

# Life

## Money, sex and the neuroses of Enfield man

THE  
**CAROLINE  
PHILLIPS**  
INTERVIEW



**C**OMEDIAN Harry Enfield has a nightmare. It is rooted in a childhood experience. "The only violent dream I have ever had is of beating a monk, Father Galsford, around the head with a cricket bat. I completely bashed him." Father Galsford was at Worth Abbey, a Catholic public school, which Enfield found horrifying. He was there for two years between the ages of 13 and 15, before his parents took him away early. "My abiding image is of 14 boys lined up just before Christmas in 1974 outside the headmaster's study, each one going in to be beaten. It was like something out of Tom Brown's Schooldays." His voice is rising. "The monks were foul and hypocritical. I got beaten quite a lot. The headmaster used to smoke and yet he beat me once for smoking."

Enfield, with his flair for catching comic stereotypes, has his second series of Harry Enfield's Television Programme starting on Tuesday week and he can be seen on Tuesday nights trying to fathom women in the critically acclaimed Men Behaving Badly. He has been the voice of nearly half the cast of Spitting Image, and of the Loads-a-money star and Greek restaurant owner Stavros.

But he doesn't rate his humour. "I'm not a very funny person. Whoever I'm with, I've always felt second funniest." He was fat as a child, but denies turning to humour as a form of protection or to make

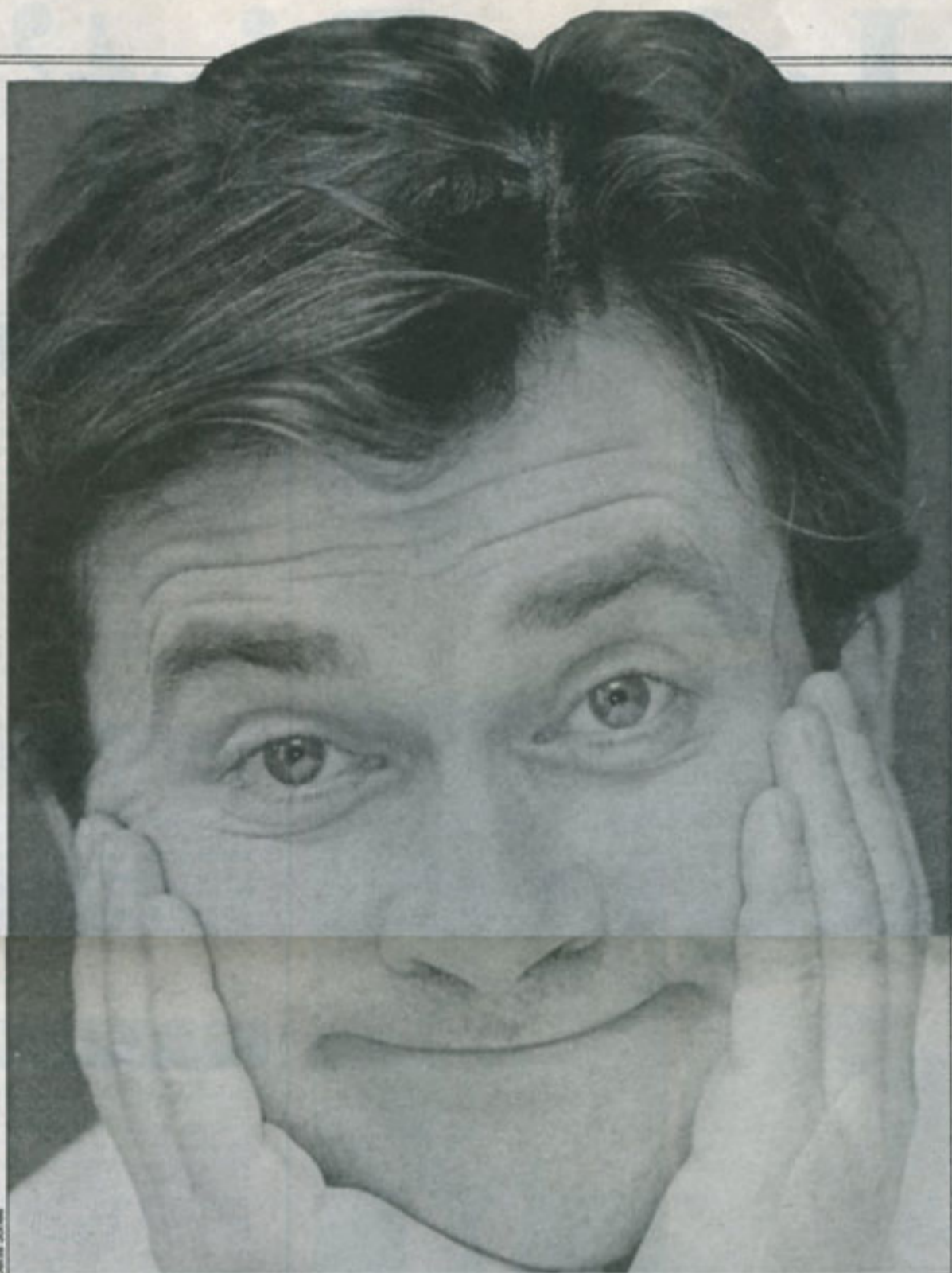
friends. He thinks humour was simply in the atmosphere of his home.

Showing a more cultured side, he will front a series called Harry Enfield's Guide to Opera for Channel 4, starting this spring. This week he was at a Labour party fundraising event, as himself, to jolly them along. He felt sick with nerves. "I only lasted about a minute. God knows why I do it. I held up my cheque book to show people how to sign it and it seemed to be flapping in the wind. Luckily, Glenda Jackson seemed to be shaking too." He smokes 40 cigarettes a day.

He returns to the subject of his education. He took his O-levels a year early (and got them all) and didn't tell his parents about the floggings until after, at his own request, he'd left the school. He then went to a local grammar school in Horsham and became a punk. "I was absolutely fanatical about the punk thing. If you went to Camden Town, all the punks were nice and middle class. I realised then that I never wanted a proper job."

After becoming a punk, he lost enthusiasm for academia and had to retake his A-levels to go to York University, where he read politics, became interested in Marxist literature and attained a 2.2. "I should have got a 2.1 or maybe a first."

He speaks in an expressive way, using his hands as if he's telling a joke, and he often adopts different voices and personas. But his own accent is studiously starchy and cockney. "Ghastly, isn't it?" he says. "It changes depending on who



The essential Enfield: "I'm not a very funny person. Whoever I'm with, I've always felt second funniest"

I'm with. If I'm with someone from New-castle, I start talking loik that. My parents hate it. So do I. I'm a toff, really. And a chameleon."

He's sitting in the Groucho Club smoking ceaselessly and with the appealing face of a naughty schoolboy, badly shaved, with pale blue Irish eyes and lanky light brown hair. He is also wearing a King of the Ants T-shirt and has "Nick, St Patrick's Day" written in Biro on his hand.

Today the toff, who is 30, lives in what he terms a "posh penthouse" in Primrose Hill. "I make over £100,000 a year." But he doesn't have a cleaner. "I do it myself. I'm very good, actually. I have a washing machine to help," he says, in his housewifely voice.

He votes Labour and dislikes the pejorative connotations of the term "champagne socialist". "I don't think you should have to drink beer in a dirty pub. Socialism isn't about celebrating poverty." Nor does he worry about offending his

Left-wing friends by making money out of commercials.

He is half-Irish and a lapsed Catholic, from a middle-class, Liberal, north London background. His father was a local government officer and his mother worked for Sotheby's in Billingshurst, in charge of their furniture department. They are both now retired and his father spends his time cycling round France, while his mother "misbehaves and puts spanners in the works all over the place".

**H**E HAS three sisters, he is the second oldest child. One sister works in Africa as an aid worker, one is a journalist in Sussex and the other is a film-maker in Scotland. "We all do what we want. We are unconventional. Mum's *ra-thar* embarrassed about her *un-yew-sual* children."

Being the only boy in his family was an advantage. "Most of my friends tend to be women and I don't mean that in a sexual way. People from public school generally find girls have a mystique, but I've never felt that."

His last girlfriend was called Sue, but he refuses to be drawn further. He gulps at his cappuccino when the subject is broached. He has been unattached for a year and a half. "I just can't seem to get it together. I'm not very good at making commitments. I'm rather terrified at the idea of spending the rest of

my life with someone, because I don't trust myself.

"I think I change very quickly. I change my opinions on just about everything straight away, so I assume I would do the same in a relationship. I hope I'll mature and get over that, because I'd like to have children. I'm getting broody."

He confirms he has a lack of self-belief. "People say I am very hard on myself. They say, 'You ought to get yourself together and stop feeling guilty about everything'. But you can't be rational about things like that. I feel guilty about not being able to make things work, really."

"I'm always looking for something new, always thinking there will be something better around the corner. It's the same with work. I do a programme and I want to move on to something else. I don't know why I have this need to keep moving on."

He professes to feel comfortable with who he is. He is open, undefensive and takes criticism easily. He is also quick-witted, funny and very likeable. So why is he so nervous? "Maybe it is a defence mechanism. Maybe I'm hiding behind my characters. Maybe I'm a lousy, mucked-up sort of person."

He draws earnestly on what must be at least his fifth cigarette. "I don't know. And I wouldn't want to bask self-indulgently in that ghastly American thing of analysing myself. To be honest, my friends tell me that since I got more successful I am more confident."

**THE LEFT WRITES BACK:** Left-handers seem to suffer more physical and psychological problems (and die sooner) than right-handers, but are often more creative and intelligent in certain fields, according to psychologist Stanley Corén. He has just written *The Left-Hander Syndrome* (£16.95, John Murray) which explores the myths and prejudices surrounding left-

handers and suggests how the world can be made a truly happier place for them. Right on!

### Life lines

**CELEBRITY CUTICLES:** The Americans spend more than \$200 million a year on their nails

and are four times more likely to have a regular manicure than they were 10 years ago. A worried Barbra Streisand even flew a woman to the set of *Prince of Tides* to tend to her inch-long talons. Top manicurist Margarete Din advises: "If you drop something, let it drop. Unless it's a very expensive crystal vase, it's not worth breaking your nails to grab it."