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City-wide arts festival celebrates a decade of laughs!

There's even more top TV names, rising stars and local talent in the Birmingham Comedy Festival 2011.

This October, **Birmingham Comedy Festival** returns to celebrate its tenth anniversary.

Since the very first festival, way back in 2001, the festival has continued to attract big names, big shows, and highlight some of the great comedic talent in the city, and this year is no exception.

Highlights include multi-award-winning West End smash **Legally Blonde: The Musical** (Oct 4-15, New Alexandra Theatre), TV names **Russell Kane** (Oct 16, New Alexandra Theatre), Mock The Week's **Andy Parsons** (Oct 7, Town Hall) and fast-rising star in waiting **Jack Whitehall** (Oct 9, The Glee Club).

They're joined by ex-drugs baron turned writer and raconteur **Howard Marks** (Oct 11, The Glee Club) and **Rob Rouse** (Oct 12, Comedy Junction, Station pub, Sutton Coldfield), while Bulgarian artist **Nedko Solakov** will be making his major UK debut at Ikon Gallery (Sep 21-Nov 13). There's backstage tension evident in new play **The Panto Girls** (Oct 12-15, Blue Orange Theatre) and Tom Binns presents a double-header from his classic comedic creations, hospital radio star **Ivan Brackenbury** and psychic **Ian D Montfort** (Oct 13, Hare & Hounds).

Acts from across the region, as always, feature strongly, with return appearances from **Mrs Barbara Nice** (Oct 10, The Glee Club; Oct 16, Old Joint Stock), **Jo Enright** (Oct 7, The Glee Club; Oct 14, Edgbaston Priory Club), **Andy Robinson** (Oct 10, The Crescent Theatre), ex-KGB mind-reader **Boris Nicoli** (Oct 14, mac), the **Half A Dog** crew (Oct 9 & Oct 16, The Victoria, city centre), **Sheila M** (Oct 14, The Patrick Kavanagh), and **Aaron Twitchen** (Oct 12, Kitchen Garden Cafe), along with **James Cook**, **Craig Deeley**, **Phil McCullough** and **Lovdev**.

Look out too for a raft of shows featuring up-and-coming local acts at venues such as Scruffy Murphys, The Red Lion (Jewellery Quarter), Actress and Bishop and Church Inn.

There's a noticeable musical thread this year with a celebration of post-war American satirists **Bob Newhart** and **Tom Lehrer** (Oct 12, Old Joint Stock), Edinburgh Fringe veteran pianist **James Sherwood** (Oct 13, Old Joint Stock), and guitarist/comedian **Ashley Frieze** (Oct 16, The Red Lion, Jewellery Quarter).

And if that wasn't enough, several Fringe events include the return of the **Laurel and Hardy Film Night** (Oct 6), Take Me Out's **Paddy McGuinness** (Oct 6) and the live touring debut of **Stephen Merchant** (Oct 17-18).

The festival boasts over 60 performances, including films, visual arts, theatre, sketch groups, mind-reading, multi-media performances, improvisation, themed quizzes and stand-up comedy at over 20 different venues city-wide.

Founded in 2000 to highlight the city's rich and diverse comedic talent, the festival debuted in May 2001 with a line-up that included **Peter Kay, Sandi Toksvig, Reginald D Hunter, Sean Lock** and **Frankie Boyle**, before moving to October in 2002.

Over its ten year history, the volunteer-led and unfunded 10-day event has witnessed performances from such established names as **Michael McIntyre, Lenny Henry, Jimmy Carr** and **Alan Carr**, attracting audiences of up to **86,000 people**.

The festival is officially sponsored by Warwickshire-based **Purity Brewing Co.**, producers of premium ales, and **The Ticket Factory**, who both return for the second consecutive year.

A Festival spokesperson said: "We'd like to thank everyone who has been involved in making the festival such a huge success over the last ten years.

"This city has a comic heritage to be proud of, but it's not something stuck in the past, it's constantly evolving with new acts and new comedy clubs appearing every year.

"If your only experience of comedy is sitting at home watching prime time variety TV or late night panel shows, this festival offers the perfect introduction to what live comedy can really offer – it can be exciting, thrilling, challenging, cheeky, affectionate, ridiculous and so much more."

- For full listings and further information on the festival, see: www.bhamcomfest.co.uk
- Follow on Twitter **@BhamComFest**
- For additional festival news and competitions see: www.puritybrewing.com

LISTINGS

Friday 7 to Sunday 16 October 2011

Birmingham Comedy Festival

In association with Purity Brewing Co. Supported by TheTicketFactory

Featuring stand up comedy, theatre, music, visual arts, magic, quizzes and more.

Various venues, Birmingham

www.bhamcomfest.co.uk

MEDIA CONTACTS:

For media queries regarding the **Birmingham Comedy Festival**, including interview and competition requests:

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[please put '**MEDIA QUERY**' in the email subject/title field]



Notes for Editors:

ABOUT PURITY BREWING CO.

Purity Brewing Co. produces premium ales using only the best natural ingredients. Our own brews UBU, Mad Goose and Pure Gold have been enjoyed by our customers for the past five years, and continue to convert people every day into ale drinking enthusiasts. Purity revels in sharing and supporting the interests of our drinkers. This is why we support local arts, music and culture - especially in the region we call home; the West Midlands. We want our drinkers to relax, laugh and indulge in their passions.



Paul Halsey, Managing Director of Purity says: "All of us at Purity are excited about continuing our relationship with the Birmingham Comedy Festival. Supporting the local arts scene is in our DNA."

"We look forward to promoting our beers to a wider audience using the platform of comedy... who wouldn't enjoy a stand up comedy performance while sipping on a great beer?"

For festival news and competitions join UBU on Facebook or follow Purity on Twitter

For more information on Purity Brewing Co. go to www.puritybrewing.com

Purity PR contact: **01789 488007**

ABOUT THE TICKET FACTORY

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The Ticket Factory is proud to support the Birmingham Comedy Festival 2011. As one of the UK's leading ticket agents, selling more than two million tickets a year, The Ticket Factory sells tickets for an ever-growing diverse range of events from comedy, concerts, sport, exhibitions, theatre performances, visitor attractions and much more across the UK.

The Ticket Factory call centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing round the clock telephone service and support for online customers via the Technical Support Line.

The Ticket Factory is a member of STAR (the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers), demonstrating to customers that they can buy tickets in confidence from a trusted source.

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