

The British invasion

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Just for Laughs tours an all-English revue for its 11th anniversary by Victoria Handysides

A1 victoria handysides

Cue the classic Benny Hill saxophone chase music-the British are coming!



Just For Laughs is bringing its side-splitting show on the road for its annual cross-Canada live stage tour. This year marks the 11th anniversary for the show, though 2011's lineup is a bit different, with all British comedians on the roster.

"Everyone knows that British wit," tour host Steve Patterson said last week, taking a few minutes to crack wise about the upcoming road show.

If degrees were granted in the study of humour, the CBC celeb would hold a PhD. Patterson acts as ringmaster for the comedic spitfire radio program, The

Debaters, which crossed platforms to television land last month.

"It's a very different animal," he said of the new television format. "...Some great stuff comes out in tapings that can't be on the air because of time constraints. What you see on TV - because they try to get the best of the best - definitely isn't the same vibe as the live taping. We hope to make it more like a live radio taping, because those are a crazy party, like going to an uncensored live comedy festival gala."

Needless to say, life is busier than usual for Patterson, who hosted the Canadian Comedy Awards last week (in which he also won the Best Male Stand-Up Award) between Debaters tapings.

Patterson has a long history with the Just For Laughs crew, having performed in three of the company's TV galas, including one hosted by Steve Martin last year. After Patterson's performance, Martin said, "if I'd known he was going to be THAT good, I would have cancelled him."

Patterson says that while Canadian comics are a self-deprecating bunch, deadpan British comedians don't make any apologies. For the tour, Just For Laughs has found the hottest, razor-sharp, best of the bunch from across the pond.

Though the names of the comics on the lineup might not be readily recognizable to Canucks, Patterson assures they aren't flop sweat-soaked amateurs. The list includes players who have appeared on NBC's Last Comic Standing, The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson and Comedy Central. These days, cracking jokes is big business in Great Britain, Patterson said.

"The live comedy scene in London, England is right now what it was in North America in the comedy boom of the late '80s. These are guys that are performing their stand-up multiple times a night, and the audiences over there are pretty tough."

Of all provinces in Canada, Patterson says New Brunswick is one of his favourites and a place where he has a ton of friends. The Maritime mentality is different when it comes to watching comics; while big city crowds come out to criticize, Maritimers come looking to laugh.

Patterson says he's most looking forward to playing tour guide for the bus load of Brits, many of whom have never toured most parts of Canada before, he said.

"We'll see how British crazy differs from Canadian crazy."

Moncton Catch the Just For Laughs Comedy Tour at Capitol Theatre, 811 Main St. at 7 p.m. on Oct. 26. Tickets are \$46, available by calling 1-800-567-1922 or at www.capitol.nb.ca.

Saint John See the tour at Imperial Theatre, 24 King Square South at 7 p.m. on Oct. 27. Tickets are \$44.50, available by calling 1-800-323-7469 or at www.imperialonline.nb.ca.

Comedians appearing on the tour include: openers Abandon and Rob Broderick (who create musical numbers at lightning speed); Matt Kirshen (Last Comic Standing, Paul Provenza's Green Room, Craig Ferguson); Stephen K. Amos (The People's Music Awards in London, the Stephen K. Amos Show); top-rated stand-up comic Hal Cruttenden; Terry Alderton (BBC One's Michael McIntyre's Comedy Road Show); and Sean Meo (BBC Radio 5 Live's Christmas Up The Front).

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