

**English transcript of Fifi Garfield's interview with
Charlie Swinbourne and John Smith on 17th May 2017**

- based on live voiceovers by Siobhan Rocks, Simon Bristoll and Alex McDonald

All	Hi everyone!
Fifi	Hi everyone, hi everyone on Facebook. Make sure you click "like" or you "love" so we know you're watching.
Charlie	Yes, we definitely need to know.
Fifi	And just to let you know there's a voiceover, so that anyone hearing watching can turn up the volume and they can hear what we're saying. Okay, we're here at Bradford Deaf Centre and a big thanks to them for allowing us to use this space. The reason we're here is to announce a funny programme called " Deaf Funny " that will be broadcast tomorrow evening on the Community Channel at 7:30 and also at 8:00 it will be available online and also on the BSL Zone app. So we're here to talk to the writer of Deaf Funny . This is Charlie.
Charlie	Thanks, nice to meet you.
Fifi	And an actor in his programme, John Smith. So we'll be here for around half an hour and we'll interview these two guys and any questions that you have you can post them online and we'll ask them later. Okay? So can you tell us about Deaf Funny ? What exactly is it about?
Charlie	Well Deaf Funny is new because it's a sketch show which means that there's lots of little clips, maybe one or two minute clips, not like a one story in half an hour, but lots of little stories with different characters. I think that's really important because there's lots of ideas for the different characters and each of them has a story and that's what we wanted to make.
Fifi	So how did you decide to cast the actors, which people will match the different characters in the production, how did you cast that?
Charlie	Well it's a challenge for the actors because usually actors take on a character and that's it, and they are that character, but every actor obviously has the opportunity to play different characters - John here was four or five characters in this. And so they have to adjust to match the character that they're given. So it's good to have different characters to show different, I suppose, like somebody who really likes hugging people, giving people a deaf hug and people who sort of assess whether other people's signing is right or wrong and it's all from deaf peoples' experience and their culture.

Fifi	I forgot to introduce myself, I'm so sorry! My name's Fifi.
Charlie	Who are you? I don't know who you are!
Fifi	Yeah, whatever! Fifi, I'm Fifi. And I was also in Deaf Funny , a tiny, tiny part.
Charlie	You were in two, two different sketches. And it was great to have you in it.
Fifi	I really enjoyed it too. Okay, so you're the writer of this script. Was it based on your life experiences as a deaf person, or other people's experiences, or what?
Charlie	It's a mixture really because obviously all of us know that lots of different things happen to us as deaf people, for example, bad interpreters, that happens.
Fifi	Absolutely and yes, we're watching some bad interpreters right now and I hope they're voicing over well!
Charlie	Oh I don't know, I'm not sure. Fingers crossed, we have to trust them don't we, that's the whole thing. We have one character who we call Cowboy Interpreter and obviously that affects deaf people in different situations and it's really important because it's comedy but it also has a serious message as well because these things really happen. And so deaf people have that sort of, hopefully will endear deaf people to that programme.
Fifi	So John, you're a performer and you've had a lot of acting experience before, so when you saw the script, what did you think about that?
John	Well when we were translating the script into BSL, I could relate to a lot of it. For example, there are lots of Cowboy Interpreters around, I'm afraid! When I first watched that sketch, I really laughed because it's real life, a true story. I hope it doesn't upset the interpreters here today, but it is true. What else did you ask me?
Fifi	That was the question I asked you. Obviously Charlie told me his response. So, Charlie, how long did it take you from, say, starting writing the script to putting those ideas on paper?
Charlie	Well, I started in 2015 and as I said before, I had someone who read my script and gave me advice. I later threw all that writing away and started again! Then one weekend, there were four actors, including John, in Derby – I've just had a shoulder operation, so I'm struggling to sign "Derby" a bit! It's still not there yet, that's why I'm signing like this. But in Derby, anyway, four actors came and we sort of filmed a little bit and saw how it worked. Then I got some funding and did more writing after that, I think it was about four months of writing and then we threw away that again and then we polished it and it was a long process. It wasn't quick. Usually sketches have five or six different writers, but in this case, it was just me, so I had to write a lot of material and
Fifi	So did you ask friends for any material or was it all yourself?

Charlie	Well I had a lot of ideas so I just wrote down all my ideas and tried to improve them. Then after we then auditioned the actors to see which actors were right and we practised, rehearsed for a week, sorry, and then we polished it up and it was great working with the actors to see how they made the roles real.
Fifi	So could I ask how many actors altogether were involved in the show and how many sketches were in it altogether?
Charlie	I think there's around 35 sketches and around 10 different actors. I think altogether 10. Two hearing actors and eight deaf actors, I think.
John	There was eight deaf, and two or three hearing.
Charlie	Two or three, yes.
Fifi	Two. And the process, for example, from the production process until the end of filming can you explain what the process was from, for example, finding venues for sets for filming, auditioning and such like.
Charlie	Well auditioning was a difficult choice because we had some great actors but they didn't necessarily match the characters, so I had to choose people I thought would work together well. For example, one sketch has two deaf men, so I was looking for the right balance between those two actors. And then after we'd got the actors we had to find the locations for the filming and that took a lot of planning and a lot of sheets of where the camera is going to be positioned, camera 1, camera 2, camera 3, all these different things were positioned. And obviously moving those around took a lot of work, so it's quite a lot of work in filming as well.
Fifi	How many characters did you play in the sketches?
John	Four, was it?
Charlie	The man who hugs, Sign Fit...
John	The man who hugs, Sign Fit, the father of the family and the man with a wife... is that four?
Charlie	And the television presenter as well.
John	Oh yes, of course, the presenter as well, so five?
Fifi	So five altogether. And did you feel you had to change a great deal to portray each of the characters?
John	Well yes, you must change because obviously they're different characters. Obviously you have to respect the writer, as the actor you have to take the direction from the director regarding what's going on with the characterisation, so it's not an easy process. So it was about 2 weeks altogether to do the filming.
Fifi	Two weeks of what? Oh, filming.
Charlie	Yes, that's right.

John	So I was going home and coming back and travelling etc.
Charlie	But really you worked hard and learned the script really well. You have to learn the script and also you have to rehearse and then all actors were given those clips which meant the actors could learn the script in English, or watch a video in BSL, so they could see themselves signing it, which was really useful, wasn't it, for you John?
John	Yes, and obviously, as actors, we helped each other, if we weren't sure about something, we discussed it as a team.
Charlie	I think Jean gave BSL advice throughout. She's fantastic, Jean St Clair. She really helped the actors with the signing. I'm not saying they were right or wrong but sort of choosing the appropriate signs and with the script as well, she checked that the filming, when it had been signed, was appropriate and I think, yes
John	It was really helpful when Jean was there, the supervisor. It was helpful.
Fifi	Yes, a monitor is a must.
Charlie	Oh yes, absolutely. We worked together really well. It's a bit challenge for the actors, given these different characters, and switching between them. I think my favourite is the television presenter with the moustache. He looks like a detective, he's quite strange.
Fifi	Yes, he looks like he's from the 1980s.
Charlie	But one thing I enjoyed myself, particularly, when I was directing it, was that when I finished then the next actor would come up to me and with a new costume, with a new moustache or a new sort of hair do. And every time, it got me! I was like, "Wow!" Fifi, you had different hair didn't you, a different colour? I didn't recognise you at first! I was like, "Oh gosh that's Fifi!" you looked so different, you looked really strange! But the worst one for you, John, must have been the fitness trainer.
John	Shh, don't say that! <i>[laughter]</i>
Charlie	He was so brave. Before we filmed, he had a dressing gown on, he wouldn't take it off. I was wondering whether or not he was going to take it off, hoping he would. And then as it came to the last minute, just as we were ready to film, he took it off. How brave is that? I think it was about an hour or one and a half hours and then he put the dressing gown back on, but that's so brave, because it was a little bit like showing his whole body! <i>[laughter]</i>
Fifi	So did you take your costume home, John?
John	It was his!
Charlie	It was the costume person's.
John	It's in his hands now.
Charlie	Maybe one day, we'll see it in a Deaf costume museum or something?

John	We'll find out tomorrow when it's broadcast. It wasn't exactly plain!
Charlie	It's very colourful, is all I'm saying!
Fifi	So with the production crew, did you have deaf and hearing people working together? What was the mix of the crew like?
Charlie	A lot of the production crew were hearing. They had experience of making lots of different programmes so it was really useful because it was so professional. Most of the actors were deaf, and we had Jean and myself, so we had a little bit of a mixture. It was really nice and the last day of filming everyone came together. We had a drink, a bit of a party.
Fifi	Yes, I was there!
Charlie	Yes, you were there, and we had a laugh with everyone. It was nice because there was only one more day but it was a half day, the last day, so it was really relaxing and it was really enjoyable. So we could see the deaf crew and the hearing actors come together and in the future I really want to have more deaf people involved as part of the crew, maybe filming. It's great to have a professional crew. That's one thing we can improve in the future.
Fifi	Okay, if you're enjoying it so far and you have any questions, please post them. Altogether we'll be broadcasting for half an hour, so there's not a lot of time.
Charlie	I wanted to ask you as well, you did the two different characters, was it a challenge? I remember you auditioned really well! In the process of rehearsals and the filming, what do you remember most?
Fifi	Well for the audition, I dressed, I felt, to match the character that I saw in the script, so I thought that would help my performance.
Charlie	Yes, I remember that.
Fifi	I didn't actually get changed on camera, but I did change!
Charlie	I covered my eyes there!
Fifi	So I got two small parts, a little bit disappointed with that, I would have liked a bigger part.
Charlie	Sorry.
Fifi	Never mind, that's alright, don't you worry about that, that's your decision, you're the director. But I did enjoy, and I enjoyed playing different characters to see if I could, you know, perform different characters. I felt like I could do that and I think I pulled it off – I hope so anyway! I enjoyed the experience. It was a really interesting experience and it was nice to work with the hearing crew and observe them, while working with Deaf actors as well. It's always so easy to work with deaf actors, it felt like a big family. John, remember we all went out for a meal one evening and made our own videos?

John	Yeah!
Charlie	Yes, they were on Facebook and as I said, I felt that they could have been sketches for the programme!
Fifi	That's right, you could have stolen it! <i>[laughter]</i>
John	Yes, it would have been free footage for you!
Fifi	We've got some questions from the audience now. From Patrick, who's asking Charlie: what inspired you to create Deaf Funny ?
Charlie	Well I grew up loving sketch shows like The Fast Show, Monty Python, loads of those kind of shows. I loved watching them, even now I watch a children's sketch show, there's one on CBBC called Gigglebiz and it's fantastic. So one thing sketch shows give you the opportunity to do is you get lots and lots of ideas across in one go. So, over the years, I've been writing different sorts of bits and pieces. Like, I've got a book of ideas, and for some ideas, you can't give half an hour to the story. It doesn't fit into half an hour, but two or three minutes, they're great. For example, the Cowboy Interpreter, you couldn't make a half hour out of that, but two or three minutes at a time works really well. So, it gives an opportunity for lots of ideas in one programme and I think that really makes me able to try something new for a deaf audience and really I just want to make the deaf audience laugh. I want them to watch something together as family or friends and watch it and really enjoy it and laugh.
Fifi	I hope you're happy with that answer, Patrick. Okay, so Nadeem <i>[laughter]</i> ... Hi Nadeem! Nadeem's asking what are your best memories from being on set. I guess it's with Nadeem, right? Because he thinks you were awesome.
Charlie	Wow! Well Nadeem is fantastic. Before... I watched him for the first time in Small World and then I thought wow, he just has so much energy, I really want to work with him one day. I was watching, he's such a nice person as well, with the audition we connected well and he was a lovely person, he's obviously an actor, a great actor as well. He suited the character and ...
Fifi	And he's a people person, right?
Charlie	He's just really funny, he's so professional and he's still very young so he's building up experience but he came in I think my favourite thing with him was, one thing I liked was the football managing sketch. Nadeem was one of the players but he's very his character's a little bit naive, shall we say. He's young, and he's like maybe, maybe he's a bit like that and he also plays a deaf spy, a very sort of cool spy, that was one of my favourite things with him. I really liked that.
Fifi	<i>[laughter]</i> I think you've complimented Nadeem enough and you should probably stop now!
Charlie	Yes! I just wanted to say that that one was different to all the other characters; it was my favourite one.

Fifi	Well done Nadeem, thank you. Okay, the next question of from Reg Cobb. The question is: who's your favourite comedian and who has inspired you?
Charlie	My favourite comedian is probably from The Fast Show. Paul Whitehouse.
Fifi	Do you know him? I don't.
Charlie	He's hearing. One of the actors from the Fast Show, he also wrote as well and he's very funny, but my favourite comedian really is this man here, John.
John	For real? Oh!
Charlie	Yep. As a stand-up comedian! Because the first time I saw him I thought "Wow!" My mother really loves watching him.
John	Hello, Charlie's mum!
Charlie	Then I met him and got to know him... and I found out that he knew my mum and when I was born, he gave her a card. One day when I was 16 or something, I found it and saw his name, John Smith, inside! So, he might have held me when I was a baby which is really strange to think about! Now we know each other, so...
John	I knew his mother from when she was pregnant, so I knew his mother before Charlie appeared! I could tell when he was a baby that he had a future in filmmaking.
Fifi	Wow! So, John inspired you, Charlie?
Charlie	Oh yes. Because I saw his Deaf humour while I was growing up. I saw him at Nottingham Deaf Club and he made me feel felt really strongly that Deaf humour is very important. Deaf people need to laugh, just like hearing people do, and we need more of it! We have fantastic comedies like Small World, but we need more, so...
Fifi	So you were an inspiration to Charlie. So this is from Scott McGill: do you think we should be allowed to do a live stand-up comedy on live TV?
Charlie	Would you want to do stand up on TV?
John	Maybe.
Charlie	I think really, Netflix has a lot of stand-up comedy on it, so I think we really need to record John. Comedy is important because it shows the time in history and what people think about at certain times and over the years. If you look back at John's comedy shows from 10 years ago there are lots of different jokes.
John	It's been 12 years now.
Charlie	You do need to be recorded. Would you like to be on TV?

John	Yes, I'm not really bothered I suppose.
Charlie	[laughter] You want to really.
John	Well, it's been 12 years. Whatever!
Fifi	The next question, that's from Jeannine: how much of the show was scripted and how much was improvised?
Charlie	It was fully scripted, but also we then practised and when the actors went through scenes in rehearsals, sometimes they had good ideas and therefore we amended it.
John	And some of the translations as well.
Charlie	And also the translation of the script as well. And sometimes, according to the ways the actors signed, we had to change some of the English script a little bit to match.
Fifi	In the rehearsals?
Charlie	Yes. Before we had the full rehearsals, we maybe changed about 10 percent of things, we improved and cut things out and then mostly followed the script.
John	For me, I preferred to work with Jean in BSL than to follow the English script. I found that better – I don't really like working with scripts.
Fifi	Did you improvise on the script?
John	Yes, there was some improvisation the scene with the chocolate, that was improved.
Charlie	Oh right, yes, you're right. There was one small part, that was just John himself, you know, but yes there was that improvisation.
John	I improvised there. It was just an idea and you said, go on, please yourself, as you will see.
Charlie	And I didn't want to stop you because you would have eaten all the chocolate as well, you know.
John	No I wouldn't have!
Fifi	I hope you're happy with that answer. So the next question is from Shirley and it's for John. She's asking: will you do comedy live on Facebook for us every month?
John	Are you going to pay me? That would be lovely. Hearing comedians get paid.
Charlie	Facebook can pay for it.
John	Every week? Impossible. If you pay me, it might be possible!

Charlie	But one thing that's important is, if you film your comedy, it needs to be filmed properly. It needs to be good and so it might be better on television, but maybe Facebook would be OK.
John	Well maybe, well if you use your DLA to pay, who knows?
Fifi	You mean PIP.
John	They've all kept their DLA.
Fifi	The next person is Alison Bryan, hello. Her question is: what's your next plan for a script, could you do Deaf Funny 2 perhaps?
Charlie	One thing that's really important to say to everyone to the audience out there is we do need to get the funding so we need to get that next, so hopefully we will get that funding, but I'd love to make more Deaf Funny because I think there's lots of ideas. At the moment, though, we haven't got plans. We're just waiting for the opportunity really to make one.
Fifi	So you're waiting for the response to the broadcast to see what people, whether the people liked it or not and that will be important.
Charlie	Two things really, one is the audience's response, whether they like it or not.
Fifi	Come on guys, watch!
Charlie	I hope they do, because everyone's got a different sense of humour and some people might laugh at one thing and the next person might not laugh at all. It doesn't mean that one thing isn't funny. The good thing is you can only wait a couple of minutes and you get the next bit of funny thing. So we've got to wait for the funding really. It's difficult to do that so it's the same for any deaf directional productions out there, you've got to wait for the money.
Fifi	So we have another question, this one is from Jen. She's asking John: what's the difference for you between TV and stage work, which do you prefer?
John	I like both, to be honest. Obviously, when I'm by myself on stage, I can do what I want. But with film and TV, you have a boss like Charlie! I have to do as I'm told and sometimes they tell me I can't do certain things. There's a different way of working in films. It's not more restrictive, but it's just a different dynamic. So ok, you have to go with what the director says and agree with what they say, so it's a challenge. Of course you have that support, you're working with a team, the director. You don't get that on stage; you don't know whether it's good or bad, you just go with your instinct, but of course, in a team there's more support there, it's just a different process.
Charlie	One thing I think about you doing stand-up comedy is, you're very natural at doing that now and acting is a new challenge. When you're acting, though, you've shown that you can do a lot of different characters.

Fifi	We've got a lot of question to get through still, and only 5 minutes left. So Reg, again, he keeps asking questions! Reg wants to know: John, are you a shy person, and how have you beat shyness on stage?
John	I'm shy, yes. I've never really approached people and gone up to them, which I think is because of my past, being isolated by being the only deaf person in the family. But on stage, the first time, yes of course I was nervous. Everything was going, my legs were going. It was just awful, that stage fright. That was in Rotherham, remember, Fifi? The two of us?
Fifi	Yes! Wasn't that in Newcastle?
John	Oh, yes, we did it together then. I think first time was when I got an award... for the FDP, the Federation of Deaf people, back in 2000. I was confident on stage, but afterwards I was back to my normal shy self. But that's me.
Fifi	Are you shy still?
John	Maybe 50/50. I know you two, but if I didn't know you, I'd just sit there and smile.
Fifi	So he's only 50/50 shy now. So this is from Sahera: Charlie how are Four Deaf Yorkshiremen and Deaf Funny different? And that's a question for both of you.
Charlie	Well I think I might have met you on Saturday, Sahera, I'm not sure, but hello! Yes they are different. Four Deaf Yorkshiremen go to Blackpool . Well that's half an hour, it's the same four characters all the way through it, all the way through the programme. It's one storyline and this is the opposite, it's got loads of different characters and stories, so there's a bit difference.
John	Well you'll find out tomorrow if you watch it. Tomorrow you'll see.
Fifi	And I don't know who's asked this last question but they want to know: will you join Britain's Got Talent with your comedy show?
John	Oh, I've been! I went once, a long time ago, I tried to have a go but I didn't get a reply. I went to the audition maybe 5 years ago or something like that but I never got a reply.
Fifi	Well, you had a go.
John	I think, someone told me that they want people who are either really good or really bad, so if you're kind of middling, they're not interested. So, well. Sorry!
Fifi	So we've got one minute left. The last question is: will you be doing Four Deaf Yorkshiremen again?
Charlie	Oh, I'd love to do more, so I've got my fingers crossed that I can do one day. It's the same with Deaf Funny . I'd love to do more and more one day and carry on and hopefully improve. Every time I make something, I learn and it's the same for you guys I'm sure. And you're acting, you learn, when I'm writing and directing, I learn, so I really just want to carry on improving.

John	Also, that just reminded me, I travel the world, and while I'm travelling, people are always bringing up Four Deaf Yorkshiremen . I have to keep telling Charlie this, because it was his idea, not mine! So, people all over the world have seen it! I keep getting recognised as the old guy with the moustache and asked if we'll be making more, but it's up to Charlie.
Charlie	Well you keep pestering me about that, but it's all good. I do want to make more.
John	Come on, Charlie, stop messing about and give a straight answer!
Fifi	It's always the money.
Charlie	Yes, the funding...
John	Give the guy some money!
Charlie	But people don't realise, television is expensive, so we need the funding to pay for the cameras, for the locations, for the actors, everything. But I'm very positive. I love to make more and maybe new ideas as well, not just the old ones, so hopefully we can see that.
John	We could do Four Deaf Yorkshiremen Go Camping.
Fifi	That's a great idea.
Charlie	I'd love to work with both you guys again because it's been fantastic to work with deaf actors and it's my favourite thing really.
Fifi	Great, thank you very much. That's our half hour done, thank you so much everybody for watching and for posting the questions and don't forget, tomorrow at 7:30, Deaf Funny is on the Community Channel and then at 8:00 it's broadcast on the web and on the BSLBT app. So I hope you enjoy watching and please do comment on it!
John	Next week there's episode two, don't forget.
Charlie	Yes, it's really important to say that there's two episodes.
Fifi	Oh yes, this week and next week.
Charlie	That's right.
Fifi	Oh that's going to be exciting.
Charlie	Thank you very much for asking us these wonderful questions.
Fifi	Thank you very much. Goodnight.