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**News Flash**

**Said with a punch:**

Russell Peters did not rely on YouTube or Google Video to win fans. The stand-up comedian shares with Kajari Bhattacharya his plans for an India tour

I don't think anyone in the stand-up game can become an overnight success by way of the Internet... I feed off the audience

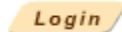
Just a comedian. That's what you might say of Russell Peters. Mimicking and cracking rehashed jokes does not become Peters. He is today one of America's finest stand-up comedians and with two seasons of BBC's Late Night East under his cap, no one doubts his talent. But few are aware of his roots ~ India and more specifically Calcutta.

Peters' popularity soared in the US after executives heard sound clips from his 2004 Canadian TV special that started making the rounds on the Internet. His acts draw quite a bit on the life of a foreigner growing up in Toronto. "When I started my career in 1989 there was no Internet or Youtube. Someone put my 2003 Comedy Now on the Internet and things started to get pretty crazy. A lot of comedians have started dumping their stuff on Youtube and Google Video with varying degrees of success. I don't think anyone in the stand-up game can become an overnight success by way of the Internet... You really can't compare watching something online to seeing somebody performing live. I feed off the audience, and every audience is different, so every show is slightly different,"

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says Peters of the importance the Internet plays in the success of a comic artist.

The Anglo Indian was born in Toronto and grew up in Brampton, Ontario. His family moved to Brampton in 1975. Now he lives in Los Angeles. Speaking of his Calcutta origin, he says, "All of my mother's family, going back to my great grandmother, were born in Calcutta. Even my brother, who's also my manager, was born in Calcutta. I have uncles, aunts and several cousins who still live in Calcutta."

While growing up, Peters had his fill of George Carlin, Steve Martin and Cheech and Chong. His taste in comedy on television has changed. "My favourite shows were and are Friends, Entourage and Curb Your Enthusiasm. They're all very funny shows. Friends became funny after the third season. Entourage is very real and very accurate to the business, and the guys talk the way real guys talk. I wasn't a fan of Seinfeld, but I really like Curb. Larry David says and does things that are funny and real."

Being of Indian origin, he enjoys the support of the community living abroad. "The Indian community around the world has been extremely supportive of me over the last several years and I'm very grateful for that. But so have other Asian communities like the Chinese, Filipino and Pakistani communities. In Canada, the majority of my audience is white Canadians, Europeans and people from the Caribbean."

Some of the highpoints in Peters' career are the nominations for Canada's prestigious Gemini Awards, appearances in Montreal's Just For Laughs Comedy Festival, the Winnipeg Comedy Festival, and the Edinburgh Comedy Festival, television appearances in CBC-TV's Comics!, Club Class on Channel 5 (UK) and two one-hour Comedy Now! specials on Canada's Comedy Network. In April 2005, he became the first South Asian to headline and sell-out the famous Apollo Theatre in New York City. With 17 years of experience, jitterbugs are still his friends before a show. "I get excited before a show. I've been doing this for 17 years now and don't get nervous anymore. My advice to aspiring stand-up comedians is the same advice that George Carlin gave me: get on stage as much as possible.

Some of the comedians people should watch are: Paul Chowdhry (UK), Paul Sinha (UK), Rajiv Satyal (USA) and Vijai Nathan (USA)."

Peters is finalising the Indian leg of his tour. "It will take place in March. I'll be visiting Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore."