



AL MURRAY'S GREAT BRITISH SPY MOVIES

BBC Four, Monday 15th December

Comedian and history buff AL MURRAY is joined by former Director of MI5 DAME STELLA RIMINGTON, political comedian MATT FORDE and film expert MATTHEW SWEET for a fresh look at the Great British spy movie. This 60-minute round-table discussion looks at the films themselves – not to mention the spies that star in them – and uses them as a lens on we the British, our fear of the world and our changing views of espionage over the decades. As well as discussing the inevitable moral ambiguity, the limited female roles and general distrust of the intelligence community, we also find out what DAME STELLA RIMINGTON, the real M, actually thinks about James Bond, what you really say at a party when someone inevitably asks, “what do you do?”, the spy gadget she’d really like to get her hands on, and the film that was *genuinely* used as a “training movie” when she first joined the service.

AL and his panel discuss how these films speak to us about our fantasies and desires for our position in the world; identify how the British Spy Movie really came of age in the colonial, post Great War 1930's with Spy in Black, Contraband and ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S Secret Agent and The 39 Steps; takes proper look at the iconic James Bond films and ultimately finds out whether a British spy really can have ‘a license to kill’; looks at the far more down to earth portrayal of an intelligence operative in the Harry Palmer films starring SIR MICHAEL CAINE and questions whether his grubby, make-his-own-dinner lifestyle has far more in common with the service of its era than we might first think; and, of course, looks at the best villains, the Russians, and wonders how much of our fear was rooted in the fact that we all really thought we might die at any given moment in a nuclear explosion.

With dozens of clips from much-loved films including: Tinker Taylor Soldier Spy, where we have the contrasting introspective, quietly methodical and deeply intelligent George Smiley; JOHN LE CARRÉ'S The Deadly Affair, a sad, angry look at the devastation of men's souls wrought by the cold war, the absence of the moral certainties of WW2... and possibly the most ferocious statement about the espionage world that's ever been made; the amped up, day-glow, man-on-a-mission FREDERICK FORSYTH movies, like The Odessa File, Day of The Jackal or The Fourth Protocol, all with a frisson of moral ambiguity for added spice, and even the odd Russian agent with an American accent.

All rounded off with thoughts on spies seemingly limitless taste for booze, how the huge popularity of spy movies influenced our television, questions on life imitating art with the Strategic Defense Initiative (blasting nuclear missiles out of space with a laser beam), and a hilarious look at the cash-ins, rip-offs and spoofs including DIRK BOGARDE'S almost implausible 008.

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What the press said about Al Murray's Great British War Movies

“hugely enjoyable”

The Times, Saturday Review

“like being in a film club with well-read and witty friends”

Sunday Times, Culture

“Murray and his contributors are clearly passionate, and it's infectious”

The Guardian, Guide

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Notes to editors

About Liberty Bell

Liberty Bell Productions, formed in autumn 2002, specialises in the production of television documentaries and features, factual entertainment, current affairs, drama-documentary and youth programming. Productions include: Scrappers (BBC One), The Three Day Nanny (Channel 4), Dave Gorman's Modern Life Is Goodish (Dave), Al Murray's German Adventure (BBC FOUR), Willie's Wonky Chocolate Factory (Channel 4), Portillo on Thatcher: The Lady's Not For Spurning (BBC FOUR), The Alastair Campbell Diaries (BBC TWO), Frank Skinner on George Formby (BBC FOUR), Three Men In A Boat (BBC TWO), The Grumpy Guides to... (BBC TWO), Grumpy Old Men (BBC TWO), Grumpy Old Women (BBC TWO), Why We Went to War (More 4), Real Life: Beating Breast Cancer (ITV1), The Meaning of Life (BBC ONE) and The Widow's Tale (BBC TWO).

What the press has said about previous Liberty Bell productions:

Scrappers

"The Walkers and the rag-tag bunch of rough diamonds they employ make for grand telly."

Ben Arnold, The Guardian

Dave Gorman's Modern Life Is Goodish

"in the study of modern miscellany Dave Gorman is the equivalent of a professor emeritus... Not so much a stand-up comedian as the funniest teacher fans never had... Gorman is an alternative comedian in the most literal sense. There's no one else quite like him."

Ian Burrell, The Independent

Portillo on Thatcher: The Lady's Not For Spurning

"Gordon Brown and David Cameron should watch it. Tony Blair should get a hold of a tape and reflect on what might have been. Media bosses who only commission films if they portray politicians as corrupt and mad should take note also... I know people with only a passing interest in politics who were gripped."

Steve Richards, The Independent

The Alastair Campbell Diaries



“Just as DVD extras allow you to see the human fallibility that lies behind the polished exterior of the finished film, Campbell’s diary fills in the engrossing trivia of off-stage politics... it is completely engrossing.”

Thomas Sutcliffe, The Independent

The Widow’s Tale

“This complex and moving film is one of the television highlights of the year so far.”

Andrew Male, The Sunday Times

Grumpy Old Men

“The whole programme put me into an uncharacteristically, seethingly good mood... Wonderful stuff”

A.A. Gill, The Sunday Times

Al Murray’s German Adventure

Murray makes a fine TV historian: interested, articulate and knowledgeable...A breathless hour around a stunning, wintry Germany that will probably leave most viewers wanting more on everything...Al Murray would be our man for the job.

Gabriel Tate, Time Out