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## Veteran TV joker Jeremy Beadle dies of pneumonia, aged 59

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- Hidden camera shows entertained millions
- Colleagues mourn friend and tireless charity worker

[Martin Hodgson](#)

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Jeremy Beadle, the television personality best known for Beadle's About and You've Been Framed, has died of pneumonia, aged 59, his agent said yesterday.

Beadle, who previously fought leukaemia, was admitted to hospital earlier this week. His agent, Nick Canham, said: "Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife, Sue, his two daughters, Cassie and Bonnie, and his stepchildren, Leo and Claire."

A veteran of Saturday night television for many years, Beadle regularly pulled in audiences of more than 15 million with his shows featuring a hidden camera filming pranks and home video pratfalls

Henry Kelly, one of his co-presenters on the 1980s show *Game for a Laugh*, said: "I shall miss him desperately. Not only was he a terrific colleague, but he was a most wonderful friend and the most entertaining company you could imagine."

Beadle was born in Hackney, east London, the result of an affair between his mother and a newspaper journalist he never met. After school, he worked as an insurance clerk, music festival promoter, advertising salesman and assembly line worker. He wrote material for the comedian Bob Monkhouse, boosting his income with minicab driving until he secured a radio show called Beadle's Bookshelf.

His television career began as a writer and presenter of *The Deceivers*, a BBC2 history of swindlers and hoaxers, and *Eureka*, which told the stories behind everyday inventions.

After the BBC turned down a format called *Gotcha!*, he took its practical joking element to LWT's *Game for a Laugh*, which established him as Britain's king of the practical joke. The show ran for five years and was followed by another hidden camera show, *Beadle's About*.

In his most famous stunt, he staged a UFO landing in a Dorset garden. So convincing was the hoax that the home's owner, Janet Elford, invited the supposed alien pilot inside for a cup of tea. "The scale was huge," Beadle told Channel 4 in 2005. "We literally cut off half of Dorset."

In 1990, he launched *You've been Framed*, which featured viewers' disastrous home videos. Sometimes criticised as the epitome of tacky TV, he remained philosophical about his love-hate relationship with the viewers. "I think people are guilty about enjoying the cruelty of comedy which is always at someone else's expense," he told the *Sunday Times*.

Beadle raised funds for Children with Leukaemia and is estimated to have generated more than £100m for the charity, for which he was made a MBE in 2001.

In recent years, Beadle had been plagued by ill health, losing a kidney to cancer in 2004. A year later he was diagnosed with leukaemia, but he shrugged off the illness, saying it was "business as usual".

### Prankster's highs

- In the early 80s *Game for a Laugh* inflicted the practical jokes pioneered by the US show *Candid Camera* on the British public and helped to usher in reality TV
- In *Beadle's About*, Beadle presided over the apparent anarchy, often disguised as a policeman, before revealing the prank and his identity
- *You've Been Framed* began in 1990 and is still going strong. It cashed in on the boom in home video cameras

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