

Doctor, Doctor, I've got a CD to sell!

Adam Kay and Suman Biswas were two likely lads from Imperial who unwittingly became mega-stars in the world of medical humour. Now junior docs, their album, especially the track *London Underground*, has become an internet phenomenon. Despite mentions in *The Metro* and *Student BMA News*, *Medical Student* is the first to get a **WORLD EXCLUSIVE interview with Dr Kay!**

**Interview by
JULIA SARGINSON**

Hello. Thank you for reading. My name's Julia Sarginson. And this interview is with Adam Kay. This article is sponsored by 'Doctors In Stitches' (the support service for 'comedians' in the NHS), who have asked me to say a few words about 'Fitness to Practice'.

MS - Adam, following the success of your CD 'Fitness To Practice', is it true to say, do you think, that you have become to some, something of a 'demi-god' in the world of medical comedy?

AK - 'Demi-god'? That's a bit high-ranking. We're probably SHOs in the world of Medical Comedy. The London Underground tune has certainly been very popular; probably because they're a common enemy shared by anyone who's ever been to London. Plus, everyone likes to hear a bit of a swear. The tune seemed to be emailed to everyone in the world a few weeks ago (I was even emailed it twice on a couple of group mailing lists I'm on) so we got a fair bit of notoriety from that.

MS - How do you and Suman come up with your spoof-tacular ideas?

AK - It normally starts with one of us coming up with a quick rosey gag ("Hehe... That lyric sounds a bit like 'bum'") and

snowballs from there into a long rosey gag. And if you think the parodies you hear on the album or at gigs are tenuous, you should hear the ones that we abandoned. Man alive.

MS - "You look like shit when you wear nothing at all". Based on personal experience?

AK - I'm not answering that. By which I mean yes.

MS - Some people might say that there is an over-preponderance of expletives in your work, especially of a word that rhymes with 'runt'. Would you say that this is entirely artistically justifiable?

AK - Lots of people ask about our use of that word. We use it to shock - you get people's attention if you break a taboo, and that's a very easy way to do it. On the other hand, we don't want to over-do it - it's a reserve swearword. Think of the problem with antibiotics - if you use them too much, they stop working, so you put a couple in reserve. C*nt is the Imipenem of swearing. Or should I say Im*p*nem. (? ... whatever)

MS - As a side note, do you feel that the overwhelming success of the UH Revue over the past couple of years is due to:

a) Your infallible organisational skills,



Kay & Biswas: SHOs in the world of medical comedy

b) The contribution of Imperial College Medical School to the evening,

c) The high quality of the piano/vocal duet pieces featured,

d) The hard work and highly entertaining performances of the acts from each of the five schools?

AK - The UH Revue is one of the things I'm most proud of, and I hope that it continues to sell out the Bloomsbury year on year now the mantle has been

passed over. The five schools all certainly put a lot of hard work into it, but it would be greatly misleading to describe all of the performances as "highly entertaining" (you know who you are). Then again, it's nice and scientific to have a control group who don't make any jokes.

(The cheek!)

MS - Paracetamoxo-frusibendroneomycin. Does it also help with hangovers, and

where can I get some?

AK - Yes it does! Cheques to Adam Kay or Suman Biswas. When it arrives please don't complain that it looks and tastes exactly like a Minstrel. That's just a coincidence.

MS - Listening to the 'Menstrual Rag', I believe I felt physically sick (or that may have been the dodgy kebab I ate last night) ... anyway ... has anyone actually ever thrown up at any of your performances?

AK - We've had people cry, we've had people leave & we've had people involuntarily (and sometimes voluntarily) produce seven types of bodily fluid since we've started. (We're waiting for someone to leak CSF to complete the set of eight)

MS - 'Fitness to Practice' and especially 'London Underground' have obviously been a runaway success (rather like that train that crashed at Holborn last year) - Why do you think this is?

AK - We're both delighted and baffled by its success. It was never the album that was meant to get out into the open - it's jokey and esoteric, almost uninterpretable to non-Medics. It was recorded in a single take on a tiny Casio keyboard, with no production values whatsoever. We just meant it for our Med School, and yet the public seemed to like it. It's making pots for charity, so that's got to

be a good thing.

(Is uninterpretable even a word?)

MS - I believe that in the past, you have taken your act to the Edinburgh Fringe. How does that compare to performing in front of the home audience?

AK - We haven't been to the Fringe, but intend to do so soon. We do perform all over the shop, to medics and non-medics, but nothing beats coming back and playing to London medical students. Mainly because it means we can use our completely in-joke material that we don't do elsewhere.

MS - Thank-you very much for answering my questions Dr Kay. Just out of curiosity, has your Fitness to Practice ever been called into question before?

AK - Happily we've both got the sense to completely separate the two halves of our bizarre double lives. During the day I'm just a generic PRHO. Except with 1500 unread emails in my inbox.

Many thanks Adam, it was a most stimulating experience. You moved me.

More information about 'Fitness to Practice', the album, can be found at:

www.amateurtransplants.com

Don't stop smoking!

DAVID MOORE

AS with the other London medical schools, there is always a lot of history to live up to at Barts, although it's not only the standards of great clinicians that students feel an obligation to strive towards. In the mid-1960s, a satirical review show, 'The Smoker', was first performed by a mischievous group of medical students, one of whom, Graham Chapman, later took up comedy full-time as member of 'Monty Python'. 'The Smoker' quickly became an annual fixture at Barts and was the perfect opportunity to poke fun at the medical school hierarchy, (amongst other deserving targets).

Last year, following a couple of years of apparent inactivity, there were fears that 'The Smoker' was as dead as a Norwegian Blue. However, an exemplary performance of original material in February of this year put paid to these concerns. Furthermore 'The Smoker' has evolved into far more than a sketch show, with humour ranging from the clever and abstract to the potentially-offensive, alongside live music and radical re-interpretations of recent chart favourites: "Germs don't kill people, Doctors do; I'm a fucking Doctor and I might kill you!"

Alongside the medic rappers, we were treated to the inner



Barts alumnus & Monty Python star Graham Chapman in a fetching floral number.

thoughts of a homosexual bouncer, Stephen Hawking's alternative career paths and a series of exploits from an over-zealous St John's Ambulance

"Germs don't kill people, Doctors do; I'm a fucking Doctor and I might kill you!"

man, (amongst many others). There was also, as per tradition, a slanderous tribute to the medical school's (dis)organisational department 'the Education Directorate', AKA 'The Registry'.

Having attended the (inspirationally-challenged) early Smoker meetings, its evolution into a varied and entertaining production was nothing short of miraculous. (After the first month of mental strain, all useful ideas would have fitted comfortably onto one side of beer-mat). As Jim Davidson has consistently proven, humour can be painfully difficult to accomplish. Diverse satire is even harder, yet for a dedicated team of Whitechapel amateurs, it all came quite naturally.