



# FUNNY TOWN

Did you hear the one about the Aussie who walked into a comedy club? London is a hotspot for up-and-coming talent from Down Under

WORDS **NANCY GROVES**

**E**veryone's heard of Aussie comedy superstar Jim Jeffries, but what about the new breed of Down Under comics doing funny things in London? Here's our pick of the bunch. Make sure you get out there and see them.

## **KENT VALENTINE**

Leading the way is Kent Valentine, whose monthly night, *The Order Of Chivalrous Persons*, in Shoreditch offers comedy without the cruelty, plus free badges.

The only heckler at last November's launch was Valentine's new-born daughter Flo. "You can't put them back in!" he jokes of babies. Not that he'd want to, the big softie.

More Dickensian dandy than sun-kissed surfer, this Triple J alumnus moved to London in 2008, an experience he documented in *How To Love Everyone, Even The Arseholes*.

A consummate storyteller, Valentine prefers well-spun yarns to one-liners. "If you're telling gags and people don't like them, you've got nothing," he reasons. "Make the story engaging and you can pull them along purely by them wanting to know what happens next."

**Misses from Oz:** Twisties.

» *The Order Of Chivalrous Persons*, Last Days Of Decadence, Shoreditch High St, E1 6JE 📍 Old Street ([kentvalentine.com](http://kentvalentine.com)). Feb 1. £5



### BEC HILL

Born and brought up in Adelaide, but weaned on *Bottom* and *Blackadder* by her British mum, Hill discovered her own funny-bone after being cast as the comic relief in multiple school plays.

Her superhero-themed debut show *If You Can Read This, My Cape Fell Off* won a slew of four-star reviews last August and Hill likens her DIY style – she's big on flip charts and stick men – to a pop-up book for adults.

"I like to remind audiences they can laugh at something just because it's silly," she explains. "But I also like the laugh you get when you kind of want to cry."

London-based since last September, she cohabits in Camden with her Scottish boyfriend Gavin. "We did look at Belsize Park," says Hill, "but I could never go to the shops in my Uggs there."

**Misses from Oz:** Twisties.

» 5 Minutes Of Fame, The Queen's Head, Denman St, W1D 7HN  
 ☉ Piccadilly Circus  
 (bechillcomedian.com). Feb 5. £5



### RENATA MUSS

If Tim Minchin is the 'manly' face of musical comedy, Muss proves girls can wear mascara at the piano, too.

Classically trained, she cut her comedy teeth at 20, winning a newcomer contest in her native Sydney. In search of a proper job, she retrained as a primary school teacher but quit her course, moved to London, and started gigging before the jet lag had worn off.

Wearing a variety of beautiful vintage dresses, Muss wins over fans with a heady mix of Mozart and "wrongness".

But ask which is tougher, an audience or a class of schoolkids, and she is clear: "If you make a mistake on stage, adults laugh politely – children let you know."

**Misses from Oz:** The smell of the suburbs.

» We Love Comedy, The Blue Posts, Rupert St, W1D 6DJ ☉ Piccadilly Circus  
 (londonisfunny.com).  
 Feb 15. £7

### YIANNI AGISILAOU

This Melburnian's career began with a whimper: a joke involving a premature orgasm on stage. "It was a black abyss moment," he says, "but they went for it."

Now a circuit regular in the UK, Agisilaou is admired for his sensitive, cerebral touch. "I don't mind Jim Jeffries – he's got jokes. But he's not the first show I'd go and see," the comic says.

The former law student considers London's comedy the best in the world. "London's this grey, insipid environment, but as a comedian, you get to whinge to other people in similar strife. It's communal therapy."

**Misses from Oz:** Sun, Barbecue Shapes.

» Covent Garden Comedy Club, Villiers St, WC2N 6NG ☉ Charing Cross  
 (yianni.org). Jan 30. £10-£13



### SARAH BENNETTO

Refreshing proof that blondes can have more fun, Bennetto founded indie night Storytellers' Club, where big-name comics hunker down for round-the-campfire action. An Australia Day special will link up to Melbourne, while a Glastonbury cameo is also on the cards after success at Latitude and End of the Road.

"It's unfathomably exciting," says Bennetto of the Glasto gig. "Our nights are really organic – there are 100 different ways to tell

the same story – so it could be a great fit."

Bennetto lives in Stoke Newington with boyfriend, fellow 'nice' comedian James Dowdeswell, but her next solo show, *The King and I*, relates how she accidentally ended up having lunch at Prince Charles' house. "That'll be the palace," she points out, helpfully.

**Misses from Oz:** Café culture, Pizza Shapes.

» Storytellers' Club, Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN ☉ Clapham Junction  
 (myspace.com/sarahbennetto). Feb 21. £6-£10

