

RIK MAYALL IS EDWIN THE EAGLE



Actor and comedian Rik Mayall has one major thing in common with his Shoebox Zoo character Edwin the Eagle.

“There’s no doubt about it,” admits the star of comedy classics such as *The Young Ones* and *Blackadder*, “we are both hopeless at the 21st century. He is totally bamboozled by a computer and so am I.”

Rik (46) puts his technology aversion down to the quad bike accident, which almost killed him back in 1988.

He suffered a severe head injury and lapsed into a coma for four days following the accident, which happened at his farm in Devon.

“After recovering,” he continues, “it seemed everyone I knew had mobile phones and computers and I didn’t know how to work them. I still don’t. I have a complete aversion to technology and that’s exactly the same as Edwin so I know what makes him tick.

“I’ve thrown three mobile phones into the Thames in the past because I couldn’t work them. I’ve never been on the internet in my life. My wife Barbara gave me a computer but I haven’t a clue how to work it.”

Rik admits that his technological skills are so poor that he even had to accept help from his daughter in order to watch the first two episodes of *Shoebox Zoo*.

“When the tapes arrived in the post, my youngest child, Bonnie, who is nine, found me trying to put it into the video machine. ‘I’ll show you how, daddy,’ she said, and led me into her room where she put it in her machine.



“It was lucky she saw it as she was able to give me an insight into how children will react to the series, and she loved it, especially the carved animals and she started crying when the little girl, Marnie, told her dad how much she missed her dead mother.”

Rik’s character, Edwin, is the self-appointed leader of the animated animal gang who have lain locked within the *Shoebox Zoo* for 1100 years.

In a veiled reference to Eddie “The Eagle” Edwards, ski jumper and hero of the Calgary Winter Olympics in 1988, Rik’s character cannot fly.

Despite his lack of skill in the air, an obvious failing in a bird of prey, Edwin is pompous, blustering and incapable of admitting he is ever wrong.

“It’s true,” laughs Rik, “He’s vain, self-obsessed, hypocritical and cowardly. He’s also so very English. He thinks he’s much better than the others, whom he considers a bunch of barbarians.”

Rik is no stranger to the world of animated film narration. In the past he has played Toad in *Wind in the Willows* and *The Willows in Winter* (for which he won an Emmy). He also worked on *Watership Down*, *Tom and Vicky*, *A Monkey’s Tale*, *The World of Peter Rabbit* and *Friends and Jellikins*; *Santa’s Special Delivery*.

“I’m so well cast as Edwin,” Rik says. “He reflects perfectly the wily nature of the way I perform. I’m an old comic and animators like that. It gives them a lot to work with. They have done a great job here with Edwin’s wings and the way he struts up and down looking terribly haughty. It’s so ME.”

