# David Jason reveals how billiards with a Cockney boss shaped Del Boy’s iconic accent



Sir David Jason, the beloved star of the iconic sitcom "Only Fools and Horses," has recently shared fascinating insights into the origins of his character's distinctive cockney accent. At 85 years old, Jason recounted how a chance encounter with his former boss inspired the unforgettable portrayal of Derek “Del Boy” Trotter, a character that has become a cherished fixture in British television history.

During a conversation on Gyles Brandreth's Rosebud podcast, Jason revealed that the seed for Del Boy's character was planted while he was filming "Open All Hours." He frequently played billiards with Ray Butt, an assistant director known for his authentic East End accent. Jason found Butt's manner of speaking both amusing and intriguing, leading him to mimic the accent during their games. This light-hearted imitation would later play a pivotal role in his casting as Del Boy.

As the director, John Sullivan, sought the perfect actor to embody the ambitious and endearing market trader, he turned to Butt for advice. Butt, remembering Jason’s comedic impressions, suggested him as a candidate. “The rest is history,” Jason noted, reflecting on how that suggestion led to a role that ultimately spanned seven series and ten years, cementing its place as one of the most beloved comedies in British history.

Beyond the initial spark of inspiration, Jason's portrayal of Del Boy was also shaped by real-life experiences. In interviews, he has cited a builder named Derek Hockley, an impeccably dressed man with a rich East End accent, as another significant influence. This observation allowed Jason to create a character that not only embodied the Cockney spirit but also defied stereotypes by presenting Del Boy as a sharp, charismatic Londoner rather than a rough market trader. This nuance added depth to the character, making him relatable to a broader audience.

Interestingly, Jason’s dedication to authentically representing Del Boy's character was evident during his audition, where he impressed Sullivan and the team with his impeccable cockney accent mimicry. This bold move showcased not just his talent, but also his understanding of the complexities of the character he was destined to portray.

While reminiscing about the show's legacy, Jason acknowledged the cultural impact of "Only Fools and Horses." The series continues to resonate with audiences, particularly following the recent production of "Only Fools and Horses: The Musical," which faced a tumultuous start with a medical emergency during its opening night in Blackpool. Theatregoers praised the swift action of the venue's staff, reflecting the enduring popularity and communal spirit inspired by the show's original run.

Ultimately, the journey of David Jason and his transformation into Del Boy serves as a testament to the unpredictable yet magical nature of creativity in television. His reflections remind us that behind every iconic character lies a blend of personal experience, keen observation, and a dash of luck, all contributing to the rich tapestry of storytelling that continues to captivate generations.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14764657/David-Jason-surprising-inspiration-Del-Boy-cockney-accent.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.comedy.co.uk/tv/only_fools_and_horses/interviews/david_jason_2015/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14764657/David-Jason-surprising-inspiration-Del-Boy-cockney-accent.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.itv.com/news/2017-10-04/sir-david-jason), [[5]](https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/1951832/david-jason-landed-only-fools-role-genius-move)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/a841319/only-fools-and-horses-david-jason-del-boy-origin-one-show/), [[7]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/celebs/only-fools-horses-real-life-20666971)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14764657/David-Jason-surprising-inspiration-Del-Boy-cockney-accent.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/0/david-jason-interview-sitcoms-better-days-fools-horses/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14764657/David-Jason-surprising-inspiration-Del-Boy-cockney-accent.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14764657/David-Jason-surprising-inspiration-Del-Boy-cockney-accent.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14764657/David-Jason-surprising-inspiration-Del-Boy-cockney-accent.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.itv.com/news/2017-10-04/sir-david-jason> - In an interview with ITV News, Sir David Jason discussed the inspiration behind his character Del Boy from 'Only Fools and Horses'. He revealed that while working as an electrician, he met a builder named Derek Hockley, who had a strong East End accent but dressed immaculately. This encounter left a lasting impression on Jason and influenced his portrayal of Del Boy as a sharp, well-dressed Londoner with a Cockney accent.
3. <https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/a841319/only-fools-and-horses-david-jason-del-boy-origin-one-show/> - In an appearance on 'The One Show', Sir David Jason shared the real-life inspiration for his character Del Boy. He recounted meeting Derek Hockley, a builder with a strong East End accent who dressed impeccably. This encounter influenced Jason's decision to portray Del Boy as a sharp, well-dressed Londoner, challenging the stereotypical image of a rough market trader.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/0/david-jason-interview-sitcoms-better-days-fools-horses/> - In an interview with The Telegraph, Sir David Jason reflected on the evolution of sitcoms and discussed his experiences on 'Only Fools and Horses'. He mentioned that his success came naturally, without a desire for fame, and highlighted the importance of the creative process in entertainment.
5. <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/1951832/david-jason-landed-only-fools-role-genius-move> - Express.co.uk reports that David Jason secured the role of Del Boy in 'Only Fools and Horses' by impressing director Ray Butt with a perfect imitation of his Cockney accent during the audition. This bold move showcased Jason's dedication to the character and his ability to embody Del Boy's persona.
6. <https://www.comedy.co.uk/tv/only_fools_and_horses/interviews/david_jason_2015/> - In an interview with the British Comedy Guide, Sir David Jason discussed his approach to the character of Del Boy. He mentioned that while the script provided a foundation, his personal experiences, including his time as an electrician in the East End, influenced his portrayal of Del Boy as a sharp, well-dressed Londoner.
7. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/celebs/only-fools-horses-real-life-20666971> - MyLondon reports on the real-life inspiration behind David Jason's Del Boy character. Jason met a Cockney businessman named Derek Hockley, who spoke with a strong East End accent but dressed immaculately. This encounter influenced Jason's decision to portray Del Boy as a sharp, well-dressed Londoner with a Cockney accent.