

Standing up for stand-up

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By **Fiona Scott-Norman**



Nick Sun

Photo: *Supplied*

A successful Sydney comic tells Fiona Scott-Norman why he's heading for London.

Melbourne, as it is easy to gauge at this time of year, dominates the Australian comedy industry.

Most big-name Australian comedians are Melbourne-based (or Melbourne-spawned); more than 100 of this year's festival shows are local, and our comedy scene swells each year with relocated interstate talent wanting to swim in the biggest pond.

Times, however, are a-changing, and the comedy scenes in other states are increasingly vigorous and healthy. Festival favourites the Kransky Sisters are from Brisbane; Adelaide started its own comedy festival in February; and Sydney just hosted two simultaneously.

Sydney, in fact, has a robust scene, and is throwing up some interesting talent. One intriguing new face is Nick Sun, who caused a stir last year by winning the national Raw Comedy competition (the prize of which was a flight to the Edinburgh Festival in August), then winning Edinburgh's *So You Think You're Funny* competition. His prize for that is a trip to the Montreal Comedy Festival. Not bad for someone who did his first tryout two years ago.

"You get totally obsessed," says Sun, 23, who's dropped out of a psychology degree.

"I just want to get really, really good at comedy. It took me a while to realise I couldn't hold down a proper job. I wasn't cut out for the academic life - and didn't try much, to be honest. The degree was so f---ing boring. This is all I want to do."

Sun - quiet, dry and spectacularly focused - is in Melbourne performing in three shows: *Mic in Transit*, *Show Us Your Roots 2*, and (the now finished) *A Night of Interpretive Dance*. Every morning, he tries out new material to the wall at the backpackers' accommodation where he's staying: "It's a challenge I've set with another comic: to work up a new half-hour before I leave Melbourne."

It's probably fair to label Sun a purist. Unusually, for these times, he has no ambition to move from stand-up into radio or television. Describing himself as socially quiet, he finds networking and schmoozing disquieting, to say the least. A few days in America last year confirmed his beliefs.

"These comics who had stars in their eyes about getting a TV show, and you see the end product who've failed to make it, these horrible train wrecks of human beings getting on stage and just depressing everyone. It was a big lesson for me."

Sun's belief is that the best comics are outsiders, and as an Australian of Chinese-Tibetan blood, whose parents hailed from Darjeeling in Northern India, he's as culturally alienated as anyone.

"I don't feel Asian; I don't really have any culture. I didn't have a language passed on to me. My family did it to help me fit in, but you're sitting around the family table and they're talking in their language and I can't understand. And they'll talk about me, and I'm just sitting there."

Artistically ambitious, Sun is planning to leave Sydney soon - but for London, not Melbourne.

"It's the best scene in the world there; you can do three or four gigs a night. And you can survive as a comic without moving into television. You can't do that here."

Catch him while you can.

NICK SUN

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