



Mark our words: there's something funny happening here. For GQ's mammoth comedy portfolio, **James Mullinger** talks to the funny men and women who are making us laugh the loudest in 2013 – from icons of American entertainment to watch-them-soar British newcomers



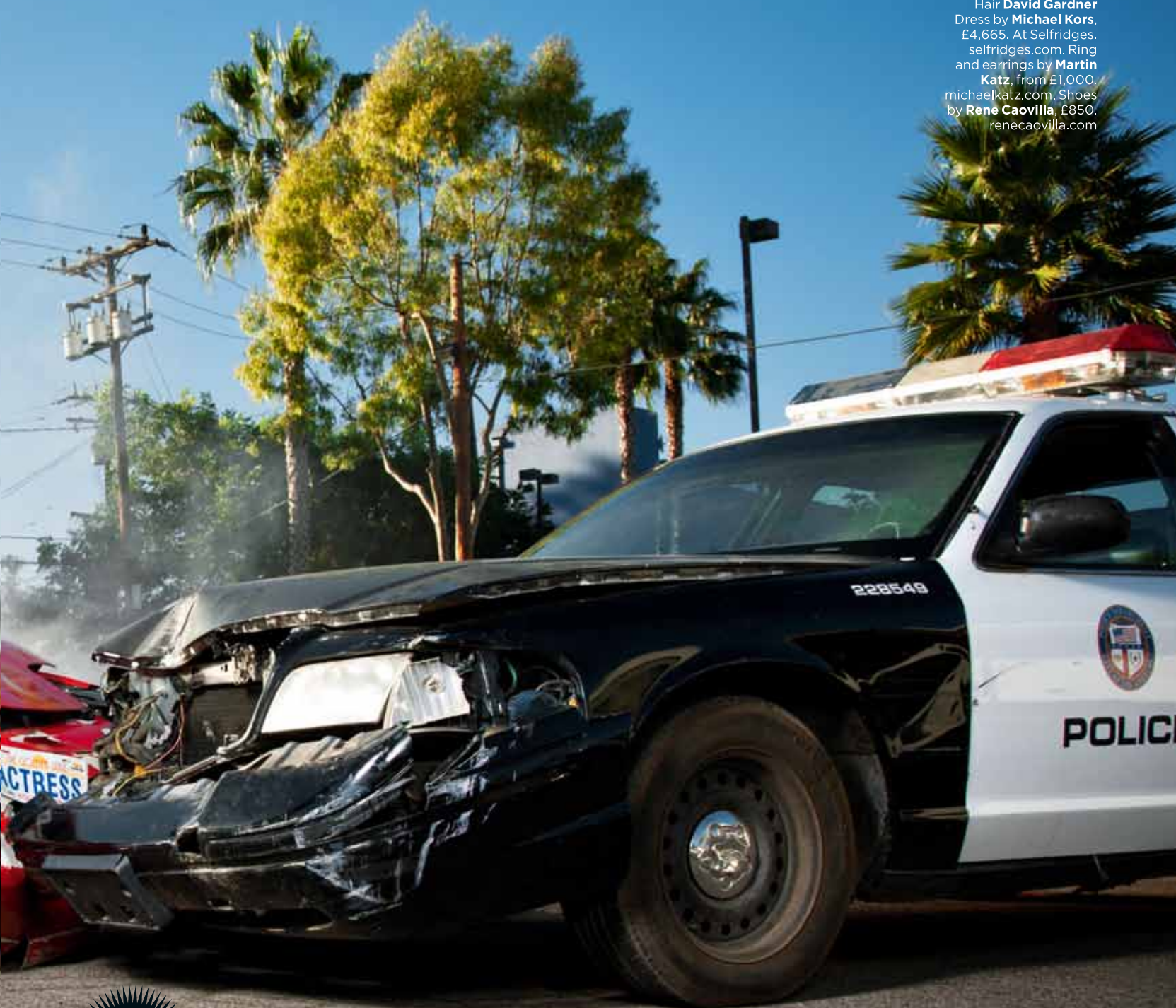
PHOTOGRAPH BY *Matthias Clamer*
in Los Angeles, 23 October 2012

At 21, Louis-Dreyfus became the youngest ever female comedian to join the *Saturday Night Live* crew. She became increasingly better known in the UK in the early Nineties as Elaine in "the greatest sitcom of all time" (copyright: everyone), *Seinfeld*. This role led to her being the most nominated

actress in Emmy-award history with a total of 14 nominations. Now 52, her third Emmy win came last year for her role as American vice president Selina Meyer in Armando Iannucci's critically acclaimed HBO sitcom *Veep*. The second series begins on Sky Atlantic this summer.

I first realised I was funny when... "I saw my ass in the mirror."
The funniest thing I've ever seen is... "My ass."
My biggest influence is... "I don't know. My ass."
I make people laugh the most when... "I walk away."
The type of comedy I just don't get is... "Smart, intellectual-type jokes."

Styling **Wendi & Nicole**
Make-up **Vanessa Scali**
Hair **David Gardner**
Dress by **Michael Kors**, £4,665, At Selfridges, selfridges.com. Ring and earrings by **Martin Katz**, from £1,000, michaelkatz.com. Shoes by **Rene Caovilla**, £850, renecaovilla.com



Styling Ashley Weston
Grooming Lina Hanson
Suit, £1,350. Shirt, £150.
Tie, £83. All John
Varvatos Collection.
johnvarvatos.com. Shoes
by Giorgio Armani.
£440. armani.com

The
OFFICE
NERD

Ed Helms

Beginning his TV career on *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart*, Helms established himself as the loveable loser by joining the cast of the American version of *The Office* in 2006 as preppy-pathetic Ivy Leaguer Andy Bernard. Small parts in almost every big comedy film of the noughties led to a lead role in one of the highest grossing R-rated comedies of all time, *The Hangover*, which made him a bankable star. Next month, the 39-year-old Atlanta native appears in *The Hangover Part III*. If it doesn't break box-office records, we will drink whatever the Wolfpack is having.

The funniest thing I've ever seen is... "John Krasinski, my co-star on *The Office*, pretending to dry heave."
My biggest influence is... "The great stand-up comedian Brian Regan."
In 20 years' time, the biggest difference in comedy will be... "It will be in pill form."
The newcomer I tip for the top is... "Wear deodorant."
My shout for misunderstood genius is... "Thomas Jefferson."
I would never joke about... "Old ladies joining the Navy."
The type of comedy I just don't get is... "Irony."
My guilty comic pleasure is... "Rubber chickens."

PHOTOGRAPH BY *Matthias Clamer* in Los Angeles, 2 December 2012

The
AWKWARD
EXPERT

Stephen Merchant

PHOTOGRAPH BY *Patrick Holck*
in Los Angeles, 17 October 2012

After making the finals of the *Daily Telegraph* Open Mic Awards in 1998, Merchant quit his office job to try stand-up. He went on to write and direct *The Office* with Xfm co-host Ricky Gervais, picking up BAFTAs and Golden Globes in the process. The 38-year-old's next venture is an HBO sitcom based on his stand-up tour *Hello Ladies*, and he steals the show in Dan Mazer's recently released romantic comedy *I Give It A Year*.

If I had to sum up my idea of comedy in a sentence I'd say it's... "Let me laugh at myself before someone else does." Being embarrassed and humiliated in public is very distressing for me."

My guilty comic pleasure is... "*The Big Bang Theory*. I'm not embarrassed because I think it's a funny show, but I could imagine there being a snootiness about it,"
I would never joke about... "I don't think any subject should be off limits. I've written shows which made jokes that other people might find offensive, whether it's about disability, race or religion, but normally we're making fun of the anxiety that people feel around these subjects, rather than making them the target of the joke."
In 20 years' time, the biggest difference in comedy will be... "There will either be no taboos or every taboo's been reinstated."

Shirt by **Burberry London**,
£225. burberry.com.
Jeans by **Dior Homme**,
£370. dior.com. Shoes by
Russell & Bromley, £169.
russellandbromley.co.uk.
Watch by **Emporio Armani**,
£329. At Goldsmiths.
goldsmiths.co.uk.

Daniel Sloss

The
COMEDY
FOETUS

Aged just 16, Scottish comedian, writer and actor Daniel Sloss began writing for Frankie Boyle after his mother badgered the comedian about her funny son. Three years later, after performing stand-up himself, he is now one of the fastest-rising stars on the comedy circuit, having released his debut DVD, *Daniel Sloss Live*, last year.

The newcomer I tip for the top is...

"Benny Boot. I gigged with Benny for the first time last year, and he's now one of the few acts I go out of my way to go and watch. He's incredible." **I would never joke about...** "Nothing. I personally believe that everything can be joked about. As long as it's done in the right way. And if people get offended, tough – being offended is something you choose to do."



PHOTOGRAPH BY *John Wright* in London, 10 October 2012



Andy Samberg

The
SNL
WONDERKID

Samberg began his career with comedy group the Lonely Island (their song *Dick In A Box* won an Emmy) before he got a regular gig on *Saturday Night Live* in 2005. Last year he starred alongside Adam Sandler in *That's My Boy* and with Greg Davies in BBC sitcom *Cuckoo*. This summer the 34-year-old will appear with Christopher Mintz-Plasse in *The To Do List*.

In 20 years' time, the biggest difference in comedy will be... "Jokes about the future."

The type of comedy I just don't get is... "Drama."

PHOTOGRAPH BY
Matthias Clamer
in Los Angeles,
6 November 2012

Production **Brooke Ludi**
Styling **Miles Siggins**
Grooming **Molly Stern**
Suit by **Burberry**
London, £995.
burberry.com. Shirt
by **John Varvatos**
Collection, £153.
johnvarvatos.com.
Shoes by **Barker**
Black, £550.
barkerblack.com.
Socks by **F Pinet**, £20



The
ALIEN
INVADER

Simon Pegg

After studying drama at Bristol University, Pegg moved to London at 23 to become a stand-up comedian. Earning a cult following in 1999 with *Spaced* and international success in 2004 with *Shaun Of The Dead*, roles in *Mission: Impossible III* and *Star Trek* cemented his status as a Hollywood player. Now 43, Pegg rejoins *Spaced* collaborators Edgar Wright and Nick Frost in *The World's End* and returns as Scotty in *Star Trek Into Darkness*.

I first realised I was funny when... "I told my mum a joke I heard on *Tiswas* and she really laughed. It was like discovering I had some sort of superpower." **I bombed the worst when...** "I was starting out in the early Nineties and I did a gig at a homeless shelter in Bristol. I was performing quirky poetry in front of 12 old men, most of whom were fatally drunk. One of them kept shouting "Give us a song." I think I sang something by Pulp."

PHOTOGRAPH BY *John Wright* at the Soho Hotel Cinema, London, 7 January 2013



Grooming Tara Hickman
using Mac Pro.
Jeans, £85. Shirt, £85.
Both by **All Saints**.
allsaints.com

The
PEEP SHOW
PRINCESS

Isy Suttie

PHOTOGRAPH BY *John Wright* on the
Orient Express, 19 December 2012

The best thing about the eighth series of *Peep Show*, Isy Suttie's character, Dobbie, has become as crucial to the show as gut-wrenching humiliation and Super Hans' quips. Her stand-up persona is every bit as loveable, hilarious, shocking and charming, and she tours constantly when not filming. She appears in the eleventh series of *Shameless* this year and her BBC Radio 4 series *Isy Suttie's Love Stories* can be heard this month.

I first realised I was funny when...

"I did a song I'd written about forbidden love at college. It was supposed to be serious but everyone laughed as it was cheesy and stupid."

My biggest influence... "Always changes, but at the moment I love *Girls*, so Lena Dunham is a big inspiration. I like anything with joy within it."

In 20 years' time, the biggest difference in comedy will be...

"A move away from stereotypes and mocking people towards the view from the individual or victim, so starting from inside rather than outside."

The newcomer I tip for the top is...

"Joe Lycett. A star in the making."

I would never joke about... "English ruins built in the 16th century, or the seminal ITV series *Knightmare*."

The type of comedy I just don't get is... "Hidden-camera comedy."

My guilty comic pleasure is...

"Cheech & Chong."

If I had to sum up my idea of comedy in a sentence I'd say... "Something that makes people feel less alone."

Production Emily Addis
Styling Tanja Martin
Make-up Arabella Preston
Hair by Terri Capon at Onerepresents.com using Bumble And Bumble. Jacket, £1,500. Stole, £1,500. Both by **Holland & Holland**. hollandandholland.com
Hat by **Lock & Co**. £295. lockhatters.co.uk. Shot on the British Pullman on the Orient Express. orient-express.com

The
STAND-UP
GUY

John Bishop

PHOTOGRAPH BY *John Wright*
at the Echo Arena Liverpool, 3 October 2012

After winning the North West Comedy Award for best stand-up in 2004, Bishop turned in his job to become a full-time comedian in 2006. In 2009, an appearance on *Michael McIntyre's Comedy Roadshow* sent his career into the stratosphere. His *Elvis Has Left The Building* tour that began later that year in small arts centres ended with sold-out nights at Wembley Arena. Two top-selling DVDs later, Bishop, 46, can currently be seen in his new Sky1 TV show *John Bishop's Only Joking*. His autobiography is published on 26 September.

I first realised I was funny when...

"People started paying me for it."

My shout for misunderstood genius is...

"Norman Wisdom. He was a brilliant performer, and massively funny, but people seem to have reconsidered the status that he had. He seems to have been forgotten when people talk about comedy greats."

The type of comedy I just don't get is...

"When you pick on somebody in the crowd or the public eye, and lambast them beyond the point where it's funny."

If I had to sum up my idea of comedy in a sentence I'd say it's...

"When you stop talking, if they laugh, you're funny."

Harry Grindrod

Grooming Nadia Altinbas

Suit, £1,900. Shirt, £200. Tie, £80.

All by **Richard Smith Bespoke**.

richardsmithbespoke.co.uk. Shoes by

Jeffrey West, £275. jeffrey-west.co.uk



Grooming
John Clausell
Jacket, £290.
Trousers, £110. Both
by **J Lindeberg**.
jlindeberg.com.
Shirt by **Prada**.
£280. prada.com

The
TICKET
MASTER

Kevin Hart

Photograph by *Matthias Clamer*
in Los Angeles,
8 January 2013

One of America's highest-grossing touring stand-ups, 32-year-old Hart is America's answer to Michael McIntyre. With material on his cocaine-addicted jailbird father and being a father himself, his 2011 stand-up concert movie *Laugh At My Pain* grossed nearly £5m at the box office and his latest *Let Me Explain* is released in the States on 4 July this year. Last year he sold out the O2 in London after scene-stealing turns in *The Five-Year Engagement*.

I first realised I was funny when... "I came out the womb. I was telling knock-knock jokes during my own birth."

I bombed the worst when... "I tried to impersonate other comedians. It wasn't until I got my own point of view that I started being funny."

My biggest influence is... "In a strange way, my dad, because he taught me how to do the right things by showing me the results of doing the wrong things."

The newcomer I tip for the top is... "No one! There is no room for any more people at the top!"

My guilty comic pleasure is... "Impressions. I would love to be able to do a good Bill Cosby. Now that's a show stopper!"

If I had to sum up my idea of comedy in a sentence I'd say it's... "Be yourself. There, a two-word sentence... beat that, Chris Rock. Call me, Chris. I love ya!"



After studying drama at the Glasgow School of Art, and a subsequent lengthy career as a straight actor, Capaldi's magnificently belligerent presence and hurricane of foul language earned him a starring role as Malcolm Tucker in Armando Iannucci's *The Thick Of It*. Shortly after winning the Best TV Comedy Actor award at the British Comedy Awards last year, Capaldi, 54, reportedly lent a few pointers on the art of swearing to Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie after they'd spent a weekend watching *The Thick Of It* on DVD. Next year, Capaldi stars alongside Jolie in *Maleficent*, a retelling of the tale of Sleeping Beauty.

I first realised I was funny when... "I failed the audition for RADA."

The funniest thing I've ever seen is... "A pair of felt shoes while on acid."

My biggest influence is... "Mrs Capaldi."

In 20 years' time, the biggest difference in comedy will be... "More comedians than humans."

The newcomer I tip for the top is... "Kevin Bridges."

My shout for misunderstood genius is... "Terry Gilliam."

I would never joke about... "Money."

My guilty comic pleasure is... "Post-*The Good Life* Penelope Keith sitcoms."

If I had to sum up my idea of comedy in a sentence I'd say it's... "The *Fatal Glass Of Beer*. (Look it up.)"



Styling Jamie Stewart
Grooming Kim Plotel
Suit by **Paul Smith**
London, £645. Tie pin
by **Paul Smith**, £45.
paulsmith.co.uk. Shirt
by **Paul & Joe**, £190.
paulandjoe.com. Tie by
Marni, £97. marni.com.
Shoes by **Boss**, £239.
hugoboss.com



Styling Miles Siggins
Grooming Olive Meyer
Props Andy Kennedy
Suit, £3,250. Shirt, £310.
Pocket square, £160. All
by **Ralph Lauren Purple
Label**. ralphlauren.com.
Tie by **Paul Smith**, £75.
paulsmith.co.uk

The
LOVEABLE
DOUCHE

PHOTOGRAPH BY **GAVIN BOND**

Max
Greenfield

at Smashbox Studios, Los Angeles,
28 November 2012

Aged 13, Greenfield was destined for a career in comedy after his *Saturday Night Live*-themed Bar Mitzvah. His TV break came in 1999 in MTV's comedy *Undressed*. He later became a series regular in *Ugly Betty* before making his name alongside Zooey Deschanel in *New Girl* as the vain, pompous, preening but loveable douche Schmidt, for which he has been nominated for both an Emmy and a Golden Globe. Next year, Greenfield, 32, will appear alongside Paul Rudd and Amy Poehler in

They Came Together, a new comedy from the director of *Role Models* and *Wanderlust*.

I first realised I was funny... "At the exact same moment I realised I wasn't cool. I was 26."

My biggest influence is... "My mother. I can remember her handing me a VHS tape of *Annie Hall* and saying, 'You need to watch this.' I was eleven. I didn't understand a lot of the movie but, nevertheless, she introduced me to Woody Allen."

My guilty comic pleasure is... "Bloopers reels. Love 'em."

The funniest thing I've ever seen is...

"My Bar Mitzvah video. If you were to watch it, you would see no evidence that I became a man that day."

If I had to sum up my idea of comedy I'd say it... "Would be best described as grounded absurdity. I like to stick a piece of gum between those two words and pull them as far apart as I can before it breaks."



Styling Miles Siggins
Grooming Kim Verbeck
Production
Brooke Ludi
Suit, £499. Shirt, £80.
Both by **Ted Baker**.
tedbaker.com. Shoes
by **Barker Black**, £550.
barkerblack.com.
Pocket square by
Turnbull & Asser, £50.
turnbullandasser.co.uk.
Watch by **Rolex**,
£5,700. At the Watch
Gallery, [thewatch
gallery.co.uk](http://thewatchgallery.co.uk)



Will Arnett

Photograph by *Matthias Clamer*
in Los Angeles, 12 November 2012

The
SCENE
STEALER

Toronto-born Arnett dropped out of his Montreal university to pursue a career in acting. His big break came in 2003, landing the role of George Oscar "Gob" Bluth II in the greatest cancelled television show of all time, *Arrested Development*, which returns in May on Netflix. Now 42, Will stars in NBC sitcom *Up All Night*, and he'll be heard later this year voicing a petulant squirrel in animated

movie *The Nut Job*. Right now he's recording for his role in *Lego: Piece Of Resistance*. He's playing Batman.

My biggest influence is...

"*Withnail & I*, because the humour really comes out through a tragic story. Every scene continues to tell the story and I think that's essential for all comedy. I have pitched jokes for *Arrested Development* to Mitch [Hurwitz] and he will say:

'Yeah that's really funny, but it doesn't tell the story.' It doesn't tell the story that we're trying to tell, so we can't use it."

The type of comedy I just don't get is...

"Winking at the audience. Unless you're a spy and you're letting me know where the microchip is, don't wink at me. I usually try to see that as a sign that they're embarrassed or they're unsure about what they're doing. So any time that you kind of

have that self awareness, you lose all credibility. Commit to it or you've lost me."

My comedy heroes are...

"Bill Murray is a perfect example of someone who is always committed no matter what it is. And I think that he is such a great actor in that sense. He's put in a slew of characters that are absurd or tragic or whatever, but he's never commented on it. He's never revealed himself."



With no professional experience and a head shot taken with his phone, Mintz-Plasse successfully auditioned for the role of Fogell (AKA "McLovin") in Judd Apatow's 2007 hit *Superbad*. Now 23, Christopher will be appearing in a flurry of movies this year, including *The To Do List*, and revisiting his superhero alter ego, "The Mother F****er", in *Kick-Ass 2*, released on 19 July this year.

I first realised I was funny when...

"My grandma told me I was. I was about five and I would run around wearing her clothes. I have yet to take them off."

My biggest influence is... "Anything Steve Carell and Will Ferrell do."

The type of comedy I just don't get is...

"The people who make *Disaster Movie*, *Epic Movie*, *Scary Movie* and all those films. I don't get it."

My guilty comic pleasure is...

"Ellen DeGeneres. She's bomb!"



Photograph by *Savin Boud*
in Los Angeles, 6 December 2012

Styling
Artemis Jafari
Trousers by **Dior Homme**, £395.
dior.com. Boots by **Prada**, £540.
prada.com



1

Born in the East End of London, Flanagan left school with no qualifications and eventually became a full-time stand-up comedian at 34. After years on the circuit, his break-out performance came in 2009 on *Michael McIntyre's Comedy Roadshow*. This year sees Flanagan, now 50, touring heavily: his sold-out O2 tour has already had extra dates added.

The funniest thing I've ever seen is....

"Derek and Clive (Peter Cook and Dudley Moore), they always make me laugh. 'This bloke come up to me and said, 'You c****.' That line starts and ends comedy."

Photograph by
John Wright
Styling Jo Levin
Grooming Kim Plotel
Suit, £1,045. Shirt, £310. Tie, £160. All by **Ralph Lauren Purple Label**. Shoes by **Ralph Lauren**, £795.
ralphlauren.com

2

LeBlanc hit the sitcom jackpot as Joey Tribbiani in *Friends*. Now 45, he won his first Golden Globe last year for his role as the fictionalised version of himself in British/American sitcom *Episodes*. This summer he can be seen in romantic-comedy *Lovesick*.

I bombed the worst when...

"I met Meryl Streep at the Golden Globes last year. I was just in a daze... I didn't know what to say, and she says, 'Oh, congratulations! You're so great!' And I hugged her. And as I'm hugging her, all her movies went through my head, and then I realised, 'You're hugging Meryl Streep a little too long. Let go of Meryl Streep.'"

Photograph by
Tony Kelly
Styling Leila Baboi
Grooming
Helen Jeffers
Jacket, £2,150. Shirt, £315. Bow tie, £145.
All by **Tom Ford**.
tomford.com



STARRING

1 Micky Flanagan
2 Matt LeBlanc
3 Bo Burnham
4 Patton Oswalt

3

At just 16, Burnham began recording comedic songs in his bedroom and posting them on YouTube. The first, "My Whole Family", racked up a million hits in a month. Having hit the American comedy circuit despite being too young to be in the clubs, his self-titled debut album was released in 2009 and is the best comedy album since Flight Of The Conchords' debut. **I would never joke about...** "Race, rape, homosexuality, heterosexuality, old age, the handicapped, little people, religion, etc. Comedy should be, first and foremost, about the varying textures of custards and the comedy therein."

Photograph by
Matthias Clamer
Styling Artemis Jafari
Shirt, £125. Tie, £85. Trousers, £479. Belt, £75. All by **Boss**.
hugoboss.com. Watch by **Burberry**, £795.
burberry.com

4

Oswalt is now considered by Judd Apatow to be one of the greatest stand-up comedians working in America today but, at 44, his new-found fame has been a long time coming. In 2011 he was cast as Charlize Theron's love interest in *Young Adult*. Scene stealing in *Two And A Half Men* has led to a recurring role in the second series of Aaron Sorkin's *The Newsroom* to be screened this year.

I bombed the worst when...

"I performed my first *Letterman* set in ancient Chaldean." **I made people laugh the most when...** "I announced I planned to quit drinking and lose weight."

Photograph by
Matthias Clamer
Grooming
Debbie Gallagher
Suit, £599. Shirt, £109. Both by **Boss**.
At Selfridges.
selfridges.com. Shoes, Oswalt's own

