

Search The Stage Online for [home](#)[news](#)[opinion](#)[people](#)[features](#)[backstage](#)[reviews](#)[listings](#)[edinburgh **new!**](#)[ticketshop](#)[recruitment](#)[classified](#)[connect](#)[stagetalk](#)[subscribe](#)[contact](#)

TV Review

IN CUTTING EDGE - THE F**KING Fulfords, you half expected David Attenborough to emerge from the hedgerows of Great Fulford, earnestly explaining the plight of yet another endangered species - the Greater Barking Toff, aka Francis Fulford, impoverished aristocrat, unofficial lord of the manor, dedicated xenophobe and father of four aristobrats.

Great Fulford, his once stately but rapidly crumbling pile, set amid 3,000 verdant acres, had been in the family 800 years and, despite having no money to maintain it, Francis did not want to be the Fulford who let it go.

To swell the coffers, Francis and his wife Kishanda apparently spend their time dreaming up ever more fanciful ways of making the house pay for its own maintenance, from inviting Playboy magazine in to shoot glamour spreads to conducting guided tours at £5 a head to letting a TV documentary crew make a film about them.

As an exercise in domestic voyeurism, it is second to none. While the children wrestled in the mud outside, Kishanda scooped up the bat droppings from the threadbare upholstery and Francis pontificated on parenthood - "it's a happier house if your children agree with your prejudices" - as he prepared a supper of partially cooked chicken.

Next to Francis, with his worrying tendency to break into a maniacal donkey bray at the end of every sentence as if to underline his aristocratic status, Kishanda seemed a paragon of long-suffering normality, shrugging off his eccentricities and tolerating the childrens' constant in-fighting and TV-ogling with calm fortitude. When she did finally snap, chucking the TV into the lake when they were not looking, you gave out a silent cheer.

The title, incidentally, not only referred to Francis' partiality to the F-word for emphasis and abuse but also his nickname at school, Fucker Fulford, revealed to camera without so much as a squeak of irony. I suspect the family will come under pressure from Channel 4 to follow this one-off with a series.



The F**king Fulfords as seen on Cutting Edge, Channel 4
Photo: Channel 4

OTHER FEATURES

◆ [Moving mediums](#)

◆ [More features »](#)

◆ [Subscribe to The Stage print edition »](#)

Even more bizarre than the Fulfords was the Storyville documentary The Importance of Being Elegant, about the Congolese singer Papa Wemba, considered by many to be more powerful than the president.

Not only is Papa Wemba revered for his music but also for a cult known as La Sape, launched by him in the seventies, which worships designer clothes. When rival factions of La Sape get together, they proudly itemise their designer labels, like exotic birds flourishing their plumage.

A brilliant piece of verite film-making, it progressed from light-hearted stuff about recording sessions, social gatherings and extravagant shopping sprees to the dark side of this baffling facet of Congolese culture - the skewed morality that says a God-fearing singer can call in gifts and favours in return for mentioning somebody's name during one of his improvised sessions.

It emerged that, in order to maintain their ruinous clothes habit, 'sapeurs', as members of La Sape call themselves, resort to all manner of criminal activities. The posse surrounding Papa Wemba - known as his ministers - looked more sinister by the minute and the man himself had the glazed languor of the corrupt.

In Mark Kiddel's profile, Robert Wyatt - Free Will and Testament, Wyatt had the look of somebody whose childlike wonder would survive any ordeal. Indeed the very fact that somebody wanted to make an hour-long documentary about him proved that he had survived drink-induced paraplegia and a very modest musical talent. Not for nothing does he sing with his fingers in his ears.

Uncharitably I'm afraid, I found myself fast-forwarding through the self-indulgent musical interludes - I can only compare it to watching a respected elderly relative performing over-ambitious karaoke - stopping off to hear about his interesting past as the drunken drummer in sixties band The Soft Machine, who toured America with Hendrix, his life with the artist Alfreda Benge and his thoughts on the human condition. "The world is full of wonderful, kind people," he said, "and yet it is, consistently and everywhere, run by bastards."

I'm very pleased I recorded the slick US series Nip/Tuck since it began with some grisly footage (albeit fake) of a buttock implant operation. Luckily I had eaten some hours earlier.

The personal animosity between the latter-day Frankensteins running the newly set up Miami cosmetic surgery clinic was beginning to get in the way of their nipping and tucking. Did we care? Quite frankly, my dear, I didn't give a tuck.

Details

Cutting Edge - the F**king Fulfords

Channel 4, Tuesday, August 10, 9pm

Storyville - The Importance of Being Elegant

BBC 2, Saturday, August 14, 10pm

Robert Wyatt - Free Will and Testament

BBC2, Friday, August 13, 11.35pm

Nip/Tuck

Channel 4, Wednesday, August 11, 10pm

MONDAY 16 AUGUST 2004 02:05 PM

Atlanta based, award winning features, shorts, documentaries Professional Videographer Award Winning Proc
• video production / postproduction • animation in NY, LA, LV, Miami • Available Albany-Utica-Syracuse- • Director HDTV Docu
company Rochester Programs

home | news | opinion | people | features | backstage | reviews | listings | edinburgh | ticketsh
recruitment | classified | connect | stagetalk | subscribe | | contact

All images and files copyright © The Stage Newspaper Limited unless stated. Images and text from this website may not be us
intended for commercial sale or redistribution. Please see our full [terms and conditions](#) and our [privacy policy](#).

If you have any comments or suggestions about this site, please [contact us](#).