Rik Mayall talks about his experiences as an actor



I've enjoyed all the parts I've played, especially people who aren't very nice, such as Alan, the politician I played in the TV comedy series *The New Statesman*. Some people loved him, but there were others who were against the programme because they thought it was wrong to make jokes about politics on television. I haven't seen that series for years. I don't think they could repeat it because many of the jokes were from that time. Comedy does date sometimes, though the basic idea behind the series – a self-important person – can be true of any time.

I do a lot of film work and still enjoy playing funny characters on TV, but I prefer theatre. I need a live audience to keep me going. If I chose a favourite part, it would be Henri in *A Family Affair*, a play we performed up and down the country several years ago. It's a comedy, directed by Andy de la Tour, a good friend of mine. It's about a family who meet to celebrate a birthday, and all kinds of things happen – things that could happen to anyone, anywhere. That's why it's so funny.

I really liked playing the part of Henri because in some ways his character is similar to mine. Henri's a bit of a loner and behaves very badly at times. I was delighted when the authors of the play saw it and congratulated me, saying I was exactly as they'd imagined Henri. Although the play is a comedy, it contains serious messages, such as how thoughtless people can be. It's very true to life and that's why I like it.

21 What is Rik Mayall's main purpose in writing the text?

- A to suggest reasons for the success of his career
- B to explain how he became a comedy actor
- C to talk about his favourite acting roles
- D to describe his future work on television

22 What does Rik Mayall say about *The New Statesman*?

- A It won't be repeated because some people were upset.
- B Not everyone approved of it.
- C It was based on an unpleasant person he met.
- D He enjoys watching it again from time to time.

23 What kind of work does Rik Mayall prefer?

- A performing in front of an audience
- B acting with his close friends
- C doing comedy series for television
- D making films about real people

24 Why was Rik Mayall pleased about acting in *A Family Affair*?

- A He could insist on which character to play.
- B The writers of the play admired his performance.
- C It allowed him to do some serious acting.
- D He played a character who was very different to himself.

25 Which of the following is the best description of Rik Mayall?

A He is a comedy actor who dislikes playing roles that are based on real life.

B He is a well-known actor who has given up playing funny characters on TV in order to concentrate on serious theatre.

C He is a famous actor who played in *A Family Affair* because he said it reminded him of his own family situation.

D He is a successful actor who says that he enjoys playing characters who are unpleasant.

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