

# A laughing matter



When trouble looms, says **Victoria Nangle**, trust your comic. He's got the power.

Oh. My. God. Last night I saw one of the best gigs I've ever had the privilege to witness. It was wicked! A comic living off his wits with the tension palpable as he was confronted with one bizarre punter out of leftfield after another. It was like some kind of new reality programme no one had told him he was in, where the powers that be had crammed in as many varied and creative eccentrics – I don't want to say 'weirdoes' as I'm still scared of them and don't want them coming after me – into a very small space. Survival is exhilarating.



But let's start off with establishing who this master of survival was. Stephen Grant is an established and talented comic who's been in the funny-making business for over ten years. A local to Brighton and aware of the sensibilities of the Brightonians and those who populate the surrounding areas, as well as a regular traveller to London and around the country, he knows his business and how to keep the punters happy. He does this most weekends at Komedie's Krater Club. He's very good at living off his wits. He's known for it. And he also never deliberately crosses the line, always coming across as very personable. You feel you're in safe hands when he's guiding the evening and you know you'll laugh loads. Always a good thing when you're at a comedy club.

However, last night it looked like a real possibility that the comic would be clubbed. With a bloody big implement of some sort. As the man in the front row sat with his arms crossed in the small space upstairs at The Marlborough, the woman two seats down howled hysterically with laughter non-stop, while the confrontational bloke's girlfriend hushed him as passively as she could, and then walked out, leaving us thinking we may have to be the barrier and stop this hulk of a man lunging at the stage. And still our guy was non-stop funny. He was on fire, magical and brilliant... and just out of arm's reach from the front row. Be funny but be wise too. If a fella's looking at you in an unhappy manner, keep some distance between the two of you. Especially if he's inclined to interrupt your set in the misconception that it's actually a conversation with him, and one he's not happy about.

## "By the end of the evening there was no one I admired more than that man on stage"

By the end of the evening there was no one I admired more than that man on stage. I don't think there was a single person in that packed audience who wouldn't take their hat off to the guy. And it wasn't just because he'd given us the best laughter-filled night of mirth. It was because he'd hung onto the power.

When someone's on stage with a microphone they hold the power. When someone heckles they are challenging that power. When someone constantly heckles and fixes the man with the power with a constant look and claims to have a job involving violence when asked the typical "so, what do you do?" audience question, you know they're planning one hell of a coup. And so does their girlfriend, hence the swift exit halfway through.

But when, despite all of this, a comic still holds it together and not only keeps their nerve and their comedy edge, but ups the ante and just gets better and better – well, you're a better man than a heck of a lot of 'em, Gungha Dinn. That's what makes the pros stand out. That's why those who have worked their way around the circuit, building up a career through the years have a presence. The material may vary, but the stage presence let's you know they've been doing this for a long time. The same way you know it was the chairman of the board stalking down that corridor and not the receptionist, you can tell who's put in the years and progressed up the comic corporate ladder.

It was a performance I will never forget, and one that will be darn difficult for anyone else to ever live up to. It felt fresh and the element of tension sharpened the kick of each punchline. And how did this aggressive fellow originally take offence? He was asked to simply enjoy the show and, quite politely, not participate in the performance. Not unreasonable. But he was only one of the disruptive elements involved. Hats off to all comedians, long may they victor over the disruptive, and long may they do it in style.



**Stand-up wisdom 15:** "Monkeys didn't become humans. Their kids just became less and less hairy." **Stephen Grant**

Comments and queries to: [vicky@thelatest.co.uk](mailto:vicky@thelatest.co.uk)

## COMEDY LISTINGS



This week's gigs, from 7 November to 13 November and the month ahead

### WEDNESDAY 8 NOV



**Earl Okin** Cabaret artist, comedian, singer and songwriter Earl hits this Lanes restaurant. Included with your ticket for this extraordinary performer is a three-course meal. Get there early so you don't get lost.  
•Mint Restaurant, 01273 323824, 8.00pm, £30

### FRIDAY 10 NOV

**Kronenbourg Krater Comedy Club: Henning Wehn, Andy Zaltzman, Roger Monkhouse, Stephen Grant** Funny folks from around the country gather to make you laugh. Yes, only you.  
•Komedie, 01273 647100, 7.30pm, £10.50/£8.50

### SATURDAY 11 NOV

**Harvey Oliver, Andy Zaltzman, Roger Monkhouse**



**Monkhouse, Stephen Grant** See Friday.  
•Komedie, 01273 647100, 7pm & 10.30pm, £15

### SUNDAY 12 NOV

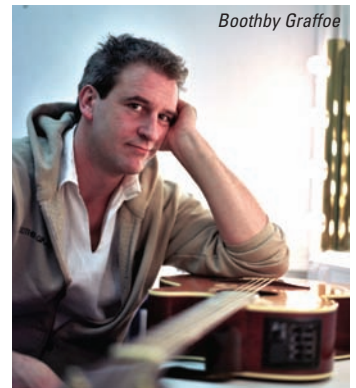
**Harvey Oliver, Andy Zaltzman, Roger Monkhouse, Stephen Grant** See Friday.  
•Komedie, 01273 647100, 7.30pm, £8.50/£6.50/£5  
**Roger McGough: Said And Done** The Merseyside poet is back with stories and recitations a-plenty, introducing his new autobiography *Said And Done*.  
•Komedie, 01273 647100, 8pm, £12.50/£10  
**Sidesplitters** Bargain comedy on Western Road.  
•The Providence, 01273 727822, 7.30pm, £3  
**Oi Oi Comedy** MC Jim Grant collects a slap up Sunday night comedy collection for Eastbourne, headlined by Martin Beaumont.  
•Café Blue, 01323 431774, 9pm, £2

### MONDAY 13 NOV



**Jethro – Laughter In The Rafters Tour** Old school comic Jethro is still one of busiest and best selling character comedians on the circuit. Definitely not one for the kids or those of a gentle disposition, this 'adults only' show is guaranteed to show you something different.  
•Pavilion Theatre, Worthing, 01903 206206, 7.30pm, £17/£16

### SATURDAY 25 NOV



**Club Boothby** Winner of the Brighton Festival Fringe Best Comedian Award 2005 and star of Radio 4, Boothby Graffoe brings music and comedy together with special guests and delivers a cocktail of laughs.  
•Komedie, 01273 647100, 9pm, £12.50

### SUNDAY 26 NOV



**Maddie Live** Don't miss Brighton's first ever variety TV talk show. The charming and effervescent Maddie Bridgett is your 'hostess with the mostess'. Delivering a highly entertaining and provocative show featuring special guests including Annabel Giles, and up and coming comics, live music acts, with Resident DJ Native Sun.  
•The Hanbury Club, 01273 605789, 7pm, £6/£4.77