

MEET TORY LEAVE-VOTER BREAKING THE MOULD

Picture: WAYNE STARR



Geoff's favourites

- FILM:** Man On The Moon
- BOOK:** Money by Martin Amis
- TV SHOW:** Mad Men
- ACTOR:** Tom Cruise
- COMEDIAN:** Bill Burr
- SONG:** Zoo Station by U2
- SINGER:** Bono
- BAND:** U2
- SPORTSPERSON:** Ben Stokes
- SPORTS TEAM:** AFC Wimbledon
- SPORTING EVENT:** The Ashes
- FOOD:** Thai
- COLOUR:** Blue
- DRINK:** Diet Coke
- CITY:** London
- HOLIDAY DESTINATION:** Ibiza
- BUILDING:** My house
- GADGET:** My Numark decks
- APP:** I don't like apps
- SCHOOL SUBJECT:** English Literature
- FIGURE FROM HISTORY:** Margaret Thatcher
- ANIMAL:** Shark

Laugh AT Brexit

SATURDAY night on the south coast. I'm at Brighton's Old Market theatre, chatting with comedian Geoff Norcott before he's due on stage.

Could be a tough crowd tonight, I suggest. This, after all, is hardcore Remain territory. And Geoff is that rarest of acts - a stand-up who voted Leave and supports the Tories.

"I'm presuming Brighton's going to be full of nice people wearing hemp berets," he chuckles. "But who knows? It might kick off. They might have had too much organic cider."

Actually, I say "acts" but there's nothing fake about Geoff's on-stage persona - that of "an ordinary bloke with maybe slightly old-fashioned opinions."

"Some people wonder about the authenticity of my viewpoint," he tells me. "They think I'm playing a character. That I secretly go home and chant, 'Oh, Jeremy Corbyn, and knit my own underwear. But I wouldn't be comfortable pretending to be something I'm not."

Gobby

Not that a Geoff Norcott gig, let me stress, is some kind of far-right, racist rally.

Geoff is just a working-class 42-year-old South Londoner, who's swimming against the tide of political correctness that dominates today's stand-up scene and challenging left-wing comedy's "morally righteous standpoint".

So, OK, he'll never go down a storm with snowflakes, but this latest UK tour, Taking Liberties, is selling nicely, thanks.

Geoff's not on some kind of mission to "convert" his audiences.

"I'm not there to educate," he insists. "Absolutely not. I always put the laugh a long way ahead of anything else. There's no higher purpose to it."

But he does enjoy the challenge of a crowd that isn't fully on-side. "A reluctant laugh is a brilliant sound," he admits. "I

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW
COMEDIAN
GEOFF NORCOTT



took the show to Glasgow. I insisted I wanted to go there. You'd think, ooh, an English Tory Leave voter in Glasgow? But that audience was fantastic."

Like any stand-up, Geoff will get grief from the odd gobby type in the crowd - sometimes more than just a half-baked heckle. "I've been threatened," he says.

But it's not always been because of his politics. "One guy was so drunk he mistook me for the previous comic, who'd been putting him down for being bald."

"He'd gone to the bar, drunk two whiskeys and tried to start on me. He wanted to talk it through in the car park..."

It helps that Geoff has been in this game a long time. His centre-right political stuff has come about more recently, earning him wider attention ("There's something inherently funny about standing up for the Tories...").

But he's played the circuit since 2001, starting at clubs that couldn't help but toughen him up. "You never feel more alive than when it's kicking off all around you," he admits.

Geoff is convinced that going out on the road is the best way to get the true measure of Britain right now. "You're reminded that people are still grown-ups."

"The majority aren't having the sort of dialogue you get on social media - what Sam Smith's calling himself this week. They're just getting on with their lives."

● **Geoff's tour, Taking Liberties, continues until November 26. Tickets at livenation.co.uk/artist/geoff-norcott-tickets. Geoff's podcast, *What Most People Think*, is available via the usual sources.**



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