

CARAVAN PLAN'S A BAD MOVE

FOR COMIC DEALING WITH LIFE & WORLD OF SHOWBIZ

# Really, getting older is just a joke



**NO LAUGHING MATTER:** Jack puts a brave face on things with comic lips

**Pictures:** TIM MERRY



**SMILES BETTER:** Above, with Kerry Godliman in sitcom *Bad Move*. Below, in *Lead Balloon*



**NEXT time you're stuck in a tailback on a country lane, crawling along at barely 2mph, here's a thought to cheer you up.** The bloke who's to blame, holding everyone up, may be comedy legend Jack Dee.

"We've been talking about getting a caravan," Jack confesses, when I ask if he and wife Jane have any plans for their 30th wedding anniversary next year.

"Believe me, I'm not entering into this in a happy way. It's like we're doing it because we're at an age when getting a caravan is the law. I'll be that person you hate when you're going on holiday. I

already know the whole thing's a mistake..."

What makes this confession so ironic is it sounds just like the mess Steve and Nicky are in.

Steve's the guy Jack plays in *Bad Move*, the ITV sitcom about a townie couple who've optimistically relocated to the country and now wish to God that they hadn't. Nicky is Kerry Godliman's character.

Returning this week, between Wednesday's two *Corrie* episodes, it's a comedy that initially took some of Jack's fans by surprise.

A little warily, I confess to him that I was among them.

In his previous sitcom, BBC Two's *Lead Balloon*, his character Rick Spisen was an hilariously cynical

stand-up, like the worst possible version of Jack's true self.

*Bad Move*'s Steve, a web designer, felt a bit gentle by comparison.

"Yes, I don't think you were alone in feeling that," Jack concedes. "*Lead Balloon* left its mark in many people's minds."

**Audience**

"If you've made something that was much liked, your next thing's bound to be compared to it.

"If it's not quite what people expected, that can be an obstacle.

"But also, remember, this is 8pm on ITV, as opposed to 10pm on BBC Two, so to some extent it had to be a different creature, for a different audience." And besides, series two

finds Steve rather less restrained. "We've been able to ratchet it up," Jack says.

"The funniest bits from the first series were where we let him find that voice."

So is Jack, at 56, still playing a character who mirrors his own personality?

"Yeah, maybe. It's about living in a state of constant, quiet despair. That definitely resonates with me.

"As you get older, you're accommodating so much more in your life that you don't like.

"Things that go wrong, or you disapprove of you realise you're less able than ever to change them."

Jack's comic outlook on life remains healthily sceptical, I'm

pleased to report, I ask if he still finds it hard to get excited by pretty much anything, as he's admitted in the past.

"Yes, I think people who get excited are f---ing mad.

"I find it hard to get excited because I know nothing is ever as good as you think it'll be - just as it's almost never as bad as you fear. Excitement is just a way of winding yourself up.

"Take people working in comedy. They'll go: 'Oh, I'm going up to Edinburgh! I'm SO excited! I'm doing three weeks!'

"And I'm thinking: 'Are you crazy? By all means do it, but why be excited? You've no idea how

badly it could go. It could be the end of you."

Mind you, some people who label themselves comics, Jack feels, are stretching the point in any case.

"We've had the emergence of this kind of bucket-list comedian," he says. "Someone who just puts it on their CV. It's like: 'Ah, yes, I'm a foreign correspondent and a doctor... and a stand-up comedian.'

"And I'm thinking, well, are you? What do you mean by that? You've tried it a few times?"

"I'm very suspicious of it, because the real stand-up comedians I know and admire are totally living that life."

They'll have also made mistakes along the way, of

course. Which brings us neatly back to bad decisions.

"Once, very early on," Jack recalls, "when I was doing open spots, I thought it'd be funny to go on stage in a blue waterproof motorcycle suit. I thought I'd create this funny character with it.

**Trapped**

"I realised within a moment of walking on that this was a terrible decision. It really was very unfunny. But by then I was trapped.

"That's life, you see. You can find yourself wearing a joke that hasn't worked. But you've just got to live with it.

● *Bad Move* returns to ITV on Wednesday at 8pm.