

EVERYTHING'S COMING UP ROSES FOR

standupforcomedy.co.uk edinburgh festival special

KAREN SHERRARD

COL HOWARTH OF STANDUPFORCOMEDY.CO.UK CHATS TO ONE OF THE FINEST CHARACTER ACTS ON THE CIRCUIT AHEAD OF HER BIG 2016 EDINBURGH DEBUT AND WUSA GRAND FINAL!

'By February 2012 I'd done a few spoken word gigs and I had a few character monologues. They weren't very refined. I'd been performing them maybe once or twice a year.

'I went to Rhod Gilbert's Comedy Playground at The Globe in Cardiff. It was a bit of a secret gig with about 200 tickets that you had to buy from (the oldest record shop in the world) Spillers. It wasn't majorly publicised but you got to see acts off the telly. Rhod had a 5 minute open spot for absolutely anybody to get up. He had a piece of paper and invited people to write their name on it. So I did. The gig was a couple of months later.

'On the night there was Rhod, Greg Davies, Lloyd Langford and Mike Bubbins - so a pretty spectacular line-up. In a way I was more nervous sitting back stage with them than I was on stage. I was sitting on a bench with Greg Davies. His knees were tucked up under his chin and my feet didn't even reach the floor.

'I had friends in the audience which helped and it was the first time I played to a comedy audience. It felt different but it was a wonderful feeling. It was more of a monologue at that point. It certainly wasn't stand-up, more of a character type act and I've learned a lot more about the comedy world since then.'

Karen Sherrard's rise in the last several years has been steep. From 10-minute open spots right through to her debut show *A Fête Worse Than Death*, she has earned much support and acclaim from peers, promoters and audiences alike. Her business-like approach to stand-up and her tireless work-rate has seen her secure spots at several festivals in 2016 including Bath, Brighton and Leicester, as well as a busy run of Edinburgh previews up and down the country. Once Karen has performed for a promoter they can't help but invite her back to complete their roster of gigs often at the insistence of an audience that can't help but warm to the brilliant and entirely believable characters she plays. Karen has earned every bit of the success she has enjoyed.

'In 2014 I took part in and won Last Mic Standing in Cardiff. That was an amazing journey because unusually for a competition you got a longer set in each round. I started with a 10 minute spot and by the final I had to perform 30 mins! I was up against a musician who could easily fill 30 minutes but for a comedian that is quite a challenge. I've since honed and developed a lot of that material which is now going into my full show.' It has also seen Karen breeze into the grand final of the Welsh Unsigned Stand-Up Awards, to be hosted at the Glee Club at the end of July, placing her in the last 6 out of the 60 or so acts who entered.

Tell us a little bit about *A Fête Worse Than Death*. What can audiences expect from the show?

'It is inspired by any crap fête I've been to in South Wales. In fact, only the other week I won a tin of ham in a tombola. Ham that comes in a tin has a certain quality that can't be ignored! It is a terrible fête hosted by Eirys Evans and featuring Esme de Flange as the guest-speaker.

'Esme is a keen lady gardener, and is the result of a combination of things. I was working as a tour leader in South America and I used to write group emails to any friends who gave a shit about what I was doing. So I would send them tales about going on the Inca Trail and getting stuck in the desert and whatever I was doing. When I got back, one year I worked at Pugh's Garden Centre and even that was quite interesting. I made a little joke about how a lot of the people around here are wearing rubber and PVC. I started seeing lots of innuendo about gardening. So I wrote an email which became something of a monologue and then I turned that into a character.

'Eirys is very different. She's 76, the same age as my mum. She's kind of based on women around where I live as well as an element of a dearly departed friend of mine. I have a lot of fun with her and she has a lot of banter with the audience.'

Spend an hour with Karen's creations and not only will you leave with plenty of practical gardening tips and possibly some hands-on experience of pruning, thumbing-in and keeping your bean moist throughout the dry summer months, but you may also win something from the dead neighbour's house clearance in the hilarious raffle. Delivered by two characters who have dwelled for a bit too long in their little village of Llanfairchwaraesboncen, and who are just the right side of sane, the fête experience is the recreation of something all very real and all the more hilarious for it.

So where can Edinburgh-bound comedy goers head to meet Esme and Eirys?

'I'm doing my run from 6th-28th August at The Annexe, Paradise in the Vault (Venue 29). It is at 13:05 every day apart from the 14th and 21st which are rest days. I'll be doing a preview on 5th August at 14:35.'

So its onwards and upwards for Karen for whom Edinburgh should be the well-deserved launching pad to bigger things.

'It is hard to gauge success but I guess looking at my diary I'm busy. People pay me to come and perform so that has to be progress. But I think inside, all artists think *nobody's noticed that I'm shit* ye! You've got the artist's paranoia keeping you grounded at all times!'

To keep track of Karen's Edinburgh preparations and forthcoming gigs, check out the website! www.karensherrard.com



Photography by Michelle Huddleston Photography
Poster by Ignacio Lopez

'...REFRESHING, WRY AND LAUGH-OUT-LOUD, WARM, WITTY AND WINSOME WITH ALWAYS THE UNEXPECTED TWIST IN THE OUTCOME. YOU WANT TO BOTTLE SHERRARD AND TAKE HER HOME.'

COLIN SELL, BBC RADIO 4'S
I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T A CLUE