



Comedy royalty unveiled in Rough Guide

A new book about British Comedy is published by Rough Guides next month. Focusing on the last three decades, the Rough Guide to British Cult Comedy covers the gamut of UK comedy talent, showcasing the cultiest comedians and shows to have entered public consciousness, earning in some cases near-regal status.

“The British comedy scene is an incredibly creative and vigorous one,” says Andrew Lockett, Rough Guides publishing director for film, music and culture. “The Edinburgh fringe, for example, is a real comedy powerhouse, as well as being a massive tourist attraction, and it makes perfect sense for Rough Guides to use the popular and direct approach we take in travel guides and other books and apply it to the subject of comedy, both live and on TV and film. Last year we launched the Rough Guide to Comedy Movies, in our film series, and I’m sure it’s an area we’ll return to.”

The new comedy guide covers the rise of alternative comedy and surrealist sketch shows, and charts the evolution through to the triumph of reality comedies such as *The Office*. Along the way, the book includes chapters about US influences, the best comedy venues and recommended DVDs and CDs. “In true Rough Guides spirit,” says author Julian Hall, “we’ve also mapped out the major geographical sources of laughter-making, introducing the comedy scene in the major cities and charting the places that have inspired comics, such as David Brent’s Slough, Alan Partridge’s Norwich and the Royle family’s Manchester.”

Julian Hall, who is comedy critic of the Independent, says “With the explosion in comedy since the 1980s, it’s really hard to believe there’s anyone over the age of 25 who hasn’t yet experienced one of the UK’s comedy nights, but there’s a first time for everyone. My hope is this book will help many more comedy virgins lose their innocence. If you miss out on the live circuit you miss out on the origins of many of Britain’s best-loved TV comedies – for example *The Young Ones*, *The League Of Gentlemen*, *Phoenix Nights*, *Black Books* and *The Fast Show*.”

At the core of the Rough Guide to British Cult Comedy is a chapter entitled *Icons*, profiling the most influential comedians to have emerged in the last 25 years. The book also contains a top-ten guide to the best-ever live acts.

The Rough Guide will tell you which comic legends started out as impressionists, which foppish film star might have become a live comedian and which comic was rendered utterly helpless as he was laughed off the stage by demonic hecklers.

The Rough Guide also explores the craft of comedy – writing and presenting good stand-up and creating sketches and sitcoms – and it covers the basics of getting into, and surviving, the terrifying art of standup. “We’ve thrown in some funny stories for good measure,” says Hall, “the kinds of things that only happen to a comic – or someone watching a comic.”

“But the main aim,” says Hall, “is to increase people’s enjoyment of comedy, in person or at home. The comedy business is full of underrated comics and there’s more to TV comedy than *Little Britain*, funny as that can be.”

To read more about Julian Hall's take on comedy you can visit his blog at
www.roughguidetocomedy.blogspot.com

The Rough Guide to British Cult Comedy's Top 50 Icons: The Faces of Comedy

The Rough Guide focuses here on comedians who have achieved success largely through their live performances. Strictly alphabetically. . .

Keith Allen	Boothby Graffoe	The Mighty Boosh
Bill Bailey	Malcolm Hardee	Dylan Moran
Adam Bloom	Hattie Hayridge	Simon Munnery
Arnold Brown	John Hegley	Al Murray
Brendon Burns	Harry Hill	Robert Newman
Ed Byrne	Sean Hughes	Ross Noble
Alan Carr	Reginald D. Hunter	Hovis Presley
Julian Clary	Lee Hurst	Reeves and Mortimer
Ian Cognito	Eddie Izzard	Jerry Sadowitz
Omid Djalili	Milton Jones	Alexei Sayle
Jenny Eclair	Phil Kay	Arthur Smith
Ben Elton	Daniel Kitson	Jim Tavaré
Harry Enfield	Mark Lamarr	Johnny Vegas
Lee Evans	Gary Le Strange	Tim Vine
Graham Fellows	Stewart Lee	Mark Watson
Rhod Gilbert	Andrew Maxwell	Nick Wilty
Dave Gorman	Paul Merton	

And out of these, the Rough Guide's all-time Top 10 live acts?

The Rough Guide nails its colours firmly to the mast on page 69, calling Eddie Izzard "Without question the showman of comedy, with lavish stage and stadium sets that don't distract from his inspired moments".

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|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| #1. Eddie Izzard | #6. Ross Noble |
| #2. Daniel Kitson | #7. Mark Watson |
| #3. Andrew Maxwell | #8. Jerry Sadowitz |
| #4. Alan Carr | #9. Brendon Burns |
| #5. Robert Newman | #10. Tim Vine |

Notes for editors:

The Rough Guide to British Cult Comedy by Julian Hall is published 26 October 2006.

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