

Try not to look at this until you've done all the exercises that go with the listening.

The best restaurant in London

- Richard: For this week's podcastsineenglish.com business podcast, we're talking about a restaurant. A restaurant that became the top-rated restaurant in London.
- Jackie: Mmm, except that the restaurant was a fake. It didn't exist.
- Richard: Yes, so we ask who did it, why he did it and how?
- Jackie: Well, let's start with who, Richard. It was a journalist, okay?
- Richard: By the name of Oobah Butler.
- Jackie: And what's interesting was that his original job included writing fake reviews for TripAdvisor restaurants. Even though he never went to them, right, and he saw that these fake reviews actually helped the restaurants to become very popular. The reviews were always positive.
- Richard: Yes, obviously the restaurants themselves paid for him to write the reviews.
- Jackie: Of course. Which leads on to why he had his idea.
- Richard: Yes. He wondered whether it was possible um... for not only to have fake reviews but actually have a fake restaurant. Would it be possible to become the best restaurant in London?
- Jackie: Yeah, now this became a challenge for him, didn't it, Richard? And we're talking about April 2017. So how did he go about it, Richard?
- Richard: Well, the first thing is, he decided to use his real shed in the garden. That was the restaurant.
- Jackie: Yeah, and he called it, "The Shed".
- Richard: And for ten pounds he was actually able to get it verified as a real place.
- Jackie: Because it wasn't real, he didn't want to give his real address, so he made it appointment only. And then um... so he... he did that and then he designed a website and he created a concept. What was that?
- Richard: [laughs] He named all his dishes after moods, so he had "Happy", um... "Love", "Comfort" as his dishes.

- Jackie: Yeah, so “Comfort” for me would be something like Shepherd’s pie.
- Richard: [laughs] Yes. And he also took some photos of the dishes.
- Jackie: Yes, those arty, soft focus, close up photos of... of food, that is very popular nowadays.
- Richard: But they were all fake as well.
- Jackie: Yeah, he didn’t even use real ingredients, right, he used shaving cream instead of cream.
- Richard: Shaving cream, yes. And paint, he painted his things to look attractive.
- Jackie: Yeah, so he had a name, had a logo, and lots of great photos, so then he submits his restaurant to TripAdvisor. And?
- Richard: Well, it’s approved and then it’s put on their site for everyone to see.
- Jackie: He started out ranked at 18... number 18,149. But by the end of August he was at number 156, and by the winter, he’s number 30. How did he do that, Richard?
- Richard: Well, obviously he has a history of writing fake reviews, he had lots of contacts, he got all his friends to write really great reviews for his non-existent restaurant and that soon got him shooting up the charts.
- Jackie: It all... it was all about the reviews. All the reviews were fantastic and it made all the difference.
- Richard: And of course he couldn’t have any bad reviews because no real people went to the restaurant at all.
- Jackie: Exactly. And then on the 1st November, the same year, just six months after listing the Shed online, he gets an email from TripAdvisor. He’s worried, isn’t he?
- Richard: Yes, he thinks they’ve rumbled him.
- Jackie: Yeah
- Richard: But in actual fact it’s to tell him that he’s London’s top-rated restaurant.
- Jackie: A restaurant that doesn’t exist, he’s told, is currently the highest ranked in one of the world’s biggest cities on perhaps the Internet’s most trusted review site. Number one, Richard. I mean that is just incredible. Now he stayed there for two weeks, but of course now that the page has been deleted everybody realises it was a fake.

Richard: But he said it was a fake, didn't he? He wasn't actually found out by anybody.

Jackie: No... no... no, he... he... he, he wanted to... to show that this was possible, right, and I suppose, it... it's sad really, because it just shows how easily fooled people are.

Richard: Mmm, how fake everything is. But in actual fact, in his own words, he's much more positive. He says, if he can transform his garden into London's best restaurant then literally anything is possible in the business world.