

Ian Smith: Foot Spa Half Empty Q&A

What is the show about?

The show is about how I thought I was going to be less stressed and maybe not have anything to talk about - but that “luckily” I found things to be stressed about! I’m a working-class Northerner becoming middle class endnote adapting to my surroundings and then I did a semen analysis which brought some not ideal results - but don’t worry, it’s all very funny and silly.

How easy is it to make fertility struggles funny?

I wasn’t sure if I wanted to talk about it - but I think anything that is stressful or embracing is usually funny to an audience. The old saying goes “tragedy plus time equals comedy”. Well, I didn’t use the “plus time” bit and launched straight into it - but that seems to be my style, to perform shows that are a little bit like shouting into the wind and having an entertaining meltdown.

Anything that didn’t make it into the show?

I went to a haunted house with my friend and hairdresser Dom (for the last show we went to Slovakia and drove a car over a tank). It was a funny trip, but just too weird to make it in. There was too much explaining to be done! Who is the Blank Monk - the poltergeist that haunts this house? Why is he haunting a semi-detached house in Pontefract? At the end of the night Dom was chosen to let a ghost enter his body and use him as a conduit for the spirit world. Not your standard Wednesday night. Maybe it will make it into a future show!

Is stress good for comedy? Do you think you can be funny when you’re not stressed?

I think so! I guess a lot of comedy is about connecting with the audience and finding common ground - and we all get stressed about things we shouldn’t as well as things we should. It’s nice to be able to laugh at yourself and feel like you’re not the only one worrying about something stupid. I don’t think I want to see a comedy show where someone has a six-pack and is talking about buying a new car and being happily married. That sounds boring!

Do you have a favourite joke in the show?

I think my favourite joke has the punchline, “Margaret, for fucks sake! Hurry up!” If you want to see the context, you’ll have to come along and see the show!

The Northern News podcast is in it’s 5th series - how do you keep it fresh?

I think we’re very lucky that the North of England keeps churning out bizarre news stories. It’s a never-ending supply of comedy gold for the podcast. Just today I looked online and found the headline “How the ‘world’s smelliest fruit’ sparked a town centre’s gas leak emergency”.

It can be harder to find stories from my hometown of Goole - there's not as much going on, but I think that's a god challenge for Amy and I on the podcast. Can we make Goole getting a toilet roll factory, having some potholes repaired or a tree falling down funny? And if a tree falls down in Goole and no one talks about it on a podcast, will anyone ever know?

What's it like recording the The News Quiz, especially when the news is so stressful too?

I really love doing the *The News Quiz* - it's an intense challenge every time, because you only have a few days to write as many jokes as you can about whatever is happening in the news - and recently the news has been famously unfunny. But it's nice to try and find the comedy in the world at the minute. It's a real thrill to get a laugh from something you wrote that morning about a subject you previously knew nothing about! But I'd still prefer the news was just very sensible and boring!

You have a second series of your radio series *Ian Smith is Stressed*. What can we expect?

Yeah, I'm very excited to start recording the new series and to go off on some bizarre relaxation journeys. I'll be talking about fertility, why sleep is apparently so important and why water seems to be the key to all good health but tastes so boring. I'm tackling the big issues. I'll be visiting a floatation tank and trying to convince the BBC to let me do some weird trips to places like beer bathing in Austria or driving to Sweden to scream with some students. Keep a look out (or 'listen out' I suppose) in the new year to see what the BBC have given me the budget to do!

What's next for you?

The tour will take up a big chunk of 2026 for me, as well as writing the radio series - I'm also working on some scripted projects and basically keeping myself busy. Hopefully I'll crop up on a few more TV bits and then will start writing some new material and thinking about the next show!

Press release:

<https://www.textualhealing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Ian-Smith-Foot-Spa-Half-Empty-Tour-202526-1.pdf>

Images:

https://www.dropbox.com/home/Ian%20Smith%20Foot%20Spa%20Half%20Empty%20TOUR%20images%2C%20credit%20Matt%20Stronge?share_manage_access=false