

the
COMEDIANs

Knock knock. Who's there? Some of the
funniest people in Britain, that's who. By Emma Freud

Photographed by ROBERT TRACHTENBERG

Styled by MOUCHETTE BELL

Al Murray

Bald, bold and gorgeous, Al Murray is the nation's favourite pub landlord.

Emma Freud You've taken your clothes off. Again.

Al Murray I'm OK with it. Last year I did full-frontal nudity for a documentary. The director put the clipboard over her face. It had been her idea, but she couldn't actually cope with the results. **EF** Was comedy always your dream? **AM** I grew up in Bedford and assumed I would become a history teacher at the sort of minor public school where you don't need a qualification. **EF** So did you one day say, 'I'm a comedian'? **AM** I started gigging and loved it. It was all about not having to get up in the morning or wear a tie. And then after a couple of years, Harry Hill said to me, 'I think you're funny but you're a lazy fucking bastard and you need to work really hard.' And he was right. So I did. And now this. My face on packets of crisps. **EF** What do you think when you see your act?

AM Oh, I never do that. I think I'm good at what I do, but watching myself on TV makes my flesh crawl.

EF The Pub Landlord... He's revered by the sort of people he's satirising. Has it gone a bit wrong?

AM Sometimes that type of audience sees my shows, and I get a sense of unrest as a whole row of lads feel, 'Hang on, this isn't what I came for.' But, they've paid their money – so the joke's on them.

EF So, this is *Tatler* – what's your favourite item of clothing? **AM** Oh yes, I know this. I just bought a tweed shooting coat from Cordings of Piccadilly, in autumnal colours with this lovely purple silk lining.

[There's a pause while I imagine it, and then wish I hadn't.] **EF** And your biggest fashion mistake?

AM Er... It's probably that jacket, isn't it?

EYELASHES, STYLIST'S OWN. MAKE-UP BY HOLLEIGH GALLON. SHOT ON LOCATION AT JET STUDIOS (JETSTUDIOS.CO.UK). FOR DETAILS OF AL MURRAY'S LIVE SHOWS AND OTHER PROJECTS, VISIT THEPUBLANDLORD.COM OR ALMURRAY.TV

T H E C O M E D I A N S

Laura Solon

Laura was the second woman ever to win a Perrier Award. Yes, you're right to look impressed. She's the darling of TV sketch shows and a regular on *Harry & Paul* and *Fast and Loose*.

Emma Freud Are you fearless? **Laura Solon** I'm constantly terrified. I worry about everything in the world. I worry about what I'm worrying about. That's why writing suits me better than performing. I can work in my pyjamas and talk to myself all day. **EF** Do you work alone from home? **LS** No – I've got a cat from a rescue centre. We had to be interviewed to check our suitability. We were petrified of being rejected. We thought they'd say, 'If you put in a second bathroom, then maybe.' **EF** So you're keen to crack American TV? **LS** British comedy is about pain, awkwardness, pauses and embarrassments. In America it's about pace, action and jokes – I'd love to do both. **EF** Could you live there? **LS** Yes – they don't complain! Our default position is to moan. I think our endless winters shape our psyche – it's difficult to be positive about life when it's cold and dark. **EF** Which of your jobs have been tough? **LS** *Have I Got News for You* – Bruce Forsyth was hosting and I think he was confused as to why I was there because I wasn't wearing a bikini. Every time I said anything he smiled at me and said, 'That was quite good!' **EF** Are you happy? **LS** Yes. Though navigating the world of adulthood is hard. Being supremely passionate about things is considered weird, whereas children can talk for an hour about dinosaurs and that's OK. I love that quote: 'Children accept life. Grown-ups pretend it's different, and cover it up with drinks.' **EF** What are you passionate about? **LS** Taxidermy. I've got a rabbit. And an owl. And the cat, but she's at an early stage – 'Stage one: living'. When she dies, I worry about what pose I'll choose for her. Sleeping? Typing? Holding an ashtray so she could be a party piece? I've given this too much thought, haven't I...

Laura wears cotton and lace corset (cut to order), £325, by **Jane Bourvis**. Leather pumps, £82, by **French Sole**. Cocktail ring, POA, by **Erickson Beamon**. Underskirt and bloomers, stylist's own. *On clothes line, from left*, nylon socks, from £7, by **Leg Avenue**. Cotton top, £1,355, by **Emilio Pucci**, at Harvey Nichols. Silk chemise, from £145, by **Stephanie Loungewear**, at **Coco de Mer**.

HAIR BY TIM PATEMAN AT PHAMOUS ARTISTS, USING SHU UEMURA ART OF HAIR. MAKE UP BY MICHAEL GRAY AT PHAMOUS ARTISTS. SHOT ON LOCATION AT DENNING POINT ROOFTOP WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO JONES & PAVNE HAIRDRESSERS, EC2 (JONESANDPAVNE.COM OR 020 7613 8500). FOR DETAILS OF LAURA'S SHOW, VISIT LAURASOLON.COM

Tim Key

Best known as Steve Coogan's sidekick on *Alan Partridge's Mid-Morning Matters*, Tim Key is also the new rock 'n' roll of comedy poetry.

Emma Freud What are you writing on the paper? **Tim Key** One of my poems: 'I went out with a model once / But I found her dull / And also she was one of those fatty models / So not much to look at.' **EF** You look good as Byron. **TK** Do I? Well, put that I'm single, then. That would be helpful. **EF** So, you went to Cambridge... **TK** Not really. I grew up near Cambridge. And I wanted to be in Footlights so I auditioned for their pantomime. And then I stayed. Someone asked me what I was studying and I said, 'A PhD on Nikolai Gogol.' He asked what I thought of *The Government Inspector*. And I said I hadn't read it because I was focusing only on Gogol's short stories. **EF** What were you actually doing? **TK** I was temping as a threshold-assessment regional deployment officer. **EF** What did you have to do? **TK** I had to deploy threshold assessment, regionally. **EF** How did you end up being a poet? **TK** By accident. I started writing poems on the Tube. And then someone asked me to do stand-up, so I just read them out. It says on Wikipedia that I'm deliberately bad. But I'm trying to be good. And now I'm writing a book of poems – so technically I am a poet. It's got out of hand. **EF** Where do you stand on fashion? **TK** Generally I wear a cardigan and hope for the best. But I'm doing practice shows at the moment, so I'm wearing a green shellsuit. When I do the actual shows I'll wear a suit – and then I can say everything in the show has improved, but really it'll just be that I'm not wearing the green shellsuit any more. **EF** Will you tell me a secret? **TK** I'm very bright. Secretly. Even though I didn't go to Cambridge.

Tim wears velvet dressing gown, £999, by **Daniel Hanson**, at **Harrods**. Yellow-gold, pearl and jet necklace, £9,800; yellow-gold and pearl necklace, £18,800, both by **Belmacz**. Cotton shirt, £95; wool scarf, £110; silver cufflinks, from £60, all by **Paul Smith**

WOOD TABLE, £2,199, BY REH KENNEDY, AT HARRODS. WOOD CHAIR, £1,749, BY JONATHAN CHARLES, AT HARRODS. GROOMING BY CAROL MORLEY AT ONE MAKE-UP SHOT ON LOCATION AT JET STUDIOS (JETSTUDIOS.CO.UK)

David Armand

David Armand doesn't even need to speak to be funny. His interpretive dance routines on *Fast and Loose* have made him the stuff of legend.

Emma Freud Why have you dressed up as a bear? **David Armand** I don't know. I had to stuff the arse. I honestly don't have an arse that shape. I thought stuffing in the bum wasn't attractive, but the stylist has assured me it is. What do I know? This is only my second interview. **EF** Why's that – are you highly private? **DA** Er... no one's asked before. **EF** What's been your worst fashion mistake? **DA** I went through an odd goth stage. I wore a black cape, but I felt the threat of violence when I wore it. I'd have been a full-on goth but I didn't have the balls. I wore a lovely sophisticated purple nail varnish but kept my hands in my pockets all the time. So I went for the slightly-miserable-indie-kid look instead. **EF** How? **DA** I wanted to have a curtain fringe like the bloke in *The Charlatans* but I had curly hair, so I lacquered and blowdried it until it looked like a rigid cycle helmet. I loved it, but clearly God thought, 'I gave you hair and you did this with it – so now I'm going to take it away.' It was my own fault. **EF** You've worked in comedy for years, but the success is recent. **DA** I spent 10 years being a guy in an ensemble – I liked it. All the stand-ups I met seemed to be incredibly driven and pressured whereas I'm a bit lazy. I've been in so many sketch shows that people normally say to me, 'Were you on *Harry Enfield*?' **EF** Were you on *Harry Enfield*? **DA** No. **EF** But now it's all about you... **DA** Yes! And I like it. Basically I'm ripping off what Rowan Atkinson did. It's fine, no one will ever know – who remembers him?



BEAR COSTUME AT MAD WORLD FANCY DRESS. GHETTO BLASTER, FROM A SELECTION, AT SICK. GROOMING BY CAROL MORLEY AT ONE MAKE-UP SHOT ON LOCATION AT JET STUDIOS (JETSTUDIOS.CO.UK)

T H E C O M E D I A N S



T H E C O M E D I A N S

Rufus Hound

Despite having weird facial hair, Rufus Hound is the Prince Regent of comedy TV. His 'Cheryl Cole' on *Let's Dance for Comic Relief* was worryingly attractive.

Rufus Hound Can I keep the cotton wool I have put down the front of my pants? **Emma Freud** No, it needs to go in the bin, you know this. **RH** Can we Photoshop off the shorts? **EF** So, you're quite naughty. **RH** If everyone is doing one thing, I want to do the opposite. It's only by doing the thing that everybody *isn't* doing that great innovations are made. **EF** Are you ever insecure? **RH** The fear I live with is that someone will say, 'It's all been a horrid mistake, go away – we meant the other Rufus Hound.' **EF** Don't all comedians feel that? **RH** I don't think I'm like the others – I've not done the proper route. When I got married, someone asked my wife if she was worried about marrying me. 'It's all right,' she said. 'He's not a proper comedian.' **EF** Are you a bit smug? **RH** I do feel smug. I really enjoy what I do, it pays really well, I fell in love at first sight with the most incredible woman, we have a kid who's smart and funny (everyone's kid is smart and funny, except ours actually is) and I get to give them the best life possible. I sat in the garden last week, having a beer, and I thought, 'You jammy wanker.' But the thing is, it will stop, which is why it's OK to feel smug while it's happening. **EF** What's the happiest you've been? **RH** For my 30th birthday, I rented an eight-room hotel in Brighton. I was with my wife and all my friends and we went to a heavy-metal gig, then ended up naked and drunk in a hot-tub, smoking big cigars. That was as happy as there is.

Rufus Hound wears silk shorts, POA, by **D&G**. Leather boxing boots, from £90, by **Everlast**. Cuff, stylist's own

HAIR BY TAKESHI SANO AT PHAMOUS ARTISTS. MAKE-UP BY EMMA DAY AT MILTON AGENCY

Miles Jupp

Miles Jupp plays Nigel in *Rev* and John Duggan in *The Thick of It*, but never mind that – he's Archie in *Balamory*. HE'S IN BALAMORY!

Emma Freud Apart from this kilt, what's been your worst fashion mistake? **Miles Jupp** I had a raincoat from BHS when I was at university. Someone had to take me to one side and tell me to let it go. It was enormous. I got to 16-and-a-half stone and I really minded. If someone says they don't mind, they're lying. I used to hate that theatre thing when people hug you. Ugh.

EF You're almost terminally nice, aren't you?

MJ Not really – I'm nicer than Nigel in *Rev*, but I'm not as nice as Archie in *Balamory*. **EF** Prove it.

MJ I once did a stand-up set in Leicester. A woman in the crowd really pissed me off and as she walked out I called her a c***. Not only was it a terrible thing to say, but I'd forgotten my dad was in. He's a minister. During the silence that followed, I just remember hearing him say, 'Enough.' **EF** You studied divinity, didn't you?

MJ I wanted to be a spy and a lot of spies were recruited from classicists. But I got an E in Latin A-level, so I did divinity instead. I would still like to be a spy. **EF** Is it true you're the only person to ever ask for a wee break while filming *Have I Got News for You*? **MJ** Yes. Russell Brand needed the loo, but they didn't stop filming for him – they just carried on. I was nervous and didn't know what to do with my hands, so I kept drinking the water on the table. I actually thought my bladder might split. The problem was, I didn't think I was a big enough name to ask them to stop filming. So Ian Hislop had to ask for me. I'm not proud of it.

Miles wears wool kilt, £580; leather ghillies, £120; fur sporran, £195; metal kilt-pin, £20; cotton socks, £15, all by **English Kilt Company**.

Tweed jacket, £2,244; silk tie, £80, both by **Anderson & Sheppard**. Cotton shirt, stylist's own. Mr Hitchcock wears wool suit, £3,324, by **Anderson & Sheppard**



T H E C O M E D I A N S

Lucy Porter

Shorter than Ronnie Corbett, Lucy Porter is the cheeky Polly Pocket of comedy. Widely regarded as the sweetest comedian in Britain, she's managed to smother herself all over primetime quiz shows and has conquered the UK with her stand-up tour, *Fool's Gold*.

Emma Freud That looked fun. **Lucy Porter** I've never respected models before, but it was so hot on that counter I nearly passed out.

EF You performed a lot last year while pregnant. How was that?

LP When people are out to get drunk and have sex, they don't want to be reminded of the consequences of their actions – and there I was like the ghost of Christmas future. **EF** Did you bomb? **LP** No – I dealt with it on stage. Anything you're nervous about you have to address.

EF Shall we talk about the issue of being a female comedian in a male-dominated industry? **LP** No. **EF** So who have you shagged on the circuit? **LP** When I was 18, I won a competition to be a judge for the Perrier Awards at Edinburgh. I wanted to be part of that world, so I literally stalked Jack Dee and Sean Hughes, to no avail. But then I hit on a slightly less well-known comic who lived near me. I walked up and down outside his house, hoping I might bump into him. Eventually I did and he became my comedy boyfriend. I know I do not emerge well from this. **EF** Do you get groupies? **LP** No, but I once snogged David Tennant after a show. **EF** I'll give you cake if you tell me everything.

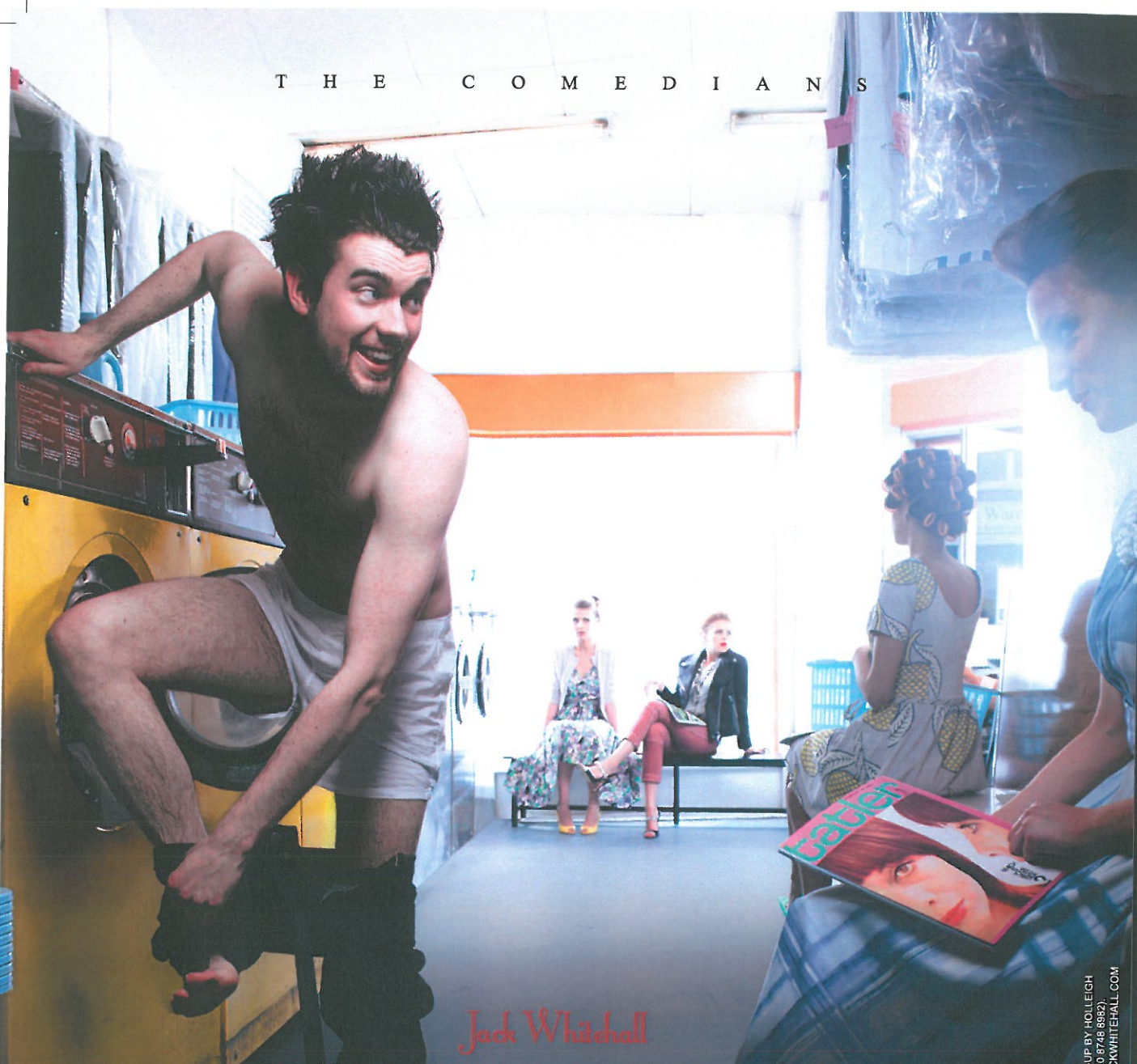
LP He came to a gig in Cardiff, and afterwards he said, 'Do you want to see my swanky new flat?' I did. We looked at the view for 10 seconds and then he snogged me. **EF** And? **LP** He was an exceptionally good kisser. **EF** I need more information than that. **LP** He was firm. There was some musing of hair and a little face-touching. And that was it. **EF** I hate you. And you have icing on your chin.

Lucy wears silk corset, POA, by Vivienne Westwood.

Paper skirt, made by stylist



T H E C O M E D I A N S



Jack Whitehall

Jack Whitehall is 22 and has been kicking up the comedy scene since taking over from Russell Brand on *Big Brother's Big Mouth*. He's a *Mock the Week* regular and is frighteningly attractive.

Emma Freud Great picture. How often do you do your own laundry? **Jack Whitehall** Not ever, maybe? I just let it build up and then take it home. **EF** So, are you a boxers, Y-fronts, or thong guy? **JW** Boxers – because I have a huge penis that can't be contained by the other two you mentioned. That is the 100 per cent true reason. **EF** Your hair is quite weird. How long does it take to look like that? **JW** No time. I cut it myself and haven't washed it in two years. **EF** It must stink. **JW** Not really – it smells of product. And sometimes beer. And someone cracked an egg into it about a year ago. Do you want to smell it? **EF** I didn't think I did, but actually I find that I do. *[I smell it. It's quite nice.]* What does your girlfriend think of it? **JW** I don't have one. **EF** Why? **JW** I seem to go out with the wrong people. My mum thinks everyone I go out with should be like Kate Middleton. I was at school with Pippa Middleton. She had award-winning buttocks even then. **EF** Are you as confident as you seem? **JW** It's impossible to be a comedian and not have huge pangs of insecurity. You're very exposed, and have to trick yourself that you're terrific. You can't go on stage otherwise. Performing is quite a good way of getting away from that voice in your head. Just for an hour. It's quite a relief. **EF** You seem fine about taking your clothes off. **JW** I do quite a lot of nudity. I had a party recently and some neighbours complained about the noise. I answered the door to them naked. **EF** What did they say? **JW** Oh, what a large willy you have.

Jack wears denim jeans, from £70, by **Levi's**. Cotton boxers, £8, by **Gap**. Leather belt, his own. *From left*, Monica wears silk dress, £655, by **Suno**, at **Browns Focus**. Cashmere cardigan (part of set), £633, by **Pringle for 10 Corso Como**. Leather shoes, £495, by **Christian Louboutin**. Sophie wears denim jeans, £280, by **Isabel Marant**, at **Selfridges**. Cotton T-shirt, £21, by **American Apparel**. Leather jacket, £700, by **Acne**, at **Selfridges**. Leather shoes, £500, by **Manolo Blahnik**. Jennifer wears cotton dress, by **Suno**, at **Browns Focus**. Victoria wears silk dress, £900, by **Emilia Wickstead**. Patent shoes, £375, by **Christian Louboutin**. For details, see *Stockists*. Fashion assistants, Maria Castellanos and Alice Casely-Hayford

HAIR BY NEIL CORNELIUS FOR NEIL CORNELIUS, 1ST FLOOR, MAKE-UP BY HOLLEIGH GALLON. SHOT ON LOCATION AT 113 FULHAM PALACE ROAD, W6 0DZ 8748 8882. FOR DETAILS OF JACK WHITEHALL'S LIVE AUTUMN DATES, VISIT JACKWHITEHALL.COM

Greg Davies

Greg Davies is the teacher in *The Inbetweeners*, a star of *Fast and Loose* and, according to the official yardstick, the tallest comic on the circuit.

Emma Freud I think everyone in this room is going to end up seeing your family jewels. **Greg Davies** It's OK – I'm always getting my kit off. **EF** Do you have no shame? **GD** No. I waited so long to do comedy that I think 'Let's go! You want my clothes off? Fine.' Dignity and comedy never go hand in hand. **EF** Does that explain your dress sense? **GD** When you're six-foot-eight, there's only one rule: if you see *anything* that covers up your flesh, buy it. **EF** Why did you wait till your mid-30s to work in comedy? **GD** It was all I ever wanted to do, but I spent 13 years as a teacher because I was frightened of failing. **EF** Were you a good teacher? **GD** I spent one Christmas carol service underlining syllables in hymns to make pornographic sentences. A minute later I saw a kid messing about and I took him off for a bollocking. I remember saying to him, 'Have some respect for other people's beliefs.' Two minutes earlier I'd been underlining the ass in Christmas. **EF** Do you love what you do now? **GD** Yes. And it's hardened me up. I was pathetically oversensitive, but being a comedian is like being dragged through loads of hedges by a really lovely horse. When I was a teacher, I was directionless and every knock floored me. If you love what you do, the knocks are OK. **EF** Are you proud of *The Inbetweeners*? **GD** I'm not in it for long but I fucking milk it. **EF** Tell me a secret. **GD** I once told some flatmates that I hadn't left the window open when we got burgled. But if I'm honest, I think I did. And I'm very sorry. There is a man who will go genuinely mental when he reads this. □