wait for the postman to come calling as they can now receive a screener electronically within minutes. That is, if they're lucky enough to find the right person to ask in the first place.

### 'Ask now or miss it'

Layers of management and the transient world of freelancers mean that if the team don't ask for out-takes whilst a programme is still in production, there's little chance of us ever getting our hands on it. Now, it's not just a matter of digging out a tape from a library and putting it in a machine, there are dozens of digital formats and restoring media from an LTO is a costly process.

The next stage of the process, once we've found the out-takes, is to seek permission from every single actor and presenter (and sometimes member of the public) in every clip to ensure they're happy to be included in *It'll be Alright on the Night*. The bigger the star, the easier they are to clear, funnily enough!

In order to give us flexibility in the edit, our small team over-source and over-clear so that if one clip doesn't work in the flow of a compilation then we can switch it for a better one.

In 2008, Griff Rhys Jones took over as writer and presenter of *It'll be Alright on the Night* and has brought his own unique style to the programme. However, Denis's legacy is still with us in the office today. We still use his ratings system for clips (P is a possible; VP is a very possible and VPY is a showstopper!) and we often joke "Denis would have loved this one".

Social media and YouTube have upped the game. With people consuming funny clips all day long on their smart phones and tablets, the TV viewer's expectation is at an all-time high. As a heritage show, we have a standard to uphold when it comes to the quality of the shows. They should still feel like 'event TV' and we should be offering the viewer something they can't see anywhere else. Which is why, despite the YouTube generation, around 90% of our total clip count comes from the tried and tested age-old method of picking up the telephone and creating relationships with TV producers.

We pay a £100 Finder's Fee for any clips that we use. So, if you have any out-takes for our next special, please email [alright@itv.com](mailto:alright@itv.com).



Denis Norden

Photo by ITV/REX



All-new *It'll be Alright on the Night* with Griff Rhys Jones

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