

# ALAN SUGAR

UNSCRIPTED  
EXTRAS

# ALAN SUGAR

UNSCRIPTED *EXTRAS*

MACMILLAN

# MENU

FEATURETTE:

WHY I CAN'T BE SCRIPTED

SCENE SELECTION

THE DIRECTOR'S BEEN CUT

ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY

## **FEATURETTE: WHY I CAN'T BE SCRIPTED**

## Extracted from Chapter 2: I AM NOT AN ACTOR

### Getting ready for the first-ever episode



Producer Peter Moore explained to me that series director Beth Dicks would be assigned to me. She would be by my side following me around throughout the filming of the whole series. This would start off with something called the 'Titles'. For those who don't know about TV (which included me at the time), the Titles are the build-up to the programme. It would start, 'Who is Sir Alan Sugar? Where did he come from? What did he do? Why is he the boss on this programme? What's so special about him?' etc., etc.

Making the Titles involved me having to spend a couple of days filming around the streets in various locations such as outside the premises where I started my very first business, next to the famous Ridley Road market. They filmed me in front of the flats where I was born in Hackney and walking around in the City of London. All of this made no sense to me at the time, but of course when it was finally edited and put together with music, it was very impressive. They added footage of me riding around in my Rolls-Royce, sitting in the back reading the *Financial Times*, all that type of stuff.

By now I had told the family about the show. They were very supportive and, I guess, also quite excited. They were asking me for a blow-by-blow account. 'What's happening now? When are you filming?'

Have you seen the candidates? When will it be on TV?’

The first thing I showed them was a small compilation tape containing all the filming Beth had done. It wasn't really impressive at that stage because it was just shots of me walking around, standing in front of places and all that. But one thing did emerge from this Titles business very quickly – I am *not* an actor! I'm fine at speaking off the cuff, but there were occasions where Beth tried to give me a script and I was totally useless – I just could not do a script. I often marvel at how professional actors remember each line they have to say and put it across so brilliantly, because I can't do that at all.

In the end, after many tries and retries at certain points, for example when I was standing by my aeroplane at Stansted airport, I asked Beth, 'Is it absolutely imperative for me to say exactly what you want me to say, word for word? Or can I say it my own way?'

This was, in fact, my first encroachment into the territory of the creative geniuses. One could see that she wanted me to say the *exact* words, so she persevered.

Very quickly the Sugar loss-of-patience and short temper started to kick in and it soon became a case of, 'Beth, I'm not doing this – take it or leave it. I've got the general gist of what you want me to say – now this is what *I'm* going to say, and that's it.'

And, of course, it was perfectly okay. The reason I labour this point will become clear later, but some production people tend to think of the main person (or the talent) – *me* in this case – as the stooge. The talent is told where to go, what to do, where to stand, what to say. So I decided at an early stage, when I got back from this filming session, to politely explain to Peter that this was not going to happen. 'And if for one moment they think they're going to tell me what to say in the boardroom, then I'm telling them right now that all bets are completely and utterly off.'

To be fair, Peter not only agreed but made it clear there was never any plan to script the boardroom scenes. 'Absolutely not,' he said. 'You're completely spot on, Sir Alan. No way are we going to tell you what to say. No way. What comes out of your mouth is what's going to be shown. That's going to be the beauty of this programme. We are not making a scripted programme at all.'

Despite this fact, as the years have gone by, because the programme and some of the sequences have been so brilliant, there have been sceptical people in the media who talk about 'scripted boardrooms'. That is absolute total rubbish and something I'd like to clear up. There is *no* script for the main programme. There cannot be a script. I mean, just think about it: if you've ever been in a meeting somewhere with six or seven people, once the meeting starts you have no idea what they are going to say and how they are going to interact; therefore, you cannot possibly know how you are going to respond. I didn't realise it myself at the time, but it's the same when I get in the boardroom with fourteen

candidates – I'm as surprised as anyone else by what comes out of their mouths and therefore can't plan what I'm going to say back to them.

So it was a good thing that Beth walked around with me for a couple of days filming the Titles, because what came out of it was that we cleared the air: there would be no script – they would take what I had to say and use it in their editing.

## **SCENE SELECTION**



## Extracted from Chapter 3: WE'RE OFF AND RUNNING

### Series one gets underway

I was told by Nick of the most embarrassing scene when the team was presenting their proposition to the advertising agency, whom I'd chosen to give me their opinion on who should win the task. At the time I couldn't conceive of what he was trying to tell me, but apparently Rachel went into a room full of executives and put up a 'mood board', which looked like something some four-year-olds had made at playgroup. She then kicked off her shoes, switched on the CD player and started to dance to the music. I said to Nick, 'You've got to be kidding me!'

Nick said, 'You could not make it up, Alan. I wanted the floor to swallow me up. It was one of the most embarrassing moments in my entire professional career.'

Andy Devonshire, who was the director, also told me he couldn't believe what he was seeing but I didn't fully grasp how bad it was until I finally saw the edited version of the episode several months later. You could actually see the industry experts cringing. It was unbelievable, but also wonderful telly. To be fair, the intensity of the process has made candidates do some pretty stupid things down the years. It is so competitive that people will do silly things to get noticed, and Rachel clearly went too far.

## **Extracted from Chapter 8: 'AM I SPEAKING ENGLISH?'**

**Filming series two with the most emotional bunch of candidates  
I've ever seen**

Syed got a real grilling from me in the boardroom. He still tried to argue his case over the hundred chickens. 'Sir Alan, I am a born fighter,' he said. I responded, 'Well, you're not a born manufacturer.'

I asked him, 'Why shouldn't I fire you?'

'Because I'm a winner, Sir Alan.'

'You're not a bloody winner – you lost!'

## Extracted from Chapter 9: 'WHAT IS IT WITH THESE PEOPLE?'

### Working with celebrities on *Comic Relief* and *Sport Relief*



As usual on *The Apprentice*, the celebrities convened in the reception outside the boardroom. Nick and Margaret were in position in the boardroom and the celebrities were called in and sat down. I made my usual grand entrance then sat down and looked along the line of faces, peering into their eyes the way I normally do to get a bit of tension going. Some of them were smiling at me. I didn't return their smiles. In that twenty seconds of glaring, Morgan piped up, 'Come on, let's get on with this. We've got no time to waste here.'

I turned to him and said, 'Shut it, Morgan. Be quiet.'

I made my speech to them, telling them what the task was about. It was a brilliant task thought up by Patrick Uden where the candidates would run a funfair which would raise money for the charity. More about that later, but what I'm going to admit to now is the worst boardroom speech I've ever made in all my years on television. I made the fatal error of trying to be a comedian in front of all these pros. I was cracking jokes that went down like the biggest lead balloons you have ever seen. It was cringingly embarrassing and you could see the awkward looks on their faces and hear the polite chuckles at some of my terrible lines.

One of my big clangers was trying to make a joke to Rupert Everett,

purposely confusing him with Hugh Grant. I came out with things like, 'Ah yes, I know you . . . you're that fellow from *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, right? How's Liz Hurley then?' Even as I recount this now I want the ground to swallow me up – again!

I made Ross Kemp furious by suggesting that the tough-guy show he was doing at the time was a bit fake because off camera he had about ten security guards around him. He, too, was not a happy camper and did not appreciate my humour.

As these jokes bombed, I could see Maureen cringing and shaking her head. The only saving grace was that it was a recorded session. When I realised very quickly that I was making a double-barrelled idiot of myself – a bit like a Piers Morgan clone – I kind of pulled myself together, got into businesslike mode and carried on explaining the task. To be honest, I couldn't get them out the door quick enough.

## Extracted from Chapter 14: 'A VILLAGE SOMEWHERE HAS LOST ITS IDIOT'

Filming series five and *Junior Apprentice* is born



From the first day I clapped eyes on him, Ben would not stop going on about the fact that he'd been offered a scholarship at Sandhurst. It seemed like every time I asked him a question or every time he piped up in the boardroom, he would mention this bloody Sandhurst scholarship, even when it had nothing to do with the matter in hand. In the end I'd had enough of him and the last time he brought it up, I snapped.

'Will you stop going on about Sandhurst?' I said. 'I was in the Jewish Lads' Brigade – trainee bugler – but it didn't help me sell computers when I got older.'

That shut him up, and I heard afterwards that the production people in the gallery thought that moment was brilliant television. Cate Hall, who worked on the series, still says it was one of her favourite *Apprentice* moments of all time. The fellow had thick skin. I fired him in week nine.

## **Extracted from Chapter 17: ALL FIRED UP FOR THE NEW FORMAT**

### **Looking for brains not bollocks in series seven**

Vincent Disneur was another interesting candidate who was half Belgian. He was banging on so much in one of his explanations as to why he wasn't responsible for something or other I had to cut him short.

'I know you are Belgian and that's where the waffles come from, but can you please cut the crap and tell me why you shouldn't be here in the final three?'

**THE DIRECTOR'S BEEN CUT**

## Extracted from Chapter 21: 'SOMEONE HERE THINKS HE'S NAPOLEON!'

Nick doing his own stunts and filming series nine with the wishy-washy poxy boxy



A simple lesson in life is that experience always allows you to learn what to do next time. Consequently, I became very proficient in what to do when faced with the baggy-jumpered, beanie-hat-wearing, brightly-coloured-scarf-around-the-neck brigade, all displaying their artistic genius. I'm talking about the directors of the BBC's trails.

As I mentioned earlier, the first *Apprentice* trail I saw was for series one, where they'd actually taken a compilation of clips from the show and patched them together to make an advert for the arrival of a programme never seen on UK television before. That kind of trail is not rocket science to produce; it simply requires a certain amount of cooperation from *The Apprentice* production team to provide the trail-makers with the rushes (I know I'm sounding like a TV luvvy now). Over the years, however, as the series became more popular, the marketing division of the BBC, who are responsible for promoting programmes, actually made custom trails from scratch.

At first I found it hard to grasp that the production team on *The Apprentice*, who knew every detail like the back of their hands, were



barely consulted with regard to the content of the trails. This separate marketing division took control and operated in a world of its own. They kind of invented a whole story for the trails and made a mini-film which didn't use any of the actual footage from the series. These were very expensive productions and were an indication of how well the BBC got behind the series.

I was of course featured in most of these custom trails. They were all made in a studio where in some cases a mini-boardroom was created as a set. I was surprised to see the size of the crew. You had the director, naturally, but also one bloke with a rag cleaning the desk, another with a brush dusting the lens, the gaffer – a bloke who fixed things if they went wrong – another geezer with the famous clapperboard and five runners asking if you wanted coffee, tea, cold drink or a sandwich. And there was a buffet fit for a queen set up for the crew, who of course must be fed! It was an amazing sight.

Being a novice back then, I fell for it hook, line and sinker. 'Your call time at the studio [meaning when I should arrive] is 9 a.m.,' they'd say. I'd get a whole list of events that were going to happen: wardrobe, make-up, tea break, film scene one, etc. The bottom line was it resulted in me being needed for five hours to film a trail that lasted twenty-five seconds when broadcast.

What wasn't amazing but bloody boring was the amount of times I was told to say the same thing over and over again to get what the director, a mini-Spielberg, described as perfection.

'Okay, take twenty-five – just one more time, Sir Alan. I know you are frustrated but we just need to get it right.'

I mean, how many bleedin' times can you say, 'Will you send the candidates in now please.'

They drove me nuts to such an extent that I would start to lose it and tell them, 'That's it – I'm out of here in five minutes.' Near to a Jeremy Clarkson moment.

When I was asked to appear in more trails in later years I would say, 'No problem, but here is the deal. You have me for one hour, so you set everything up, do all your scenes with the other people, take all the shots that you need. Use one of your runners to stand in for me to get your eyeline, focus, lighting and all that bollocks; then I come in – bish bash bosh – I do my bit and then sod off.'

'Oh dear, dear, dear,' they laughed condescendingly. 'I'm afraid it doesn't work that way, Sir Alan. It *would* be nice if we could do that, but in reality you will be needed for at least three hours. We'll try and fast-track it of course, as we know you're a busy man.'

'Er, no, mate. Did you read my lips? You have one hour, otherwise I am not doing it, simple as that. So go tell Fellini he has to work around it.'

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY**

## Extracted from Chapter 16: MORGAN THE TYRANT

### Documentaries, Twitter wars with Piers Morgan and new friendships



Making *Life Stories* with Piers Morgan was interesting at some points, verging on hilarious at others. To start with, Piers was being as mischievous and rude as he possibly could, but he knew I could give it back with interest so there was some great banter in this film, some of which unfortunately didn't make the cut. One of Piers's trademarks, as anyone who's seen his interviews will know, is that he tries to get his guests to weep about the unfortunate things that have happened to them in life. While we were filming, the pathetic film crew and directors would take him to one side at times and say in effect, 'Go on, Piers, try to get him on to some sentimental story – we want to see the sad side of him. See if you can make him emotional because it would be a major coup to see this so-called tough guy from *The Apprentice* crumple. If we could just get a glimpse of a little tear in his eye, it would be fantastic.' I say this was pathetic because, although I didn't actually hear them say these words to him verbatim, you could tell that's what they were doing as in certain sections of the filming they would stop, make some excuse that the lighting was wrong or something like that, then pull him aside to have their little talk.

I said to him, 'Piers, these people are amateurs, son. Do they think I've

just come off the bloody onion boat? I know what they're trying to get you to do, so forget it.'

Piers laughed and said, 'I know, I know, but you know what it's like in telly. They're asking me to do these things, but you're right, you're right. Anyway, let's move on.'

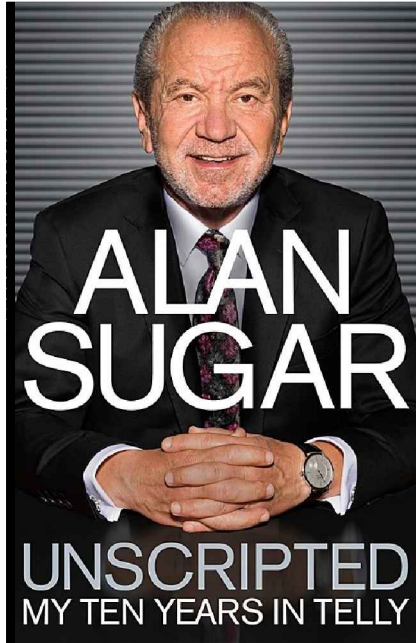
At one point Piers asked me, 'What's been the worst moment in your life?'

And here, if I say so myself, I went into my best acting mode. If BAFTA were looking in, they should have given me a bloody award for this alone. I changed my whole demeanour to appear uncomfortable; I put on a very serious face, took a deep breath and started to speak very slowly and very sincerely. 'Yeah well, it's a difficult one to talk about. I know you like doing these things and you've forced me into it, but if you really want me to say . . . well, my most traumatic time, I guess . . . [long pause] . . . was when you got fired from the *Mirror*.'

It was a hilarious moment. Even the camera crew couldn't keep their cameras steady and Piers himself burst out laughing. Unfortunately, because I'd tricked the producer, who thought he was about to strike TV gold, the actual sequence never got into the final cut.

Extracted from *Unscripted: My Ten Years in Telly* by Alan Sugar

Published by Macmillan on 24 September 2015



Find out more on [Panmacmillan.com](http://Panmacmillan.com).



First published 2015 by Macmillan

This electronic edition published 2015 by Macmillan  
an imprint of Pan Macmillan  
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR  
Associated companies throughout the world  
[www.panmacmillan.com](http://www.panmacmillan.com)

ISBN 978-1-5098-2193-8

Copyright © Amstar Media 2015

Front cover photo © Paul Marc Mitchell

Illustrations © The Boy Fitz Hammond 2015. No reproduction without express prior permission.

The right of Alan Sugar to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Pan Macmillan does not have any control over, or any responsibility for, any author or third-party websites referred to in or on this book.

You may not copy, store, distribute, transmit, reproduce or otherwise make available this publication (or any part of it) in any form, or by any means (electronic, digital, optical, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Visit [www.panmacmillan.com](http://www.panmacmillan.com) to read more about all our books and to buy them. You will also find features, author interviews and news of any author events, and you can sign up for e-newsletters so that you're always first to hear about our new releases.