

## The Art Of Raw: An Interview with Nick Sun

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Since the tender age of ten Nick Sun has wanted to be a comedian. "I just remember seeing it on TV when I was in Year Six and going that's me!" laughs Sun, now twenty-two. "That's me? Jeez, I'm going to sound like a cunt. You just see it and you just go 'I think that's who I am'. You realise you're not really cut out for a conventional nine-to-five job and can't really do a degree. A lot of comedians I find are stuck halfway between a conventional lifestyle and homeless people."

Since beating nearly 800 other entrants to become 2004's *Raw Comedy* winner it's clear that Nick Sun is not only a comedian, but also a damn fine one. *Raw Comedy* is a competition for amateur comedians with the grand prize being a trip to the prestigious Edinburgh Comedy Festival and has served as a springboard to greater things for past winners such as Adam Spencer, Peter Helliar and Sarah Kendall. An added bonus for Sun is the affirmation for his parents that he made the right choice to drop out of his psychology degree to pursue a career in comedy. "I think after I won *Raw* they were a lot more comfortable with it, it's some concrete proof that I'm not just pissing around. Which I am anyway! They don't have to know that..."

But it wasn't Nick Sun's first foray into *Raw Comedy*, in fact his very first ever stand up gig was *Raw Comedy 2003*, which did not go quite as spectacularly as this year's entry. "I started off well and I ended well, but the bit in the middle kind of sucked." This time around Sun felt more confident about his chances, or at least as confident as the ever self-deprecating Sun gets. "I thought I had a fairly good chance. Well... not a fairly good chance. I knew I had a chance. I guess everyone thinks they have a chance," Sun says.

"Competition kind of sucks the fun out of it. You've got to keep everything really tight. But I had no idea how I'd go in the final because I couldn't gauge what everyone else was like. I couldn't see any of their acts cause we weren't allowed to go out in the audience. We couldn't hear anything from the sides so pretty much as soon as our acts were over we started drinking." As far as drinking goes Sun has a lot to celebrate, his *Raw Comedy* win, his inclusion on the *Show Us Your Roots* bill and a spot on the ABC series *Stand Up*. Not too shabby for a guy whose comedic career only started a little over two years ago.

Sun's comedic style is dry and acidic, influenced by controversial funny men Bill Hicks and Andy Kaufman. Though born in Australia his Chinese and Tibetan background also helps defines his comic identity. One of his routines consists of him doing a satirical Asian comedian routine... then his black comedian routine. It cleverly subverts ideas of the ideas of the otherness of different races by highlighting the similarities in many ethnic routines like the accents and the crazy families.

But being labelled an ethnic comedian and using his cultural background for the main source of his material isn't something that Sun is wholly comfortable with. "When I first started out I did a little bit and then I stopped doing it. You have to address it, but I didn't want to address it in the conventional way. I've pretty much ditched all the ethnic comedy in my routine at the moment. I don't really want to address it because I don't feel like I'm necessarily from that area. I don't really identify with that kind of cultural group." With a spot on the *Show Us Your Roots* tour, featuring a line up of ethnic comedians, it seems Sun is at least going to have to start visiting his presumably crazy relatives to stock up on anecdotes and accents.

Despite all his successes Sun is pragmatic about the business of comedy. For him the main disadvantages are the poverty, the loneliness and the bad gigs. "Bad gigs are measured on how much you can blame the environment," explains Sun.

For him the worst environment was a hen's party located at a restaurant during broad daylight. It was ill equipped for his performance without a stage or even a microphone but Sun valiantly soldiered on. "There were about fourteen people there, eight of which didn't speak English. I just came on and said 'hi! I'll be your stripper for today' and it was all downhill from there."

Luckily Sun has quite a masochistic streak that is a virtual necessity to survive dying on stage. It was the fear of bombing that originally kept him from attempting comedy earlier. "I was like what if everyone hates me? What if I'm really shit? I think bombing in front of your friends is the worst. On one level it feels really horrible and humiliating. But on another level it's like 'yeah!'" Sun imitates the sound of a whip. "Tell me I'm bad! I have problems. I should see a psychiatrist. Just that one part of me gets off on mass rejection."

One thing's for sure, with his ever-rising profile and talent it seems that his taste for rejection is going to become ever harder to indulge.

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