

CREATIVE CAREERS

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Comedians: Project Brief for Film-Maker - Producing a film and pod-cast with Paul Merton

For the Comedians exhibition we wanted to bring the exhibition alive by having a film at the start of the exhibition with a famous comedian introducing the show and talking about the history of British comedy. Paul Merton was the obvious choice as his portrait featured in the show and he's a great historian on comedy.

To communicate ideas effectively to the film-maker and interviewer, we wrote a project brief.

It's always good to start by giving a short description of the project.

Context

The exhibition 'Comedians' has been selected from the collection at the National Portrait Gallery by three partner galleries in Sheffield, Plymouth and Sunderland which will show the face of British comedy from the 1940s to the present day and will explore the ways in which well known British comedians have been portrayed, revealing both the public and private faces of comedy.

Approximately 60 comedians will be represented in the exhibition focusing on those known for stand-up to those working mainly in television and radio. It does not include 'comedy actors'. The portraits will be chosen for their visual quality, quirkiness and humour.

Paul Merton has agreed to provide a short filmed introduction, to camera, for the exhibition and a slightly longer sound piece that could act as an audio guide or podcast.

Objectives

To produce a short introductory film to the Comedians exhibition with Paul Merton to be screened at the start of the exhibition, exploring the history of British comedy and British comedians. The film will be a 'to camera' piece and should be between 6-8 minutes long.

To also produce a longer more in-depth audio file with Paul Merton to work as an audio download/podcast for use in conjunction with the exhibition but also to have a legacy outside and beyond the exhibition, offering an alternative perspective to collection at the National Portrait Gallery. This podcast should be between 8-15 mins long.

Include your objectives so it's clear what you want and so you can later evaluate if they were met.

Define your target audience as this will influence the style

Do you want the narrative to explore the exhibition narrative in more depth or cover a different theme?

Audience

The film and podcast should both be pitched at an accessible level – to appeal to a general audience but also pitched at a level to appeal to young people. With this in mind the tone/level needs to assume the audience may not know about the history of comedy and may not be aware of some comedians in the show, especially some of the early comedians.

Narrative

As the exhibition tells the story chronologically of British comedians from the 1940s to now, the film should complement this structure with a chronological exploration by Paul Merton of the comedians featured in the exhibition exploring their style of

comedy, personality, catchphrases, interesting anecdotes, influences and exploring geographical upbringing, class, gender and race. It would also be good to hear about Paul's own career as a comedian, his influences and favourite jokes.

Format

The film should be produced in a 16:9 format mastered on DV CAM to full broadcast specifications. Master copies of the film to be delivered on DV CAM with 5 DVD copies of the film. The audio file to be a Mp3 audio file.

Schedule

20 January

Venue: National Portrait Gallery

09.30 Film-maker arrives and sets up equipment

11.00 Paul Merton arrives

13.00 Paul Merton leaves

Include a schedule –
so the film-maker
knows when he has to
deliver the film by.

10 February

Presentation of "rough-cut" versions of the Film and the Tape to the Gallery for comments and feed-back, to be confirmed within one and a half working days

7 February

Presentation of "fine-cut" versions of the Film and the Tape for final comments, to be confirmed within one and a half working days

24 February

Delivery of master copies of the films

Ideas for Questions for Paul Merton

- Why is it that British comedians and British comedy is so successful around the world?
- Is there a 'north / south divide' in comedy? How did regional comedy exist and then change with the advent of radio broadcasts and TV?
- Which comedians in the exhibition in your view directly influenced each other?
- Can you give a 'time-line' link to each of the decades reflected in the exhibition?
- The exhibition concentrates on 'stand-up' comedians in the Gallery's collection. Are there comic actors who have particularly influenced you?
- Why is the history of comedy interesting to you and how did you come to know so much about comedians?
- Could you pick one or two images selected that are funny in themselves?
- What do you think of your portrait in the exhibition? Do you remember the occasion and why you chose the dolphin? What was the experience of sitting for a portrait like? Do you have thoughts about the image it presents?

- Can you tell us a couple jokes by comedians who are represented in the exhibition?
- Can you give us an insight into how a public face of comedy can sometimes conflict with the private personality?
- Who do you think are influential comedians today?
- Could you say something about changing comic styles?