



photo courtesy of Gabby Jerrard PR

# SILLI BILLI

'Most people don't want to have a real job but most people end up having one. I was so determined not to do that. I used to love watching stand-up comedy like Eddie Murphy's *Raw*, Jack Dee and Eddie Izzard. I thought I'm just going to try that.'

I started 9 years ago when I was 19. I started just before I went to uni and then carried on whilst I was at uni in Newcastle. I was doing a 3-year English course. I thought if I just kept doing stand-up comedy throughout the degree then hopefully by the time I finish I could just do the comedy. It was as if I shouldn't have done the uni bit. It was weird. You don't know anything about stand-up and you start doing a few gigs. It takes everyone a different amount of time to get there and there are so many factors. I love it.'

I am sitting with East London-born Chris Martin on the steps outside Cardiff's Buffalo Comedy Club. Chris is engaging, buzzing in fact with a warm infectious energy as he waits to hit the stage with a preview of *Responsibilliness*: his fourth hour-long show.

'My first gig was just upstairs in a pub. I thought that all gigs were going to be the size of the Comedy Store so I invited about 30 people and they were basically the whole audience. It went alright.'

I'd try to go down to London in the holidays. The good thing about London is that you can just do so many gigs. A lot of those early unpaid gigs are great for stage time and there's no pressure. The more you do it the better you get – it's that simple I think. Then you get to a level where you know what you're doing and you're doing too many gigs, or too many of the wrong gigs. I just wanted to do all the clubs and get funny.'

And get funny Chris did, with the Sunday Times describing him as 'Destined for greatness' whilst the Guardian describes him as 'One of the UK's best young observationalists'.

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High praise indeed, backed up with a string of international performances, TV appearances (*Fake Reaction*, *Dave's One Night Stand*) and radio credits (*BBC 5Live*, *talkSPORT*), and a line of sweet support slots for the likes of Jack Whitehall, Russell Kane and full tour support duties for Milton Jones in 2013: 'I'm a clean comedian. I don't really swear on stage and that's important when working with Milton Jones'.

With a 'Top-10 Comedy Podcast' (*The Guardian*) with Carl Donnelly rolling along very nicely, once Chris' eyes have stopped twitching from the noodle-fuelled marathon that is the Edinburgh Festival, there is then the small matter of a national solo tour of *Responsibilliness*, a quick-witted, quirky observational hour-long show which explores Chris' coping mechanisms on moving into...of all places...his parents' shed.

With the back-to-back shows in quick succession, all requiring new material, Chris' work and turnover rates look to be pretty phenomenal which is quite something as his on-stage delivery is efficient, chatty and quick-fire, packed with funny anecdotes and sharp one-liners..

'Always write a new hour. That's my general theory. This is my 4th hour in a row. Some people spend a long time just honing their 20s but I can't even look like I'm enjoying myself up there if I'm saying the same stuff over and over.'

And on the subject of agents Chris' advice is simple. 'When you're starting out you have to just get good. Don't think about agents. Just get good and that stuff takes care of itself.'

For Chris' gig list, including details of his current Autumn tour, quotes and links to the brilliant podcast, visit:

[www.chrismartincomedy.co.uk](http://www.chrismartincomedy.co.uk)

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by Col Howarth