Arthur Daley

A truly memorable TV character

Written by Andy Owen

George Cole was a very special man. A superstar if ever there was one.

As his character *Arthur Daley* in Minder, he delivered some of the most unforgettable one-liners, British television has ever seen,

Arthur Daley was/is one of TV's greatest ever characters.

But what made him memorable, was the talent of the man that played him.

Daley was the endlessly smooth and slightly dodgy wheeler-dealer - and had a way with words that turned everyday conversations into pure comedy gold.

From continually mentioning *"Er indoors"* when talking about his long-suffering wife, to confidently announcing "*The world is my lobster,"* his phrases became part of everyday language for millions of viewers. A lot of them are still used to this day…

Half the fun of watching Minder, was waiting to see what brilliant bit of market-trader wisdom he'd come out with next. Every episode contained a gem. Some contained many.

I regularly watch repeats of the series as it has never lost its appeal.

Terry, Dave and Arthur at The Winchester Club

Whether he was talking up a *"nice little earner,"* dismissing someone with a cutting put-down, or spinning another elaborate story, George Cole delivered every line with perfect timing and that unmistakable twinkle in his eye.

Decades later, those quotes are still fondly remembered. And when it came to memorable lines as Arthur Daley, nobody did it better than George Cole.

I recall seeing an interview in the '80's, where George Cole talked about always having a £20 note in the back of his wallet, just in case a taxi driver (who were his greatest inspiration) came out with a funny or memorable saying while he was getting a cab somewhere,

He'd give them the £20 note, and say "*Right, I'm having that one*", and he would effectively buy the line from them, to use as Arthur Daley.

It was a towering injustice that he didn't get a Knighthood. An OBE wasn't enough.

Here are just some of his gems that I have pulled together. They are the absolute finest, laugh-out-loud Arthur Daley quotes, grouped by his unique outlook on life, business and his fellow man…

“I’ve got prawns in the game.”

"I discovered a window of opportunity and I jumped straight through it."

“I’ve got a thirst you could photograph!”

“Oh my good gawd, The VAT Man!”

"Brick walls do not a shovel make, nor iron bars a cage. I have been a prisoner of conscience."

"As with most things in this life, Terry, it is in the eye of the beholder. One man's firewood is another man's porcupine wotsisname."

"I spend my life worrying about my fellow man, my friends, my family, making sure 'Er Indoors has a crust, pushing the economy of this septic isle ever upwards with my entrepreneurial skills."

“Terry, there’s no wicked for the peaceful.”

“You can make a happy man feel very old. “

“Stand on me Terence, this is all a bit previous.”

“I’ll have a Vera and London, thanks Dave.” *(Vera Lynn- Gin and London Philharmonic-Tonic)*

“The world is your lobster.”

"A friend in need is a pest"

“I’m getting agg from plod"

“You can’t judge a man by his boat."(*Boat Race - face)*

Arthur wanted to get the lock up painted. The decorator said, “I will give you a quote. “No, no, Shakespeare gave quotes. You give me a firm price.”

(When accused of stealing someone else's business patter) …"Oh, I think you'll find the English language is available for general use."

“On my bank managers eyesight!”

“Eh Terry! What’s French for ensuite?”

"This is the secret of good business. You make contact with your customer. Understand their needs. And then flog them something they could well do without."

"Don't judge others by your own low standards!"

"He's an invertebrate liar!"

"He must be on them stair rods." *(steroids)*

"Get your retaliation in first. It's the basic rule of English fair-play."

DS Morley is questioning Arthur. He asks him: "Why is it that everyone seems to take such an instant dislike to me? Arthur replies: "It saves time."

"Did you clock the geezer with the gold Hampsteads?" *(Hampstead Heath – teeth)*

Arthur is given a cheque as payment for some dresses. "What's that? A cheque? A bloody Gregory? Don't you realise why he's called Bouncing Morry? I wish your parents had gone in for goldfish instead of children. Then when they got tired of them, they could have flushed them down the loo."

"It's a phenomenononom Terry"

"I'm serious Terry, I'm using my serious voice!

"Not even in jest, Terence!".

"A perfectly understandable misunderstanding!"

"The world is your oyster, Terry. But it's up to you to find the pearl."

"A nice little earner, Terry. No tax, no overheads, and completely kosher."

"I am a taxpayer, Terry! Well, a potential taxpayer."

"The government wants us all to be entrepreneurs, Terry. I'm just doing my bit for the nation's balance of payments."

"I have never done a dishonest day's work in my life."

"I am a businessman, Chisholm, not a criminal. I merely exploit the gaps left by the Inland Revenue."

"The police, Terry, are like the weather. Essential, but frequently a bloody nuisance.

"'Er indoors is a wonderful woman, Terry. A saint. Mind you, even saints have their moments of extreme violence."

"Marriage, my son, is a beautiful institution. But who wants to live in an institution?"

"A man who trusts a woman, Terry, is a man who buys a used car from a stranger in a pub."

"As Shakespeare so beautifully put it, Terry, Neither a borrower nor a lender be, unless you can get a decent rate of interest.'"

"I'm a man of the world, Terry. I've been to Southend."

"We must look to the future, my boy. To the sun-lit uplands of the next transaction."

"I purchased a lorry load of goods various."

"Our septic isle."

"It's a natural reflex response to Plod probing my property."

"He's a diamond geezer."

"Large VAT please Dave, and a half for Terry. And put it on the slate..."

"He always leads me to the leads."

"Let me put it this way. Dying could ruin your living."

"I'll be laughing all the way to the Leeds!"

"Not many!"

"Stand on me!"

In the Eurotunnel episode, Chisholm appears and Arthur says, "Look Terry, it's Interplod."

"Ere, Tel, bring the Jag round the back and drive me round to Dave's for a vodka and Slimline, on the slate."

"Is he brown bread?"

"No man is a roundabout"

"You're a better man than what's his face."

"He was just a prawn in the game."

Arthur was talking about selling stolen items to an associate. "Larch Lap Larry is not a fence."

"Play your cards right Terry and there'll be a nice little Tenner in this for you."

"They're taking diabolical liberties!"

"I resemble that remark!"

"Oh my good gawd Terence, scantily clad Richards (Richard the Third – Bird) all over the gaff, it's downright diabolical!"

I read this recently, about George Cole:

"I had the absolute pleasure of being on the Minder film crew for 52 episodes. One day I was telling George about my dodgy neighbour and his story about a visit by the VAT man, whom my neighbour described as the 'Licenced Mugger.'

George used it later in one episode. On another day, George did a drunk scene and it was, superb, so much so the crew applauded when the scene ended. He turned and said "That performance is down to you lot, as I picked up drunk tips watching you all returning from the pub at lunch time. What it did show was just what a good actor he was, as he was teetotal."

I'll leave the last word to Arthur. These are his very last words that were spoken in the final episode…

"I don't understand it. Why me? Why me? Have I not always conducted my life with decency and dignity? Have the time-honoured values of yesteryear deteriorated to the point that there is no place left in the black economy, for men of vision?"

George Cole sadly died at the age of 90 on August 5th, 2015.

An irreplaceable talent.

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