

# Peters one funny Indian

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Leslie Nielson did it. So did Michael J. Fox. And Jim Carrey did too.

All three of these Canadian comedians went down south, made it big and proved to the people of the United States that Canadians are funny. But when the American United Paramount Network offered Russell Peters his own television show, it wasn't his Canadian heritage they were after.

"They wanted me to wear a Sikh turban, have an Indian accent and know everything about Pakistani movies," Peters explains. "This is what made me so mad about it, because it was all wrong. When they picture an Indian person, they don't picture someone like me. They picture someone like my mom or dad, with an accent and they can't understand why I don't sound like my parents."

As a first generation East-Indian Canadian, Peters has encountered this type of stereotyping before, dating as far back as his childhood in Toronto during the 1970s. But instead of sitting around and complaining, he managed to incorporate these experiences into a controversial and hilarious comedy act, which Peters claims is his way of fighting back against racism. So why address these issues through

entertainment?

"George Carlin is the main reason why I'm doing it," Peters proclaims. "I used to hear him do stuff and I was like, 'Man, this shit is so real.' I also do comedy because I love performing. I love getting on stage and the immediate response of making people laugh."

Since beginning his career, with a string of gigs at Yuk Yuk's amateur nights in 1989, Peters has appeared on numerous CBC and Comedy Network specials and has steadily toured across Canada, England and the United States over the past five years. Although he has nothing but respect for Yuk Yuk's, where he holds the highest title of "Triple-A Headliner," Peters doesn't share the same feelings toward the American and Canadian networks when the topic of Indian people on TV is brought up.

"We're the second largest population in the world, but we're invisible on TV," Peters points out. "Everything is either black or white. It's not that people don't want us on TV — many white people ask me why I don't have a sitcom. It's just that the people who are in charge of TV — all those crusty, old, white people — have no idea what Canada looks like right now."

When it comes to the state of the entertainment industry in Canada, does Peters consider Canadian

comedians who move to America to be selling out?

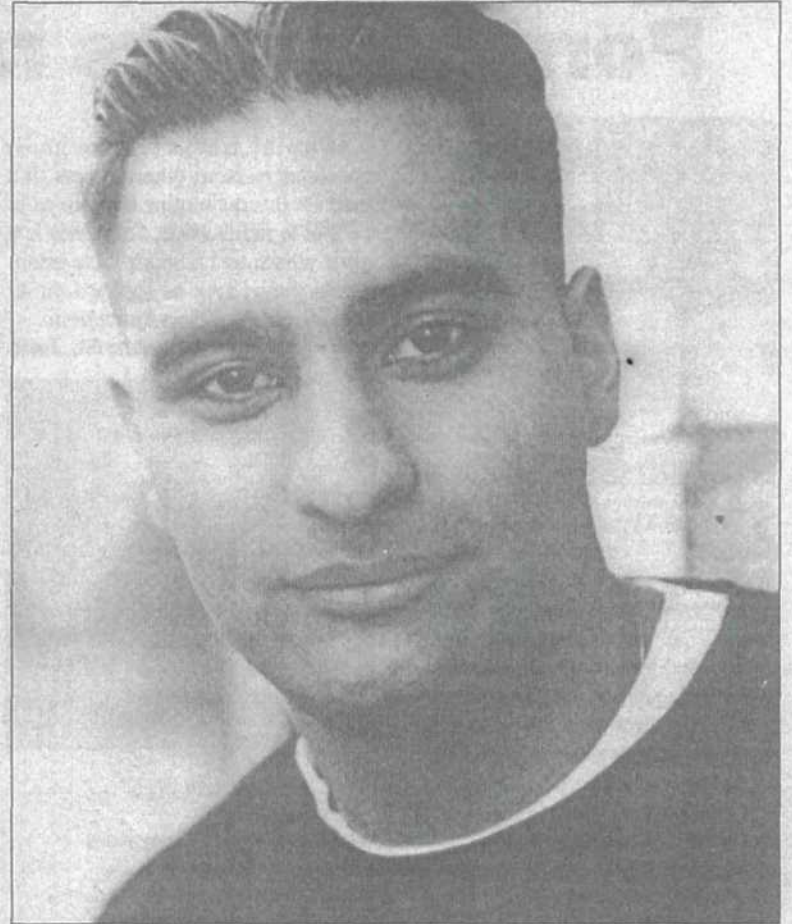
"Not at all," he replies. "What are they supposed to do? You get into this business to become rich and famous. The Canadian entertainment industry doesn't understand that the more competition you have, the better your entertainment will be."

Peters continues by pointing out the obstacles presented by the Canadian entertainment industry may be too much for him to truly succeed here.

"Canada will change because the people who are in power now will be out and the people who are young, like us, will have a different vision," he declares. "Right now, in the States, people are telling comedians, 'Wow, you'd make a good show, let us come up with an idea.' But in Canada, it's like, 'Oh, you want a show? Then come up with some ideas yourself.'"

Fortunately, Peters hasn't forgotten about the people who will make up the future entertainment industry in Canada and has great things to say about fellow comedians like Gavin Stephens.

"Gavin's moving up quick and coming along real good. There's no doubt he'll eventually be a headliner," Peters predicts. "When he was an amateur, I was like his training wheels. I used to take him on the road to open for me. There's a



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**"HEY, HOW YOO DOOING?"** Comedian Russell Peters will attempt to charm the ladies with his stand up routine tonight at The Spoke.

bunch of young guys coming up in the industry besides Gavin, like Jason Rouse, Ron Jossal and Jean Paul. They're going to be the future, I don't just want to make it, I want to see everybody make it."

Russell Peters will perform tonight with Gavin Stephens at 8:30 p.m. at The Spoke. Tickets are \$5 and include admission to after-parties @ The Spoke (Bhangra) and The Wave (Hip-Hop).