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INTERVIEW: Aron Kader
Arabs Gone Wild Invade La Jolla Comedy Store

By Gordon Downs • Tue, Mar 29th, 2011

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Aron Kader was brought up in a diverse household (a Mormon mother and Palestinian Father) planting the seeds of what would eventually become a career in comedy. Kader moved to Los Angeles at the age of nineteen, and after some time spent training with legendary improve troupe, The Groundlings, Kader decided to venture out on his own and pursue his dreams of being a full-time stand-up comic. After years toiling on the open mics of Los Angeles, Kader was discovered by Mitzi Shore at The Hollywood Comedy Store, and would later go on to appear on Comedy Central's Premium Blend and perform on the notorious Axis Of Evil Comedy Tour. SanDiego.com recently caught up with Kader as he was finishing up a weekend of shows at Cobbs Comedy Club, and discussed his early years in stand-up and how a comedy circuit known as the "Tribble Run" helped him become a better comic.

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Aron Kader
Courtesy Photo

How were last night's shows?

Aron Kader: The shows have been going really good, they're good crowds up here, they're real smart. Last night there was a bunch of Google people here, the guy who actually invented Google maps was there. So I was trying to make map quest jokes, but yeah they were really good, we're having a good time.

How did you know they were from Google?

I have a friend that brought them so, he was with a little bit of a crew and I met them before the show and stumbled on to that information.

How much riffing and crowd work do you normally do in your act?

It kind of depends on the crowd. A lot of times when you're the emcee you'll do that, other times when you do it it's because you're stuck and you can't remember your next joke, so you start going, 'Where are you from? What's your story?' For the most part I'd say there's always a couple of minutes in there where you've got to get to know the crowd. Sometimes I'm closing the show and that's a situation where you can just go right through your material and just keep going. If it's a really good crowd you don't always have to do crowd work, but I'll riff within my own material without going into the crowd as well.

Do you remember the first time you did stand-up?

It was actually in L.A. I moved to L.A. in 1993 and I had gone to school, and it wasn't until 1999 when I was going to open mics and trying to write material. It was a little café open mic at this place called Sonoma Blue, that's not even there anymore, it closed down. I did three minutes and just like went into a blackout mode when you got onstage and you can't see anything. I said a couple of jokes and three minutes felt like an eternity back then, but yeah I remember it pretty clearly.

Would you ever toss back a few drinks back before going up?

I wouldn't get really messed up but yeah there was a couple of times. Some of these open mics they don't have booze; it's like a café or something, so that wasn't possible. But there was one where I remember I had to have a couple of beers and I was with a buddy of mine and we'd both go to the open mics together, and he told me, 'Man, if you need to get drunk all the time for these things this not good.' And I realized if I can do it sober, then after that if I can do it with a couple of drinks then I know I got it. You feel so out of control, you feel like you've got to have a drink to relax, I still to this day I don't mind having a drink but if I get too pissed onstage that's when I really start riffing.

What was your process from doing open mics to becoming a passed regular at The Comedy Store?

I met a guy named Adam Barnhardt, who was doing the Sunday night room at The Belly Room, he still does it to this day, He's been doing The Belly Room at The Hollywood Comedy Store for like fifteen years or something. He really liked me and said, 'Why don't you come in to the Sunday show and be regulars with us?' So the deal was we could be regulars in his show but obviously we had to run it and promote it and try to get an audience in there, and be a part of the whole production. So once I had a show that I knew I was going to be able to do every week, there was about 7 or 8 of us regulars; and you feel the pressure to write new material every week. A lot of people are going to see you every week, and if you don't have new stuff they're going to get bored and not going to want to watch you, so that was good pressure. After I started comedy about six months later, I started doing these David Tribble gigs, do you know Tribble?

Yeah the Tribble runs.

So I did some Tribble runs, and only out at six months I didn't really have 30 minutes to open for somebody, but I just winged it and by the time I came back from those, I had a good 15 minutes. And then the next time I went out to do a Tribble Run I actually had 30 pretty good minutes. It was about a year before I had a good 30 minutes, and then after that Mitzi picked me up, but this was after 9/11 at that point.

So the Tribble Runs really helped you hone your chops and acted like a trial by fire.

Absolutely, it helped big time. Maybe it's because I was younger and I didn't care as much and I was a little bit more gutsy. It just seemed like I didn't care if I bombed in Missoula, Montana you know. I did a lot of bombing man, like I'd do okay for about 5 or 10 minutes and then I'd just start tanking. And I just knew I was going to, because I didn't have 30 minutes. So I'd say, 'Alright, I'm going to do good for about 5 to 20 minutes and then after that I'm going to struggle, and I just knew that was going to be the case, so I just did it. When I finally showcased for Mitzi, she liked me. But she was looking for Middle Eastern people though, so I kind of got lucky. Back then she was still coming around every Sunday and Monday to watch people, and she wanted Middle Eastern people. I remember that New Year's Eve of 2000 she threw me in the big New Year's show, she liked me, and she wanted to test me. I was like the Tribble thing, you don't think you can do it, but then you do it. Even if you bomb, you're a better comic than you were before because you learn from your mistakes.

When would you say you found your voice as a stand-up comedian?

Probably just a few years ago, I've always had it and it was always there. You always feel like every year you might look back and go, 'I'm stronger this year than I was last year.' You always feel like that. I have new material that I like more than my old material; or you go back and listen to tapes ad go, 'Oh my god, I'm so much better than I was.' The longer you do it the more you can look back and say, 'Man I'm better than I used to be.' It was about the 7 or 8 year point when I really kicked into gear and realized that I'm more of a physical comic. I had energy and I wasn't afraid to use it. I had material to sort of back up acting goofy onstage and it all sort of came together. There's the acting part and there's the material part, and you never know which ratio it is. Is it 80% performance, or is it 80% material? I use to never take the mic out if the stand and let all of my material just do the work. And then I finally caught up with and realized that I need to sell it, I need to push it, I need to dance around and be funny. It all sort of came together a few years ago when we were doing this Axis of Evil Comedy Tour in 2007. That's when I really feel like I sort of woke up.

Will there a DVD release of Arabs Gone Wild?

This year we've been doing the tour so we've been thinking about it. Now that we've done a lot of shows and got them under our belt, and the show's pretty strong now. We might wait until September to tape in Washington D.C.

Does Aron Kader have a message for the children?

Be careful what you tweet for.

Aron Kader performs with Arabs Gone Wild Thursday March 31 at The La Jolla Comedy Store.

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