

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Paul Charlton Talks to Us, the Beeb and Will Shakespeare

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Paul Charlton, one-third of the British comedy group [The Ginge, The Geordie and The Geek](#), was in his London flat, waiting for the BBC to issue a verdict on a TV series, writing a dramatic play, and finishing working on the group's 2012 show, which they'll take to the [Edinburgh Fringe](#) in August for their final year there.

We crossed the Atlantic via Skype to have a chat before he plunged back to rehearsals.

What's a Geordie, and why are you hanging around with a Ginge and Geek?

In Britain we call a Ginge is a person with red hair. and a geek-which has a slightly more loose meaning- is a bit of a nerd, usually wearing glasses, a bit goofy and actually making a bit of a splash over here with the fad of geek-sheek. My particular Ginge and Geek are friends and colleagues I've known from my classical acting training over a decade ago at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. We've been jobbing actors since graduating but a few years ago decided to reclaim the power and start our own comedy sketch show. We write sketches with a very populist appeal, without vulgarity or sexual innuendo and of a general feel good quality.

Your group has been a big Fringe hit and you just did a pilot for BBC. What's the pilot like and when will the Beeb give you a 100-episode order?

A 100 episode order!!!!? I'd be dead trying to write 100 eps. We write all the material between the four of us and it's hard blooming work. I'll settle for 6 eps which is the standard over here and we're hoping to find out soon.

You're also a playwright – a serious playwright. How do you find navigating those waters... the differences between writer and actor, the difference between being seen as a comic and writing dark, grim stuff?

I found out today that I missed out by a whisker for a very prestigious award for a play that I'm having trouble finding a home for right now. It's very dark and uncompromising and so a bit of a risk to a lot of theatres. It's about vulnerable kids in the care system and examines a subject I'm very passionate about. I workshopped it with LA and NY actors through [LoNyLa](#) and that helped a great deal, there's a lot of very generous and talented people on your side of the pond that I've really enjoyed working with over the passed year or so.

I also went for a very silly advert audition today with my other hat on as an actor. I then came home and carried on with my new play and was accosted by the Ginge to analyse a sketch that we can't get right at the moment.

It keeps things interesting, but it is very draining. And to top it all off it's the end of a fantastic

football (soccer to Yanks) season, so I have to fit that in as well.

You're planning to participate in the [TimeWave Festival](#). What's your wildest fantasy of what you might do?

Like a lot of people I was very moved by the mass protests all over the world over the last year. I'd love to recreate multiple moments of interesting stories from protests with actors all over the world at the same time weaving together stories that unite us against the greed and injustice of this market driven world. And I'd love to use camera's mounted on peoples heads or hats to create collage of visuals the way the individual sees the story which would I hope create a really unique viewing experience. It would also be a nightmare to write design and order, not to mention sort the technology, but these kind of dreams are now becoming reality and as more and more people experience their entertainment in non traditional formats we have to keep looking to the future. That's why LoNyLa and it's technology is so exciting for me. There's so much potential for telling stories in a new and interesting way.

Improv sketch set-up: You have time-travelled back to 1608 and you go into a pub. You order your pint, it's really crowded and there's only one open seat. You sit down and the man next you says, "I hear you said my plays stink." It's William Shakespeare. Go!

Me: Will mate, I've been misquoted, those cheeky journalists! I said your play's elitest. I said you stole stories almost story beat for story beat from playwrights down the ages. I said you even recycled your own plays. I mean what was going on with the tempest mate. Were you having a bad day? Was it the football distracting you? I sympathise Willy, I really do but for God sake lad don't subject us to more of the bloody same thing again and again.

Will S: Well I think you're being very unfair there Paul, it take a long time to write those iambic pentameter and create such arresting stories and emotions.

Me: Aw don't get me wrong son, I appreciate the skill in the verse, I really do, despite the fact that you break your own rules time and time again when it suits you.

Will S: well what's your problem then. My plays are seen by all levels of society. I'm not elitest.

Me: You're not now cos some tosser's brought me back to 1608 and it stinks in this tavern by the way. The man in the corner should learn to use a toilet rather than weeing on the wall in the sawdust. But I digress... sorry. If you came to the 21st century Willy mate, you'd see that your plays are watched only by the middle and upper classes and school children forced at pen point by their teachers to sit through three hours of language that makes no sense to them whatsoever. Yes they might get the emotions conveyed by the actors, but theatre is about language, it's about telling stories and a huge part of that is understanding what is being said, if you haven't had the luxury of being in a good school and coming to understand this language then you have no chance. Theatre in the non-musical sense is populated by middle and upper classes and i want to make it accessible to the working classes. no offence though.

Will S: None taken.

Me: Great. Oh and *Romeo and Juliet* was alright. Decent love story that. Well done.

Will S: Thanks.

Me: No worries. Credit where credit's due. Anyway I have to get off. I've got an art appreciation class at seven.

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