

# The Ten Funniest New Yorkers You've Never Heard Of

The next *Seinfeld*, the next *Sedaris* (David *and* Amy), and the man behind the year's most rocking TV ad.

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## Aziz Ansari

**You May Have Actually Heard of Him If:** You frequent the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre—the CBGB of alternative comedy—where Ansari hosts the weekly stand-up show “Crash Test.”

**The Setup:** Ansari, only 22, won this year's Best Male Stand-Up at the Emerging Comics of New York awards.

**The Punch Line:** “Texas senator John Cornyn’s argument against gay marriage is, ‘If your neighbor marries a box turtle, it doesn’t affect your everyday life. But that doesn’t make it right.’ I myself was not a psychology major, but I think it’s safe to assume that at one point or another, Senator Cornyn has thought about making love to a box turtle.”

## Vernon Chatman and John Lee

**You May Have Actually Heard of Them If:** You’re a fan of their twisted MTV2 variety show, *Wonder Showzen*.

**The Setup:** Don’t let the puppetry, animated films, or use of actual children fool you—*Wonder Showzen* is not for kids, nor for some adults. But the crass-and-burn humor (a guy named Pottymouth with an actual toilet for a mouth and . . . well, you get the idea) often delivers radical social protest.

**The Punch Line:** A charming blue puppet named Clarence, looking like a resident of *Sesame Street*, persuades passersby on the street to tear up and burn a copy of the Bill of Rights.



## Dorff and Gausas

**You May Have Actually Heard of Them If:** You watch a lot of *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. Kevin Dorff plays the recurring Coked-Up Werewolf, and Christina Gausas has appeared in many roles, from a mom to a porn star.

**The Setup:** An improv duo, Dorff and Gausas are known for brainy, off-the-cuff interplay that recalls the heyday of Nichols and May.

**The Punch Line:** Dorff: “It’s my brother’s funeral. He was a suicide bomber.” Gausas: “So then he totally saw it coming.”

## FUNNY BUSINESS

### Conan on the Couch

The lanky embodiment of *No* Middle America.

### The Ten Funniest New Yorkers

The next *Seinfeld*, the next *Sedaris* most rocking TV ad.

### One Night. Five Open-Mic

A Monday spent on the front

## David Javerbaum

**You May Have Actually Heard of Him If:** You pay close attention to the end credits of *The Daily Show*.

**The Setup:** Javerbaum, a former writer for both *The Onion* and *Letterman* (as well as an accomplished librettist; he’s currently working on the stage version of John Waters’s *Cry-Baby*), was named *The Daily Show*’s head writer in 2003. He now leads the prize-gobbling band of “80 percent Ivy League-educated Jews,” as Jon Stewart called them at the Emmys—

**Eight Things New York C** where the show grabbed its third straight award for  
An informal survey of comed best variety or comedy series.  
lines.

### How to Build a Joke

A dissection of a one-liner.

**The Punch Line:** On how to fill *The Daily Show* during the slow summer months: “We’ll just do what other local stations do . . . make up stories about ways to improve your memory.”

### Sam Lipsyte

**You May Have Actually Heard of Him If:** You’re a frequenter of book blogs like *maudnewton.com*, which championed his latest novel, *Home Land*.

**The Setup:** Long adored for pitch-perfect short stories about melancholy losers, Lipsyte hit full comic stride with *Home Land*. Lipsyte’s that rarest of writers: lyrical and laugh-out-loud funny.

**The Punch Line:** “We didn’t have squash at Eastern Valley. We didn’t have tennis, either, unless you count that trick with the steel hairbrush and the catgut racquet whereby the butt skin of the weak was flayed.”



(Photo: Margo Silveri/Courtesy of Demetri Martin)

### Demetri Martin

**You May Have Actually Heard of Him If:** You are one of the swooning Demetri-ites who flock to his appearances at UCB or the “Eating It” show at the Zipper Theatre.

**The Setup:** Martin melds Wes Anderson hipster innocence with the deadpan brains of Steven Wright, crafting smart, incisive one-liners. Plus, he writes palindromes, including a 222-word opus titled “Dammit I’m Mad.”

**The Punch Line:** “I’ve noticed that at most theme parks, the theme is ‘Wait in line, fatty.’”



(Photo: Courtesy of Russ Meneve)

### Russ Meneve

**You May Have Actually Heard of Him If:** Last Call and the *Tonight Show*.

**The Setup:** Meneve practices classic, crowd-pleasing comedy—sharp, observational jokes that remind you why stand-up got so popular in the first place.

**The Punch Line:** “In Vegas, there were prostitutes everywhere, and I had no idea they were prostitutes. I was too caught up in how well I was doing at the bar. Here’s a tip for when you find out she’s a prostitute: Say, ‘What a coincidence! I am also a prostitute.’”

### Noam Murro

**You May Have Actually Heard of Him If:** You work in advertising. Murro, a director with Biscuit Filmworks, won about every ad-world award this year—a run capped when he was named 2005 Commercial Director of the Year by the Directors Guild of America.

**The Setup:** Murro helmed the H3 Hummer spot, in which a Godzilla-like monster mates with a giant robot, then gives birth to a Hummer. He’s also behind this year’s Starbucks ad in which the band Survivor sings personalized versions of “Eye of the Tiger” to individual espresso drinkers—one of the few commercials you’ll actually stop and watch on TiVo.

**The Punch Line:** (*sung to opening guitar riff of “Eye of the Tiger”*) “Glen! Glen, Glen, Glen! Glen, Glen, Glen! Glen! Glen!”