

THE COMEDY GAZELLE



ABOUT THE GAZELLE

When I first moved to Chicago, I was immediately struck by the level of talent in the scene. "Fuck, she's good," I thought as I watched Kristen Toomey annihilate a sold out Laugh Factory. *Why haven't I heard of her before?*

It's a question I come back to often, and a major problem here. The city's bursting with household-name-level talent, but unless you're in the midst of it, it can pass you by.

That's why I started The Comedy Gazelle – to bring outsiders into the heart of Chicago comedy, and to share knowledge that can hopefully make the scene that much stronger. It was also the pandemic and I had shit else to do.

Thanks for your support!

– Jerry

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INTERVIEW: MARTY DEROSA

After watching some YouTube breakdowns of Bret “the Hitman” Hart, I sat down with Marty DeRosa (@martyderosa) and spoke to his ADHD for nearly four hours. We talked how to impress as a young comic, dealing with mental illness, crowd work tips, building material, and much more.

I was reading Brido’s book [The Perfect Amount of Wrong: The Rise of Alt Comedy on Chicago’s North Side] and saw you were in the intro.

Yeah, I snuck my way in. I started right at the end of that book. My class was the class after that. The next book would be a bunch of comics showing up without enough shows for everybody, so we started Comedians You Should Know, and then a bunch of other shows started popping up after that.

How was your class different from the one before you?

I think one of the things we changed was we were more approachable. Danny [Kallas] and I worked in a warehouse; we were just dudes. Some of the comics in that book had their own table, like the Comedy Cellar. It was very elitist stuff. The class before me, man, they would always have these lists of the best shows, the best comics. We were never on them. Me and the other psycho comics like Joe Kilgallon would be like, “I’m on a show with #14 tonight!” I’m like, “I’m on a show with #6 tonight! Let’s fuckin’ smoke ‘em!” We wanted to be better.

And how many years in were you when you started CYSK?

Maybe like one or two. We all knew none of us could close it out. Not all of us could host it. But by booking the best comics, you perform with the best comics and you get better. I was just talking to Jarrell [Scott Barnes] about hosting. He hosts CYSK a lot and he’s a great host, but I also know he’s sick of hosting. You get more shows, but you also wanna do a “real” set. I used to host all the time. There would be nights where I felt like I murdered as a host and people would go, “You know, you should do this. You should really try comedy.” I’d be like, “Motherfucker! What are you talking about? I did the best tonight!” The way they see it, you’re sometimes not even a comic. But what happened – and this is what’s happening with Jarrell – is that I got better. So



good luck putting a guest spot up first, or even a first comic, cause I’m gonna smoke ‘em. You’re gonna break the show. A smart guy like Danny will go, “Fuck, Jarrell’s ruining the show by being so good. I can’t have him host anymore.”

If you’re too good of a host doesn’t that just set the next person up to do well? Maybe just don’t have a bad comedian following them.

But that’s not the world we live in. We’re in a big city where people are always popping in town. Sometimes people just don’t have great sets. I always love looking at a lineup from someone I know who puts thought into them. I’ll say to Danny, “Alright, so here’s why you did this, this, and that.” This would be the coolest thing I think: I love baseball, so I’m thinking you have a show where it’s like, “Alright, Jarrell, you’re my host. Shit, Jarrell’s cooking! Quieter, weird comic, you gotta wait. I need some charisma to follow this guy! Alright, you, you’re in!” I would love to be able to do that: put a line up together that can change. It’s like, “Oh shit, this crowd’s getting tired. We’re gonna have to bring up – you think a loud person – NO! We’re gonna bring up a quiet person, so they really have to listen and she has great jokes!” I love shit like that. Cause sometimes you’re like, “Hey, why don’t we put up somebody who can flip this room?” If you want to impress or get

attention from people that will book you, flipping a room: number one. I love people who can flip rooms. It's being like, "This is not going well, but I will not allow that." I love seeing a young comic finally realize, "No, this mood, this fucking vibe in here is not it. I can fix this."

What else do you look for in a young comic?

Here's what I judge comics on: obviously if they haven't written a new joke in a million years, but I'm looking more for, like, have you gotten better? Seeing somebody and going, "Oh shit, they got better." I love that. But flipping a room: number one. I was at this Sunday Laugh Factory show and just the bowl was filled - which I think is enough for a great show - but there's some princes and princesses who just, "I don't like it! That's it?" And they'll go in and shit the bed and just have such a self-centered, shitty set. They could have stayed home and the show would have been better off without them. But Max [Walter] went up and flipped it, then he walked past me and I go, "Dude that was fantastic!" And he goes, "Good, tell your friends." I was like, "Fuck yeah, dude!" I love that shit! Flip a room, I'm gonna be like, "Curtis, you know who you gotta check out?" Cause I don't think there are enough eyes on comics from the people in charge. I think sometimes they're too busy doing other work, so if I have a good relationship with them, I'm always like, "Here's who you need to check out." Because the boring old dogs need to go and the people who are fresh and new need to push them out. That's the cycle of life. That's how it should be. The Laugh Factory should be like that soccer league. If you eat shit at the Laugh Factory enough times, you gotta go back to the minors. Because you're just taking up spots.

I feel like a lot of people stop trying to get better and hit a wall. Was there ever a point where you realized you had to make a change and do something different?

When I moved back here from LA I knew I wanted to get better at joke writing. I really knew it was a hole in my game. I had a couple jokes that were great. I was like, "I wish I just had more jokes like that." Smart, funny, dirty. I wanted more jokes that were better so I didn't feel like I was wasting anybody's time if I really needed to lean on the material. I didn't want to be exposed as a bad comic, where it's like, "Oh, when he's not talking to the crowd his jokes are dog shit." I didn't want to feel that. And I really enjoyed the process. I got a lot of enjoyment out of watching these bits grow and hearing other comedians go, "Oh shit there's a whole bunch more to that huh?" And noticing they were noticing it.



How many years in is this?

Probably like ten, eleven years maybe. I had some jokes but they were just kind of there. Nothing really flowed together. So I stopped drinking for almost a year and I really focused on my health and writing, and basically taught myself how to write a big, long, ten minute bit.

So ten years in you're primarily doing crowd work with a few jokes sprinkled in?

It was funny because my buddy Drew [Michael] was telling this other comic, [Mike Sheehan], like, "Here's what I think you should do: have the jokes floating around and just fuck around and then grab the jokes when you need them." And Mike was like, "No, I have this other idea." And I was like, "I'll do that then!" And that's what I do. I just fuck around. On nights when the crowd is weird at the Laugh Factory, it'll take a little crowd work to wake them up, and then I'll zip back into the material, and if I feel like I'm losing them, we'll go back to crowd work. That's when I can use that power to my advantage. But there are times where I am just like, "No, I'm working on these bits." One of the ways that I used to waste time and now I maximize my time at a club is genuinely working on a bit all weekend. And if I'm working with somebody, I'm always asking them, like, "What are you working on this weekend? Let's fucking figure it out."

What does working on it look like for you?

Let's say I have six sets at Laugh Factory in the next three days. When I'm getting to the joke I kind of tell myself, "Let's really focus here, let's remember how it goes." Especially if it's one of those bits where it's like, "How did this not work? Oh, I didn't say the one thing first!" There's just things you figure out then you have all this data and it's like, "Why did this work really well one night and okay one show? Why is this changing?" Then you figure it out and remember the flow of it. When I was first getting into comedy, my friends would go on the road and I would be like, "Oh shit, they're better. They fucking figured out that bit." The road is great because you have a bomb and you go, "What happened?" Well, no one in Peoria knows what the Red Line is. You learn to un-city your joke or un-Chicago comedy scene your joke. The road will knock the scene off of you. A lot of it too is that you've got a great joke, but you gotta take out the trying to make open micers laugh part of it. There's some people where I'm just like, "You're open-mic-funny. You're not I-would-book-you-on-a-show-funny." What people like that don't understand is the booker's also protecting you from a horrific bomb. If I know a comic, I'll be like, "Well, I thought it was funny because I think you're a lunatic, but you couldn't do that at a real show where people pay actual money." But when comics figure that out, it's awesome. That's a fucking beautiful thing to see, where you're like, "They fucking figured out how to be a maniac, but they're bookable now!"

Do you have any advice for reeling yourself in and not being too crazy or self-indulgent?

Yeah, ask a comic that's better than you, who you really respect, to watch your set and just ask for honest advice. There's certain times where I want to tell somebody, "You gotta chill out." And they'll go, "Oh my god, really?" And there's other people where I just don't have that relationship with them, but I'm like, "Man, I wanna tell them to just fucking chill out or to just stop fucking bullshitting and get down to it." If you hit it off with somebody whose opinion you value, ask them to watch your set. I wish I would have done that more. I wish I would have had more mentors, like people who I could have reached out to and kept in better touch with. But I was lucky enough where my friends got very funny, so I just asked the people who I'm friends with.

I like that, just asking for more feedback from people who are better than you.

If we're all stuck at a club all weekend it's like, "Yeah I'll watch your 10 minute set." I hate hearing that older

comics don't help or they're dicks. That's fucking horseshit. Older comics should be cooler to younger comics because when you first show up, it's tough, and when you're first doing the Laugh Factory, to me it's not a big deal, but to them it's the biggest thing in their comedy career. They're nervous and they need to talk, or even just saying, "Good set or good job." I like talking to the comics who ask questions and are curious about getting better, because most of us are comedy nerds. I love getting in a car and just being like, "What do you think went wrong?" Years ago I was in Indiana with some hot shot Chicago comics and they all ate shit. I was like, "They don't know what the Red Line is, man. You guys are talking about Wrigleyville douchebags. They don't understand that you don't have a car. How are they gonna understand you're on a train and there's a guy jacking off? They don't live in your world." There's always something to learn from all these shows, whether they're good or bad.

Do you have any advice for trying to get out on the road more?

Have a car and offer to drive. If you don't have a car, you better get real good at comedy, get real good at learning bus schedules. The car is huge. The car is a peace offering. But to get work on the road is honestly just to ask. And that's one thing that I wish I did more early on in my career was ask for things more. I just always assumed, "Well, I'm good at this, so I should be able to get the stuff." I didn't ask enough. And there were times where I was probably too competitive. I should have been asking more questions. But I was just enjoying myself a lot, which is sometimes what it's all about. Growing up, I had a rough childhood. I had some childhood trauma that I'm still dealing with, and I lost my mom and sister when I was 20, 21. Depressed all my life. Then during COVID I lost my dad and my best friend. But comedy has always been there and been the one thing I know I can do and feel good about.

Are you able to get up when you're going through it?

I can if I have to. I think back now and sometimes I'll get angry because if there was a weekend where I was like, "Fuck, I'm so depressed," Funny Business doesn't want to hear that. Funny Business will just give you a guilt trip and be like, "Oh, we can't depend on you," which is such bullshit. I'm glad now if you bring it up it's not as big of an issue. If I'm at a point where I just can't do it, I think they know, "Okay, you clearly must be having a time if you're canceling." Sometimes I can fake it. Sometimes it can be the thing that knocks me out of a depression. Sometimes it's like, "I've been inside for so long, I just have to get out." But I was having panic attacks because I was taking way, way too much medication for my anxiety and depression. And now I don't take anything – that's not to say medication's bad – it's just the medication that I was taking was bad for me. I had a big breakthrough realizing that. I got a ketamine treatment which was really good for my brain, so I'm able to just enjoy comedy again. Because there was a time when I was like, "Why am I doing this?"

Do you ever talk about what you're going through on stage, or are you like, "No, this is gonna bring down the mood and not be funny?"

I've had panic attacks on stage, but the crowd was with me the whole time. They're like, "We're here dude." And then I was like, "Okay, I'm feeling better," and finished on top of the world. If they love you, you can talk about anything. But there's some times where I'll see a comic on stage and they're talking about depression and they clearly are depressed and they're just bumming the whole room out; they're not doing it in a fun way. I love a fun depressing joke. A joke about your depression that's fun is so awesome. If you can make people laugh about your mental illness and let people know they're not the only ones that feel that way? Gold star in comedy. Like George Carlin looks down at you and is like, "You did a good job today, buddy." Also, sometimes it's not that a comic's bombing, it's that they're so sweet and adorable, then they're talking about this pain they're in and the crowd just wants to hug them. It can get real, real interesting up there when you talk about mental illness. I feel like now people are more open about talking about stuff. Like if I'm closing out a show, by the time I go up I feel like everyone's said, "I'm this, I'm this, I suffer from this, I have this." Then you go up at the end and you're just like, "What's left?"

The bingo card's full.

Yeah, I used to close on a show where they just book all dudes and you're like, "Jesus, there's nothing left to fucking talk about!" Now I love that there's these more diverse lineups and hopefully they get even more diverse. I love being the only dude on a show. But there are those times where you listen from the back and everybody is so depressed. It's a reflection of the times; everybody's going through it.

What do you wish you had known earlier that you know now in terms of dealing with your depression?

Keep an eye on self medication. For some people it's drinking, for some people it's drugs, for some people it's hooking up. For some people it's everything. I kind of liked everything. I took comfort in all my vices: "I'm gonna get drunk, I'm gonna do comedy, I'm gonna fuck somebody," and it was just like, "Buddy, you're just out here hurting, man." But at the time, I felt like all those things were what I needed. It's like, "Nah, dude, you don't need that."

What do you wish you would have done?

I wish that I would have been a little bit more of a professional comic. Instead of having the most fun, I would maybe wait till the show's over to start drinking and stuff. I would just get so drunk. And you think you're slick. Every comic knows when you've done coke right before your set, you know what I mean? But these are things that comics are just gonna have to figure out. If I really like a comic or I feel like there's something I can say that'll help, I will. But you're gonna learn your own stuff. There's some stuff that I wish I would have done, but it all leads me to where I'm at right now, and I'm very happy right now.

I was gonna ask: are you happy with where you're at in your career?

I haven't done the clips and stuff like that. I know that's what you gotta do, but I'm also fine. You know what I mean? Like any comic, I would love to do more and have more opportunities and stuff like that. Being Gen X is very weird. I have such weird views on fame and the things you do to get fame and the clips and all that. I like going on Instagram to just look at the cool stuff I like. I really don't like seeing comedy on there, and for a while I didn't post on Instagram. It was my secret little place and I'd just follow all these weird wrestling and action figure accounts.

Do you think you will post stuff? It seems to work for people.

I just got my brain right a couple months ago, so this is all kind of new. I was in a very dark place. I got ketamine treatment and that saved my life. I was starting to think about killing myself. I was lucky enough to be in a position where I could do the treatment and really threw myself into it. Since then, comedy's been unbelievably fun. I'm in this spot that I think a lot of comics are, where I don't think I've ever been funnier, but I'm also the least booked I've ever been as a big boy comic. I look at my calendar and I'm like, "Oh, man." But I'm lucky enough where I can go up at Laugh Factory and CYSK and some fun shows in the city. If tomorrow a clip went crazy it's like, "Oh, cool. That'd be awesome." I'd love to do fun stuff and I know that I can do it. It's not a problem like in the past where they're like, "You can headline this great club, right?" And I'd be like, "Uh, yeah! Sure!" But now that would be amazing. I'm open to everything, but I'm also very defensive of my brain. There's certain stuff I just say no to because I don't think it's gonna be good for my brain.

I feel like to improve you have to be pretty critical and hard on yourself. How do you balance that with mental illness? I imagine when you were first starting it was pretty tough.

Like I said, there was just no way to cancel. Funny Business would be weirdos like, "Hmm, canceling, huh?" It was so psychotic and we all were like, "I'll do it. I'll drive through a blizzard." So many times I should have just been like, "Fuck it." Anytime I see somebody on Facebook that's taking a little break, I'm like, "Good for you." If you are mentally not doing well, this is so fucking tough to do. Because from the start of the morning, you check your phone and everybody's success is thrown in your face and all of your shortcomings are just right there. That's how you start the day. Then throughout the

day, you're either dreading this performance, or if it's not the performance, it's getting there. I think about these comics that are hurting and they're driving hours or on buses. If you're depressed, the last thing you should do is be on a fucking Greyhound bus for six hours. If I can help a comic that's in that situation, it would be my honor to help them because, man, I've had some of those where I was just like, "Man, I wish somebody would help." These poor comics are afraid that some dickhead comedy club's going to never book them again: "You're not coming, huh?" That kind of shit drives me crazy. If a booker is like, "What do you mean depression? You're not gonna do my club?" Then you don't wanna work for a fucking piece of shit like that. Every comic loves performing and when you are so depressed you don't want to perform - that's one of the signs of depression: "I no longer enjoy things I used to enjoy." You gotta look out for yourself. If depression has taken your love from comedy away, that needs to be addressed. Sometimes even just one night off. If you're in that open mic fucking bubble every night, take a night off and don't do anything comedy related. Or take a night off and go to a show and watch comics who are just a little bit above you. Just watch them, enjoy the comedy, or go to a club and watch some fucking pros. Get inspired.

So I'm curious because I've gotten a lot of different answers on this: do you think a host has to be good at crowd work?

I think they should be engaging. They can be tricked into thinking it's crowd work. I know some clubs want, "Is anyone from out of town? Who drove the farthest here?" If that's what they want you to do, you have to do that. But honestly, you can kind of just get them ready with a couple questions and announcements. I think for me, being a good host is being genuinely excited to bring up somebody. Even if I don't like

somebody, but I know they're gonna crush, I'm like, "You guys are gonna love this next comic." That to me is when the show feels like it's cooking, when it just seems like the host has these funny friends: "How good was that? And now I have another funny person who's gonna come up." You're just basically presenting your very funny friends to these people and hopefully you should be genuinely excited to bring them up.

Did you do anything specific to get better at crowd work?

We did backyard wrestling and I just always would talk and it was never a problem. When I first started, like most people, I relied on the stuff that works. I wanted to get booked on stuff and I wanted to move up the food chain. I just kind of leaned on that; I leaned on it too much. I tell people crowd work doesn't have to just be, "Hello, how are you?" I talk to the DJ, I'll talk to my friends if they're in the back. Sometimes in the middle of a bit, I'll ask a guy, "You ever do that?" And I look for smiling people. That's another thing I learned throughout the years: don't just talk to somebody because they're right there. Talk to the right people. The greatest thing I can say to people who deal with mental illness is if you're on stage and there's someone in the front row who looks at you like they wanna kill you, just ignore them and do not talk to them. They're not your problem. They're just having a bad day or they're having a great time and they'll tell you after the show. So many times we'll just go, "You hate me!" and no one can see their face. When you only have a certain amount of time up there, the last thing you need to do is stop all your momentum by going, "Why do you hate me?" Unless you know without a fucking shadow of a doubt you've got the time and the chops to make this something great, don't fucking do it. When you're just getting started and you're trying to do well, only do crowd work to the people who are smiling. And if they answer too much, fucking move on. You don't want them either. You don't want, "I'm fucking miserable, don't fucking ask me a question," and you don't want, "I wanna be a comic, let's do this together!" You want a smiley person on a date that just wants to get a little laugh and go, "Oh, I talked to the comic, that's great." Then move on. If they keep talking, move on. If you feel like you've created a monster, move on.

When you're on stage, where are you physically looking?

Depending where I'm at, I'll probably find five or six tables and like a typewriter I just, "da-da-da," and then go back. I find that I check in with the funnest,

friendliest tables. I genuinely look for the fun people and I can just feel they are having more fun than everyone else. And I'll watch the crowd before I go up too. I like to see who's fun. One of the things that my fiancé always tells me is that they just need to be pumped up. I don't really like the, "Hey, you're wearing this, you look stupid," or whatever. Sometimes that's fun if they're high status, but if some dude just looks like a little dork - pump him up. That's my favorite thing to do. Pumping up a dude is so funny. Because guys aren't used to it. I'm telling the girl, "You're with this guy? This guy's a fucking cool dude!" I think it's just so fun: "I think you're the coolest dude in this weird little town." People that are cool and stuff, let them know they're cool. And if they're interesting, find out about them. You can learn some fascinating stuff. But also, I know where I'm going.

Are you steering them with your questions?

Sometimes, yeah. Or I know what it's going to be, so I have the joke ready to go. Sometimes I'll just go, "I can't believe I'm gonna tell you this one." That's when I'll start telling a story and if it's funny then I'll go, "Maybe this will be an actual bit." You can start to come up with stuff like that. Sometimes it is just: "I'll tell you something I do." I was just joking around about this coffee shop I love going to, and people were very interested in the story and they would ask me questions afterwards. And I was like, "Oh, these are all things I could just put in the bit, and answer all their questions." That's the thing too, where sometimes a better comic will come up to you and say, "You need to do more with that joke." That's because our antenna is like, "That's the most interesting thing you've talked about."

I feel like everybody has jokes like that, but might not know what to add.

That's why it's great to talk to people and have your crew where you can talk about stuff. If you're a good comic and a good person, comics ahead of you will be rooting for you. And if they hear you start a good joke, it's like, "Whoa, whoa, you gotta do more of that!" The best thing you can do for a comic is to point them in that direction: "Didn't you notice everybody got quiet and was like, 'He does what with his what?'"

So when you're writing, is that all on stage?

Yeah, I build around the big laughs. I go up on stage and I'll riff a lot of stuff. If something gets a big laugh, I'll make a note that it's something I need to figure out. I fuck around a lot. I would hear a lot of comics say, "I write on stage," and I'm like, "What does that mean?" Then I would hear people say, "Yeah, I just fuck around and if it's funny, I go back to it." And I was like, "Ooh, I like that!" So I would do that a lot, and if I felt like something was good, I was like, "I should just do a whole bit about this."

If it works right away, are you like, "Alright it's done," or will you tweak it a little bit?

Kevin Bozeman said to me recently that no joke is ever done. Especially if you have writer's block. I hear people go, "Yeah, writers block," and I'm like, "Then make the jokes you're fucking constantly forcing us to listen to better." I've had writer's block; it's something that happens to everybody. But don't punish us by just doing the same old jokes over and over again. Hunker down and make those jokes better. How do you not accidentally come up with better tags for these jokes? Because us in the back, we have some great tags for your jokes. There's nothing like being in the back with a bunch of comics when you know somebody's set on stage forwards and backwards. That is like some of the most fun.

What I hate is having a joke that everyone knows, but you still have to tell it because it works.

There's times where I'll talk to a younger comic and I'll go, "Why aren't you doing that joke anymore?" And they'll go, "I don't do that anymore. I retired it." And I'll be like, "You dummy, that was your only good joke! What are you doing?" Comics are either, "I'm gonna do this joke for the rest of my life," or, "I burned that material the other week at an open mic." When you're first going there might be stuff that works that you don't love, but it works and you have to do it because it's

filling the time. And at first, comedy is just about filling the time.

Do you have any advice for building a longer set?

So that is obviously where getting on the road will help you. But go to mics or do a show and have a mission. The comics I studied from a distance that came to shows with a mission have always done well. They're there to fix a bit or add to it. Always be working on something. I know everyone wants to kill if the crowd's hot and everything, but sometimes that's the time to take that chance and do that new bit. Sometimes it's not. But the only way to learn how to do a longer set is just to do it. Maybe that means finding a bar or renting out a room at the Lodge to do half hours or something. Have goals, push yourself. I know everybody's in a hurry to make a special. Just get 10 or 15 really, really good minutes. Wherever you're at in comedy, that's what you should be shooting for. If you're an open micer, it should just be five good minutes. If you wanna start doing shows and stuff? 10 really good minutes. If you're an interesting person, that 10 minutes will take you so far. If you're interesting, if you're cool, if you've got something unique about you, 10 good minutes will take you so far, to where you have to figure out more material.

Last question: what would you change about the Chicago scene if you could change anything?

I wish there was more money to be made; I wish the bars that had these shows treated the comics better; I wish there were more fun, can't miss shows. Sometimes there will be a fun show, but everything feels kind of the same right now. Humboldt Jungle was cool to do; that was a super fun one. But I've done a couple shows where I'm like, "This really wasn't fun." I love the Lincoln Lodge, but I wish there were

three more Lincoln Lodges. I just wish there were more opportunities. Like outside of a few Black stations, none of these stations have comics on ever. They'll have Marilee on all the time and it's like, "Yeah, of course you should have Marilee on. She's the funniest fucking person in the world." You don't want comics on your dumb shows to make them funnier? So bizarre. Sports Talk - Joe Kilgallon should have his own show. What is going on? It's so stupid. But all these people in the city are just like, "Well, unless you're on a TV show or something, I don't give a fuck about you." They don't love you till you're gone. It's so weird. There's so many talented people in the city that can do cool stuff. Like, [Adam] Burke does Wait Wait...[Don't Tell Me] which is awesome, but there should be 10 different jobs like that for comics in the city. I think it's a bad look. It's like, "Are we really this big city? Because you have to leave here to really do anything." There's people who've built their own thing, and maybe it's just showing how antiquated all the old comics are - like what's radio anymore? But back in the day, comics were on the radio, comics were on morning shows being dirty and stuff. And they just don't do that anymore unless you're famous, or out of town famous. I just feel like for the very excellent comedians in this city, there should be more opportunities.



THE COMEDY GAZELLE & THE DEN THEATRE PRESENT

2023 GAZELLIES

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KAYLEY HORTON

"I don't know anyone as honest and forthright on stage as Kayley. She has an infectious energy and excellent jokes, which are compounded by her willingness to be real and vulnerable."

DAVID FEINBERG

"David is truly one of the funniest comedians around. His material is always consistently fresh, funny and thoughtful. He runs an open writing table at The Annoyance every Tuesday, creating a welcoming and safe environment for comedians of all levels to come and kick around bits and jokes and help punch them up. David is constantly lifting up other comedians by attending shows, posting clips of others and supporting everyone. David is someone I look to as a source of motivation and inspiration, as he is always on the move and grinding."

JARRELL SCOTT BARNES

"Hands down one of the best host in the city. Super likable on stage and knows how to bring a room together. He has great material, but also great crowd work that gets the crowd ready for a show."

SAM BIRU

"Newer comic and already such a good joke writer. I saw him do 10 mins in the big room at the Lodge and the laughs never stopped. So funny."

TIM CRUIT

"Every week I look forward to seeing Tim at Schubas. Watching his voice develop and joke writing get stronger and stronger is so exciting. Tim is one of my favorite newer comics in the scene."

Comedians Recognizing Comedians

OBI EHN

"Obi's material is both inventive and jarringly honest while still managing to be incredibly hilarious. He's the type of comic who makes you want to throw out all of the old material you planned on doing and run home to write some new every time you're on a show with him. Book his funny little gap toothed ass."

TIM BRENNAN

"I've seen Tim host multiple shows from open mics, to bar shows in small towns to hosting Dave Attell at the Improv and he truly is a master of hosting. He sees all the details and knows how to win any room and maintain or regain energy."

BRIAN CONNORS

"Brian is elevating gay comedy with wonderfully witty songs about hysterically gay out of pocket things! Like a song about his father getting him panties for Halloween. Not only is Brian blowing us all away with his stand up, but he produces the amazing pop up show Mic Mash which is always packed out and filled with people having fun. Brian is always the center of fun and has made my first year in comedy so amazing."

GRACE KILPATRICK

"Grace is an incredible writer and her stage presence is somehow perfectly frantic and memorizing. By the end of her sets not only do bust a gut laughing, I also feel like I learn a lot about her too."

FRANKIE THE KID COMEDIAN

"A lot of y'all sleeping on Frankie, and not because it's nap time. I know he's been in the scene for a bit, but it's a shame no one is giving this kid attention! With jokes like "gimme my baba bitch" and "nine-uh-weven? I can't even count to four!" it's clear Frankie's been around the blocks a few times. Play-times over: Frankie is the real deal!"

MIKE ATCHERSON

"Mike is one of the best hosts in the entire city. He consistently keeps the crowd engaged and energized and is extremely likable on stage."

OH JAY LAMONT

"One of the best host in the city hands down! Energy on 10 every time! He gets the audience involved and excited and makes every host set original and unique."

**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO
MADE THIS POSSIBLE.**

**HAVE SUGGESTIONS?
WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?**

**DM US @COMEDYGAZELLE
PATREON.COM/COMEDYGAZELLE**

