



Flex

A situation comedy by Phil Collinge and Andy Lord

OVERVIEW

Flex is a team comedy set in an exclusive gymnasium in the heart of Manchester's gay village. Entirely based within the foyer area of the gym, the series brings together a variety of characters with seemingly only one thing in common - their pursuit (in one way or another) of the body beautiful. Using conversational dialogue and non-verbal interaction we explore the protagonists' lives, loves, triumphs and failures without ever leaving the room.

Even though the majority of the 'action' in **Flex** takes place away from the gym itself - or at least off camera - we hardly miss a thing because all is revealed via the colourful tittle-tattle and informal conversation of the markedly distinctive characters that we encounter. Jokes are shared, opinions are formed and arguments are won or lost as we eavesdrop on the gymnasium's occupants. Each episode focuses primarily on a self-contained storyline which gradually evolves by way of the various exchanges and conversations that we witness. In addition however, a number of intriguing narratives develop throughout the series adding substance to the situation and allowing us to slowly fashion the seemingly ad-hoc snippets of information into something that finally begins to make perfect sense...only to discover that we were wrong!

MAIN CHARACTERS

Gerald Cook:

Late 50's, Short, Overweight, Balding, Gay.

An almost constant occupant in the foyer, Gerald has never been seen to do anything more strenuous than amble between the sauna room, the drinks machine and the rest area. Permanently attired in his pristine white bath robe, Gerald sits and listens to the conversations of the others with a mixture of interest, indifference and horror. Although Gerald has been married for over 25 years - often entertaining the others with stories of his wife's unwelcome attempts to arouse his 'innate animal passion' - his homosexuality is obvious to everyone. A friendly and harmless man, Gerald uses the gym to provide the visual fuel to stoke-up his repressed carnal desires - desires which will never, ever, see the light of day.

Tony Bentley:

Mid 20's, Muscular, Sporty, Straight.

'Vain', 'narcissistic', 'arrogant' and 'egotistical' - none of these words adequately describe the true character of Tony Bentley. However, if you add; 'gullible', 'bigoted', 'pretentious' and 'thick' you are getting close. Tony is forever parading around the gym displaying his impressive physique and basking in the admiring glances that he receives from the women, the men and the mirrors! Tony constantly tries to make an impression with any unsuspecting female using the gym - particularly the impassive Sam - and as a result makes himself the butt of relentless 'breeder' jokes. To Tony's credit however, he has the amazing ability to take even the cruellest insult as a glowing compliment.

Sam Bradshaw:

Early 20's, Slim, Athletic, Intelligent. Undisclosed.

Samantha Bradshaw is a regular user of the gym, and her commitment pays off. Despite her outwardly 'boyish' looks, she remains equally attractive to either sex, oozes with the confidence of a woman who knows that she is attractive, and is completely at ease with her sexuality - whatever that might be. Her private life is very much a closed book to the rest of the characters and she remains aloof as she skilfully deflects the attentions of anybody who has the confidence to make a move. Smart, savvy and quick witted, Sam is more than a match for anyone - especially Tony.

Lulu Smethurst:

30's, Short, Powerful, Gay.

Lulu is an employee of the gym and manages to annoy everyone with her tales of domestic bliss/woe (delete as applicable) after her recent civil partnership with her short-term lover Simona. Forthright and outspoken, Lulu can often appear uncaring towards the others, but beneath her butch facade and offhand attitude hides a genuine and down to earth friend always ready to share a problem - or is she just nosy? As strong as an ox, she is notorious for setting the most exhausting and demanding of gym training schedules. Lulu Smethurst, nee Otobo, regrets taking her partner's name - or at least wishes she had admitted that her real name is plain old Jane Jenkins.

Gary Johnson:

Mid 20's, Athletic, Handsome, Intelligent, Gay.

Gary is the real fitness professional at the gym and it clearly shows. Although he is extremely fit and in excellent physical shape, he is not the type to show off. Level headed and astute, he controls the finances for the gymnasium's owner Mr Samuel and is always available to avert any crisis. Many people believe that Gary is the live-in lover of the owner but due to his obvious 'qualities' - which they would like to sample - they refuse to admit it to themselves. In reality, Gary is Mr Samuel's son - a fact he has to hide for the sake of his father's reputation within the community.

Shane Everett:

18, Lean, Tall, Impressionable, Undecided.

Shane is eager to learn. Eager to learn how to get the body of an Adonis and eager to learn the ways of the world. Coming from a sound family background, his lack of an ASBO has resulted in him becoming somewhat of an outcast in his neighbourhood. Shane visits the gym after work and uses his time there deciding what direction his life should take. Whilst Tony attempts to interest him in his fantasy world of football, fast cars and 'fanny', Martin tries equally hard to lure him towards the more luxurious things in life - expensive wine, fine food and his bedroom overlooking the City's event arena!

Martin Eavesham:

40? 50? Handsome, Wealthy, Controlling, Gay.

Everything that Martin touches turns to gold. In at the start of the dot-com phenomenon he has made a career out of making the right decisions at the right time - and as a result he finds it extremely difficult to accept that anyone could contemplate contradicting him. Although he is, on the whole, a likeable character, his tendency to stamp his authority on anything and anyone can become frustrating. Well-heeled, Tanned and living the lifestyle that most others can only dream of, Martin is a popular figure with everyone he meets - for all the wrong reasons.

Timothy Graham: Late 40's, Skinny, Shy, Gay.

Outrageously camp and painfully shy, 'Timid Tim' is *always* at the gym, yet he rarely interacts with anyone other than an infrequent one-word answer to polite enquiries. Despite working in the training room all-day, every day, nothing seems to make a difference to his worryingly insubstantial physique. Tim could almost be described as an incidental character, but his occasional visits to the foyer - for a fresh towel, for a glass of water, or for a quick ogle at Gary - always set tongues wagging. Rumours are rife about the 'out-of-gym' life of Tim, but no-one has ever got close to establishing the truth.

Simona Smethurst: Late 30's, Tall, Elegant, Secretive.

As Lulu's partner, Simona is an irregular visitor to the gym. Imported from Russia as the internet bride of the late local businessman Brian Smethurst, Simona remains understandably secretive about her past. People assume that Lulu is using Simona for her inheritance, but in reality Simona needs Lulu in order to remain in the country and to live the lifestyle that she is accustomed to. Unsurprisingly, Tony is impressed.

Mr Samuel: ?

As the owner of the gym, Mr Samuel is only ever talked about and is never seen, his only 'appearances' come in the form of an occasional telephone conversation with staff. His hard-nosed outlook towards business often causes unrest amongst the members of the gym and rumours soon start to fly about the identity and underlying principles of this mysterious figure.

STORYLINES

The Day After the Night Before

It is the day after Shane's 18th birthday party, and he is suffering. Shane is unwilling, or unable, to talk about what happened, and the others begin speculate. The last time Sam had seen Shane, he was being led away from the group by Tony - this is worry to everyone. Flashbacks start to haunt Shane as he recalls vague recollections of sparkling cocktails, lap dancers, whipped cream and needles. It is only when Gary catches sight of Shane in the changing room that the full horror of his evening with Tony is revealed.

Who's the daddy?

Has Tony managed to get a recent 'conquest' pregnant, and if so why was he foolish enough to break his own strict rules by giving her his real name and number when they met!? We witness Tony's entirely selfish take on the situation as he struggles to find a way out of the predicament whilst trying to convince the others that it is nothing to do with him. When it transpires that he is not the father after all, people start to question his virility.

Hide and Seek

Lulu arrives at the gymnasium in a panic. Her partner Simona has disappeared. The search is underway, and everyone tries to help. Where they've looked, what has happened and who has spotted her is all told through dialogue as they drift in and out of the gym. Has Simona been deported, has she been arrested, or has she simply been on an extended shopping spree?

The Mysterious Admirer

Timothy finds a suggestive note addressed to 'Big 'T' under his gym bag. When more and more notes are discovered around the gymnasium, speculation builds to a frenzy as the regulars try to unmask Timothy's mysterious admirer. Tony seems unusually composed however, and is in somewhat of a quandary - not only were the love letters intended for him...but he had written them himself!

Nothing!

Everyone arrives at the gym expecting the usual juicy gossip, but no one has done anything exciting all week. Like a cross between Hancock's famous 'Sunday afternoon at home' and any episode of Big Brother, the members spend the evening trying to think of something interesting to talk about. After it becomes worryingly obvious that they are no longer able to exchange civil pleasantries they resort to playing games - and everyone's competitive streak comes to the fore.

Bye-bye Lulu

Lulu arrives late for work for the third time in four days. Mr Samuel loses his temper and sacks her (via a phone call to Gary). Gary is not happy, and he struggles to cope with his increased workload. When it transpires that Lulu has been looking after an elderly neighbour, Gary is persuaded to speak to Mr Samuel about getting her job back - it works. Perhaps Mr Samuel isn't the ogre that everyone thought, or maybe the influx of forty-three new corporate members influenced his decision.

SERIES THREADS

Shane's Rights of Passage

As we watch Shane's character grow, we share his anguish as he struggles with the life choices that are presented to him. Will he be enticed into the 'laddish' lifestyle that Tony worships as a pseudo-religion, or will he be seduced by the high-life and false promises that Martin so eloquently presents as an option?

The 'Outing' of Gary

Throughout the series, pressure mounts on Gary to admit to his relationship with the gymnasium owner Mr Samuel. At first he is quite happy letting his associates think what they like about the situation, but as mistakes are made and clues are picked up on, he is left with a decision to make that could ultimately destroy his father's carefully created persona.

The Secretive Mister Cook

Just who is Gerald Cook? Although we slowly begin to paint a picture about his life away from the gym we never fully understand Gerald's motives, this is compounded by his impartiality regarding how the gym is managed. Rumours about his identity begin to circulate. Is he planning a take-over? Is he a 'mystery shopper'? Just who is Gerald Cook?

The Trials of Lulu and Simona

As it becomes increasingly evident that there is 'something not quite right' about the relationship between the 'happy couple', questions are asked and problems are aired. Will Lulu's assumed identity have legal implications on their civil partnership? How is Simona's lifestyle funded? And, why does she have a seemingly unworkable interest in Martin?

PRODUCTION NOTES

Flex builds on the successful format of recent series' such as *The Royal Family*, *The Smoking Room* and *Early Doors* in so far as it relies solely on character interaction and sparkling dialogue to convey a wide variety of storylines. Outwardly mundane conversations develop and evolve as we paint a vivid picture of the complex, surreal and often hilarious lives of the gymnasium staff and members.

As the whole series of **Flex** is filmed entirely using one solitary set and without the need of a studio audience, production costs can be kept to a minimum. The set requires a single room containing a relaxed seating area, a reception desk and a couple of drinks machines along with suitable fitness notices/posters and ephemera. A doorway leading out to an assumed outside world, a corridor guiding us to an implied training room and three doors labelled 'Male Changing Room', 'Female Changing Room' and 'Sauna room' complete the transformation from a one room set (or location) into a convincing gymnasium foyer.

In addition to the main set, a small number of establishing shots can be filmed cheaply to convey location, time of day, weather conditions, etc. This footage could easily be limited to external shots of a gymnasium sign hung over a suitable doorway - during the daytime and also at night - although stock footage of the Canal Street area of Manchester would greatly help to establish and strengthen the locality of the episodes.

To compliment the main characters, a number of additional extras will be required to undertake 'walk on' parts in order to give the impression of a busy and popular gymnasium environment. *Whilst on the subject of the characters, it should be pointed out that the names used in this treatment (and subsequent scripts) are for illustration purposes only and can be changed to reflect the ethnicity of any actors chosen for the roles.*

SAMPLE DIALOGUE

The following script extract is intended to give a flavour of how the characters interact with each other and is included to provide a *feeling* of the proposed scripts.

A FEW OF THE REGULARS ARE SAT ROUND THE GYM'S FOYER AREA. THERE IS A DRINKS MACHINE, A SEATING AREA, RECEPTION DESK ETC. A DOOR LEADS OFF TO THE MAIN GYM AND ANOTHER TO THE EXIT. POSTERS ADVERTISING EVENTS ADORN THE WALLS ALONG WITH LARGE FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS OF BODYBUILDERS.

GARY JOHNSON ENTERS LOOKING FLUSTERED.

GARY

I've been double booked again!...I've had to mix the 'over sixty's easy-go aerobics' with the 'advanced circuit training for the seriously deranged'...By the end of the session there were so many little old ladies receiving the kiss of life I felt like the spare part at a geriatric gang bang!

SAM

Never mind all that. Come and listen to this.

LULU IS ABOUT TO READ OUT A LETTER.

TONY

Go on love.

LULU

Well apparently they're making a sit-com about us.

GERALD

Us?

GARY

Oh yeah, I knew about that. It's a new sit-com about the people who use this gym. An intimate examination of our lives told through our conversations.

GERALD

What exactly do they mean by intimate examination?

TONY HAS WALKED OVER TO ONE OF THE BODYBUILDER PHOTOS.

TONY

What's funny about us?

HE IS BUSY PREENING HIMSELF IN THE REFLECTION ON THE PICTURE AS HE SAYS THIS, THE FACT THAT IT IS A PICTURE OF A MALE BODY BUILDER AND THE FACT WE CAN SEE THE BODYBUILDER'S CROTCH SUPERIMPOSED ON TONY'S FOREHEAD IS LOST ON HIM.

GARY

Oh I don't know. It's all set in here apparently, all in one room.

SAM

Well, I'm up for it, what about you lot?

GERALD

I'd rather staple my foreskin to Blackpool Tower and bungee jump off.

GARY

Not a definite 'no' then?

LULU

What about all the press attention?

TONY HAS WANDERED OVER AND SAT DOWN. HE PLACES HIS ARMS BEHIND HIS HEAD AND STRETCHES. HE IS SAT WITH HIS LEGS APART AND IS OBLIVIOUS TO HIS FRIENDS ATTEMPTS TO AVOID STARING AT HIS CROTCH AS HE STRETCHES.

TONY

Might bring a few more admirers my way.

LULU

But of course you'd never take advantage of that?

TONY

Oh yes!

GERALD

Just be careful. You might end up with a sex maniac who drags you back to his hotel room for a night of repeated molestation.

GARY

Are you speaking from experience?

GERALD

No, but I live in hope.

SAM

I suppose we'd better get in there and do some working out. We want to look our best for the cameras, eh?

SHE IS EAGER TO BE OFF, BUT GARY STOPS HER.

GARY

We can't, the whole room's full up with that block booking...Pledges Tubular Bandages.

TONY

I still don't get which part of the body you put a tubular bandage on.

GARY

And more to the point, do they make them with a built in splint?

TONY LAUGHS WITHOUT KNOWING WHY.

GERALD

Guess we'll just have to stay in here then.

THEY SIT IN SILENCE FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN GET AWAY WITH.
PAN AROUND TO TONY, WHO IS SAT IN A POSED MANNER. HE IS
STARING INTO SPACE AND IS OBVIOUSLY RUNNING SHOWBIZ
FANTASIES THROUGH HIS HEAD.

IN A WORLD OF HIS OWN HE SMILES FALSELY.

TONY

Yeah sure, where do you want me to sign?

GARY

I spy with my little eye something beginning with 'W'.

TONY NOTICES THE OTHERS WATCHING HIM

TONY

Right I'm off!

HE STORMS OFF AT THE IMPLIED INSULT.