

The knock on Jon Dore: 'inappropriate' comedian launches new TV season

BY TONY LOFARO, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE JANUARY 21, 2009



The gags on The Jon Dore Show may push the boundaries of decency, but the show's star says they just try and write whatever's funny.

Photograph by: (Comedy Network), (Comedy Network)

Jon Dore is not crazy -- he just acts that way sometimes.

The Ottawa standup comedian has long harboured a reputation as a wacky comic actor with a penchant for over-the-top gags that push the boundaries of good taste. Comedy is subjective, he points out, and so not everyone will ever get his wild antics or appreciate them.

On stage, he's dangerous and funny, whether it's sparring with an audience member over his dopey ball-cap, dropping the F-word in his act, or even stripping bare-chested to reveal a pair of painted suspender lines down his body.

On his TV show, which begins its second season Wednesday, Dore is really out there dangling alone on the comedy ledge. He has a fascination with masturbation and isn't afraid to talk about it.

"I'm completely inappropriate," says Dore over coffee and a bagel at a diner, referring to himself as portrayed in The Jon Dore Show, which essentially follows him around as he deals with staged comic situations with real professionals.

"It's so fun to play a person like myself who doesn't have any rules that govern him. It's fun to break the rules, it's not a goal (of mine) because they're just jokes."

Dore doesn't think up all of the TV show's outrageous gags. A team of writers helps crank out ideas

for him to exploit. He says last year's episodes tackled more issues that were a bit too personal (his excessive drinking, fertility) but this season's themes will be broader and include his take on discrimination, saving the planet and the justice system.

Some episodes can be downright bizarre -- bordering on tasteless -- yet Dore manages to pull them off. Take for instance, the second episode in the 13-part series titled "Jon Gets Horny." Dore tries to cure a permanent erection problem by becoming an Internet porn star, and at one point, is seen humping a plastic garbage can.

"We just write what we think is funny," explains Dore about his writing team.

"That's how we talk and behave in regular life but keeping in mind if there is an opportunity to push it a little bit, we will."

Dore once worked as a second banana on Canadian Idol, creating funny bits with contestants for the amusement of Ben Mulroney and TV audiences. Yet even on those bits, you could see a comedic talent wanting to burst out -- only to be straight-jacketed by the constraints of conventional network television.

The no-holds barred Comedy Network is a better fit for Dore, a gangly, self-effacing comedian who thinks fast on his feet, and is spontaneous and truly inventive when he's in front of an audience.

"We'll never be on CTV because we'd probably never get away with half of the stuff we do. But we're not all (lowbrow), we have a few poignant ideas in there from time to time," says Dore, whose hero is David Letterman.

Dore never sought out to be a comedian, even though he said as a young boy his parents gave him praise for his silly impersonations of people he saw on television.

Dore said he never thought he'd be a standup comic and his first outing was a disaster. "I went up and I was terrible," says Dore.

"I did five minutes off the top of just talking, no real jokes. There were no boos, but I knew it wasn't going well. It was scary," says Dore, who had no clue about writing jokes with punch lines.

"I was trying to write personal things about my family and things I find odd about them. Today, I look back on my first five years of standup and feel almost embarrassed. But I should not be embarrassed, I was young."

He says he hadn't yet found his inner comedic voice.

"I wasn't writing what I thought was funny, I was writing what I thought the audience wanted to hear. It took me nine or 10 years of developing my act, just little steps along the way."

Dore is not amused when he's labelled a "Tom Green lite," insisting his career is far different than Ottawa's other notorious comic.

"It's just a coincidence that I did a show at Rogers and Tom did as well...

"I never did his type of comedy, he was not a standup comedian and our TV shows are entirely different. His show was deliberately all over the map, mine is more structured with a storyline."

The Jon Dore Show's new season premieres Wednesdays, Jan. 21 at 10 p.m. on The Comedy Network.

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