



Answering  
the call of the  
mountains in  
Alaska

COMEDY,  
LIKE SKIING  
AND SNOWBOARDING,  
IS ALL ABOUT SHARED EXPERIENCES,  
SO IT'S APPROPRIATE THAT SNOWBOARDING  
FUNNY MAN MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE HAS  
PLENTY OF TALES TO GO ROUND. HE LETS  
EMMA MORRIS IN ON THE GAG

# MAN MOUNTAIN AND MUPPETS



**D**espite the frosty December morning, I'd cycled to meet Marcus Brigstocke, and once he started explaining to me how passionately he felt about the environment, I was glad I had. Outside his beautiful south-west London home sits his Superbrig motorhome – no pun intended, it's a bonafide brand – waiting for its next venture to the Alps. Whether that is the family trip to Morzine at half-term, Brigstocke's next press trip to Chamonix, or to the Altitude festival in March, there'll be no unnecessary flights taken by this household. Brigstocke genuinely loves the mountains, and it's not just about

the riding for him – he enjoys every single minute out there, confessing to being a bit of a holiday Nazi. There's no chance of a lie-in to nurse your hangover – on his watch it's first lifts at 8am, and no stopping until they close. It's this passion that inspired him seven years ago to start doing comedy gigs in Alpine bars, and last year led to the Alps's first comedy festival, Altitude.

A family man who doesn't drink, although does have party animal Russell Brand's phone number, his time in the mountains is precious. Seven years ago Brigstocke turned to snowboarding when he developed an unusually large lumpy ankle (he showed me, it's very



large) that, despite his assurances that it's normal, prevented him from skiing. "I'd previously thought snowboarders were w\*\*\*\*\*s who didn't know what they were doing, that they scrape all the snow off the mountain and all that other stuff skiers used to say, but when I could no longer ski because of my ankle, I couldn't not be in the mountains – it's more to me than just the skiing. So I had a lesson with Chucky, a Canadian snowboard instructor who was everything you could possibly hope for in a snowboard instructor – he said gnarly in his second sentence – and the rest, as they say, is history."



Brigstocke is now a confirmed snowboarder but ventured back to skis last season when he took part in the celebrity slalom competition on *Ski Sunday*. But he felt presenter Graham Bell was disappointed with him – he only managed to add 0.03 seconds to his time after a whole day of training, which to ex-Olympian Bell probably seemed unimpressive. Maybe it was something to do with not having skied for six years, but he rates himself as a

**"THE ONLY THING THAT SHOULD GO UPWARDS IS THE CHAIRLIFT"**

"pretty good snowboarder", not fussed with getting air – "the only thing that should go upwards is the chairlift". He prefers "steep and deep" and some of his best days on the snow have been chasing the powder, but lack of fitness later in the day is the one thing that stops him enjoying the mountains to their fullest. He has those moments, like many of us, when "everything is burning, and you think 'I really love this but if I don't stop I'm going to die'", so he recently employed ➤

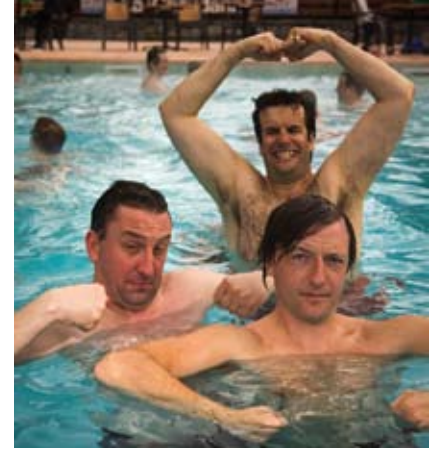


**Clockwise, from above: Marcus takes a rare pause on the slopes; The funny men of the Altitude Festival; “My gag wasn’t that bad...”; “But yours is...”**

a personal trainer. Heading off for his second session after our meeting, he confesses that after the first he went outside, took in a breath of cold air, and threw up.

We’ve all enjoyed some comedy moments while on the mountain and fortunately, as a comedian, Brigstocke has had his fair share. The most embarrassing of these was when, at 19, he joined his 12-year-old brother’s group of friends on his school trip. “We found a jump and I told them all to go over it and wait the other side to check me out. I got in the tuck position and realised too late that the lip off the jump was vertical – while I was still in the air I knew my ski holiday was over... and I just kept going up. I broke my shoulder and my finger. It was such classic arrogance.”

Brigstocke began his career in comedy in the usual way – as the class clown, once escaping under the school fence to entertain a local nursing home



with his jokes. When he failed to get into drama school, a friend called him and told him he was “crap at acting anyway”, would be better off in comedy and had booked him a gig with only six days to prepare. Brigstocke loved it, and particularly loved performing at the Bear Pit in Edinburgh, where heckling consists of throwing beer down on the artist below. It was in 1996, when he won the BBC New Comedian, that he realised he could make a living out of jokes. “When I was a teenager I could repeat the whole of Robin Williams *Live at the Met* but it didn’t occur to me back then that it was something you could do for life as it looked so magical to me, then I won the award and it all took off really quickly.”

Now a major funny talent performing in the UK and beyond, he’s taken up a near residency on BBC Radio 4’s 6.30pm comedy slot and has an impressive list of TV and film credits, including *Love Actually*. Whether he’s taking his inspiration from *The Muppet Show* (“I’m a lifelong fan, it was always Fozzy as a kid but I now really like Rowlf, the dog”) or *Star Wars*, he is simply very entertaining. And just to hammer home the point, he treats me to the most amusing lightsaber demonstration I’ve ever seen. When you’re constantly making people laugh it’s no wonder he takes his holidays so seriously, and with Brigstocke as committed to making us laugh as he is to his snowboarding, March’s Altitude Festival is top priority for him and us.

**AFTER THE FIRST TRAINING SESSION HE WENT OUTSIDE, TOOK IN A BREATH OF COLD AIR, AND THREW UP**

