



'You have to value yourself...'

'What really pushed me to get on stage was seeing Louis CK. I was watching his stuff years ago, watching his work ethic and seeing his output. I'd always wanted to do stand-up but life just got in the way. Then I had an awakening and thought *just do it* so I had a look. My first gig was Drones. I booked it in January 2011 and the gig was in February. It went really well. I was like a duck to water.'

Chatting with Leroy Brito over a coffee, the things that strike me most are his confidence and his patience. Leroy's trajectory is one he has taken calm and careful control of, and he describes a strategic and methodical approach to the game. At the point where the subject of nerves comes up, it is only to confirm that they have never played a part, not even before or during that first gig.

'I feel I've always had a stage presence. I've never been nervous before a gig so I've always been relaxed on stage. I'm just enjoying it and learning along the way. I'm not a professional comedian but I get good gigs, and I'm patient enough to make sure I get good at it first.'

The relative newcomer that I am, I find Leroy's cool approach refreshing, as for me every day that I'm not scrambling for as many spots as I can feels like a day where I at least should have been.

'I do gig a lot but I try to do good gigs. I had a free Saturday night one weekend before I was getting paid gigs. I contacted Jongleurs and asked them if I could jump on and do a 10-spot and I got the gig. I'd rather do a 10-spot in a full club on a Saturday night than drive somewhere on a Wednesday night for an open spot where there are 15 people on the bill. You've got to be quite strategic but you also have to value yourself. It's all about valuing yourself. My 9th ever gig was at the Glee in Cardiff. Then I did a few other open spots there. I'd done 5 or 6 open spots at Jongleurs. I would travel to Brighton to play Komedia. But if it was for someone taking advantage then there's someone else for that.'

'I treat it like boxing. You've got to keep moving, keep fit. You've got to get in the gym. Keep gigging. Keep those muscles working. One comedian told me that I have something that a lot of comedians don't have, which is the work ethic. You can't just turn up to the big gigs. You have to put the hours in. I'm at the bottom rung of a long ladder but I've got the patience to do that.'

The first time I saw Leroy perform I was in the audience at a charity event at Cardiff's Shot in the Dark. It wasn't clear whether he was there to do a spot or whether he'd just turned up and decided to take to the stage.

He performed a brilliant 10. There was no subtle line where Leroy became his stage persona. He just strolled right on, nailed it and strolled off again. I'd been blown away by his slick, natural delivery as it demonstrated a level of on-stage confidence that I knew I would have to work hard to achieve.

'I'm not really sure how I define my style. I'm just being myself. I'm not trying to be too clever. I'm not really a story-teller. I'm just telling jokes, and there is a thread between them, and that thread is me.'

'I'm really enjoying Bill Burr at the moment. I watched a lot of Eddie Murphy and Richard Pryor as a kid, listening to their records with my cousin, but I'm not really influenced by them. It's funny because I'm not really on the black or urban circuits. Mainly because I'm mixed race and I'm from Wales. I come from a place where everyone gets along and it's not segregated. I can still do that stuff but it wouldn't be true to me.'

'I've always been myself. The material has become more sophisticated but it's always me. I was 29 when I turned up. I had a son and a daughter. I had life experience. So I got on stage and I just tried to be honest.'

So what of the future? What's next for Leroy Brito?

'I set myself targets. When I first started I wanted to get paid spots from the Glee and Jongleurs within five years, and I've done it in three. I was doing open spots there through networking, being professional and being a nice guy. Those are the milestones. My goal is to be a really good club comic. My target is to become a headliner on the club scene. I've gone from doing unpaid open spots, to being the occasional 20-min guy and I've very recently progressed to become the regular 20-minute guy.'

So the hard work is paying off. In 2014 Leroy has been a finalist at the Welsh Unsigned Stand Up Awards, he recently played Jongleurs in Camden and has started filling his diary for 2015 with more coveted paid Glee and Jongleurs bookings.

'I'm just trying to become good. I got some great advice by Mick Taylor who runs the Comedy Café in Shoreditch, which was *be the best you can where you are, and we will find you*. I'll move to London when I'm ready, when I'm turning down a lot of paid gigs, rather than moving there to try to chase a dream. I've got a good job and the reality is I'll probably earn less money from comedy than I do in my job, and I've got two kids. I'm patient enough. It's gonna turn but I've got time.'

Check: twitter.com/leroybrito