

Edinburgh Comedy Awards 2023 – winners announced

The winners of the Edinburgh Comedy Awards which is the highest honour at the Fringe have been announced.

- The winner for Sky Best Comedy Show has been won by Ahir Shah
- Urooj Ashfaq has won the DLT Best Newcomer Award
- The Show for Gareth Richards has won the Victoria Wood Award

Nica Burns, Director of Edinburgh Comedy Awards, had already said at the beginning of the Fringe how happy she was that the Comedy Awards had been saved by new sponsors. In May there was a real threat that the prestigious awards would not be run because of lack of sponsorship. She also confirmed that “plans are now in place to secure the future of the Edinburgh Comedy Awards for the long term”.

At the awards ceremony Ms Burns said: “Two outstanding shortlists, fielding so much talent, led to very intense lively judging debates. It was nail-biting to the final votes. All our shortlisted comedians will be an important part of the comedy scene for years to come.

“Congratulations to Ahir whose blending of his family’s personal story is funny yet emotional, political yet positive, clever and engaging, powerful and tender. His craft as a comedian is so extraordinary that he inspires both tears and laughter. It’s the most wonderful experience.

“Urooj’s arrival in the UK is a breath-taking success story. Working in her second language she’s never experienced a UK audience before. Her ability to engage us immediately demonstrated her natural instinct as a comedian. She is a delightful personality who makes you smile even before she tells you the joke that will make you laugh. Bringing a fresh, new voice to our comedy scene she has a very exciting future.”

Adnan Ahmed, Chair: Producer, Sky Studios said: “This year’s incredible nominees prove how vibrant the Edinburgh comedy scene is; we were wowed by the quality of all the shows. In such a strong year, it felt impossible to choose just one, but Ahir’s is a worthy winner and he has delivered a truly superb show...”

Donald Taffner Jr, DLT Entertainment said: “I have seen 113 shows so far of my booked 127 and every show on the DLT Entertainment Best Newcomer shortlist. We at DLT are proud to be supporting the next generation of great comedians. What fantastic debuts! I look forward to seeing how their work develops in years to come. Congratulations to the talented Urooj on an extraordinary achievement. Her future is bright.”

A spokesperson for The Victoria Wood Foundation said: “‘A Show for Gareth’ is an extraordinary initiative by his fellow friends and comics Mark Simmons and Danny Ward and embraced by the comedy community and audiences alike. Victoria would have been part of it had she been here. We are delighted that this is the first of the Victoria Wood Awards and combines her spirit with that of the Fringe.”



Urooj Ashfaq



The late Gareth Richards



Ahir Shah

Ahir Shah, nominated in 2017 and 2018, started his comedy career at 15 doing open mic nights. Super intelligent, articulate, politically astute, a writer and performer on BBC Two's 'The Mash Report', Shah has appeared on many TV panel shows including 'Have I Got News for You' and 'Mock the Week' as well as Radio 4's 'The News Quiz'. His award-winning show 'Ends' skilfully blends his family story and its generational progress within contemporary Britain.

Urooj Ashfaq, making her UK debut and working in her second language, has won DLT Entertainment Best Newcomer. Hailing from Mumbai, she was discovered by The Soho Theatre, renowned for their comedy programme, who have been championing South Asian comics and bringing them to the Fringe for more than a decade. Likeable, edgy and with charm in abundance, she's thoroughly engaging and gives us an evening full of laughter. Her show covers everything from her parents' divorce – shocking within her culture – and her Muslim identity to her thoughts on pornography. 'Oh No!' is a show that's honest and understandable, offering a new perspective to British audiences. Urooj is a fresh, exciting addition to the UK comedy scene.

The **Victoria Wood Award** – which is at the discretion of the panel – is awarded to '**Show for Gareth Richards**' which truly captured the spirit of the Fringe, as comedians came together to support the family of Fringe favourite Gareth Richards in an extraordinary act of collegiality. Nominated for the Best Newcomer Award in 2010, the hugely loved and horribly missed friend and colleague was due to perform again this year before he was tragically killed in a car accident on his way back from a gig. His close friends and fellow top comedians Mark Simmons and Danny Ward decided to fulfil Richards' Free Fringe performance slot. They organised a daily comedy mixed-bill show. More than eighty of the biggest stars of the UK stand-up circuit volunteered to perform, including Frank Skinner,

Dara Ó Briain, Jack Whitehall, Shaparak Khorsandi, Adam Kay and Stewart Lee. With 100% of audience donations going to Gareth's young family, the heart-warming tribute show quickly became a sell-out hit raising over £18,000 to date. The Award helps them exceed their target for the Festival of £20,000.