



[Looking at the lesser postcodes](#)

by **The Faces at the Window**

Reviewed by [John Waterhouse](#) Jan 2017

The Faces at the Window are a new comedy ensemble, formed by three production companies, bringing together the talents of six writer/performers with two musicians. Regular Listeners to Radio 4 will be aware of the 6.30-7.00pm time slot which has seemingly forever been reserved for comedy, typically with a range of quick-fire sketches and jokes interspersed with the odd comedy song and this is to a large degree the format of this show.

However, whereas today's Radio 4 comedy tends towards the hard hitting aggressive humour, pioneered by the so-called Alternative Comedians of the 1980's onwards, I was pleasantly surprised that with **The Faces at the Window**, I could detect several earlier and I would say, very much superior influences, including The 'Goons' from the 50's, 'At last the 1948 show' and 'Round the Horne' from 60's and even 70's favourites, 'the Two Ronnies'.



The group was initially brought together by **Victoria May** and **Daniel Thackeray** but as a true ensemble, The Faces at the Window is not built around any one or two lead actors and in true Monty Python style, everyone has an equal role playing numerous parts. The actors had fun changing from being the dominant character to the person under attack - the audience never got used to any single individual being the 'straight man' or the buffoon. The ensemble has only one female member, which seems to be typical of this type of performance (think 'Round the Horne', 'Not the Nine O'clock News' and even 'the Alan Partridge Show' with Rebecca Front) but apparently, that was just how it came to be and the line-up did not seem at all imbalanced.

A nice touch was that whereas shows like the Two Ronnies and a lot of modern radio comedy features just one token song, there are several songs sprinkled throughout the show with singer/writer **Richard Barry** (the Neil Innes of the group) playing both guitar and ukulele, backed by **Phill Howley** on drums with some very spirited double-bass playing by **Joel Roberts**. The overall pace of the show was very slick, as one sketch gave way to another and all the performers demonstrated a wide range of accents and characterisations. The content was at times edgy, a notable example being a sketch about the lengths the DSS will go to in cutting benefits and demoralising claimants, but for the most part the writers' steered clear of politics

and the show could in no way be said to be partisan.

Some sketches were reminiscent of the satirical observations characterised by the likes of Peter Cooke or perhaps Not the Nine O'clock news, with an amusing example being what at first appeared an attack on Swiss clinics like Dignitas, but was actually mocking celebrity scientists, with **Steve Cain** providing some nice pathos as a disillusioned boffin. Another idea which worked well and was worthy of Monty Python was a virtuoso Australian guitarist, played by **Edward Barry**

, attempting to improvise with a pair of bongo drums. In keeping with the format of classic radio-style comedy, there was a running sketch, with

Victoria May

giving an excellent impression of a rustic gardener. Other sketches showed a warm respect for the Goons with for me, one of the best moments being

Daniel Thackeray

's portrayal of Mr Conniving Bastard.

Overall, this was an enjoyable evening of varied, fast-flowing entertainment from a talented new company of whom I'm sure we will be seeing more in the future.

The Faces at the Window is presented by Lilaloka, Hat Hair and Scytheplays Ltd.