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Monty Python – Top 10 Comedy Films

By Chad Koch

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Someone once said something along the lines that, Monty Python is to 'funny' what chartered accountants are to 'boring'. Who are we to disagree?

2. Python's Give Live Birth

The legend of Monty Python emerged nobly from the dusty corridors of Oxford and Cambridge universities. All of the British Python members had their comedic starts in revue shows put on by these universities. They soon rose to the ranks of responsibility within these societies, "In bewilderment we saw a notice board informing us that we are now officers!" recalls John Cleese.

Their well-received show, A Clump of Plinths, transferred to London's West End and later visited New

Zealand and New York under the new title Cambridge Circus.

Cleese stayed on in New York and during a photo shoot for a comic strip he met American illustrator Terry Gilliam. Terry was soon folded into the every growing omelet.

The BBC, on the advice of producer Barry Took, signed the group – which now included Eric Idle and Terry Gilliam for a 13-show series. Ah, but what to name the show?

3. The Toad Elevating Moment

Owl Stretching Time. A Horse, A Spoon and A Bucket. The Toad Elevating Moment were all names in the running. But as planning for the series became more chaotic, the BBC management began to refer to the team as a 'flying circus', inspired by the Red Baron's World War One fighter squadron. The

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troupe liked the sound of it and randomly added the term Monty Python from their growing list of alternates. Funny that.

4. Mystery Of The Lost Python Sketches

No one knows what happened to them. Oh wait, 3 new sketches of never before seen Python material were recently discovered and performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The famed sketches were written by late Python star Graham Chapman and were unearthed by a literary executor in Los Angeles. Each sketch lasts four minutes and features a cast of characters including a gay parrot and an overworked Messiah.

5. Brian's The Life Of The Party

Monty Python's Life of Brian snagged the funniest film of all time in a poll arranged by Total Film magazine.

The film satires the rise of organized religion and caused more controversy than a Kevin Smith baptismal when it was released back in 1979. It was banned in many parts of the UK and church leaders accused it of blasphemy. Nothing like bad publicity to push the ratings.

Their King Arthur era spoof, Monty Python and the Holy Grail, trailed by only a few spots, landing it at number five.

Top 10 Comedy Films

1. Life of Brian
2. Airplane!
3. Withnail & I
4. There's Something About Mary
5. Monty Python and the Holy Grail
6. American Pie
7. Groundhog Day
8. Some Like it Hot
9. Blazing Saddles
10. Planes, Trains and Automobiles

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6. Kim Broad Aka John Cleese

John Cleese rode a roller coaster of fame during the 1970's playing the role of stressed hotelkeeper Basil Fawlty in *Fawlty Towers*. He continued his fame with films like *Privates On Parade* and *Clockwise*, then hit worldwide stardom with *A Fish Called Wanda* in 1988. The follow-up film, *Fierce Creatures* faulted to gain attention with audiences. These days audiences know him best as the new Q in the James Bond films and Nearly Headless Ned in the Harry Potter films. He will next be seen playing father to Lucy Liu in *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* and as the voice Fiona's Father in *Shrek 2*, Fiona is voiced by *Charlie's Angel's* co-star Cameron Diaz.

7. Around The World In 80 Days

Michael Palin has also rocketed to fame due to his turn with the troupe and in 1977 he teamed with Terry Jones to make their own comedy series, *Ripping Yarns*. Michael also appeared aside John Cleese in *A Fish Called Wanda*, then went on to do a reality show for BBC TV, called *Around the World in 80 Days*, where he attempted to literally follow in the footsteps of the Jules Verne literary character, Phileas Fogg, by trying to travel around the world in the allotted time, but without flying – By the way,

it's Jules Verne's 175th birthday this week. During the Pole to Pole trip, he met up with Python fans in Greece and ate snake in China while struggling to meet his deadline.

8. Get Yourself To Mars

Eric Idle continued his stint in the limelight by teaming with Neil Innes to create *Rutland Weekend Television*, a parody of regional broadcasting. He later appeared in *Graham Chapman's Yellowbeard*, *Disney's Honey*, *I Shrank the Audience* and *Splitting Heirs*. His recent novel titled, "The Road to Mars" is about two comedians in the 22nd century. Fans most likely know him today as the voice of Mr. Vosknocker in the animated film, *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut*.

9. Keep It Real

Terry Jones maintained a diversity beyond mere comedy, by writing about history, presenting documentaries, penning children's books and going onto direct the 1996 version of *Wind in the Willows*, starring his old pals – Michael Palin, John Cleese and Eric Idle.

10. The 12 Fisher Monkey Kings

Terry Gilliam lent his talents to the troupe as a director and by creating the very distinct animations that became Monty Python's visual trademark. We soon followed it with his feature film debut, *Jabberwocky*, starring Michael Palin. After helming the much loved, *Time Bandits*, his fame skyrocketed in Hollywood. But his style led to many conflictions in the biz including a big throw down with Universal Studios over his film *Brazil* and then problems with backers on the very expensive, *Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, which starred Eric Idle and featured Robin Williams. His real success followed by taking on unconventional studio films including the critically acclaimed, *The Fisher King* starring Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges and the stylistic sci-fi thriller, *12 Monkeys* starring Bruce

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Willis and Brad Pitt and the Hunter S Thompson extravaganza, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas starring Johnny Depp and Benicio Del Toro. These six actors all gave some of the best performances of their career in Gilliam's films.

11. Parting Shots

"We weren't being satirical because it wasn't the thing that interested us," Terry Jones says. "Ours was a slightly more abstract humor – just being silly really. What satire there is, is more generalized satire."

Referring to The Life of Brian – "Comedy is about reminding us of the truth of being human: we all have a body and we all must die, and it is okay," reckons Eric Idle.

"Monty Python is a great combination of intellect and silly", concludes Robin Williams.

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Evening Activities For A Stag Weekend In Bristol

By Brett Danielson

Ah, Bristol! If any city deserves the name of Home of Comedy, it must be Bristol. Home to Jongleurs and Jesters, a pair of world-class comedy clubs, and birthplace of Lee Evans, Justin Lee Collins and laughing gas, Bristol offers some unique possibilities for stag weekend activities. A Bristol stag weekend can combine an afternoon of paintballing, quad biking or five a side with an evening of carousing and comedy at one of Bristol's rightfully famed comedy clubs.

The traditional stag night of strippers and lap dances has more recently been replaced with an entire weekend's worth of 'guy fun', often away from home so the scandalous naughty doings don't trickle back to those who might care. If you're planning a stag weekend for an upcoming wedding, a Bristol stag weekend offers many possibilities for memorable, unique stag activities. Among the many Bristol stag weekend activities that you might include are:

:: Quad Biking at a Bristol course – An obstacle course run on quad bikes can kick off a stag weekend in Bristol with a bang. Get dirty, get the blood pumping and get the testosterone primed for a night on the town later.

:: Assault Course – River rafting – upstream? A Bristol stag weekend favorite is an assault course that

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pits your team against the river – and other teams on a home–built raft made of articles bought in a 'ship's store'. It's another blood–raising activity that will prime the pumps for a hot night on the town later.

:: Bavarian Bierkellar – Instead of a nightclub, take the Stag out for a beer–filled night at a mini–Munich Bierfest. With oversized steins of the best brews in the world, and lots of raucous fun, it's a Bristol stag weekend standard.

:: Comedy Club – Bristol is the home of comedy – and the comedians that play the Bristol comedy clubs are past masters at pointing the finger at stags out celebrating their last nights of freedom. No Bristol stag weekend would be complete without a night of gut–busting howlers at a Bristol comedy club.

Brett Danielson works for

<http://www.chillisauce.co.uk>

, a tour operator specialising in stag weekends in

Bristol and other cities in the UK and Europe.



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