

Rumor has it there's a cunning plan to bring back Blackadder for fifth season

Enlarge / Rowan Atkinson is Capt. Edmund Blackadder and Hugh Laurie is the dimwitted Lt. George in *Blackadder Goes Forth*, the fourth season set during World War I.

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The BBC's quirky-yet-classic 1980s comedy series, *Blackadder*, might finally have a long-hoped-for fifth season, according to British tabloid reports. However, such rumors have circulated before, and there's been no official announcement confirming the news just yet.

I have long adored this oddball series and have frequently revisited the episodes via DVD over the years. (It doesn't take long; there are only six episodes for each of the four seasons, plus a handful of specials.) The show follows its protagonist, one Edmund Blackadder (played to perfection by Rowan Atkinson), through different historical eras in England: the Middle Ages, the Elizabethan era, the Regency era, and World War I.

Blackadder starts out as a bumbling prince (the younger son to King Richard IV) and proceeds to become both smarter and lower-ranking as the seasons progress: a nobleman in Queen Elizabeth I's court in season two, a butler to Hugh Laurie's foppish, dimwitted Prince Regent in season three, and a

captain on the Western Front in season four. He is a knight in *The Cavalier Years* special and a shopkeeper in *Blackadder's Christmas Carol*, a Dickens parody set in Victorian England.

Blackadder has always straddled that fine line between being slyly silly and wickedly smart, drawing abundantly from British cultural history for its frequently broad humor. Who can forget Edmund's brief stint as a corrupt Archbishop of Canterbury and that infamous Black Russian codpiece? How about when he was kidnapped by a Spanish torturer who doesn't speak English and engaged in an elaborate game of charades to communicate? He once accidentally burnt Samuel Johnson's dictionary, pretended to be the Scarlet Pimpernel, and stood trial as the Flanders Pigeon Murderer. The final episode of season four ("Goodbye") proved uncharacteristically moving.

His pot is blacker than his kettle

There haven't been any fresh *Blackadder* episodes since the 2000 one-off, *Blackadder Back and Forth*, and fans have longed for a fifth season ever since, with their hopes continually dashed. But now it looks like it might actually happen. Atkinson, Tony Robinson (who played the dogsbody Baldrick), Stephen Fry (Melchett), and Laurie have reportedly discussed reprising their roles and are eager to do so. Fresh episodes are supposedly being written.

So just what might a fifth season of this offbeat comedy series be like? Co-writer Richard Curtis (who wrote the new Danny Boyle film *Yesterday*) has said that the original series "was a young man's show, criticizing older people, saying how stupid those in authority were." So this time around, per reports, *Blackadder* will be much older: an aging lecturer at university, perennially irritated by his young students. Let's hope the new season continues the tradition of tailoring the theme song's lyrics to each episode.

Of course, to quote *Blackadder* himself: "Am I jumping the gun,

Baldrick, or are the words ‘I have a cunning plan’ marching with ill-deserved confidence in the direction of this conversation?” One shouldn’t place *too* much confidence in a couple of tabloid reports. Barring an official announcement, all we can do is wait and hope that this turns out to be a plan so cunning you could put a tail on it and call it a weasel.

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