

RICHARD HERRING

Words: Natalie Beech

In a move that seems very in keeping with the '10 Best [insert here]' articles of our time, Richard Herring's new show will give us a live run of his best stand-up performances for this year's comedy festival in his new show, 'The Best'.

For someone who has been on the circuit for almost two decades now, going about choosing the best of his shows is no easy task. "It's really difficult. I performed all 12 of my shows over six weekends at the Leicester Square Theatre last year and so that gave me a reminder of some routines that I had forgotten about," Herring explains. "I am focusing more on the older shows though, as I guess that material will be less familiar."

He's a regular at Leicester's Comedy Festival, describing it as "newer and more spunky than some of the more established festivals." It's clear that Edinburgh still takes the title as the comedian's Mecca, but with rising prices and increasing competition, Leicester's Comedy Festival is offering an increasingly authentic experience and a platform to both national and emerging acts. "The younger comedians have to work so hard to get anywhere these days and are consequently fucking excellent," Herring says. "Go and see one of them. Pick a name you don't recognise and go."

This year, his show will revisit shows such as 'What is Love, Anyway?' and 'The Twelve Tasks of Hercules Terrace', a show based around his own mid-life crisis. But despite years on the circuit, many will know the comedian from his Metro newspaper column and his Leicester Square Theatre Podcast, which has featured high-profile guests including Louis Theroux, David Mitchell and Sarah Millican, just to name a few. If he had to pick the best of his guests, who would it be?

"Again very difficult, he says. "But I think my

favourite might have been Sara Pascoe, who has one of the sharpest comedy minds I have ever encountered, but is also passionate and interesting when being serious." Dream guest? "I am filled with envy that Adam Buxton got to interview Michael Palin, who is my all-time comedy hero."

Herring's stand-up has always pushed the boundaries of comfortable, never shying away from diving head first into heavy topics. His work has explored everything from Nazis to the meaning of life, Jesus to genitals. So inevitably, 'The Best' will revisit these topics. And if that doesn't sell it to you - well, you probably just won't enjoy it. "If you don't enjoy this show then it's fair to say that I am probably not for you. It will only take a couple of hours to find out whether you ever have to see me again. What an opportunity!"

Herring has been prolific over the past 12 years, creating one show a year and scooping up multiple awards for his work. He won the Chortle Internet Award for four years in a row, with 'As it Occurs to Me' winning the award 2011-2012, and his Leicester Square Theatre podcast winning 2013-2014.

But 'The Best' won't just be his former routines back to back. He explains, "It's pretty much all old material, though there is a mini theme developing of what 'the best' means and if it's a useful and meaningful concept or just a piece of subjective nonsense."

Although he describes it as an attempt to achieve "wall-to-wall laughs", his own subjectivity on what 'the best' of his work is will no doubt show us which shows he believes to have shaped and defined his eminent career. In this respect, 'The Best' will certainly prove to be more than just the sum of the funniest parts.

"They are all a part of me and equally important in making me the comedian and man I am today."

Richard Herring will be performing at The Cookie Comedy Club @ o2 Academy on 8th February as part of the Leicester Comedy Festival.

