

comedy of errors

FUNNYMAN **NICK KROLL** GOT HIS BREAK ON ONE OF THE WORST TV SHOWS EVER. NOW LOOK AT HIM.

BY DAN CRANE.
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
LAUREN DUKOFF

GEN
TUS
032

COMEDIAN NICK KROLL could be 2009's poster boy for alt comedy if he believed in terms like *alt comedy*, which he doesn't. Kroll is in that sweet spot that any funnyman perennially busting his ass always dreams of occupying. He's a regular on the Los Angeles circuit, frequently doing stand up playing characters at Upright Citizens Brigade and Largo. He wrote and starred in two of the funniest videos on Funnyordie.com: "Rich Dicks," now being developed into a TV show, and "The Ed Hardy Boyz," which even Christian Audigier (the designer it contemptuously parodies) loved. Kroll has minor roles in Judd Apatow's upcoming *Get Him to the Greek*, as well as in *Date Night* with Steve Carell and Tina Fey. He lends a voice to HBO's animated comedy *The Life & Times of Tim*, and now he's co-starring on *The League*, FX's raunchy and hilarious new comedy about a group of dudes who obsess over fantasy football. I can't help but wonder: How does this guy even have time to have lunch with me?

Nevertheless, over an heirloom tomato, peach, and burrata salad at Cube restaurant in Hollywood, Kroll—who insists he's not a foodie ("I don't have the mental capacity for anything more than comedy")—is spinning an inspiring tale of hard work finally paying off.

The story begins with the workshops Kroll took at the UCB Theater in New York City while he was a freshman at Georgetown University. He continued doing shows at UCB, wrote for MTV's *Human Giant*, and lent bits of snarky commentary to several of VH1's *Most Awesomely Bad* countdown shows. Then his wildest dreams came true. Sort of.

"I came out here [to L.A.] for the Emmy-winning television show *Caveman*," he jokes, referring to the critically lambasted sitcom based on the Geico commercials. "We shot the 12 episodes, and it took off. It was huge. I chose that we shouldn't do any more. We should just go out on top like *Seinfeld*. The network and the public and the critics agreed..." He laughs. The show was canceled after six episodes and had the dubious honor of landing on the *Chicago Tribune's* list of the top 25 worst TV shows ever.

Sure, Kroll, now 31, landed his first starring role in a sitcom that tanked miserably, but it got him out to L.A. (and got him on *The View*, which is one of the funniest bits of television you'll ever see—find it on YouTube). More importantly, it gave him the network stamp of legitimacy. In other words: "This guy is bona fide," he explains. "He is certifiably willing to get four hours of makeup put on every morning to then be completely thrashed by the critics."

Kroll's new show, *The League*, looks much more promising. It's an improvised, single-camera ensemble sitcom in the style of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. "The story they tell is that Jeff Schaffer [the show's creator, who also wrote for *Seinfeld* and *Curb*] was in three fantasy-football leagues, and his wife was like, 'If you're gonna spend your time doing this, you better make some money on it!'"

Kroll is part of a cast that includes Mark Duplass, from indie cult hit *The Puffy Chair*, and *Human Giant's* Paul Scheer. Having so many funny, talented guys to work with, says Kroll, gives the show its color. "You've got Steve [Rannazzisi], who is, like, a man, a guy, a real dude. I'm, like, half dude, maybe quarter dude," he says, offering me a bite of potted duck on warm farro with pomegranate ("You've gotta try this—amazing"), underscoring, perhaps intentionally, his lack of dudeness.

Kroll loves the collaborative nature of the show, and he attributes much of his recent success to just being part of a peer group that supports one another. "It's all about being available and being open to this ability to achieve things," he says, then adds self-deprecatingly, "that sounds like a fucking self-help group."

Does the born-and-bred New Yorker see himself living in L.A. five years down the line?

"That depends where the primo coke is, you know?"

stylist: [djuna.bel](#). grooming:
[jamie.greenberg](#) for mark
cosmetics at the wall group.
jacket by [endovanera](#), shirt by
[band.of.outsiders](#), shoes by
[marc.jacobs](#), his own jeans.