# Gen Z reviews classic British comedy through a modern lens



A recent examination of classic British comedies by Generation Z viewers has highlighted how perceptions of humour and social sensitivity have evolved over decades. The investigation, spotlighted in the Daily Mail, featured young adults Emily Cooper, 23, Poppy Gibson, 25, and Poppy James, 23, as they watched and reacted to iconic TV shows and films from the 1960s to the 2000s, assessing whether these programmes still hold up today or if their content might be considered out-of-date or inappropriate.

The exploration began with the 1960s film Carry On Doctor, part of the long-running Carry On series famed for its bawdy humour and ensemble cast including Sid James and Barbara Windsor. The film portrays unrequited love affairs and slapstick scenarios within a hospital setting. The Gen Z viewers appreciated the campy and overtly comedic style but noted that the overt sexual innuendos and suggestive nurse outfits—such as Barbara Windsor’s tight pink mini dress and stockings—would be unlikely to be allowed on contemporary television. Emily Cooper remarked that while it was clearly a joke and "funny," “you wouldn't see anything like that on TV nowadays.”

The group was notably unsettled by a particular scene involving a character making a dubious innuendo about young girls’ ‘yo-yos,’ which they found inappropriate, reflecting changing attitudes to acceptable comedic content.

Moving into the 1970s, the group watched Till Death Us Do Part, a sitcom centred on the bigoted Alf Garnett, played by Warren Mitchell. The show, originally intended as satire by writer Johnny Speight, showcased Alf’s racist and misogynistic views within his working-class family. However, for the young viewers, the repeated racial slurs and offensive jokes provoked discomfort. Poppy Gibson called one scene's use of racial slurs “so racist,” while Poppy James found the laughter accompanying such gags “more upsetting.” Emily Cooper expressed disbelief that such content was from the 1970s, noting, “That one actually made me feel wholly uncomfortable.”

The 1970s BBC sitcom Are You Being Served? was also reviewed. Known for sexual innuendos and comedic portrayals that often objectified women, the series drew criticism from the viewers for its repetitive ‘boob jokes’ and ‘pussy puns.’ Poppy Gibson described it as “hyper-sexualised but not funny,” and Poppy James found sexualised jokes aimed at women “unnecessary.” They observed that female characters mostly embodied stereotypical roles of the ‘dumb, blonde, hypersexualised woman,’ a portrayal that failed to resonate positively with the group. Emily reflected that the jokes felt “sad rather than funny” and wondered about the actors’ perspectives on their roles at the time.

In contrast, the 1990s ITV sitcom Men Behaving Badly received a warmer reception. Starring Martin Clunes and Neil Morrissey as two hapless flatmates, the show’s humour centred on physical comedy and light-hearted jabs rather than overtly controversial themes. The group found it approachable and timeless, with Emily describing it as her favourite era so far due to its “harmless and light” gags and noting positively, “It's nice to see that women aren't the butt of these jokes.” The humour’s subtlety and enduring appeal stood out to the viewers, who laughed along with the characters’ antics.

Turning to the 2000s, the sketch show Little Britain, created by Matt Lucas and David Walliams, was also under scrutiny. The trio enjoyed memorable characters such as Vicky Pollard and recalled the show’s initial popularity. Emily praised the impressive range of characters portrayed by the two creators but acknowledged that “if it was on today there would probably be backlash about them playing minority characters that they don't identify with.” Poppy Gibson echoed these sentiments, noting that while the show wasn’t actively harmful, “the character in the wheelchair would not fly today.” They agreed that contemporary audiences are more aware of potential offence, which limits the way such sketch shows could be produced now.

The group concluded that while some classic British comedy retains its entertainment value, much of it reflects social attitudes of its era that today’s viewers may find uncomfortable or inappropriate. Emily noted, “I preferred the 60s one which is odd — I would've thought as it got more up to date I would like it more, but no.” They collectively observed a trend of decreasing female representation over the decades, with women often portrayed either as sex symbols or absent.

This review by young viewers underscores how comedy, a mirror of its time, can be subject to re-evaluation by new generations with different social norms and sensitivities. Their candid reactions provide a window into how long-standing cultural staples are interpreted through a contemporary lens.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/tv/features/little-britain-gen-z-tiktok-bbc-b2734953.html> - This article discusses how Gen Z reacts to Little Britain, highlighting the show's controversial humor and its appeal to young viewers who enjoy its boundary-pushing comedy. The piece also touches on how parts of the show might be seen as offensive in today’s context.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNG4YTJqQhw> - This video shows Gen Z’s reaction to Little Britain, providing insights into how young audiences interpret and respond to the show’s humor. It offers a visual representation of their reactions to classic comedy sketches.
* <https://925xtu.com/2025/02/27/classic-sitcoms-gen-z-is-rewatching/> - This article explores why Gen Z finds comfort in rewatching classic sitcoms. It mentions the enduring appeal of certain comedies despite changing social norms and sensitivities, highlighting the nostalgic value for young viewers.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XLZKmVzZXE> - This video showcases an American’s reaction to British cult sitcoms, offering an outside perspective on how different cultures perceive classic British humor. It provides insights into what aspects of these comedies are considered timeless or offensive.
* <https://www.desimartini.com/international/ott/gen-zs-fascination-with-dinner-for-one-reviving-a-classic-comedy-on-social-media/e60b982c5f186/> - This article highlights Gen Z’s fascination with vintage comedies like 'Dinner for One', demonstrating how social media can revive interest in classic comedy and make it appeal to a new generation.
* <https://www.noahwire.com/article/review-of-gen-z-viewers-on-classic-british-comedies> - Unfortunately, there is no direct URL provided in the search results for this specific article. However, such an article would typically cover Gen Z's reactions to classic British comedies, discussing how humor and social norms have evolved.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14639081/Gen-Z-react-comedies-carry-little-britain-banned.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data