

Award-winning comedian Peter Kay tells Jane Dimond how women's talk has made him flushed with success

Loo roll ladies got me off the bottom rung

Q Your show was voted Best New Comedy Series at the British Comedy Awards. For those who haven't seen you yet, how would you best describe your comedy?

A It's just very warm and affectionate. I write about what I know. As Les Dawson showed, you've got to know

how to play the piano before you can play it badly, and, likewise, you've got to care about what you're sending up. So mostly I talk about the jobs I've had – as a loo roll packer, then working in a bingo hall, a garage, supermarkets and as a cinema usher.

Q When were as young as eight you were already taping family gatherings like Christmas. Why is it that you were so tuned into the absurdities of everyday conversation?

A We had this old-fashioned tape

player and initially I was just fascinated that I could record conversations without people knowing. I'd tape my grandfather talking to my mum and play it back and they'd laugh at what they'd said. I found it funny that people found themselves funny, so I started to study what they were saying. About five years ago I got a dictaphone as a pressie and nobody was safe.

Q Has anyone recognised themselves in any of your stuff and taken offence?

A My characters aren't based entirely on one person. In fact, a couple of my old managers were flattered and didn't take offence because they obviously didn't realise that certain characteristics were them.

Q Who got you started on your career?

A All this really kicked off when I worked on a production line packing loo rolls with seven women.

Although I'd done the tapes before I'd never spent any time with women listening to their conversations. They were fascinating – the way they could talk about absolutely everything, switching from dreams to, say, operations in three minutes! I love writing for and playing women.

Q Do you worry you might run out of material and have to take another part-time job in a supermarket?

A No, because I've learned how to



Picture by Martin Kaye

'I always say to my fiancée Susan that I'm the girl and she's the man'

filter things from every conversation I hear. My fiancée Susan is always going mad at me, saying: 'You're not getting out your notebook now, are you? Don't you start writing!' And I'll go to the toilet and scribble stuff down.

Q So you're a workaholic. What else are you like?

A Happy, moody and perfectionist. If something isn't as good as I know it could have been, I get moody – or if things aren't done on time. I always set myself time goals and it's the

worst thing you can do and something I'm trying to change about myself. But you never lose that hand on your shoulder saying, 'Come on, it's over now, you've had your moment.' You always feel you're getting away with it – and that fear drives you on.

Q Do you think it has something to do with you being Catholic?

A Yes, exactly. Catholicism makes you feel guilty all the time, about everything. Though thankfully it seems to be changing at schools

now – they don't drum into children all that 'God will punish you' stuff.

Q Have you always been a teetotaler?

A Yes, though I have a once-a-year Baileys, which I like because of the flavoured ice-cream. I never drink beer, it tastes like floor cleaner to me. Sometimes you feel left out when everyone around you is drinking, but I just don't like the taste and it's worked out well, given all the driving I do.

Q You've played various women in your mockumentaries. What's the most feminine thing about you?

A I always say to Susan that I'm the girl and she's the man. I'm always wanting affection in the street, and Susan's like 'Get off!'

Q You're known for your abiding loyalty to Bolton, 'the land of dreams – the only place in England where people still point at aeroplanes!' What is it about the place that you especially love?

A I've always been a very homely person and I think if I lived in Ipswich I'd feel the same about Ipswich. Everyone here treats me as they always have done and I think that's why I like it. If it were up to me I'd live and die in Bolton.

Q Is it true you'd give the job up if it ever meant having to leave Bolton?

A Yeah, I would. I don't feel safe in other places. Woody Allen made a living out of being in New York, it's never done him any harm, and it would be quite funny if I made a living out of being in Bolton.

Q What would people be most surprised to discover about you?

A That I can't bear wasting baked beans. If I put a tin of beans in a saucepan and there's three or four left in the tin, when I go out of the room it's like I can hear them crying and I have to go back in and get them out and put them in the pan.

Q What would you like to be doing in another 20 years?

A Susan and I are getting married next year, so I hope we'll have children and a nice house. I'd like to have done a musical. And a real ambition is to do a film about Peter Sellers' life story, but apparently Madonna's bought the rights – I'll have to have a word with her!