HUMOR_Italian sense of humor_ROE Alex_ABBREV.doc (prepared by S.K. Meyer)

https://italychronicles.com/italian-humour/, consulted 6 Jan 2022, slightly edited, facts unchecked

Italian humour, April 17, 2005 by Alex Roe

When I exhibit occasional flashes of a sharp, acerbic and sarcastic style of humour, it is instantly recognised and labelled as 'English humour' in a faintly **disparaging** manner. Still, I persist and always will, I am, after all, basically English.

The Italian sense of humour is different from mine. The English comedian the late Benny Hill was regarded as being one very funny guy here in Italy. I understand why. Italians quite like comedy which is **slapstick** and contains a nice quantity of **scantily clad**, **well endowed** young ladies.

I find the 'Benny Hill' style of Italian comedy a bit **dull**, mainly because I've seen it all before and this makes the **gags** seem out-of-date and unsophisticated. It is not really what I would call 'intelligent humour' and it seems a little weak and unoriginal. Maybe, it is a language problem, but when those around me, Italians, are **howling** with laughter, I am left wondering what is so funny, even when I do manage to understand the jokes.

Well, things are changing. A very English style of humour is starting to make its mark in Italy.

One of the TV programmes responsible for this radical change is a half-hour **slot** called 'Camera Cafe' which is a type of sit-com and it all takes place in front of the coffee machine in a fictitious office. It is a wonderful example of Italians laughing at themselves and makes very good viewing.

The characters, tho' not overly original, are very well observed. There is an autocratic boss, a Bolshevik-leaning union rep, his trusty salesman **side-kick** who is a very badly dressed and ignorant **womaniser**, then there is a die-hard mother's boy, a rather plain and useless secretary, the office party girl, a psychopathic chauffeur, a gun toting security guard, a **down-trodden** single mother, and a **scruffy** computer tech.

The **sketches**, which are divided into three or four parts, are sharp and witty and make me laugh as much as some of the best UK comedies do. It is very Italian, as it should be, but it is very good and marks a new era in the sophistication of Italian comedy. The only thing that may raise English eyebrows is that some of the subject matter is a little bit too adult for its 7pm slot, but then, Italian kids do not get sent to bed until well after nine, so the kids either watch it, or go to their rooms.

There is another, late night, satirical comedy show which goes by the name of 'Le Iene' (The Hyenas), and is a mix of **stand-up comedy** and various attempts to expose **dodgy** Italian characters and business practices, as well as targeting the often farcical **goings-on** in the wonderful world of Italian bureaucracy. It also just so happens that the comedy duo accompanying the **leggy**, **busty**, but intelligent, blonde female host, are the very same two who star in Camera Cafe. They **are on a roll**, and I hope it continues.

disparage: denigrare; **slapstick**: farsa grossolana; **scantily clad**: seminudo; **well endowed**: ben dotato/a; **dull**: pedestre; **gag**: battuta; **howl**: ululare; **slot**: fascia oraria; **side-kick**: la "spalla" a qualcuno; **womanizer**: donnaiolo; **down-trodden**: oppresso; **scruffy**: trasandato; **sketch**: scenetta; **stand-up comedy**: comedia cabarettistica; **dodgy**: losco; **goings-on**: vicende; **leggy**: tutta gambe; **busty**: del seno prosperoso; **to be on a roll**: essere in un periodo fortunato

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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GIST: An English friend is trying to explain his sense of humour to you. He found an article, and gave it to you to help you understand. READ these words, quickly SKIM READ the text, just looking for them. Count them. Choose the right answers (*pull-down*). One is a trick! 2-3 MINUTES MAX.



_____ Italo _____ 9/nine _____ UK _____ Benny Hill



DETAILED: Great! You have a better idea, now, but you also want to be able to discuss the topic with your friend, so for a deeper understanding of the content, READ these very general questions TWICE, then SCAN READ the article TWICE slowly enough to understand the content (but not too slowly!) WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE QUESTIONS. Then CLICK on the correct True/False answers according to the information contained in the article. Try to do it WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE TEXT, but if you need to look at the text, it's OK, just note those question numbers on a separate piece of paper to remember which ones they were. *HINT: the questions don't necessarily use the exact wording of the text!* TAKE 10-15 MINUTES MAX.

1. Slapstick comedy is popular in both England and Italy. TRUE / FALSE

2. A lot of Italian comedy isn't very intellectual. TRUE / FALSE

3. People understand English humour to be biting and sarcastic. TRUE / FALSE

4. "Le Iene" concentrates on dubious characters and ways of doing business, as well as farcical situations that can be encountered when dealing with the Italian bureaucracy. TRUE / FALSE

5. Italian and English senses of humour used to be very different. TRUE / FALSE

6. "Camera Cafe" isn't a good example of English-style humour in Italy. TRUE / FALSE

7. The "Camera Cafe" characters are original, but not well observed. TRUE / FALSE

8. The "Camera Cafe" content is good for all age groups. TRUE / FALSE



(All the images are Microsoft Clipart available in the Word program used to create this task.)

LIVEWORKSHEETS