

In conversation with Jerry Seinfeld

I had a good ride with the TV series. I got to enjoy big-time show business. But what I love is just sitting with a notepad. Being a stand-up comedian is a very nice life.

Perched on the edge of a hotel sofa in Los Angeles, one of the world's richest and most powerful

entertainers tucks into a heap of cookies with childlike zeal. It's not just proof of Jerry Seinfeld's sweet tooth — after all, his regular prop in the 180 episodes of his eponymous sitcom was a bowl of sugary cereal — but a sight that somehow crystallises his appeal. In an age where even many twentysomething celebrities seem tired and jaded, this 53 year-old still has a fizzy energy that complements his boyish looks. Then there's his undiminished curiosity about the world and everything that inhabits it — throw any random topic at him, and chances are he'll have an angle on it.

Born Jerome Seinfeld in 1954, he made his earliest observations about fellow students at New York's Massapequa High School. Slowly drawn into the world of stand-up comedy, it was during the mid-'70s that he threw himself completely into the life, painstakingly honing material and often performing for tiny crowds. Despite his intense work ethic, it wasn't until 1989 that Seinfeld got his big break. But breaks don't come much bigger. Television network NBC commissioned him and fellow stand-up Larry David to produce a show in which he starred as a fictionalised version of himself. Eschewing such niceties as plot and drama, Seinfeld was completely radical in that there was no noticeable progression for any of the characters: the rule of the show was, "No hugging, no learning."



On Spielberg...

"I made a little joke to him: 'Somebody should make a movie about bees and call it *Bee Movie*.' Right there he got out his phone and called Jeffrey Katzenberg!"



On Pulp Fiction...

"I think it was definitely influenced by our show. That scene about the Big Mac, when Larry [David] and I saw that, we went, 'Hey, that's our stuff!'"



On CG animation...

"I completely went down the wormhole of the world of CG animation. I helped them frame and animate every single action in the 1,400 shots of the movie."

Edgy and intelligent, the series began with middling ratings. But by its fourth season it had snowballed into a phenomenon, winning Emmys as well as a huge audience, and breaking TV taboos with episodes like *The Contest*, in which the lead quartet bet to see who can go longest without masturbating. In 1998, after nine seasons, Seinfeld put the show to bed, turning down NBC's offer to pay him \$5 million per episode for continuing it. He then stepped quietly out of the limelight, only making a slight return with 2002's *Comedian*, a documentary focusing on the process of stand-up.

This year, though, he's finally back in a big way. Teaming up with Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg, Seinfeld is the force behind *Bee Movie*, *DreamWorks'*

latest CG animation, and he's clearly been fired up by it. Even the movie's marketing bears his unique stamp, like the hilarious live-action trailers starring Spielberg, Chris Rock and Eddie Izzard (who's not even in the film), or the promo stunt at Cannes, where Seinfeld, dressed in a bumblebee costume, zip-lined off the roof of La Croisette, quipping, "They tell me Scorsese did the same thing last year for *The Departed*."

Empire sent Deputy News Editor Nick de Semlyen on an inter-continental journey to meet with the legendary funnyman in Amsterdam and then LA. "During our second meeting, Seinfeld demonstrated his impressive observational powers by stopping the interview five minutes in to ask where we'd met before. There's

a steely focus behind the jovial veneer — he's not exactly Robin Williams — but the man's genial nature and precision wit make a few hours in his company fly by."

EMPIRE: Is it true that *Bee Movie* began with a dinner date with Steven Spielberg?

SEINFELD: It is true. I had called him previously to ask him to direct an American Express commercial I was working on for the internet. He wasn't able to do it but he said, "Why don't we have dinner?" I was extremely excited about meeting him. I got up the next morning, had a shower and then just sat in a chair at home, dressed and waiting for the dinner party. At the restaurant — it was Spielberg, his wife, me and my wife — there was an awkward >>

lull in the conversation, so I made a little joke: "Somebody should make a movie about bees and call it Bee Movie." Right there and then he got out his cell phone and called (*DreamWorks animation chief*) Jeffrey Katzenberg! But I still only had a title, and I certainly didn't want to make a movie. Next time I'll keep my mouth shut.

EMPIRE: What do you find interesting about bees?

SEINFELD: Their utopian society fascinates me. Honey fascinates me. Flowers. That they are technically aeronautically unable to fly but do it anyway. The hexagon, that they invented to build their hives, which is the world's strongest geometric shape. That they all have weapons, they carry these weapons around with them. The bright stripes, the little roundness. I don't know, they're just funny to me. Just the perfect character to build a comedy around.

EMPIRE: Are there other animals you find inherently funny?

SEINFELD: The horse has always amused me a lot. I used to do a bit about it: "Do they know they're racing? What do they think is happening when the jockey is hitting them and yelling at them?" It was a whole thing about, you know, they get to the end and think, "Why all the rush? We were just here! What was the point of that?" And dolphins. I'm one of those real dolphin people. They're kind of smiley and they seem to like to fool around. Though you watch these documentaries and find out there's always a vicious, ugly side to any animal that you like. I was watching something the other day about killer whales, that they'll kill a seal but before they eat it, they'll throw it around, play with it. You ever see this?

EMPIRE: I have, on *The Blue Planet*, I think.

SEINFELD: Yeah, they flip them around as a game. It's extremely disturbing.

EMPIRE: They might not make such a good subject for an animated comedy...

SEINFELD: No, that might scare the kids a little.

EMPIRE: Do you have pets yourself?

SEINFELD: No. I have kids.

EMPIRE: Are they the reason you've not been in the public eye for a while?

SEINFELD: Yeah, I got married and have three little kids now and I moved to New York to make my life there. Starting a family, that's

a long step. So I've been keeping quiet for a while.

EMPIRE: Why choose to make your comeback with an animation?

SEINFELD: Katzenberg had been trying to get me to do one of these movies for a long time. I don't like doing other people's material, as a comedian; I always like to use my own. So I knew I would have to write it, but I didn't realise I was going to get into the technology of it as much as I did. I completely went down the wormhole of the world of CG animation. I helped them frame and animate every single action in the 1,400 different shots that make up the movie. I got into it.

EMPIRE: Is *Bee Movie* the first time you've done voiceover work?

SEINFELD: No, I'd done some for commercials before. My first one was in the mid-'80s, for a product called Grizzly Beer. I did some joke

movie, you know? I had a good ride with the TV series. I got to experience big-time show business. But what I really love is just sitting with a notepad. Being a stand-up comedian is a very nice little life.

EMPIRE: When was the first time you realised you wanted to tell jokes for a living?

SEINFELD: Oh, very young. Very young. But it was more of an astronaut fantasy. I didn't really think I could do it. I didn't know if I was funny. So it wasn't until I was in my early 20s that I thought, "I might as well have a go at doing what I really want to do."

EMPIRE: What kind of material did you write when starting out?

SEINFELD: My first ever bit was about being left-handed and how the word 'left' is always associated with negative things. Two left feet, left-handed compliments, you go to

"Comedians like to hang out together. All the ones I know feel, as I do, that you just don't feel comfortable around anybody else."

about, "Why is everybody driving pick-ups? There's nothing in the back of them." You know, the only thing you ever see in the back of a pick-up truck is a big dog or a guy with no shirt on. And they're talking about how one day they should get shirts and ride up there in the front.

EMPIRE: Other than *Bee Movie*, your only other film credit is *Comedian*, a documentary about stand-ups. Why not do a regular comedy?

SEINFELD: Well, you know, the idea of me playing 'Brad Johnson' just doesn't get me excited. That's an actor's profession. There's a lot of guys that do that great. I do what I do, which is kind of like the bee thing. Bees specialise. One guy watches the door, one guy stirs, the other guy heats and cools the honey. My thing is stand-up. It's very simple: go to a hotel, go to a theatre, do your show and then go home. No meetings, no executives, no marketing strategies. Which is what we're doing now with this

a party and there's nobody there — "Where did they go?", "Well, they left." That was one of the first jokes I ever wrote.

EMPIRE: Did your first public performance go down well?

SEINFELD: Well, there were only about five to ten people, but I remember them reacting and I couldn't believe that they would laugh, you know, at a total stranger. I'd only made my friends laugh previously and I thought maybe you would have to know me to get what I was doing. So I remember that day very well. It was a place on Third Avenue and 33rd Street. This guy named Rico owned it and he paid me \$25 to do 20 minutes.

EMPIRE: Were you the class clown?

SEINFELD: No, I was a quieter kind of guy and even at school I was pretty quiet. I could have just been a writer, I think. I love writing.

EMPIRE: How about your parents? Did they support your career choice?

SEINFELD: Once I told them they

were a little surprised. Because I hadn't really shown much interest in comedy. But they were very supportive. They thought it was an interesting thing to do.

EMPIRE: According to certain websites, you dabbled in wrestling too as a teenager...

SEINFELD: Wrestling? I've never heard that one before. (*Laughs*) Like a professional wrestler?

EMPIRE: Amateur, I think.

SEINFELD: That's hilarious. No, that's not true, but it's really funny. (*Pointing at tape recorder*) Leave it on there.

EMPIRE: It was in your early 20s that you met your most key collaborator, Larry David...

SEINFELD: Yes. Everybody loved Larry — he was a very funny stand-up and very different, you know? This was back in the '70s, and he used to do a bit about the Iron Curtain between Western Europe and Eastern Europe. He'd say that behind the Iron Curtain was a bunch of Eastern Europeans waiting to put on a show as soon as the curtain went up. Material like that, that was my kind of thing. And one day we decided to spend the day in Central Park and write jokes together. Which I almost never did in my whole career — I would never write stand-up with anyone else, and I'm sure he didn't either. When we got together that day, I found there was a fantastic chemistry between us.

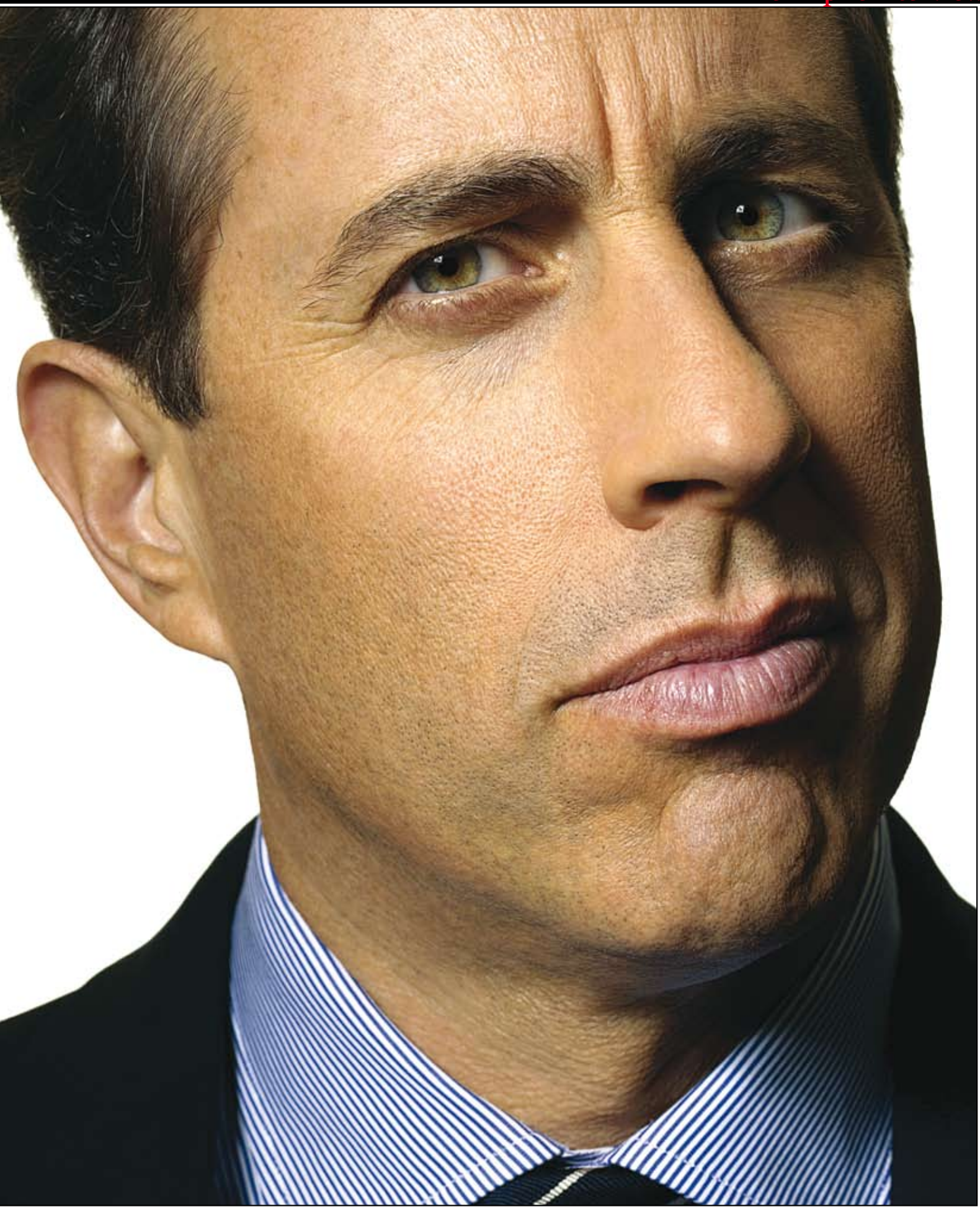
EMPIRE: Did you witness his legendary stand-up sets, when he'd sometimes come on stage, look at the audience and walk off again?

SEINFELD: (*Laughs*) Yeah, I saw all that stuff. We couldn't be more different as people, but comedically our sensibilities are perfect, like hand in glove. Our brains would connect and sparks would fly. So 15 years on from us meeting, when the TV show thing was an opportunity for me, I thought of him. And that's how the show happened.

EMPIRE: Where did the idea for *Seinfeld* come from?

SEINFELD: You must know the story about me and Larry going to the deli and making fun of the weird products, bits of ginseng and things like that that they sell in these places around the cash register. And as we were joking around in there he said, "This is what the show should be: two comics just joking around. No story, no nothing." That was how it started.

EMPIRE: And the characters? >>



SEINFELD: They were people we knew. Kramer (*Michael Richards*) was someone Larry knew and George (*Jason Alexander*) was a little bit based on Larry. We based characters on comics, guys we knew in the business. Anyone who lives in New York knows a guy like George — he's a classic New York guy.

EMPIRE: Have you ever had a real-life nemesis like Newman?

SEINFELD: A nemesis? No. But Newman is an unbelievable character. He started with an episode where we decided it would be good for Kramer to have a friend that would do something bad to me. So we were casting it, and Wayne Knight walks in the office. And one thing Larry and I were really good at was we knew when someone funny came in that office. There was no way they were getting out — they were going onto the show. So Wayne Knight comes in and he starts reading and he's got that incredible energy, the face and the body and the whole thing. And we thought, "Right, he's in." I'd say 90 per cent of the character was Wayne, his incredible comedic power. When you do a TV series, half of it you make and half of it, it makes you. You just follow things like that: "Okay, we're going that way now."

EMPIRE: A lot of real-life situations Larry got into made their way into the show. Was it the same with you?

SEINFELD: To a lesser extent. There was one episode where I decided I wasn't going to get mail anymore — I decide that it's antiquated, there's no need for it. And Newman starts to sweat, because he's a postman and afraid it'll catch on and he'll be out of a job. But that was a true thing. I decided there was nothing in the mail I wanted. Nobody was writing me letters and I had a business manager taking care of the bills. What else is there

in the mail? (*Laughs*)

EMPIRE: Seinfeld has famously been labelled "the show about nothing"...

SEINFELD: Erroneously, I would say. Of course not — it's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. I mean, my show was about the quotidian human experience, which encompasses everything. So it's about your day, and things that go wrong. But that's not nothing. Nobody's watching nothing. That saying started with one of our episodes, when George and I were pitching the fictional show to NBC. It's stupid, but it sounds good. If it sounds good, people will repeat it.

EMPIRE: Halfway through Seinfeld's run came *Pulp Fiction*, arguably a movie about nothing. Tarantino has said he's a fan of yours — do you see a connection there?

SEINFELD: Oh, definitely, I think *Pulp Fiction* was definitely

Like, why did these guys even hang out? But there's a stupidity to the things they dealt with and the way they dealt with them that very much influenced our show. Larry and I loved nothing better than two smart guys and a stupid conversation.

EMPIRE: Do you still keep up with the Seinfeld gang?

SEINFELD: Oh yeah. In fact, all four of us (*Seinfeld*, *Alexander*, *Richards* and *Julia Louis-Dreyfus*) got together recently, with Larry, for an extra for the final season DVD, which is out at the end of the year. We just sat and chatted on camera, interviewing each other about the experience of doing the show, and had a great time. As soon as we were together it was like the old days again, just that amazing feeling that we always had. And we thought, "We should do some more

tell me a downside to fame. I'd love to hear one.

EMPIRE: Well, do you now think twice before going out in public?

SEINFELD: You want to walk outside? I'll walk right out of this building with you. How do you think I got *in* the building? I don't know, I just think people must be dysfunctional, that you can't handle someone coming up and giving you a compliment. How bad is that? You do get celebrities moaning about it and it makes me sick. They're pathetic. Pathetic human beings. If you have something that you want to do and you want to make people laugh, you want to give something to this faceless general public, you want to perform for them and have them like you, and you succeed in that, how can you complain about anything that comes with it?

EMPIRE: Speaking of the public, as a stand-up you must have had to deal with hecklers...

SEINFELD: Like any comedian I've had some trouble with them. But I remember figuring out that being supportive to the heckler was a fun way to go about it. Instead of attacking them, being kind of sympathetic to their situation: "You seem unhappy. Let's talk about it. What's bothering you?" Being more of a heckler therapist.

EMPIRE: Any bad experiences lately?

SEINFELD: It doesn't happen as often anymore. I think my ticket prices are too high now for people to get drunk. It was more when I was in clubs that were only \$5 to get in that people would get rowdy. But I was on stage the other night and I was in the middle of a joke, trying to set this idea up, and somebody just yelled out, "Where's your buddy Kramer?" and, "How's Kramer doing?" (*Michael Richards was taped yelling racist insults at a comedy club in November.*) So I went into this thing: "He's doing fine, he's gotten over having yelled out something inappropriate at an inappropriate moment. As you will get over it, embarrassing yourself like you just did."

EMPIRE: What's the worst thing that can happen to you as a stand-up?

SEINFELD: When the sound system doesn't work. Because that's all you have. That's the only connection you have with these people: the sound system. I did a show at a museum in New York a couple of years ago and I had, like, this

"All the time people tell me jokes. I try to laugh politely, but inside I'm confused. You don't go up to a chef and make him eat your food..."

influenced by the show. That opening scene, about the Big Mac, when Larry and I saw that we went, "Hey, that's our stuff!" (*Laughs*) Yeah, Larry and I went along to the theatre and we loved it. It's very flattering. I love the stuff Tarantino does — Kill Bill was an incredible piece of work, really cool, and so was *Grindhouse*.

EMPIRE: How about people who have influenced you?

SEINFELD: I'd say the main thing was The Abbott And Costello Show. They were a comedy team from the '50s that did a TV show which basically consisted of vaudeville routines in the street or in the hallway of an apartment house. And really, it's the only video record of a lot of material that was done in vaudeville and burlesque in those days. They were quite sharp in their performance; their timing was phenomenal. There is a similarity between Jerry and George and Abbott and Costello.

shows." But we won't.

EMPIRE: What about the future? Any other ideas for a TV show?

SEINFELD: I have had one, but I won't do it.

EMPIRE: Can you share it with us?

SEINFELD: Sure. I thought the show that should follow my show should be an examination of having a wife. And it should be called Mrs. Seinfeld. Because I know a lot of married guys, you know, and there's so much material about being married and I'd love to do a show like that. It would be set in the same universe as *Seinfeld*, but ten years later. But I'll never do it (*laughs*).

EMPIRE: How about another movie?

SEINFELD: Between you and me, no. It's hard. Maybe I'll be in someone else's thing if there's something really good, but so far I've never been handed anything good.

EMPIRE: When *Seinfeld* really took off in its fourth year, did your sudden fame change you at all?

SEINFELD: No, it was fun. I mean,

Your Q

Jerry, why the Superman fetish?

Gemma 'Kramer' Davies, Bridgnorth
He was just a character I totally loved when I was a kid. The colours and the powers and the situations he'd get into, it was so much more entertaining than a book. And that's stayed with me. I thought the new movie was great and I loved the guy that played him.

The Top 5 Seinfeld Movie References

SELECTED BY **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

5 The Boyfriend: Part 1 (Season 3)

When Kramer and Newman leave a baseball game and become victims of an unknown spitter, the episode turns into an extended JFK spoof. Cue flashbacks in Zapruder-style film stock and Jerry going all Jim Garrison as he recreates the trajectory of the "magic loogie".



4 The Package (Season 8)

Wayne Knight, who plays Jerry's fleshy nemesis Newman, also appeared in Basic Instinct as one of the cops who sweated through the famous interrogation scene. He recreates it to hilarious effect here, with Jerry in the hot seat. Knight also appeared in JFK, as a character named 'Numa'.



3 The Chicken Roaster (Season 8)

Elaine is told she'll lose her job unless she gets a signature from her boss, who's in Burma. There, she finds he has turned into a jungle warlord à la Kurtz from Apocalypse Now. One of Seinfeld's most unlikely parodies, it works thanks to witty lines like, "You're an errand girl sent by grocery clerks to collect a bill..."



2 The Raincoats (Season 5)

Seinfeld has riffed on everything from Midnight Express to The Crying Game, but no film reference is as edgy as the Schindler's List storyline. Forced out of his apartment, Jerry makes out with a date during a screening of the Holocaust drama — and gets caught. The idea came to the show's co-creator Larry David, also Jewish, as he daydreamed in temple.



1 The Race (Season 6)

Jerry Seinfeld has made no effort to disguise his obsession with Superman, his hero popping up all over the show's nine seasons. Here, as Jerry is forced to re-run a childhood race, the action is scored by John Williams' famous theme and comes to a freeze-frame finish with the star turning to the camera, winking and wisecracking, "Maybe I will, Lois. Maybe I will."

Egyptian temple. So it was this huge, gigantic, concrete structure and you couldn't amplify the human voice enough. You couldn't hear it, it was unintelligible. I had to do 45 minutes of people not hearing one word. It was awful.

EMPIRE: You must get asked to host the Oscars all the time...

SEINFELD: Yes.

EMPIRE: Why do you keep turning it down?

SEINFELD: Well, I would say it's not a job in show business. If I hosted the Oscars and I did it really well, they would just ask me to do it again. And then again. And again. There's no up-side. I don't know, it's just a weird environment. I'm lucky that I can do things that kind of interest me as a challenge, but everybody there is nervous, you know? They want to win their award. They're not there to have fun. I like to go in front of an audience that wants to have fun.

EMPIRE: Is being a comedian always fun?

SEINFELD: Oh, yeah. Don't you think it would be? You ever tell someone a joke?

EMPIRE: Not often. I'm no good at telling them.

SEINFELD: Really, you don't tell jokes?

EMPIRE: I can't usually remember any.

SEINFELD: Well, then, you ever say something funny and have somebody laugh?

EMPIRE: It's happened.

SEINFELD: Fun, right? Well, that's my life.

EMPIRE: I'm only asking because your documentary, Comedian, doesn't have a whole lot of laughs in it. It makes doing stand-up look quite stressful and difficult...

SEINFELD: Well, Comedian just showed the worst part of it. That shows how you build it; it doesn't show what happens after it's built. Once the thing is built, once you've built the boat, then you can go out onto the water and it's nice. But the building of the boat is not fun.

EMPIRE: Do you think anyone can learn to be funny?

SEINFELD: That's a good question, and I've thought about this a lot. And I've come to the conclusion that you can't pass it on. There's a certain instinct about it that's very fine. Like, decisions you have to make. You're out there on your own. It's not like even having a co-driver that you could sit in the passenger seat with and give a little tip like, "Here's where you turn, here's where you brake." It is like >>

being a racecar driver because you're alone and there are so many quick decisions that are made in the moment. And I don't know how you teach that.

EMPIRE: When you go on stage, do you follow a set routine, or wait to see what the audience is like?

SEINFELD: Oh no, you have the whole structure in your head of what you are going to do. You can make changes within that, but the basic thing is there. That's called the act. When you've got an act you have the greatest thing in the world.

EMPIRE: How about off-stage? Do you get people cracking jokes at you all the time?

SEINFELD: Yes, yes. And you know what? It's the worst thing about what I do. Just because it baffles me. I met Steve Martin recently. And I can think of funny things to say, but when I'm talking to Steve Martin I'm gonna be careful that if I say something funny, it's *really* funny. And if I wasn't a comedian I would definitely not attempt to be funny, because you're talking to Steve Martin. But for some reason, people think, you know, "I can play the game the way this person plays it." But I don't know why you'd think that. All the time, people come up to me on the street and tell me a joke. And I look at them and think, "Guys, this is my profession. I spent my whole life learning how to do this on a higher level than what you're doing." I try to laugh politely, but inside I'm very confused. You know, you don't go up to a chef and make him eat your food...

EMPIRE: Do jokes you find really funny ever fall completely flat?

SEINFELD: That happens a lot, and that's why I road-test my material so much, to find out what works and what doesn't. My own instincts don't help. It's still complete hit or miss every time.

EMPIRE: There's one agonising clip in *Comedian* where you dry up in the middle of your routine. How often does that happen?

SEINFELD: Never. That was an exceptional thing — I had driven all the way down there to the comedy club to try out just one idea, and I suddenly couldn't remember it.

EMPIRE: Is that a comedian's worst nightmare: your mind going blank?

SEINFELD: Yeah. I've never had that happen though. I was just trying to remember this one thing, but it couldn't come to me. People do tend

to focus on that moment in the film. I think in the movie it seems bad, but it really wasn't that bad. Like you walk in a room and say, "What did I come in here for?" It was one of those. And the audience laughed anyway. There was a British lady in the audience who said something very funny: "Is this your first gig?"

EMPIRE: From the number of movie references in *Seinfeld*, I'm guessing you're a film buff...

SEINFELD: Yeah, I watch everything. I've got a lot of DVDs.

EMPIRE: Do you have a favourite?

SEINFELD: That would be *The Graduate*. I love every frame of that film. It's just perfection. The cultural moment it captures, the hilarious scenes, everything about that movie is perfect. I actually put a little homage to it into *Bee Movie*, if you look closely.

EMPIRE: You must be a fan of TV show *30 Rock*, since you recently guest-starred in it...

SEINFELD: Yes, well, that show is excellent. Something about it is just very funny and fresh. NBC asked me, and since I love Tina Fey's work and have been a fan of Alec Baldwin for many years, I decided to do it. The whole 'Seinfeld-Vision' idea, where they inserted me digitally into *Heroes* and all those other shows, I thought was very funny. Incidentally, Alec and I grew up in the same town. I was always aware of him and all the Baldwin brothers when I was in high school.

EMPIRE: Are there any current up-and-comers you think will become big comedy stars?

SEINFELD: I haven't seen much of the new generation, although I was reading about this kid today, Patton Oswalt, who is the voice of the rat in *Ratatouille*, and I liked some of the things he was saying. That he didn't get into comedy to get out of it, which is what a lot of guys do. Even in my day people

wanted to get a talk show, get a sitcom, get a movie. Everybody wants those things and I did too, but I also felt like this was a great art form unto itself, to just be a stand-up comedian. I like the guys that still stay loyal to it as a form.

EMPIRE: Aside from your new pal Spielberg, do you have a lot of famous friends?

SEINFELD: Well, I have a lot of comedian friends. Garry Shandling, Chris Rock obviously. Comedians really like to hang out together. All the ones I talk to feel as I do that you just don't feel comfortable around anybody else. There's something about the life, I don't know what it is. I was talking to someone the other day, an old comedian friend who was cleaning his car, and I said something like, "Oh what's the point in cleaning that thing? We're gonna be dead so soon," and he laughed. And most people would go, "Oh, that's so depressing..." If your average person finds it depressing, it's funny to us.

EMPIRE: People seem to assume that you were the light side of *Seinfeld*, and Larry David brought the darker edge. Is that wrong?

SEINFELD: I think so. To me, everything is funny, dark or not.

EMPIRE: Would you make a joke about, say, 9/11?

SEINFELD: Yeah. I mean, not to an audience.

EMPIRE: But within your circle of comedian friends?

SEINFELD: I was actually talking about it the other day. All those papers, all those bills, all those receipts, you know, that were drifting down through the air. You never hear what happened with all that. Everybody thinking, "Please get back to me ASAP on all of this." There was a lot of paperwork that just disappeared and you never hear about any consequence of that, and we were just discussing that aspect.

EMPIRE: On a lighter note, you're famously obsessed with gadgets...

SEINFELD: Yes, that's true.

EMPIRE: Do you have a favourite toy?

SEINFELD: My 911 RS. That's the new Porsche.

EMPIRE: I read recently that you can now buy battery-powered scissors, to save you the exertion of cutting. Is technology making us lazier?

SEINFELD: To me, the ultimate lazy thing is the Amazon 1-Click ordering. You ever go on Amazon.com? I don't know if we can go

much lower than that. One click. Like, "I can't click twice. They've gotta make it just one click, because I've got other things to do and all I've got in me is the one click..." So that's what we've descended to:

"I'll buy anything you want but don't make me click more than once!" And another thing — I'm not making this up — there is a company in America called Haggag Slacks, and they have a pair of pants with a thing in the waist that will pop open an extra couple of inches in the middle of your meal. That is where we are right now — we need a ripcord in our pants!

EMPIRE: That's pretty extreme. So now *Bee Movie* is finally coming out, are you planning on keeping a low profile again?

SEINFELD: I think so. These days, with my kids, it's just a lot more fun for me to go home. Going home always used to be about wanting to get together with somebody. Now there's a circus going on every time I go home, a carnival happening every time I open the door. I can barely get my coat off, because they're all over me. You end up kind of peeling clothes off and leaving them on the floor.

EMPIRE: Is it easier to make your kids laugh than an audience at a show?

SEINFELD: It's actually similar, because once you latch onto something that makes them laugh, you can just do it over and over again and they'll laugh every time. They like to play this game of who-blinks-first, and I say, "Loo-loo, lollipop!" to make them crack up. (Laughs) Now that's the big joke in my house. All the kids — the seven year-old daughter, the four year-old son, the two year-old, who doesn't know what we're talking about — all sitting at the dinner table going, "Loo-loo, lollipop! Loo-loo, lollipop!" See, you're laughing too!

EMPIRE: Guess it works for adults as well...

SEINFELD: And that's exactly what I found with this movie. That's a joke for four year-olds and you're laughing at it. And every time I write a joke for adults I find four year-olds laughing at that. I don't think there is any such thing as child humour. A good joke transcends it. A good joke transcends everything.

nick@empireonline.com

>> Bee Movie is out on December 14 and is reviewed on page 58.

Your Q

Will you ever work with Larry David again?

Dennis Green, Worcester
I don't think so. You know, once everyone's a king, they have their own kingdom and they don't want to deal with anyone else's ideas. But we stay in touch. He lives in California and I live in New York, but we talk pretty regularly on the phone.