

As Seen in

BACK STAGE

THE PERFORMING ARTS WEEKLY

Spotlight on Comedy ***Comedy Best Bets 2004***

10 Standout Stand-Ups Worth Watching

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By Amelia David

D.C. Benny

Storytelling is fast becoming as important to our current comedy decade as creating a one-person show was to the '90s, and we can't even think about storytelling without first putting D.C. Benny at the top of our list. From his earliest days at the Uptown Comedy Club in Harlem to his current status as a regular at the Comic Strip, the Comedy Cellar, Nuyorican Poets Café, and Boston Comedy Club, D.C. Benny has honed his fine, laid-back style of comedy using stories from his life, with his most important focus always being on his characters. Rather than wanting to be known either for monologues or characterization, Benny feels his style allows his audience simultaneously to get to know his own voice (from telling the story) and the voices of the characters populating the stories.



Never one to rest on his comedy laurels, Benny started his current "Urban Myth" storytelling night (the first Friday of every month at 9 pm at NYC's Zinc Bar) as a place where audiences could see where the "funny" comes from in a comedian's jokes. Most comics make use of true experiences that they then exaggerate or distill down to a couple of lines. Benny believes the real story is almost always funnier, and that's why he created this show. "Urban Myth" has been building a loyal following who come to see seasoned comedy acts working their storytelling chops, including Ben Bailey, Vic Henley, Tony Woods, Dean Edwards, Jessica Wood, Bill Burr, and Back Stage Bistro Award winner Cory Kahaney. There's also the occasional surprise guest dropping by, like Dave Chappelle. Benny's hope is eventually to make the night a weekly event, and he's also working with the independent producers at The Show Entertainment (www.bringtheshow.com) on a variety of projects utilizing the amazing talent pool of undiscovered comics he knows exists in NYC. Benny hopes to build "Urban Myth" into New York's coolest comedy night and to develop it for television.

He has also opened for Bernie Mac, Margaret Cho, Jeff Foxworthy, and the Fugees, and written for TV and the Internet. He recently wrapped a "Showtime at the Apollo," where he received a standing ovation. His half-hour comedy special repeats frequently on Comedy Central. Considering what strong character-driven talent he shows in all his work, from acting gigs on "Law & Order," to appearances on "The Chris Rock Show," to numerous stand-up sets, to commercial characters (yes, that was him in the Budweiser "How you doin'?" campaign and many others), we were amazed to find out he isn't represented by a film and TV agent. We're sure that's a fluke that can't last. In the meantime, Benny is doing what he loves more than anything -- making people laugh. Until you've caught his act, you haven't truly experienced what strong storytelling skills can add to the fun and art of stand-up.