

## LET'S GO!

There's a python in his past, in his living room and down his pants, American comedian Arj Barker tells Matthew Myers.

**DNA:** You've been coming to Australia now for many years. Do you think of it as a second home?

**Arj Barker:** Definitely. In fact, maybe a first home! I love California, too, but when I'm there I often miss being in Oz.

**Do you think the Australian sense of humour differs a lot to the American?**

Well, not to this American. I could think about why I seem to click with the audiences there, but the truth is, I don't try to analyse it too much.

**Tell us about your new show *Go Time*.**

It's mainly stand-up, but book-ended with some songs I wrote and even, for the first time in my career, some dancing. But it's mainly stand-up, which is my main skill so I focus on that.

**You're a part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival family.**

**Have you made any particular close mates in that circuit?**

Yes, I'm very friendly with many comedians and close friends with a few of them, but I won't name names, as I wouldn't want to hurt people's feelings. I have also made non-comedian friends in Melbourne over the years. They aren't quite as funny to hang out with but I love them anyway.

**What's the best thing about Melbourne?**

Friendly, awesome, beautiful people.

That's the truth. I meet so many cool, chilled, awesome people Down Under.

Sure, there's the odd douche bag, but they're far outnumbered by kind, thoughtful and laid-back folk. My kind of people.

**Do you think we'll see full gay marriage in our lifetime?**

I sure hope so. It seems so bloody obvious that people should be able to be with who they want and the law ought to recognise it. It's hard enough having a relationship without the government getting involved.

**Do people ever mistake you as gay?**

Not to my knowledge. Pardon the generalisation, but I don't think I'm a sharp enough dresser for people to think I'm gay. But if someone did think I was gay, I wouldn't be offended. If everybody thought I was gay though, I might start asking myself some serious questions.

**If you were gay, who would you go for?**

Maybe George Clooney. He's a bit older,

but still pretty dreamy.

**Do you still get Aussie girls wanting you to pose for a photo to make their boyfriend's jealous?**

Occasionally. I always think it's weird how people want to make someone they care about jealous. Jealousy ain't a pleasant emotion. Why would you do that to someone intentionally? Bloody sadistic if you ask me.

**How do you feel about gay guys finding you hot?**

Very flattered!

**Have you visited any gay bars in Australia?**

I think so, in Sydney. Or maybe patrons of the bar were just really, really, really friendly.

**Do you think that deep down, a lot of comedians hold an internal angst and comedy is their form of release?**

I would argue that it's not very deep down for a lot of us. For many comedians the angst is right out there in the open for all to see.

**If you could zap yourself into any sitcom in history, what would it be?**

*Cheers*, because I love a drink.

**Who would you rather resurrect to have dinner with? John Belushi, Groucho Marx, Bernie Mac, Bea Arthur, Sam Kinison or Lucille Ball?**

Belushi or Marx, but I can't decide. Can I choose both and have them be sort of half-alive? I'm sure they'd still be fascinating company even in a slightly zombified state.

**Is there any particular comedian who has been a major influence on you?**

The first comedy I remember responding to was *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. My family used to watch it together when I was a child. The absurdity of it delighted me. Cut to 30 years later where I was in Sweden going on a talk show and who was the only other guest? John Cleese! He was very gracious and happy to oblige when I asked for a picture with him. My mom got a major kick out of that.

**In another life, what kind of job do you think you'd be doing?**

Well, I was a cowboy in my past life and a clown before that. My cowboy incarnation died in a stampede and as a clown I took my own life after the head clown instructor told me to wipe the smile off my face.

**What's the campest thing in your house?**

There's a python that comes around (Monty). I guess with the right outfit, he would be pretty camp.

**What's the most embarrassing moment for you on stage?**

Once in Adelaide, I was wearing shiny, Lycra trousers for a heavy metal-themed show. I started getting giggles where there were no punch lines and it took me a couple minutes to look down and realise my zip was down a few centimetres. It wasn't a full disclosure, but there was some fuzz coming out for sure and maybe a bit of "neck" exposed.

Arj Barker's new show *Go Time* is playing at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. The Festival runs March 27 to April 21. Check for dates: [comedyfestival.com.au](http://comedyfestival.com.au)



PHOTOGRAPHY BY REBECCA TEAGUE

Arj on gay marriage: "It's hard enough having a relationship without the government getting involved."