

EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 7AM ET

Press Release

For immediate distribution



**JUST FOR LAUGHS REVEALS THE HIGHLY-ANTICIPATED
PROGRAMMING LINEUP FOR IT'S FIRST-EVER ONLINE,
*JUST FOR LAUGHS FESTIVAL***

Kevin Hart's global comedy brand, Laugh Out Loud (LOL) is the official festival programming partner

Featuring some of today's top performing comedy artists, the first slate of artists announced today include,

**HANNAH GADSBY – JO KOY – HOWIE MANDEL – KENYA BARRIS – SARAH COOPER
AMBER RUFFIN – TITUSS BURGESS – NICOLE BYER – TRIXIE MATTEL – DEANNE SMITH
JENNY HAGEL – ANDY KINDLER – Crave's CANADA'S DRAG RACE
CBS All Access' TOONING OUT THE NEWS – VARIETY'S 10 COMICS TO WATCH –
NEW FACES: CREATORS!**

Montréal (September 9, 2020) – After much preparation, in an extraordinary and challenging time for all, renowned comedy leader Just For Laughs is proud to reveal the first slate of programming for the **Just For Laughs Festival**, presented by La Capitale Insurance and Financial Services, in collaboration with Loto Québec. JFL's first-ever 100% virtual and 100% free online festival will take place on October 9 & 10, 2020. Featuring over 100 artists, **Just For Laughs Festival** will feature special programming focusing on today's timely and important topics, with a thought-provoking comedy spin aiming to inspire and engage audiences near and far.

Excitingly this year, JFL and Kevin Hart's global comedy brand, Laugh Out Loud (LOL), are expanding their longstanding relationship. LOL's experiential division, LOL X, will serve as the official programming partner for the **Just For Laughs Festival**, curating a robust lineup for their very own comedy room within the festival which will be dedicated to celebrating Comedy in Color, featuring a mix of live stand-up performances from top-tier talent and emerging comedians, virtual panel discussions, live podcast tapings, and more.

Just For Laughs has worked tirelessly over the recent months to curate an inimitable comedy experience that will include multiple digital comedy rooms running simultaneously with a hybrid of programming in forms of

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In Conversations, live discussions, and panels, designed specifically for online audiences. Promising to be riveting, original, and interactive, the **Just For Laughs Festival** will be a platform for discovery, satisfying all comedy fans' cravings for new, live content after the industry's abrupt disruption as a result of COVID-19.

"As a leader in the global comedy industry, but also as a true digital comedy pioneer, we are very proud to offer this special edition in an optimized free edition format, enabling us to do what we do best, curating and creating the best of comedy, while making it more accessible than ever, to all fans across the globe", emphasizes **Charles Décarie, President and CEO of the Just for Laughs Group**. "We are truly able to deliver a Festival that lives up to Just for Laughs standards. Our spectators will be thrilled to safely reunite with their favorite artists - Rest assured that we will be back in a big way in 2021 with exciting plans for the comedy fans and industry who travel to join us every Summer".

"Our goal with the Just For Laughs Festival is to really engage with the global comedy community, and have some important discussions regarding big societal issues in a way that's still entertaining, with comedic relief provided by some of today's brightest comedy stars", shared **Bruce Hills, President of Just For Laughs**. "I could not be more honoured that Kevin Hart's LOL is our official programming partner, working alongside our talented programming team, to offer the best possible, first-ever, 100% digital comedy festival."

"Just For Laughs is an unparalleled comedic institution and we are delighted to expand our relationship with the festival and usher in an exciting new phase for our experiential division LOL X!," said **Jeff Clanagan, President of Laugh Out Loud**. "Just For Laughs is the perfect partner to shine a spotlight on the emerging, diverse voices that are shaping the future of our Comedy In Color franchise and we look forward to unveiling more in the coming weeks."

The first slate of artists joining this year's **Just For Laughs Festival** include:

HANNAH GADSBY: Tasmania's own Hannah Gadsby stopped stand-up comedy in its tracks with her multi award-winning show, *Nanette*, which played to sold out houses in Australia, the UK and New York. Its launch on Netflix, and subsequent Emmy win, took *Nanette* (and Hannah) to the world. Hannah's difficult second album (which was also her eleventh solo show) was named *Douglas*, after her dog. *Douglas* was a smash hit, moving beyond the trauma at the centre of *Nanette* and instead letting the world see the view from Hannah's brain – one that sees the world differently but with breathtaking clarity. Earning her an Emmy nomination, her recent comedy special *Douglas* is now available to stream on Netflix.

JO KOY: Awarded "Stand-Up Comedian of the Year" at the 2018 Montréal Just For Laughs Festival, comedian Jo Koy sells out theatres and arenas across the world. Koy's most recent variety special *Jo Koy: In His Elements* was just released on Netflix this summer. Next year, the comedian will be releasing his first autobiography, *Mixed Plate* where he uncovers the stories behind his stand-up: the conflict, the drama, and the laughter as he struggles to find his place in the entertainment industry, a country and the world.

HOWIE MANDEL Emmy-nominated comedian, actor, host and producer, Howie Mandel, has remained a constant force in show business for more than 30 years. Mandel currently serves as a judge on NBC's smash competition series, *America's Got Talent* in addition to hosting the widely popular hit game show *Deal or No Deal*. He has worked as a host, actor, and/or executive producer on countless other TV shows including *Take It All* and *Howie Do It* for NBC, and recently released his first solo special in 20 years on Showtime, titled *Howie Mandel Presents Howie Mandel at the Howie Mandel Comedy Club*. Mandel's versatile career has encompassed virtually all aspects of the entertainment spectrum, including television, film and stage. From his work on the Emmy Award-winning *St. Elsewhere*, to the international animated children's series *Bobby's*

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World, Mandel has become a mainstay of the American comedy scene and he continues to perform as many as 200+ stand-up comedy shows yearly across North America.

KENYA BARRIS: A Rhodes Scholar. A triathlete. A safe driver. Kenya Barris is none of these. And while Barris is widely celebrated as an award-winning writer, producer, director, and now, actor, it may surprise many to learn just how under-recognized for over-accessorizing he truly is. Barris is perhaps best known for creating the hit comedy series *black-ish*, which quickly became a critical and popular success amassing numerous awards and launching two spin-offs, *grown-ish* and *mixed-ish*. Still, of all his many accolades, Barris remains most humbled by being named the proud recipient of the prestigious 1998 Federal Tax Lien. Notwithstanding a decades-long addiction to Afrin nasal-spray, Barris hasn't stopped creating television shows, among them the recently-launched Netflix original series *#blackAF* and the variety sketch series *Astronomy Club*. Barris has also further expanded his work into features and will release two films in the coming year, *Coming to America 2*, the highly anticipated sequel to John Landis' 1980s classic starring Eddie Murphy, and an adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Witches* with Robert Zemeckis directing and Octavia Spencer and Anne Hathaway set to star. Along with this bio, Barris has several highly-anticipated projects in the works, including a feature-length musical about Juneteenth with Pharrell Williams as his partner on the project; *EnterGalactic*, a first-of-its-kind adult animated music series based on Kid Cudi's upcoming album of the same name; a reboot of the family comedy *Cheaper By The Dozen*; an animated feature based on the songs of Bob Marley; and a remake of the classic sports comedy *White Men Can't Jump*, among others.

SARAH COOPER: In April 2020, Sarah went viral with her brilliant satirical lip-sync impressions of the current U.S. President. She has been retweeted and praised by the likes of Lin-Manuel Miranda, Ben Stiller, Halle Berry, Chrissy Teigen, Jane Lynch, Jerry Seinfeld, Seth Meyers and Bette Midler amongst others. These "how to" videos have been seen by tens of millions of people including her "How to Medical" video which has been viewed over 20 million times and counting. Sarah's first variety special *SARAH COOPER: EVERYTHING'S FINE*, directed by Natasha Lyonne and executive produced by Maya Rudolph, will premiere on Netflix this Fall. She is currently writing a new show for CBS adapted from her best-selling book *How To Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings*. Sarah was named one of Variety Magazine's "10 Comics To Watch For 2020" and guest hosted *Jimmy Kimmel Live* in August 2020. Prior to her online success, Sarah also wrote the best-selling book *100 Tricks to Appear Smart in Meetings*. Sarah is next set to pen an auto-biographical take of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* for Audible. Her social platform is in the millions and continues rising daily.

AMBER RUFFIN: Emmy and WGA Award Nominee Amber Ruffin is a writer and performer for NBC's *Late Night with Seth Meyers* and was the first African-American female to write for a late-night network talk show in the US. Ruffin's own series *The Amber Ruffin Show* is coming soon to Peacock. Ruffin wrote and performed on Comedy Central's *Detroiters* and is a regular narrator on *Drunk History*, and has also written for the HBO's *A Black Lady Sketch Show*.

TITUSS BURGESS: Emmy and SAG nominated actor, musician and writer, Tituss Burgess is quickly emerging as one of the entertainment industry's most versatile and dynamic performers, with his work in television and theatre generating both critical and commercial acclaim. Rising to fame in his iconic role as "Titus Andromedon" in Netflix's *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, Burgess can currently be seen as the host of Quibi's hit new cooking competition, *Dishmantled* and in Apple TV+'s *Central Park*, an animated musical comedy series that follows the Tillermans, a family that lives in Central Park. Later this year, Burgess will appear in MGM's Aretha Franklin biopic *Respect*; as well as the up-coming Netflix music competition show, *Sing On!*

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NICOLE BYER: Nicole Byer is one of the most versatile and recognizable voices in the comedy landscape today, currently starring as host of Netflix's Emmy-nominated competition baking series *Nailed It*. She can be seen as producer and star of the scripted comedy series *Loosely Exactly Nicole*, which debuted on MTV and aired its second season on Facebook Watch. Byer also continues to host her very popular weekly podcast *Why Won't You Date Me?*

TRIXIE MATTEL: Trixie Mattel is the stage name of Brian Michael Firkus, an American singer, actor, drag queen and recognized "Skinny Legend." Trixie is the winner of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* season 3 (originally competing on season 7). He is also a Billboard Heatseekers #1 charting recording artist, a wildly successful theater touring act, and one half of a comic duo on Viceland's *The Trixie and Katya Show*.

DEANNE SMITH: Canadian Comedy Award winner, DeAnne Smith, has performed at festivals all over the world including Just For Laughs, JFL42, JFL NorthWest, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, the New Zealand International Comedy Festival, and Austin's Moontower Comedy Fest, just to name a few. She's also been on TV all over the world, including appearances on *Last Comic Standing* and *The Late Late Show*. Her video *Straight Men, Step Your Game Up* has over 46 million views. Her Netflix half-hour comedy special, the critically-praised *Gentleman Elf*, debuted January 2019. She is currently developing a sitcom for CBC.

JENNY HAGEL: Jenny Hagel is a TV writer and comedy performer who is also the Executive Producer and Head Writer of *The Amber Ruffin Show* (Peacock). She also writes for NBC's *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. Hagel's other writing credits include the Golden Globe Awards, TruTV's *Impractical Jokers*, Logo's *Big Gay Sketch Show*, and Head Writer of Fuse's *White Guy Talk Show*.

ANDY KINDLER: Andy Kindler currently recurs on Fox's hit animation, *Bob's Burgers* and Comedy Central's long-running *Tosh.O*. He is also a regular on the critically-praised Canadian web series, *But I'm Chris Jericho*. Andy was the host of Season 4 and 5 of Hulu's standup series, *Coming to the Stage* as well as a series judge on the seventh season of NBC's *Last Comic Standing*, the star of two half-hour *Comedy Central Presents* specials and was a frequent guest and correspondent on *The Late Show with David Letterman* with over 40 appearances. He has previously recurred on *Everybody Loves Raymond*, Showtime's *I'm Dying Up Here*, Disney's *Wizards of Waverly Place*, IFC's *Maron* and *Comedy Central's The Daily Show*. Every year Andy delivers his infamous State of the Industry Address at the Just for Laughs Festival in Montréal.

CRAVE'S CANADA'S DRAG RACE: Beyond the eleganza extravaganza, the drama, and the competition, there is fierce and cheeky humour. On Saturday Oct. 10, viewers are invited to a live conversation with the Top 4 finalists of *Crave's Canada's Drag Race*, JIMBO, Rita Baga, Scarlett Bobo, and Canada's First Drag Superstar, Priyanka! Also joining the Queens is Canada's Drag Race judge Stacey McKenzie, as they spill the tea on their time on the first season, and how laughter, love, and inclusivity plays a huge part in making it so successful.

CBS ALL ACCESS' TOONING OUT THE NEWS: CBS All Access' animated daily news satire series *Tooning Out the News* joins Just for Laughs for a panel with Executive Producer RJ Fried ('James Smartwood'), Co-executive producer/ head writer Zach Smilovitz, Jack Bensinger ('Tyler Templeton'), Maureen Monahan ('Kylie Weaver'), Naima Pearce ('Tory Hughes'), Ike Ufomadu ('Dr. Ike Bloom') and a conversation with their animated counterparts. The discussion will focus on the upcoming U.S. election and world events.

VARIETY'S 10 COMICS TO WATCH presented by Cohen Gardner LLP: One of the biggest events in the comedy world each year is Variety's unveiling of their annual "10 Comics To Watch" feature. Catch the best and brightest from "10 Comics To Watch" and let them show you why they made the 2020 list.

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NEW FACES: CREATORS: This showcase features the up-and-coming influencers and creators who are contributing to the evolution of the comedy landscape as we know it!

Festival Juste pour rire: More accessible than ever with three viewing experiences

On the French-language side, you can't miss the terrific programming of this hybrid edition, with three innovative methods for consuming content. Whether they're presented live from the Yoop Montreal space at Place des Arts, or from the Théâtre St-Denis, or from the Festival micro-site designed specifically for the occasion, this year's galas, concept shows and major conversation events will be true to the event you love – an event that's been lighting up the streets of Montreal for 38 years now. Among the offerings is the return of the now-celebrated Soirées Carte Blanche at the Théâtre St-Denis, which may be presented before live audiences, just like the Rire en français gala. The partnership with the Yoop space will make it possible to present several shows before a live audience while also broadcasting them in real time via the digital platform, enabling a wider viewership to enjoy the shows through the sale of unlimited-capacity access. And to close out this edition, catch the biggest names in comedy and their guests during the digital free portion of the Festival on October 9th and 10th, including excerpts from their previously-taped performances posted online, along with 100% exclusive content!

Mark your calendars and tune in to www.hahaha.com/en/2020festival to join us. 100% virtual. 100% free!

Additional artists, events and show times to be announced in the coming weeks.

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

The **Just For Laughs Group** would like to thank all its partners, who have been tremendous allies in bringing about the success of this initiative. First, we'd like to acknowledge the support of **La Capitale Insurance and Financial Services, Loto-Québec, Laugh Out Loud (LOL), CTV Comedy Channel, and Variety**. We also extend our thanks to our public partners: the **City of Montréal, SODEC** and the **Government of Canada**.

Find us on social **#JFLFestival**

Facebook: @justforlaughs

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About the Just for Laughs Group

Founded in 1983, the Just for Laughs Group is the most important player in the global comedy industry. Under the management of Groupe CH, Bell Media and ICM Partners, the company is an international powerhouse in the creation of multi-platform comedy content. Every year, it entertains millions of spectators with its festivals on Canadian and international stages, in Montréal – the biggest comedy event in the world – as well as in Toronto, Vancouver, Sydney and Bermuda. The Group organizes shows featuring thousands of comics from Canada and other countries, including established artists as well as up-and-comers; stages its own comedy shows and musicals; produces touring shows; broadcasts digital and televised content (notably *Gags*, which is shown in 150 countries and followed by an online audience of ten million on YouTube); manages talented artists; and is the originator of the ComedyPRO and JPR Pro industry conferences. www.hahaha.com

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Source: Just for Laughs Group

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