

STAND-UP COMEDIANS THAT NEED YOUR ATTENTION



RABITA SALEH

Sometime about three years ago, I got into stand-up comedy. I started with YouTube videos of some amateur comedians who performed at random open-mics, and upon finding them quite hilarious I decided to look into some more popular names, expecting them to be even better. Surprisingly, they just weren't as funny to me. Perhaps it's the fact that stand-up is inherently an interactive medium of art, and taking it to a big stage ruins its essence for me; a stand-up comedian on a big stage just becomes more of an actor than a comedian, their acts feeling too rehearsed and unnatural.

Whatever the case may be, I went back to the slightly less famous comedians, and a few became my favourites. From what I've gathered over the last three years, here is a list of a few comedians I think would get anyone interested in stand-up comedy.

KT TATARA

I first spotted this Asian-American comedian doing a stand-up bit on Laugh Factory, which incidentally is one of the best

channels for comedy content. His boyish face and cheeky demeanour make him instantly funny, but watch him and you'll realise he is no kid. In fact, when I first checked his content out, he was well into his thirties while I was under the impression that he was barely past his teens.

Sometimes he deals with the usual Asian stereotypes but puts the most unexpected twists on them, while at other times he embraces his American side and makes witty commentary on that lifestyle. All I'll say is, if you think you can handle it, check out his "Independent Women" set. I could have that bit playing all day, and still laugh at the punches.

JAMES VEITCH

I can't confidently say whether what this English comedian does actually qualify as stand-up at all. However, I can say that his approach is exceptionally innovative. James Veitch is famous for his over-the-top interactions with people who send scam email. You know the "hello I'm prince of nigerias" emails that every parent falls for? He just replies to them in the most absurd ways possible, and takes the conversation to the absolute extreme, to

the point where the scammer gives up in exasperation and requests to be left alone.

He doesn't stop at that though. From pulling elaborate pranks on his roommates to infuriating the people who by the highest misfortune dial his number by mistake, his entire comedic philosophy resides in taking all interactions to the maximum. There's no doubt that although he presents his interactions as facts, he does take creative liberties with his material, a lot of which may be completely fictitious. In a comedian's trade however, that rarely matters. If he says he filled a bathroom with a million rubber ducks, who am I to question it?

KENNY SEBASTIAN

Kenny is by no means an amateur comedian. He has an almost cult-like following in India. Kenny's philosophy, unlike any other good stand-up comedian I have encountered, is that comedy can be enjoyed by an entire family sitting in one room. As absurd as that may sound, given that people almost never find common ground on humour with their parents, Sebastian's pieces make it seem effortless. Watch his "Bucket Bath", or "Middle-Class Families in Restaurants" set and you'll know what I mean.

Kenny's new gig "Chai Time with Kenny Sebastian" is self-proclaimed as "sit-down comedy" and although I had my doubts at first, I can't deny that even that chilled low-key humour has grown on me over time. With his inherent personal innocence, crowd-pleasing enactments and brilliant on-stage improvisation, he is currently one of the best comedians in India's emerging comedy scene.

PARDIS PARKER

Another comedian who works with some delicate issues, Parker is a Sri Lankan-born Canadian comedian. His unique experiences while living in Toronto and travelling on a regular basis definitely gave him a lot of material to work with. Parker has recently moved slightly away

from doing full-time stand-up, as most comedians do at some point, and decided to dabble in some acting, writing, and directing. Although he's now based in the States and doing "Mideast Minute" on Comedy Central, his stand-up bit on "Airport Security" remains one of my favourites till this day, and I would highly recommend it.

KANAN GILL

I'll end my list on another Indian comedian who has risen to the spotlight more recently and is now getting some well-deserved recognition. I didn't discover Gill through stand-up though. The first videos that I watched him in were from "Pretentious Movie Reviews" which he did with Biswa Kalyan Rath, another brilliant comedian.

Upon watching those videos for a while, I looked up Kanan, and was pleasantly surprised to note that he did stand-up as well. His one and a half hour special called "Keep it Real" on Amazon Prime, which I totally have an account for, is one of the most elaborately constructed sets I have ever witnessed. Keeping a huge audience engaged, and delivering punch-line after punch-line continuously for that long, is an amazing feat that shows off Gill's writing chops brilliantly.

When you begin to watch stand-up, you'll soon realise that not all comedy will be to your taste, especially if you have particularly high sensitivity to content. Most comedians believe anything and everything can be joked about in the right context. Be prepared to have some "Oh snap!" moments at the beginning of your journey, and remember that they're just words from a person trying to make people laugh. They can't hurt you unless you let them.

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