

Jane Bussmann

Long bio and TRIVIA

From *The Worst Date Ever*

*I grew up in north London, a hinterland between Muswell Hill and Highgate. Muswell Hill had the sense of having been exciting once in some raw, punky British heyday, back when Suggs from Madness hung out there singing about his car and you could buy speed in a flat over the grocer's. Then property prices soared. Soon Muswell Hill sold nothing but croissants and baby clothes, while Suggs had gone to Camden. As for Highgate, no one lived there except Sting and teenage toffs on their way to Channing girls' school and Highgate boys' school, not bothering to look when they crossed the road because they were God's chosen people. Sting I'd never seen, unless he was a flasher with a scarf round his face in the mid-eighties, in which case I saw quite a lot of him. Our road disappeared into Queens Woods, an old plague pit where flashers would gather sociably to wait for schoolgirls in legwarmers taking a short cut home. Any flashers left in the woods come 6.30 p.m. would see me stumbling back from judo in a brown duffle coat and Nana Mouskouri glasses and think, 'Oh well, not exactly Claire Grogan, but I can't stand here with my knob out much longer: the mosquitoes are gathering.'*

At 22, Bussmann wrote for a BBC sketch show pilot set in a nightclub called *The Borderline*. *The Borderline* was never transmitted but Bussmann was hired by the BBC as a full-time comedy writer producing "off-the-cuff topical jokes" for their radio presenters. While at the BBC, she created and wrote the sitcom pilot *The Michael Moore Show* (with David Quantick), sold to *Spitting Image* creators Luck & Flaw when Bussmann was 24. In the same year, the sitcom *Put Out More Fags* (with David Quantick) was optioned by BBC TV. It was produced as a BBC1 Pilot starring Lisa Riley, chronicling the adventures of two chain-smoking mothers who became pregnant while still attending school.

Bussmann co-created and wrote sitcom and sketch show pilots for the BBC, ITV and Channel 4. She was script editor and writer on the British sketch series *Smack The Pony* which won two consecutive years at the International Emmys (Popular Arts category, 2001 and 2000) and Best Comedy Format at the Banff Television Festival 2000. In 1996 Bussmann was a staff writer on the British satire show *Brass Eye* and Chris Morris' subsequent sketch show *Jam* (Writer's Guild Award, two British Comedy Awards, a Gold Sony Award, four Silver Sony Awards and a Royal Television Society Award). Bussmann was a

staff writer for series one and two of *So Graham Norton* (three British Academy Awards) and *Friday Night Armistice* (Bronze Rose of Montreux, Broadcast Award). In 1996 Bussmann optioned the screenplay *Single Girl's Diary* to Granada US.

In 1996 Bussmann began performing on BBC radio shows and became a team member and correspondent on shows like *Loose Ends* hosted by Ned Sherrin of *That Was The Week That Was*. She also wrote and performed on the BBC's *The Now Show*, ITV's *The Sundays* and *The Treatment*. In 1998 Bussmann and Quantick wrote and performed the sketch series *Bussmann & Quantick Kingsize*, which featured Bussmann and Quantick playing Victorian child prostitutes and a German serial molester called Der Fingermann, with Peter Serafinowicz as Ike Turner in an abusive sexual relationship with Melvyn Bragg. Both Bussmann & Quantick were put on probation by the BBC's Light Entertainment Department. Bussmann & Quantick performed on the BBC's topical satire *Election Night Armistice* (1997).

In 1998 Bussmann's book about the British ecstasy scene *Once in a Lifetime* was published, winning Muzik's *Book of the Year* award the same year. *Once In a Lifetime* was featured as Book of the Summer in the *Times*, Book of the Year in the *NME* and Book of the Month in *GQ*. *GQ*'s Editor-in-Chief James Brown reviewed it as "So good it's dangerous".

In 2000, Bussmann & Quantick created, wrote and produced (with Jess Search) *The Junkies* (2000). It became the world's first internet sitcom with 3,000,000 hits. *The Junkies* starred Sally Phillips, Peter Serafinowicz and Peter Baynham as three hapless heroin addicts. After heavy media coverage in the *Times*, the *Independent*, *Esquire* and the *Guardian*, *The Junkies* was optioned and screened by Channel 4, although no further episodes were made.

In 2001, Bussmann was "Named and Shamed" in Britain's biggest tabloid the *News of the World* as one of the writers behind the most complained-about program in British television history, Chris Morris' *Brass Eye Special* (2001). A satire about the media's coverage of paedophilia, *Brass Eye Special* became a lead story on the BBC's *Nine O'Clock News* and led to government calls for new censorship regulation. Tony Blair was "dismayed" by the comedy. It was nominated for a BAFTA and a Royal Television Society Award.

In 2002, Bussmann studied directing at USC. Her production workshop short *My Terrorist Dad*, written and directed in two weeks, was featured in BAFTA's Academy magazine and the *Independent on Sunday* as a "New Filmmaker to watch". In the run-up to the 2004 US presidential election, Bussmann wrote,

performed, cast, directed, and edited *Tomorrow's News*, a spoof news program for the 50-year-old American station Pacifica Radio.

In 2005 she wrote *Toffs & Pikeys*, a sitcom for Little Bird (*Bridget Jones Diary*, *Croupier*), *LA Brits*, a sitcom for Channel 5 and *The Accidental Serial Killer*, a teen horror comedy feature, for CC Films. In 2005, she wrote, directed and produced a documentary short about a peacemaker, John Prendergast's Race. It was short-listed by Sundance Film Festival judges. Her report from Uganda was featured on the BBC's flagship show *From Our Own Correspondent*. In 2006, Jane wrote for *South Park* and guested as the voice of Lois from *Family Guy* in the Mohammed episodes.

In 2006, her live comedy show *Bussmann's Holiday*, about her adventures following peacemaker John Prendergast to a Ugandan war zone, played in Los Angeles, Off Broadway in New York, at the Edinburgh Festival and the Soho Theatre in London, receiving rave reviews. *Bussmann's Holiday* was nominated for the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award and won Best Comedy at Perrier rivals the Tap Water Awards. The show played again as *Bussmann's Holiday: The Worst Date Ever* at the 2009 Edinburgh Festival, Assembly Rooms, George Street.

Between 2007 and 2008 Jane developed pilots for NBC and HBO and wrote *The Worst Date Ever*. In 2009, she developed for Ternion, Big Talk, Channel 4 and Film4 and did research trips to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya.

Bussmann also works as a newspaper columnist, writing *Bussmann's Holidays* for Britain's *Mail on Sunday* newspaper (1997+), named Journalist of the Year in 1999 (AITO) for her report from Colombia and nominated as Travel Writer Of The Year in 2000 (Travelex), 2004 and 2005 (British Press Awards) for reports from Viet Nam and Tornado Alley. She wrote the Hollywood column *Letter from America* for *Red Magazine* and celebrity features for the *Sunday Times*, *The Independent*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Glamour* and *InStyle*. In 2003-4 she wrote a column in the *Face* called *We Heart Los Angeles*. Jane hates Los Angeles.