

Q&A

MAWAAN RIZWAN

COMEDIAN, ACTOR, JOURNALIST AND ACTIVIST, MAWAAN RIZWAN IS A MAN OF MANY TALENTS. SHOT TO FAME BY THE COMIC VIDEOS ON HIS YOUTUBE CHANNEL, HE PRESENTED THE BBC DOCUMENTARY *HOW GAY IS PAKISTAN?* AND, IN AUGUST, HE PRESENTS HIS NEW SHOW: *GENDER NEUTRAL CONCUBINE PIRATE*

You're a man of many talents. How do you see yourself foremost?

A comedian, really, then an actor and writer. Comedy is what I enjoy most. It's a really powerful medium and in terms of what I want to tell the audience, is the most imaginative and magical way to do it.

Have you enjoyed turning your hand to other mediums as well, such as presenting *How Gay Is Pakistan?*

I did enjoy it. It's great that in the past couple of years I have had some opportunities to dabble in other mediums. That's something I have been wanting to do. It's really personal to me, I was going through some turmoil with my family and I thought it was something worth exploring. It's actually a privilege to be able to make that come true with the support of a massive broadcaster. My parents still haven't seen it though because I wanted to sit down and watch it with them.

You've done a lot of work with BBC Tthree. Has the channel moving to an online-only platform affected you?

I think online gives you good scope to play around, especially within the art form I have chosen. With comedy it's important to take risks. Online is the perfect place to do it because it is a bit lower pressure and it means you don't have to pander or cater to existing groups or audiences — in fact, your audience can find you. And that's what's proving really useful for me and what I've found liberating in the past. I'll have an idea and I'll make something, then it takes this blind optimism that people will find it. The internet is open access and it will get to the people that it needs to get to.



I CHOSE A NAME THAT WAS THE MOST UNGOOGLE-ABLE THING FOR PEOPLE



Mawaan delved into gay Pakistan for a BBC documentary



A LIST_Q & A

Also, it means we don't have to make set formats; we don't have to make 30-minute shows, or an hour-long show, thinking about ads break. I do script-writing in telly and work within a really structured pyramid — and that's great — but there's this freedom that comes with working online that I find really liberating.

Tell us about your upcoming show, *Gender Neutral Concubine Pirate*, at the Edinburgh Fringe.

When I chose the name, I thought: what's the most unGoogle-able thing for people? If people really want to come to see it, I want it to be an effort for them to find it, so I thought of the most sassy name. Basically it is an hour-long show, there is a lot of mad cap physicality with some honest confessional stand-up. I am mixing my clowning and my stand-up and merging it to make it an unapologetic and quite a sassy show.

You've performed at the Edinburgh Fringe before; how has your act evolved since you were there last?

This is my fifth year at the festival. Everywhere I go I try to reinvent my

show and do something completely out of my comfort zone. So in last year's show the first half of it was silent, it was all mime and quite physical. Then this one is really shouty, quite bold and quite glam rock. So every year, it's a really good opportunity to experiment with new concepts and new ideas while still developing my voice as a comedian. So there is obviously consistency there with me, but at every festival I feel the need to push new creative boundaries.

Do you feel now is as good a time as ever for young queer comedians to try to break through?

I can see that but part of me thinks that the way we identify is almost secondary to what we do. If there's other stuff going on that can inform your art form, I think that's really powerful. It's an interesting, exciting time and it feels as if there is more visibility for the LGBT class. For me, it's really exciting to incorporate that movement into my work.

Gender Neutral Concubine Pirate runs from 5-14 and 16-28 August. For details, visit tickets.edfringe.com