

Find out what's annoying Ed

ED Byrne has decided people annoy him. The comic, a familiar face to audiences of TV show *Mock The Week*, and self-proclaimed "grumpy old git", recently turned 40 and has decided that nearing middle age is the time for a spring clean.

So with a cry of "I am in my 40s, hear me roar" he is embarking on a new tour focussing on all the things which get his goat, and the people he just does not have time for.

"It's like a spring-clean of my life," he says. "I've come up with reasons why you can't be my friend. There are seven billion people on the planet and I only have the time to be friends with 10 of them and so I have to choose carefully."

How does he choose?
"It's the little things that annoy me," Ed explains.

"People who don't indicate on roundabouts, people who uses the phrase, 'touched a nerve there', or 'I'm just making conversation'."

In his new show, *Roaring Forties*, the Irishman turns his trademark mix of one-liners on subjects ranging from fatherhood and friendships to vasectomies and driving awareness courses.

"It's about getting older," he says. About being at an age where you're not really that old but no one thinks you're trendy anymore."

All this is not to say the father-of-two has lost his smile; in the flesh he is smart, funny and planning a big party for

himself when the tour hits Glasgow, the city where he began his stand-up career 20 years ago.

Since that first show he has conquered both comedy and the small screen with two previous smash-hit tours – *Crowd Pleaser* and *Different Class* – under his belt along with appearances on both *Mock the Week* and *Have I Got News For You*.

He is also a sucker for a quiz, having appeared on *Celebrity Family Fortunes*, where his family won the jackpot, *Celebrity Mastermind* and competing on *Celebrity Pointless*.

So how has almost two decades in showbusiness changed him as a performer?

"One thing that has changed is that I now don't pretend to think something for the sake of a joke," he reflects.

"I mean there's always comic exaggeration and embroidering a story to make it funnier, but it's more true to my life now."

"I used to say I hated kids, for example, and it wasn't true – I've always loved kids and wanted to have them, but that wouldn't have fitted with the style of comic I was earlier in my career."

"I think being truthful makes it more chancy, but if I take an opinion and try to find a way to make it funny – even if people don't agree with me – I think it pays off because audiences know what's authentic."

Being the married father of two young sons, with his publicist wife, Claire, has given him lots of new things to talk

about on stage, but does the family ever object to appearing in his materiel?

Ed says: "It's something that most comics experience."

"People know what you do for a living and then they complain when you mention them in the act, and I've certainly had at least one girlfriend in the past who objected."

"But my wife and my family are really funny and Claire understands what goes with the job."

"Actually she comes off very well and people say our relationship – very sparky, very joshing – comes across."

"I can't think of a time when she's said 'you can't use this', but if she did, I'd not use it."

On top of stand-up, Ed has a few acting ideas bubbling away, including a couple of plans for a sitcom, but for now he is roaring into his 40s still loving the job he has done for 20 years... complaining about what annoys him.

Veronica Lee and
Chris Madden



At a glance

What: Ed Byrne - *Roaring Forties*
Where: Dorking Halls
When: April 26
Time: 8pm
Tickets: £23.50
From: 01306 881717,
www.dorkinghalls.co.uk



LADY IN CHARGE: Annabel Giles

COMEDY COTTAGE: SPORT RELIEF SPECIAL

Harlequin Theatre, March 28,
8pm, £10, 01737 276500

MODEL, presenter and writer Annabel Giles will return to Redhill to host Comedy Cottage's biennial funny fundraiser for Sport Relief.

Fresh from a turn on ITV's *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here*, Annabel will MC the night's festivities and host her popular Rubbish Raffle, where gifts from her house are arbitrarily distributed depending on what she thinks of your personality.

Comedy Cottage host Sajela Kershi said: "A great supporter and friend of the Comedy Cottage, and extremely popular with local club regulars, Annabel been hosting our Comic or Sports Relief nights from when the club first opened."

Award-winning comic Suzy Bennett will headline the bill, which also features Gerry K, Gary Tro, Ben Champion, Phil Lucan and Nat Tapley.

Suzy, who has recently supported Russell Kane and Jimmy Carr on tour, was a finalist in Jimmy Carr's *Comedy Idol* and is a former winner of the *Funny Woman Award*.

Sajela said: "Suzy is a dynamo of a comic, with a uniquely warm and chatty stage presence, she has the ability to win over any crowd with her loveable velvet and chocolate smooth West Country accent."

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