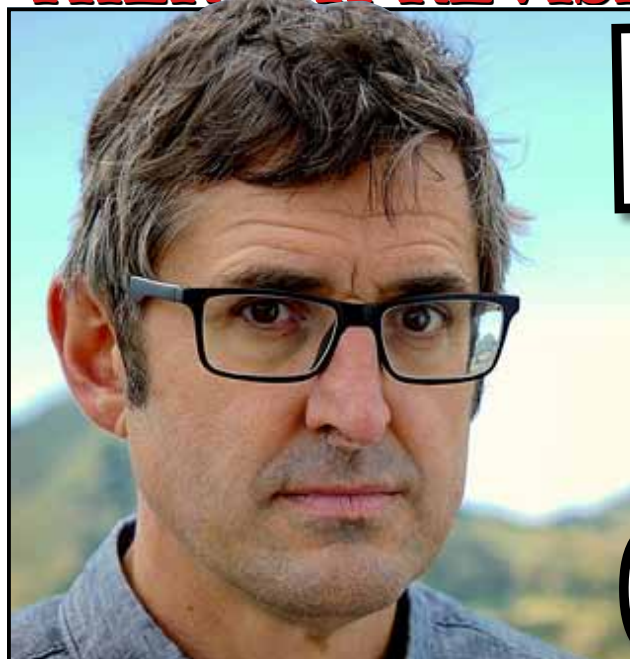


THEROUX REVISITS HIS TV 'BEST BITS'



Louis and the edge of reason

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WHEN THE FUN STOPS BeGambleAware

PLENTY of people set personal goals. But, insists Louis Theroux: "It's not like anyone says to themselves: 'Oh, I'm going to be the biggest d**k ever.'"

So how come there are those who end up acting that way?

Political extremists, conspiracy theorists, religious fanatics, Louis has hung out with such types now for 25 years, making shows where he has repeatedly asked that question, albeit more politely.

"It's about trying to establish where this attitude of theirs is coming from," is how he sums up his distinctive approach to documentary making.

Interfere

Twice, for instance, he's visited Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas, which preaches the message that gay people should burn in hell.

But even faced with such a hateful message, Louis didn't simply plough in. That's never been his style.

"How have these people managed to tell themselves this is a good idea?" says Louis.

"I do arrive with my own views. But I try not to impose these too obviously, or let them interfere



THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW

LOUIS THEROUX
Interviewer and filmmaker

with how I relate to the people I'm among." Recently, of course, Louis's travels have been somewhat curtailed by lockdown.

But he did get as far as the attic of his London home.

"I crawled into the eaves and found boxes I hadn't looked at in ages," he tells me.

These turned out to be a treasure trove, crammed with old notes, letters, pictures and diaries. Rummaging around, Louis found material dating right back to his early work in the mid-90s.

Back then he was on America's TV Nation, before his BBC debut with *Weird Weekends*.

And it has now inspired a new four-parter, starting on Sunday on BBC Two.

Louis Theroux: *Life On The Edge* reflects on his most memorable work, from the raw to the

most recent - mixing archive clips with fresh observations. But just to be clear, there'll be no Jimmy Savile. And no Max Clifford.

In fact, none of his celebrity encounters from the early 2000s - under the title *When Louis Met...* - is getting a mention. Not for the moment at least.

"There's certainly a good programme to be made about the world of celebrity and that style of documentary making," he concedes. "But not right now."

Truth

Both the Savile and the Clifford encounters, of course, turned out to have a greater significance, as the terrible truth about each man later emerged.

The Savile film, in particular, left quite a mark. Some accused Louis of letting himself be "hood-winked" by the radio and TV personality.

In response, he argued that the programme, shown in April 2000, "still had a plausible claim to being the most revealing portrait of Jimmy while he was alive."

And he did at least confront him about those paedophilia rumours, not that it got him very far. For all his success, and despite turning 50 this year, Louis says he still struggles with self-doubt.

"It's just part of my natural make-up," he tells me.

"But the good thing about making programmes like mine is they don't allow me much time for self-analysis. I have to be there in the moment."

● *Louis Theroux: Life On The Edge* starts on Sunday at 9pm on BBC Two.



LOOKING BACK: Louis Theroux returns to TV this Sunday