

Issue #3 - July 2022



Blizzard Comedy zine



Comedy for the Malcontent Left



Introduction

Jonny Collins

At the end of the month this issue comes out (assuming we get it out on time) I will be turning 27. Ageing is always a bit of a headfuck – but then I remember I was only 23 when I first started Blizzard Comedy.

In these 3 and a bit years it simultaneously feels like I've done more than I have in any other period of my life, and also nothing. Some of this has been the weird time warp the 2020s have been so far, others my own mental health struggles over this time. But whatever the reason – I still can't quite believe how far we've come.

Whilst in purely capitalistic terms we're still very much a long way away from being a profitable endeavour – but we are getting ever closer to being self-sustaining, which is honestly kind of daunting.

Blizzard Comedy was never meant to be a money-making endeavour, it was a project that I felt was needed to get more people into live comedy without the stigma that a lot of the mainstream clubs have, and to give really under appreciated talent a platform to improve and showcase themselves on a paid basis.



In those metrics, an ever-growing community of performers, fans and collaborators, I feel incredibly satisfied with the progress that has been made, even if large parts of the last few years has been a blur.

There are still improvements we need to make, and milestones to reach. But I am content with what I have achieved so far, and if it all ended tomorrow, I would have nothing but fond memories of this work.

On a personal level as well, I am getting to a comfortable flow where I'm no longer exhausting myself to put these shows on, which I know for a fact all of our patrons would approve of – and balancing Blizzard with a social life and self-care is getting easier. I want to especially thank our Patreon supporters for making this possible.

As for what's next for us – it'll be more of the same. But I do want to make better use of our Twitch account, more regular streams with interviews, gaming, and other formats alongside our panel show. I want to drive our Patreon support up even more to enable us to increase the amount that we're paying to our acts, and hopefully enable us to entice acts from further afield to come up.

But my primary goal for the next 3-12 months is honestly to be kind to myself, while doing what I love just enough not to stop me from loving it.

You are all the loveliest community I have ever been a part of. I am immensely grateful to be a part of this. Love you all, enjoy the rest of this silly Zine xx.

An interview with

Jake Donaldson

What is your show about?

I suppose at its core its about my personal experiences of anxiety, and it certainly features lots of real stories from my life, but more generally it's about how life as a modern, progressive, feminist man in a world still trying to break free of toxic masculinity contributes to anxiety and mental health issues. It deals with how toxic masculinity does (but shouldn't) play a part in how I relate to my Father, my disability and my sex life.

What motivated you to theme your show around this?

My initial reaction to being asked this question was just to say "Cos I needed to write a blurb for the Fringe programme deadline and I panicked" but that's only half true! A few months before the first lockdown, I reached a point in my life where my mental health was very poor and I spent some time in a hospital, followed by a lot of therapy, during which I explored how a lot of the things that have gone on to be themes in the show were at the core of my unhappiness. Once I'd recovered enough from that period in my life, and I came to write a new show, I realised that the messages I took from therapy were things that I'd like to share with other people, both to help bust myths about how men "should" think and feel, and also because this way my therapy is tax deductible.



Why is it important for men to talk about these issues?

Toxic masculinity thrives when men don't talk about things. I think lots of men these days understand what toxic masculinity is, and they understand they're part of the patriarchy and are recipients of the privilege this provides, and are trying to be good feminists and allies.

But often we can forget to also give time to our own thoughts and feelings when we're caught up trying to make sure we're doing the right thing for other people. Although men have a lot of catching up to do in terms of balancing the cosmic cheque-book, no one is saying that they as individuals have to now subject themselves to some sort of selfless lifestyle where their own emotional needs can't be met.

It's important for people of any gender to be able to express themselves. Among left-leaning, well-meaning, progressive men I think it can often feel like we agree with this statement for other people, but that internally we shouldn't allow ourselves this basic human process, due to a combination of latent toxic masculinity and male-guilt.

These are both important pieces of context to be aware of as men. We have to get better at allowing ourselves to acknowledge we are privileged, and to try and be better people, while also still allowing ourselves to admit that we have emotional needs as well. Men need to have these conversations with each other, to help re-sculpt the image of what masculinity is, and how men see each other, as well as to take responsibility for our own problems. They can't be magically fixed by any external group. It's up to men, first and foremost, to fix masculinity.

How does this show differ from previous hours you've performed?

It's funny because my last hour was written in 2019 and I only got to do it a handful of times before the pandemic shut us all down. I was partly about toxic masculinity as well, so in a way that show ("Jake Donaldson Fights The Sea") was almost a Work-In-Progress version of this new one.

That show was very different though. "Neurotica" is mostly just straight stand-up, whereas my last show involved me in swimming trunks, a dressing gown and children's boxing gloves, telling stories while attempting 5000 jumping jacks as audience members threw water and salt over me. I've abandoned that approach in favour of a return to the more traditional stand-up that made my first show ("Help! I'm Trapped in the Body of an Adequate Comedian!") a success.

What do you want to get out of this show?

First and foremost I just want to entertain people and create an hour of comedy that makes people then want to seek out my other work. With this show, I'd also love to think I've started a conversation, or given someone in the audience the confidence to speak up about their feelings, and start taking up their own space in the world. Also money.

When and where can we see your show?

I'll be previewing the show at The Verve in Leeds on 5th July and at Blizzard in Manchester on 21st July, then the **Edinburgh Fringe Festival from 4th-28th August**, every day at midday, in Cabaret Voltaire! After that I'm hoping to take it on a small UK tour, so anyone reading this who has a venue and might like to have me bring the show to you, get in touch!

The Comedian

Amarpal Singh

Having low self-esteem, mental health issues and a lack of social cues, I gravitated towards stand-up comedy. But such crippling personality traits also fare you well in the world of TTRPGs (tabletop role playing games. Sorry I shouldn't have used an acronym. I was trying to be clever. Sorry. My bad).

One of the most famous havens for social outcasts is Dungeons and Dragons (D&D. Sorry again). A game where you can be anything you want; brave, sexy, all-powerful or even a vaguely normal-functioning human. The world is your oyster (but be careful, oysters in this game may be sentient and want to kill you).

Rather than going through the maths to immediately put you off, I asked myself a question: You can be a fighter, a wizard, a bard... But in a game where you can live up to your full potential, harness the powers of the gods, strike down demons, why isn't there the option of being a comedian?!?!

I bring to you a character sheet of a new class of D&D character: The Comedian. Hopefully, in the future I can increase his level and tell you of his daring escapades, from saving a small child who fell down a well from depression with humour and witty topical observations, to making a dragon yield from over sighing due to various puns.



John Doe

CHARACTER NAME

L1 Comedian

CLASS & LEVEL

Human

RACE

Entertainer

BACKGROUND

True Neutral

ALIGNMENT

PLAYER NAME

EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

9

-1

DEXTERITY

11

+0

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

INTELLIGENCE

15

+2

WISDOM

13

+1

CHARISMA

16

+3

0

INSPIRATION

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

-1

Strength

0

Dexterity

+2

Constitution

+4

Intelligence

+1

Wisdom

+5

Charisma

SAVING THROWS

0

Acrobatics (Dex)

+1

Animal Handling (Wis)

+2

Arcana (Int)

-1

Athletics (Str)

+5

Deception (Cha)

+2

History (Int)

+1

Insight (Wis)

+3

Intimidation (Cha)

+2

Investigation (Int)

+1

Medicine (Wis)

+2

Nature (Int)

+3

Perception (Wis)

+5

Performance (Cha)

+5

Persuasion (Cha)

+2

Religion (Int)

0

Sleight of Hand (Dex)

0

Stealth (Dex)

+1

Survival (Wis)

SKILLS

11

ARMOR CLASS

+0

INITIATIVE

30ft

SPEED

Hit Point Maximum 8

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total

1d6

HIT DICE

SUCCESSSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

NAME

ATK BONUS

DAMAGE/TYPE

Bottle

-1

1d6 -1

Barstool

-1

1d8 -1

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

Leather Jacket
Disguise Kit (make up)
Portable speaker

Microphone
Brewers' Kit
A Backpack
A Bedroll (for sleeping at another comics house)
2 costumes (for failed character idea)

5

Cigarettes.
Lighter that does not work,
Notepad of failed jokes.
Pack of crisps.
Chocolate bars
Monster Energy drinks x3
A Waterskin

EQUIPMENT

I have low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, border-line schizophrenia and I am on the autistic spectrum. Of course I became a comedian.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

I am a mainstream comedian so clearly I am left-wing. However, when Channel 4 gets privatised, and there is an opening for right-wing sitcoms, my morals go out the window and I'll gladly star in To Kill A Snowflake

IDEALS

I am bonded to my fellow comedians. When they fail, I fail. When they succeed, I succeed. But if I ever become a team captain on a panel show, they can go fuck themselves. I'm in the big time now baby!

BONDS

I hide my true flaws behind a mask of smiles and jokes. Nothing to laugh about here. Just genuinely the flaws with most comedians.

FLAWS

13

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Ability Scores Increase by 1.

Speaks Common & Sarcasm.

Light armour - faded leather jacket that should have been thrown away.

Improvised weapons - barstools, broken bottles, insulting words etc.

Tools - Mic Systems and Brewers' kit (how else do I get through my days).

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

Comedic Inspiration

You can inspire others through jokes, applause or sympathetic chuckles. To do so, you use a bonus action on your turn to choose one creature other than yourself within 60 feet of you who you can hear laugh or make a joke. That creature gains one Comedic Inspiration die, a d6.

Once within the creatures next 10 minutes stand up set, the creature can tell a joke and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. The creature can wait until after it tells the joke before deciding to use the Comedic Inspiration die as it was too risky or from the news about 2 months ago. But must decide before the DM says whether the roll succeeds or whether you are gonged off. Once the Comedic Inspiration die is rolled, it is lost. A creature can have only one Comedic Inspiration die at a time.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (a minimum of once) or the amount of free drinks you have scammed from the bar. You regain any expended uses when you finish a long rest on the floor of another comics house.

Your Comedic Inspiration die changes when you reach certain levels in this class. The die becomes a d8 at 5th level, a d10 at 10th level, and a d12 at 15th level.

FEATURES & TRAITS



Quarter Life Crisis.	Tall women won't date me.	Too much of it at the front.
AGE	HEIGHT	WEIGHT
Dead behind them.	Blotchy	Thinning
EYES	SKIN	HAIR

CHARACTER NAME

CHARACTER APPEARANCE

ALLIES & ORGANIZATIONS

NAME

SYMBOL

After finding himself divorced at the age of 35, with his ex-wife taking the four kids, two dogs and the really good fridge from the garage, John Doe decided that the healthiest thing to do was to stand in front of a group of people shouting and crying. Somehow, he has turned this into a career.

His goal in life, is to obtain the ultimate treasure... joint custody... of the dogs.

He will travel the world in search of better paid gigs, panel show appearances or at the least, a few free drinks from the bar.

What's the worst that can happen?

CHARACTER BACKSTORY

ADDITIONAL FEATURES & TRAITS

TREASURE



Charisma

SPELLCASTING ABILITY

13

SPELL SAVE DC

+5

SPELL ATTACK BONUS

SPELLCASTING CLASS

0

CANTRIPS

Vicious Mockery
Dancing Lights

SPELL LEVEL SLOTS TOTAL SLOTS EXPENDED

1

2

2/2

SPELL NAME

- Cause Fear
- Charm Person
- Disguise Self
- Hellish Rebuke

2

3

6

4

8

5

9

SPELLS KNOWN

An interview with

Edy Hurst

What is your show about?

My show is about me, Edy Hurst, doing what the rest of this godforsaken world is too scared to do; finally close the book on the 125-year-old book that is the *War of the Worlds* book by H.G. Wells. Book. As well as all of its litany of remakes, sequels, adaptations and re-imaginings that plague our polite civilisation. For too long people have enjoyed this story of Martians invading Victorian Woking, making disco musicals, low budget horror films, and radio shows mistaken for reality, but I'm sure to fix that by having created the ultimate and comprehensive lo-fi comedy rock opera that will be certain to put this bad bird to bed. Tenacious D meets Mars Attacks.

What motivated you to adapt this source material into a comedy show?

Edy Hurst's Comedy Version of Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of H.G. Wells' Literary Version (Via Orson Welles' Radio Version and Steven Spielberg's Film Version) of the War of the Worlds started its life as most things did, a joke cut for time in my previous show.

In my debut, Hurst Schmurst, I originally had a bit that discussed and then attempted to recreate with the audience Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of the War of the



Worlds. Because my life and comedy is largely trying to do something very conceptual and high-budget, with the incredibly limited resources of a children's birthday party.

The musical is something that is both incredibly obscure, a prog rock/disco version of a Victorian Science Fiction Invasion novel, but somehow also very popular, still doing sell-out arena tours across the country now. It gave me hope that quite niche interests and daft projects could reach larger audiences, and so Jeff became a little bit of a hero. He's since been on GB News, so that has really sent me into a spin.

War of the Worlds seems like this pop culture touchstone that everyone knows *a bit* about, and I've become hyper focussed on all the ways it is folded into media and entertainment.

War of the Worlds is a story with a lot of clear beats that lends itself well to a big daft show, with lots of excuses for mucking around and having fun with the way we retell stories in a consumerist society.

Has the adaptation proved challenging?

Kinda! It's been a lot of fun, but also has been as much about what not to put in as it is including things, which seems fair given the novel is 125 years old and probably has a different re-boot-daptation-homage for each year it's been published.

Wanting to make jokes and funny songs with a work that other people care deeply about is something I've been really conscious of. I want to make fun things, but not take the piss out of stuff for the sake of it.

I know audiences for this show will have a huge mix of relationships with the source materials. It's important to me to respect the huge range of creativity that others have brought to the story. But, you know, still be funny about it.

During lockdown(s), I started making the Podcast Edy Hurst's Podcast Version of...The War of the Worlds which acted as a way for me to deep dive into the book and make songs, as well as figure out things I wanted to explore but wouldn't fit into the 55-minute mark. Turns out there's a lot of atrocities of the British Empire involved when you look at a novel about Britain's fear of being invaded by a technologically enhanced culture. Who would have thought?

Serious question – do you prefer the Original or New Generation version of the album? Explain your working.

Original. Hands firmly down. I remember finding the gnarly illustrated vinyl in my parents record collection in between a copy of the Goodies songs and Frampton Comes Alive, which I think explains my musical comedy career pretty succinctly.

I didn't know if it was going to be an audio drama or an audiobook, or even an orchestral score like The Planets by Holsto imagine the shock when this stomping disco musical track came on telling me all about the probability of anything from Mars coming here. And I think for me that's the biggest part of all of the Musical Version of that feeling of individual discovery.

Also it's got Thin Lizzy front man Phil Lynott just pop up half way through, and Richard Burton, heir to the Burtons menswear fortune.

What Progressive Rock Opera/Musical/Sci Fi Horror do you plan to adapt into a comedy show next?

I'm in talks to do a EDM retelling of *The Exorcist* that I'm really hoping comes off, but I've been crawling up the walls to hear back about it. Honestly, the whole thing's been making my head spin. What have I got to do? Suck cocks in Hell!?

Maybe *Wuthering Heights*' Acid Jazz freak out? How about Dr. Frankenstein's Family Funk Hour? Or *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a folk duo like Simon and Garfunkel? But they can never be on stage at the same time as if they're in some sort of double date sitcom episode?

When and where can we see your show?

You can see me all over the place!

July 7th & 14th - BUXTON FRINGE, The underground, 7.30pm

July 23rd - KNARESBOROUGH, Frazer Theatre, 7.30pm

28th July, Blizzard Comedy!

And 16th - 23rd August - EDFRINGE, **Just the Tonic** @ The Mash House, 10.40pm

Hopefully after that there'll be a bit of a tour towards the end of 2022 and in 2023, but that's it for now!

Internet Werds

Bobbie-Ann Jones

Hello, I am Bobbie-Ann Jones. Wordsmith, homosexual and Internet whizz. I am going to define and unpack some Internet words/slang for the technologically challenged, uneducated masses. What qualifies me for this? Well, 4 years experience working in administration, a BTEC MERIT in ICT and an insatiable love for knowledge (and hentai).

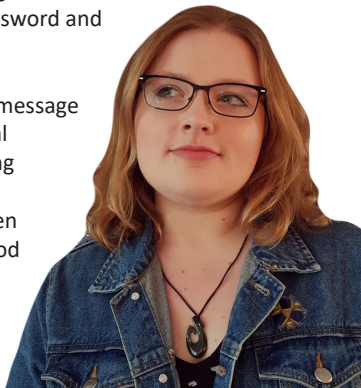
I also used to use my Grandma's computer and printer to do 'homework' when I would actually print off various Legend of Zelda pictures to pin up next to my bed. Although one time, I did Google 'breasts'...

Anyway, enough about me. Let's talk about the Internet.

Google - where the 'breasts' live.

Facebook - a place where dreams go to die and millennials declare war on each other. Bring a sword and shield.

Instagram - a place where people message me rather than messaging via usual channels and it gets really confusing because like the whole appeal of Instagram is how visual it is but then people tell me about their childhood trauma in my DMs? Wtf dude.



I'm just trying to look at tits and cute animals (or tits on cute animals, which brings me onto the subject of furies).

Furry - nice people who just want to have a good time, leave them alone.

Twitter - a messy version of Facebook featuring nudes and pornography.

Nudes - things you can send only if you are over the age of 18. Might be wise to keep your face out of shot too.

TikTok - a waste of time but also my only hobby and source of new information. Read into that what you will.

Tumblr - a place for Born to Die and Electra Heart stans and also Dr Who and Sherlock erotica.

Virus - the thing I accidentally downloaded onto my sister's teacher training laptop when trying to look up Nintendogs cheats.

Catfish - worth 800 bells in Animal Crossing: New Horizons.

Meme - the only source of joy during the peak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

An interview with Bethany Black

How did you get into comedy?

I find the how a lot less interesting than the “why” which is a pathological need to be liked coupled with a crushing inability to truly enjoy anything.

The how is that I'd wanted to act, then I met performing arts students when I went to college and decided to write and direct. I dropped out of University in my final year and came out and transitioned, and lived back with my parents in the North West, and there was no film industry in Chorley. I couldn't afford to live on people's couches whilst I got the experience to get a job in media in London, so I quit and took a job doing data entry.

It was so soul crushing and I knew I needed to do something creative, and whilst I was looking a friend asked if I'd host a rock cabaret night and I said sure, and that's how I fell in to this.

Give us the rundown on your comedy career so far.

In August 2002 I hosted that cabaret night, Club Fuzzy in Preston and I loved it! I was hooked. I spent a bunch of years getting better, I got nominated for Best Newcomer at The Leicester Comedy



Festival in 2008 and later that year I did my first Edinburgh Show “Beth Becomes Her”.

Since then I’ve written and performed stand-up all over the world, played Glastonbury, done some panel shows, written comedy for TV and radio. It’s been wild.

Where are you right now in your life and career?

Ha! Ready to move on from stand-up! In life I’ve never been happier, more secure in my self and relationships. In my career I’m doing great, I make enough money and I’ve been in some TV shows.

Unfortunately due to Covid, a show I was supposed to be co-hosting with Joe Lycett, Rosie Jones and Suzie Ruffell didn’t go ahead over Christmas, but these things happen. I’ve been around long enough to know that nothing will make or break you really and you’ve just got to keep plugging away.

What’s your favourite fun fact?

That “oid” as a suffix means “looks like but isn’t”. So humanoid, looks like a human but isn’t; cuboid, looks like a cube but isn’t; factoid, feels like a fact but isn’t. There you go, the least fun fact, haha!

What’s the funniest joke you’ve ever heard (and who told you it)?

I think Barry Cryer’s “man with half an orange for a head” joke, which is a long, shaggy dog story of a pub joke is the funniest joke I ever heard, and the one that I love telling as a gauge of someone’s sense of humour.

What's your trick to finding the funny side of dark topics?

Knowing the difference between the subject and the object of the joke. You can joke about any subject, but what's your object in telling it?

We use humour in three main ways: Firstly, to bond us together. Secondly, to exclude out-groups; and finally, to gauge if what we're saying is accepted by the rest of the group. If I tell a joke about a "taboo" topic, it's usually to bond us as an audience in recognising the universality of the experience. It's not to exclude a group who has already been marginalised and create an "us" who are laughing at a "them". It's us laughing at us. And I'm not testing if you all agree with me that "us" by our very "us-ness" is better than "them" and their very "them-ness" in a way that I can then exploit. At its core it's that; not "punching up" or "punching down" but whether we include or exclude.

Tell us about your cat (and please can we see it?)

I have three cats; Spruce who is 13 and who is a "perma kitten". She was a rescue who was originally found in a bin when she was a kitten and has never grown to full size. She's my best friend in the world. She doesn't hunt, she's scared of most animals including birds and any buzzing insects, but she loves bringing home cooked meat. She's a big fan of pastry too and will bring home sausage rolls, and steak bakes. She brought a whole McDonald's through the cat flap a few months ago.

Our second child is Albert. He too was a rescue, we think his mum was a pedigree Abyssinian who'd got out whilst she was on heat and I got him from Leigh Cats and Dogs home. He's

mute and very unperturbed by other people and so he's the one you see in my publicity shots.



Our youngest is Fred. We got him from a woman who lived round the corner from us when we lived in Levenshulme, I think he's part panther. He's a very big lad. 8kg of decorative predator and I'm so glad he likes me because I don't think I could win in a straight fight with him.

What crime would you most like to commit?

I'd like to do a jewel heist.

What advice would you give to someone starting out in comedy now?

If you can think of literally anything else you'd rather do with your life work on that. I became a comedian because I can't do a 9-5. When you fail at other things in the way I did and you have the specific skill set that I do, then comedy's really the only thing that I could do to make a living.

The comedians who make a living from this and don't go and become huge TV stars reasonably quickly are the ones who didn't give up. If the audience doesn't laugh it's not because they're a bad audience (mostly), it's because you don't have the skills to make them laugh at what you want to talk about.

The job is figuring out how to make strangers laugh. And those strangers all have jobs that they don't enjoy, and lives

they wish were better and nowhere near enough free time. If they're prepared to come out of the house to watch stand-up then you need to respect their free time and try to make them laugh.

What are your hopes/expectations for comedy as an industry in 2022?

I think the live circuit is getting better, as it has constantly since I started out 20 years ago. There are more, diverse comedians doing all sorts of different things to different audiences. Comedy has never been healthier.

The percentage of gigs that are run by straight white blokes who book acts who look and think like them and end up playing to audiences that look and think like them is falling to the point that when I see one of those gigs' line-ups it's a rarity rather than the norm.

Have you got anything exciting coming up that we should look out for?

My performance at the Blizzard! Other than that, I've a lot of projects on the go that'll likely come to nothing, but that's the excitement of this business. You keep coming up with better ideas and throw them against a wall and each time a few more people discover you and go "maybe not this one, but I can't wait to see what else they come up with!" and in the end something eventually gets made.

Chapter One: Crossing The Road

Any Other Name by Elanamax

There are, at any given moment, several thousands of children with magical potential in the world. In fact, most children have some kind of attunement to magic, which is why the world is so much more colourful for them. Magic is a little bit like lice, in that you're more likely to pick it up when you're in kindergarten, but it's not at all like lice in the fact that it takes a magical spark for that potential to come into its own.

A magical spark is hard to come by, especially as you get older, which is why adults can often look so dull and grey. Many of them would benefit from a magical spark, which might open their eyes to how bright and colourful the world can be when you're not looking at it through an un-magical lens. These people often become more jaded and scared as they get older, and while it's a reasonable response to feel sorry for them, you'll spend a lot of time feeling sorry if you start doing that.

Jonathan Rosewood was sixteen years old, and for him, the world was a dull grey. He adjusted his mask as he walked down the street, not really going somewhere, or



escaping from anywhere. The walk he was walking was the kind where you put one foot in front of the other and keep moving because it occupies a little bit of your brain -- like not walking into lantern poles or other people -- that now doesn't have the time to worry or stress out, which is why walking is considered a good thing to do when you're in a bad place. However, there are limits to the therapeutic power of walking, and when your whole world is grey, all walking does is make the shadows a little less dark.

He walked in a little circle around the lady taking donations for a nearby shelter, trying not to think about whether or not he'd give her any money if he had any to give, and then felt a bit guilty for wondering about that. Was he allowed to think of himself as poor? He didn't have a lot of money, after all. Sure, his parents were well off, but it's not like they spent much of their wealth on him, and he was glad about that. After all, it would mean they were home more often, which was a situation he'd prefer to avoid as much as possible.

But then, he thought, if he didn't have his parents, he would value money more, right? That would mean he wouldn't want to give it away. He was lost in thought as he walked down the street, his footfalls a constant rhythm to his mind ticking away the minutes. His parents were home, because it was Saturday and Saturdays Were For Relaxing. For Mother, that meant two hours with a glass of wine, yoga and wine-assisted meditation, before being picked up and heading into work for some relaxing overtime. For Father, it meant tennis -- digital, of course -- weight-lifting and then two (2) power naps, followed by a conference call in the guest house out back, where he'd slowly get plastered on expensive whiskey and fall

asleep in the guest bedroom.

Jonathan was waiting for it to be three in the afternoon, when his mother would leave and he'd have the house to himself. Not that there was much to do in it for him. His parents abhorred what they called frivolous distractions like television, board games, distracting literature, computers, art and friends, and so he spent most of his time at home lying down, usually with a copy of Essential Sensory Deprivation next to him so he could pretend to be studying the merits of his own lack of entertainment instead of blankly staring at the ceiling, willing it to be anything other than grey and drab.

But it was still more comfortable than not lying down. Despite the Rosewood household being a minimalist dream, his parents had, so far, not yet managed to make sheets and mattresses rough yet. Some comfort was allowed. Just a little bit. As a treat.

He quite looked forward to lying down for a bit. For someone who didn't really do much but sit, lie, stand and walk, he had surprisingly wild dreams, all swirls of chaotic colours burning through and around each other, noise and movement all around. He used to think of them as nightmares, but lately he'd found himself enjoying them. They were a good distraction from, well, nothing. But getting to them meant going around the block one more time and then walking home, or finding something else to do.

A few years before, Jonathan used to go to the library when he had nothing better to do, on days like this, but he'd once made the mistake of telling his mother about it and had

found himself on house-arrest for the rest of the summer. He'd gone once after that, after school, and had been caught. Any talk of him getting a phone at any point had shut down. Even now, he was the only kid in his entire school with a pager. He hated the thing, but if he didn't respond to its message fast enough with a little ping, he'd never hear the end of it.

Why his parents even bothered, he didn't know. It seemed they wanted him to live the exact same life they lived, but he didn't get why. They didn't seem particularly happy, weren't particularly religious, and barely even talked about anything other than work. He had heard the word 'synergy' a lot more than any sixteen-year-old should.

Shaking his head, he rounded the corner and stopped for a moment. The sun shone on his face and for a very brief moment, there was some colour in the world. It was mostly yellow, sure, but the warmth of it, accompanied by a gentle breeze, was pleasant. Then the reality of his destination sank in again and, like a gritty, realistic action movie, the gentle yellows and oranges of the afternoon sun seemed to wash out, and reality became a little colder.

He walked a little faster. There was almost always a little moment like that, when he went out. A brief moment, like coming up for air, where things were a little better. But they were always worse after that, and once the moment had happened he made sure to hurry home before grey became dark and that unreasonable lump in his throat started to form for seemingly no reason. He wasn't going to cry in public. His father had berated him for crying in private; if he did so in

public and his parents found out, they'd probably make him sleep in the living room again so they could keep an eye on him.

His hands in his pockets, shoulders squared and eyes to the ground, he crossed the road and tried to bury his face in the collar of his jacket. It was eerily quiet when he almost bumped into a chair he realized was in front of a table. Already strange to see these things outside, but on a zebra crossing? He looked up and saw a woman sitting behind the table. She looked a little bit like one of those well-meaning middle-school teachers, who rewarded thirteen-year-olds with stickers (who would pretend not to be proud of them), all rosy cheeks and smelling faintly of incense and a minimum of two cats.

She was wearing what appeared to be a dress from the Fifties; the only thing 'off' about the presentation was a tattoo of an eye peeking out of her dress at her collarbone. She smiled at him, and indeed, her cheeks were rosy and round.

"Hello," she said.

"Um," Jonathan responded.

"Please, sit down. My name is Charlie. Charlie Ferman." The lady's smile was unwavering and eerily genuine. It wasn't predatory or scary, just... disarmingly honest.

"You're in the middle of the street," Jonathan said.

The lady giggled, a sound like sleighbells ringing through the air on a christmas morning. "I don't think that will be a problem," she said, and rolled her eyes at her surroundings in an exaggerated display. Jonathan looked. The world had stopped. Cars had all braked for some reason, he thought, until he realized that people, too, had frozen in place. A man was trying to get a pigeon from pecking at his hotdog, and it was hovering just a few feet from his face.

"I don't understand," Jonathan said. He sat down out of shock, more than out of any obligation to do as the lady asked.

"Gosh, I do so hate this part," Charlie said. "You're dead." Jonathan looked at her.

"No, I'm not," he said. "I'd know if I was dead. I wouldn't be talking to you."

"Well, you're not wrong. But you also kind of are," Charlie said with an apologetic little smile and then waved in the other direction. Jonathan only just now became aware of the fact that there was a sixteen-wheeler only a foot from the table. "You're going to be dead," Charlie said. "In just a few hundredths of a second. It'll be fairly painless, if that helps. Would you like a sweet?" She produced a small piece of wrapped candy out of a little purse.

Jonathan took the candy absent-mindedly. "Uh," he said again. "What do... how... what... wh--"

"Yes, that does seem to be the prevailing reaction a lot of

the time,” Charlie said with a little smile. “So I have some good news and some bad news. Please, eat it. Make you feel better.” Jonathan unwrapped the candy and popped it in his mouth as she spoke. “I work for Afterlife Social Services,” she said and clasped her hands together, like a school counselor explaining something to stubborn parents. “Essentially, we find children with magical potential who are about to... hrm... pass on to the great beyond and try to... keep a little bit of that magic in the world. Don’t ask me why.”

“Why?”

“I just said...” She smiled. “Cheeky. I like that. Well, it’s something to do with balance, but, and you haven’t heard this from me, apparently someone just doesn’t like things going to waste. Especially people.”

“People die every day.”

“Well, yeah. That’s what the afterlife is for, dummy.”

“Is this a Jesus thing?”

“Um,” Charlie said, “not quite. I’m not supposed to talk about it to people who aren’t fully dead yet.” She scratched her head. “Let’s just say there’s a bit more to it. More paperwork. But what we’re here to do today, you and me,” she pointed at herself and then Jonathan, “is kinda like, well, recycling.”

“Recycling of what?”

“Well, if I have it right -- and I always do, I’m pretty good at

my job -- you've got some untapped potential, and well, while we can't fully unlock it anymore, we can still do some good with it."

"Magical potential?" Jonathan frowned, chewing on the candy. Charlie leaned forward and frowned right back, but her frown seemed to be more like an apology.

"It's a lot, isn't it? How are you feeling?"

"Confused," Jonathan said. "Do you really work for an organisation named ASS?"

Charlie stared at him for a moment, nonplussed, and then burst out laughing. No cute sleighbells, this was a full belly laugh, head thrown in her neck. After she'd recovered she dabbed at her eyes. "Goodness. Hah! Yes, yes I do. Anyway, Johnny," she said, and immediately noticed his apprehension. "Ah, sorry. I was trying something. It said in your file you don't like your name, so I was hoping a nickname might... hrm, anyway." She cleared her throat and sat up straight again. "We'd like to offer you the chance to not be dead."

"Uh," Jonathan said, "sounds good?"

"Well, there's a couple of, uh, caveats."

"I know about fine print," he said, remembering mind-numbing legal conversations at home, as well as studying for a fake bar exam he'd taken (and failed) at twelve years old.

"Good, well, um, the big one is that you won't be living with

your family for a while,” Charlie said and looked at him, waiting for a reaction. After a moment, he figured a shrug would have to do. He figured any place was as good as another. His parents would probably pick him up anyway. She shrugged back, smiling again. “The other is that we’re going to use your magical potential to help someone else.”

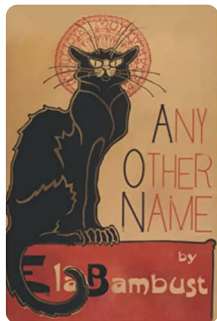
“How?”

“Well, I’m going to have to answer that question with two of my own.”

“Okay.” Jonathan stared at her. None of this was really sinking in. None of this felt real. Was he hallucinating? Had he been hit by a truck and is this what happened when you died? Or was this somehow real?

“Well,” Charlie said, raising a finger, “what do you know about witches?” A second finger went up. “And have you ever heard of a familiar?”

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My Ten Biggest Influences in Comedy

Jonny Collins

Earlier this year, I was reflecting on a scrapped YouTube project about who I considered to be the biggest influences on my comedy. It was a little arrogant to think that less than two years into stand-up, with no paid gigs under my belt, that anyone would have cared. But I put a lot of work into the list and never got around to recording it.

It got me thinking about how inaccurate that list would be applying it to 2022 Jonny, featuring comedians who I either don't find funny any more, respect but haven't watched in years, or have since been outed as utter pieces of shit. Graham Linehan and I think Louis CK must've been on there at some point.

Now that at least 20 odd people seem invested in my art, it would be interesting to re-do this list.

Some of these comedians I have had the pleasure of working with, others retired or died long before I began stand-up. But all of them are significantly important to my writing, performance, and work ethic.



They're also mostly men and all white – which I assure you I am very ashamed of.

10) Mitch Hedberg

Inevitably every conversation I have with comedians, I find myself bringing up his name or one of his jokes and talking about how I wish I could write his kind of jokes.

Audiences often did not get him. I don't know if it's the jaded comedian in me, but that is both tragic and also one of the funniest things in the world. It sounds sarcastic but it really isn't. The fewer people that find something funny, the funnier it is. (Only if it is actually funny though – right wing comics appear to have taken this idea too literally.)



I can't justify putting him any higher on the list, as I am less familiar with him than the others on this list. But his best jokes are easily up there as some of my favourite of all time.

"I'm sick of following my dreams, man. I'm just going to ask them where they're going, and hook up with them later."

9) Lee Evans

Lee Evans' arena tours were the first exposure I had to stand-up comedy.

Lee Evans is one of those people that makes stand-up look easy. It seems to come so naturally to him. And if you analyse his material, objectively it's nothing spectacular. But my god does he sell it.

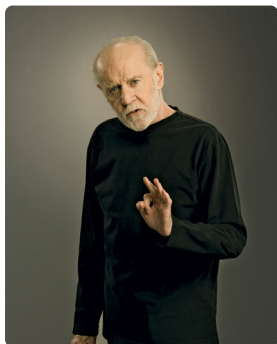


Evans is the embodiment of “You can sell a sub par joke with a great performance, but you can’t sell a good joke with bad performance” – a mantra that has stuck with me.

There are plenty of criticisms to have of his work, but I do think that he might be one of the greatest stand-up performers of all time.

8) George Carlin

I have a very mixed relationship with George Carlin. On the



one hand, his work has been co-opted by the far right as a champion of Free Speech and you could argue indirectly responsible for the rise of new atheism, and by extension modern anti-feminist and neo-Nazi movements.

But it's very clear that he is not at all that person himself. While I'm sure if he were alive today

it's very possible we'd clash on a lot of issues, he would very much also be decried by the anti-woke brigade for at least half of his specials.

I do not blame any leftist who has no interest in Carlin, as his work is dated. But I refuse to let the right reclaim him as a conservative hero. All his material and recorded thoughts suggest he was far more nuanced than that.

Carlin's influence may have been detrimental to my development, as a lot of his best routines are light on jokes and were basically anarchistic political speeches. I cannot pull that off. But I do think his influence let me know that comedy could be a tool for spreading activist messages. He may well be one of the reasons anyone is reading this, as maybe I wouldn't have been someone who started Blizzard without him.

7) Andy Field

This one is much closer to home, and someone who I have had the pleasure of working with on multiple occasions. You might not know Andy Field yet, and you are missing out if that is the case. Andy is one of those comedians that absolutely never fails to make me laugh, no matter the context.



Whether it's creating characters based on tenuous one-liners such as Row-Boat Cop (who's like Robocop, but is in a Row-Boat) or my personal favourite William the Concurrer (who's

like William the Conqueror, but he just agrees with everyone). Or sincere anecdotes about poop and drugs, to just pure performance art deliberately undermined with his own deadpan weirdness. Andy is a true artist, I'd call him a king of alternative comedy but even that feels like selling him short. He definitely isn't a comedian everyone will get, but he is the comedian we all deserve.

6) Lee Mack

Lee Mack was the first comedian I ever saw live in a theatre. He has a couple of gags that haven't aged amazingly – but on the whole seems lovely and one of the wittiest people alive. Whether you see him live or watch him on TV he always comes across as the funniest person on the line-up.



His full shows are nothing to sneer at either. Lee Mack is one of the few comedians going today that could've also held his own in pretty much every era of British comedy on TV. His jokes were classics from the moment they were written, yet also the opposite of hack and predictable.

Does his influence come across in my work? I don't think so. But did he show me what comedy could be and inspire me to strive to be better with every show? Absolutely.

5) John Robertson

John Robertson is one of the best solo performers I have ever seen. A comedian who delves into dark and sinister subject

matter expertly without ever punching down or crossing the lines. A man who pumps so much good and joy into the world and largely inspired my comedy attitude over the last few years of aggressive inclusivity in all that I do.



I loved John from the moment I first saw him. Getting to work with him was a dream come true. He's so supportive of what we're doing, and enthusiastic about all the new and exciting things going on in the leftist shitposting comedy world.

We need more Johns in the world, but he is also one of a kind, and beautiful. My life has improved greatly since discovering him, and he makes the world we live in an objectively better place. Absolute hero.

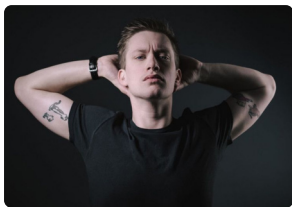
4) Daniel Sloss

Before Daniel became an international superstar of comedy, he started stand-up at 16, and made his first TV appearance at 19. Suddenly, comedy didn't seem so impenetrable.

Watching stand-up as a teenager, I didn't actually realize it was a thing people could do. I assumed comedians were just a different breed of human and were born that way. I felt like that about all TV really.

Now I have loads of friends who've done TV, I feel silly for feeling that way, but the first thing that broke my illusion

is seeing Daniel Sloss, aged 19, absolutely killing it on TV. Knowing that people my age were doing comedy got me to seriously think about doing it. I don't know if I'd have done my first gig at 16 if it weren't for seeing him.



This is how powerful representation is. If I, a white AMAB, middle class person can feel so much empowerment from another white AMAB person, imagine how important it is to pretty much any other demographic.

I haven't worked with Daniel. I did bother him in Edinburgh once though and then try to add him on Facebook. Idk what I thought was gonna happen, he'd accept and we'd poke each other forever and never talk probably.

3) Tony Law

If Lee Evans taught me what stand-up was, Tony Law taught me how to break it apart and make it interesting. Tony Law taught me you could make people laugh by yelling Gok Wan for 5 minutes.

It took me a while before I applied my Law love to my own comedy. I don't think that if I hadn't discovered Tony Law that I would be a more by-the-books comedian – but I do think that his weirdness inspired a lot of



the weirdness I brought into my own works, and definitely my shouty bollocks delivery – that’s textbook Law work.

2) Andrew O’Neill

Ugh, okay, here’s the one everyone saw coming.



I first discovered Andrew O’Neill, because a man by the name of Tom Mullen who is now a dear friend – saw me gig once, and recommended them to me as my set reminded him of them.

Immediately after that I was hooked, and not in a healthy way. I was absolutely obsessed. If Daniel Sloss had shown me that people my age could do stand-up, Andrew O’Neill was the proof that genderqueer metal nerds could.

Despite my mixed feelings on my own work at the time when I was their biggest fan, it would be remiss not to give them a shout out. Not to mention their band frequently goes on our playlists, god they’re good.

1) Eddie Izzard

And to NO ONE’S SURPRISE number 1 is the O.G. genderqueer comic hero, Izzard herself.

Eddie Izzard is the first comedian that I was a dedicated fan of. I got her box set one Christmas with 6 of the best stand-up

specials of all time to date, and quickly filled in the missing gaps to complete my collection, including a VHS only release because I'm that dickhead who'll track stuff like that down.

Each special has its own quirks and tones, but they all fit together cohesively. You can tell when bits have been reworked and built upon between specials, making it really exciting to binge them and think you know where a bit is going only to be taken in a completely different direction.

This is something that I have since applied to my own writing – often expanding on existing material and eventually detaching it from the source when it's complete enough as my main method of writing new material.

There was a documentary released about her, which became



an essential viewing experience for me before every gig. Seeing her journey, seeing her painstaking crawl to the very top Her story is one that made me want to follow in her footsteps, and to this day is a much needed source of inspiration when I'm stuck.

Not to mention being a formative part of my self-discovery identity wise. Eddie didn't kickstart my urge to wear skirts and dresses, but she was the only representation I had of someone who could do that and it not be a part of the joke (or if it was, very much on her terms). It was just a part of her look, sexy, rock 'n' roll, and a stark contrast to 2 hours of inane but hysterical ramblings on everything from religion to recorders.

I don't actually think I'm very similar to Eddie as far as my content goes, but she is probably the one who is most important to my own personal and professional development.

So that's the 10. I'm actually pleasantly surprised that the list hasn't changed all that much. I think John Robertson, Andy Field and Mitch Hedberg were new, replacing some of the less savoury names on it previously, but all the others have remained constant.

That being said, I do have a large number of honourable mentions which are much more different than they would've been 10 years ago:

Robbie, Connor, Aaron and Adam: My friends who really pushed me into actually doing stand-up for the first time.

Bethany Black: The only reason Beth didn't make the top ten is because I excluded acts I'd booked for Blizzard.

Bec Hill: Bec is one of the loveliest people on the circuit, and I don't think many people deserve praise and success more than her.

James Ross: James is arguably my biggest influence that I've met and worked with on many occasions.

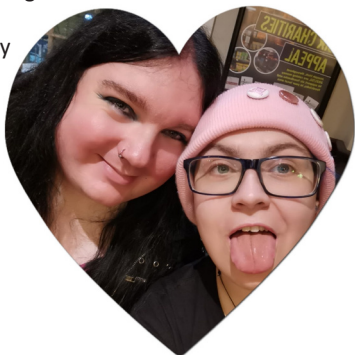
Kiri Pritchard-McLean: Kiri taught stand-up to us in my third year of uni and her influence in my work cannot be overstated.

Josh Jones: Josh is one of the nicest people I've ever met, and despite getting into stand-up after me, was an immediate natural and has only skyrocketed since then.

Tom Short: Tom is one of the loveliest people on the circuit, is constantly looking for ways to reinvent himself and is one of those few comedians who genuinely has a love for the art.

Tony Basnett: Tony is a big nerd with genuine talent and has built one of the greatest comedy nights in Manchester – so obviously I owe Blizzard's success to him.

Despite not being a stand-up, it would be rude not to shout out **Kirstie** on this list, without whom this zine or indeed Blizzard itself would not exist.



Kirstie has always been a beacon of support and enthusiasm for everything I've done, and having that constant for the majority of my adult life has been genuinely essential in shaping not only the comedian but the person I am today.

This is too many pages already, but rest assured this list could go on and on. If this were simply a list of my favourite comedians, everyone on the Blizzard booking list would be on here multiple times.

At a time in my life where comedy is more and more difficult to enjoy because comedians are the worst, I want to thank the named people here especially for making the circuit better.



Wordsearch

Words contributed by the featured guests

n t a i c a n c e l k a d w a
e d i c i n n a r y t y d i b
r h s g o t s g i t k i w d r
d o b e z h a s a y x e a e i
s a p r e l i m i n a r y l c
o t i l f r t u c n d a n e k
f u m d l n i r c k g g e c t
i t k v u g l h a r i t s t i
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p u s i l l a n i m o u s d m

*thrum
flit
delectable
geas
pusillanamous
slake
preliminary*

*sing
biscuit
cunt
cancel
tyrannicide
nerds*

*dwayne
rock
johnson
pirate
flag
pride
brick*

Who said it?

Match the joke to the comedian

“The big kicker that made me realise I was a lesbian was that I actually hate men less than most bisexual women.”



Tony Wright

“I have the name of a cab driver but the face of an Uber driver.”



Kirstie Summers

“I am a bisexual man engaged to a woman and that’s like doing LGBTQ+ on easy mode.”



Katie Mitchell

“I got rejected for a promotion at the E45 factory. Apparently it was external application only.”



Bobbie Jones

“Concept - making love to Mario while Dire Dire Docks plays in the background. I’d be his Jolly Roger Bae.”



Nathan Tommis

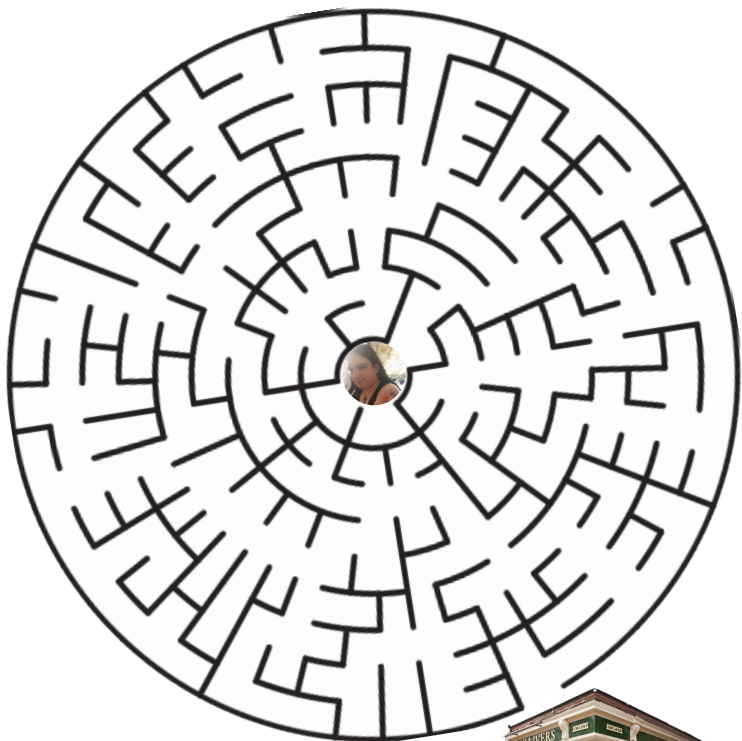
“I’m gonna deck that fucking horse.”



Jake Donaldson

Lost in the Northern Quarter

Jonny is running late, help them get to Gullivers on time for Blizzard



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Blizzard Comedy

Comedy for the Malcontent Left