

YOU'RE HAVING A LAUGH

As the award-winning Komedia hits town ANNA BRITTEN asks, why Exeter?

Exeter will soon be one of the best places in the UK to see comedy. Yes, really. Things are about to get a lot funnier, a lot more often.

On 26 September Komedia launches its legendary Krater Comedy Club at the Barnfield Theatre – the first in a new, monthly residency. Already resident in Brighton and Bath and scooping more Chortle Awards than any – any – other comedy venue in the country, Komedia has for two decades been a byword for belly laughs. Trust us, we're not just regurgitating PR blurb: name any top British comedian and it's 99% likely they'll have Komedia on their CV – way, way down when they were first starting out. Komedia, you see, has a track record of picking the funniest up-'n'-comers and setting them on the road to stardom: just ask Catherine Tate, Harry Hill, Sarah Millican and Michael McIntyre to name but a tiny sample.

"We actually looked at Exeter before opening in Bath in around 2006," says co-founder Richard Daws. "The city shares the creative centre buzz and student city vibe we have experienced Komedia flourish in, similar to both Brighton and Bath."

Does he realise Exeter, at the southern tip of the M5, might as well be Skye when it comes to many London-centric entertainers?

"It's a long way for most comics and I think in the past, Exeter will have suffered from the simple geography. However we are very confident we will be able to bring our very best comedians to

Exeter on a regular basis. And as we have found out in Brighton and Bath, when you foster a relationship with the comics, they then bring their solo shows back to the city. This has happened many times in comics' careers at Komedia's Krater Comedy Club."

Jokers to the right

Mark Olver, West Country-based regular Komedia compere and on the bill for launch night, agrees:

"Exeter is a great place to visit, and there are some lovely places to stop on the way. It is only Devon; it isn't as if they are going to The Lizard." What's more, he says, stand-ups will have a great time here. "Exeter crowds, Devon crowds, general West Country crowds can be great. We have a slightly laid back attitude to life, quite chilled. I know Exeter pretty well, know that there are a lot of nice people down there. Just

lovely."

Along with Mark, opening night promises "the heavyweights of Komedia", according to Richard. "Stephen Grant is compere – Mister Krater Comedy Club himself, winner of the Chortle Award for Best Compere in the UK [he also made headlines in 2010 for winning a lawsuit in which his ex-wife tried to prevent him joking about their divorce]. Chris Chopping is from Cardiff, so expect Celtic mirth. David Jordan will be a musical tour de force and Chris Martin, one of the most exciting young comics on the

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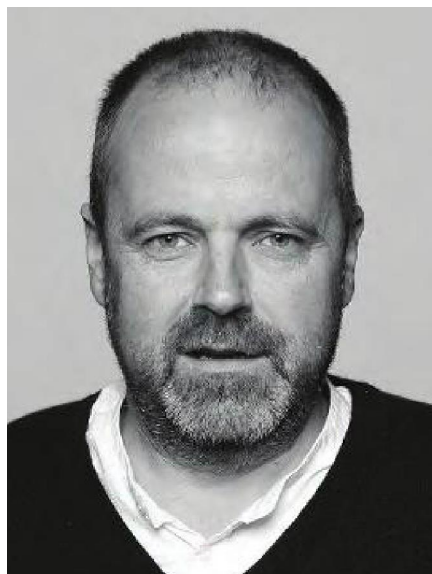
circuit, will be headlining and has been tipped as a star of the future."

Sounds great, but... an all-male line-up? Really?

"This is a difficult one," admits Richard. "We would be much happier if line-ups in general had a more even split based on gender. Komedia has, over the years, supported and hosted a great many female comics, and will continue to do so, but truth is, there are just fewer females committing to the hard slog of the stand up circuit than males. That said, I am sure we will get Krater regulars Nina Benjamin, Sally Ann Hayward and Zoe Lyons to Exeter at some point in 2015!"

We'll look forward to it – as we'll look forward to a drastic upsurge in local endorphin levels from 26 September onwards. In the meantime, Mark, how about a joke?

"Oh, I will absolutely tell you a joke. Definitely. 100 per cent. On the first night in Exeter." **BL**



Opposite, clockwise from top: Krater Comedy Club; David Jordan, "a big, theatrical bloke with a guitar" according to Chortle, appears on opening night; regular Komedia compere and performer Mark Olver. This page: Richard Daws of Komedia

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