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# GT

## Review: Whose Line Is It Anyway?... Live at the Palladium

17:10 10th June 2016 by [Ryan Butcher](#)

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CULTURE > THEATRE

**It's difficult to review an improv show like *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* Where do we even start? By the very nature of the medium, the show we saw last night is going to be completely different to any show for the rest of the run. The very make-up of *Whose Line* requires a willing audience to help establish themes and situations – and in one occasion, even sounds! – from which the comedy is derived from.**

At one point, a woman called Elizabeth was serenaded in a rock opera style about being an osteoarchaeologist. 'Bones' came up a lot. Later on, a grown man used another young woman as a makeshift snowboard to escape an avalanche. And all on the stage of the hallowed London Palladium, no less. That kinda thing doesn't usually happen when *Cats* is in town.

The thing is, though, *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* is a beloved telly institution. It ran for nearly a decade on Channel 4 in the 80s and 90s, and its American spin-off is still on air, after beginning in 1998. So you probably know what you're getting yourself in for before you've even bought a ticket. The stage transfer is pretty much a carbon copy of the TV show – which was filmed in front of a live audience anyway. There's no fuss, but plenty of nonsense. It's certainly not big, but it's clever – most of the time, anyway – and that's exactly what you should want from an improv show. And much like when you go see The Rolling Stones or Bruce Springsteen, you're getting exactly what you want – the greatest hits.

Of course, the British version of the show helped cement the careers of TV legends. Stephen Fry, Paul Merton and Josie Lawrence, for instance. As well as introducing us to brilliantly funny comedians from across the pond, like Canadians Gregg Proops and Colin Mochrie, and Ryan Stiles. With Clive Anderson steering the ship, of course. The current run of *Whose Line at the Palladium* features aforementioned Josie, Gregg and Colin, joined by Brad Sherwood and Jeff Davis, who currently star in the US version of the show. If you'd have thrown in the absent Ryan Stiles, it would've pretty much been a dream line-up for any fan.



For those who never saw the show when it was originally on, or any of its reruns on "UK Gold Dave Ja Vu", as Clive Anderson says, or if you've never fallen into a YouTube hole watching endless episodes – trust us, it's an easy way to loose a Saturday afternoon – then all you need to know is that it's an improv show made up of a selection of games, relying on participation from the audience.

If anything, some of the more memorable games from the show – like Three-Headed Broadway Star, Greatest Hits, Questions Only, and, of course, the show's namesake *Whose Line?* – get just as big a crowd reaction than performers themselves. That's how beloved the format is.

There were times that we were literally crying with laughter in our seats. Watching Josie and Greg act out a hunting scene in the style of Film Noir, before quickly switching to the lowest common denominator of comedy – a porn film – before Brad and Jeff emerge on the stage as hillbilly doctors, is something that needs to be seen to be believed. But the likelihood is, it'll never be seen again. Each performance of *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* is a unique experience.

Luckily, the performers on stage are absolute professionals, who've been working in improv for more than 30 years. It means they're ready to react to any possible situation with hilarious consequence. And the chemistry between each of them is palpable. You're not only watching masters of their craft flexing their creative muscles – you're watching a group of mates performing and doing what they love.

**GT gives *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*... Live at the Palladium – 5/5**

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*Whose Line Is It Anyway... Live At The Palladium runs until 19 June at 7pm, with matinees on Saturdays and Sundays at 3pm. Tickets cost between £30 and £75, plus booking fees. For more info and to buy tickets, visit [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk).*

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**To book your tickets click here**





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## Culture | Comedy

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# Whose Line is it Anyway, London Palladium, review: 'nostalgic and very very funny'



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The cast of Whose Line is it Anyway?

**L**ong before Mock the Week was even a twinkle in Russell Howard's eye, Whose Line is it Anyway? – which ran from 1989 to 1998 on Channel 4 – was delighting British TV audiences with its American-style, short-form improvised comedy. Now, Dan Patterson and Mark Leveson, who created both shows, have brought the band back together (once again – they had a West End run in 2015, too) for a nostalgic rip through World's Worsts, Party Quirks and, of course, Hoedowns.

Clive Anderson was back at his little desk, officiating the improv games with his usual palette-cleansing dry wit, while old favourites Josie Lawrence, Colin Mochrie and Greg Proops were roared onto the stage like returning war heroes. Everything has been calibrated for fans of the television series, down to the identical staging. This was not Radiohead refusing to play Creep, this was the Rolling Stones gamely bashing through the hits for an adoring crowd.

It felt, despite the introduction of American comedians Brad Sherwood and Jeff Davis (stars of the current US version of the show – though you sensed the crowd would have preferred Ryan Stiles and Tony Slattery), like a format approaching its 30th birthday. There's nothing fresh here. These improv games are aeons old, peddled by comedy troupes across the globe and as ubiquitous as knock-knock jokes.



Some sections were embarrassingly dated – comedy raps? Really? – while the performers fell back too readily on sex gags. Indeed, the first two jokes, on a space theme, had “helmet” and “Uranus” as punchlines. Schoolyard, yes. West End theatre? Must do better.

The thing is: after nearly three decades of freewheeling improv, they are so damn good at it. Anderson and his chums might be a little heavier, a little balder, but the years have hardened their comedy muscles, rather than diminished them. The chemistry between the old guard – Proops and Mochrie, in particular – is tangible. While the nature of improvised comedy means that some sections fall flat, others – Mochrie and Sherwood being manipulated as puppets; the “greatest hits album” TV advert – produce genuine, sustained, hard-to-breathe laughter. They’re oldies but, for the most part, goodies.

This is not a show aimed at anyone looking for the next wave of cutting-edge live comedy, but sometimes the wheel doesn’t need to be reinvented. That much is made clear by a raucous crowd who took great delight in providing Anderson with suggestions for the games (though they, too, were carnally-fixated – it must be the warm summer air) and lapped up rehashed versions of their Nineties favourites.

It’s not big, it’s only slightly clever, but *Whose Line is it Anyway?* remains, after all these years, very, very funny.

**Whose Line is it Anyway is playing at the London Palladium until June 19.**

**Book now to avoid disappointment: visit Telegraph Tickets or call 0844 871 2118.**



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**new!**

## Whose Line Is It Anyway? Live Review

The classic TV show comes to the West End and brings all the LOLZ!

 Like Be the first of your friends to like this.

Posted: [Wednesday 8 Jun 2016](#)



Above: Whose Line is it Anyway

## WE loved it!

We've experienced numerous [shows](#) in the West End before - but none like *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*. Without a storyline, a change of scene or even a script - you could be fooled into thinking that [watching](#) a group of people free-styling on stage could lead to awkward silences, tumbleweeds and slow claps.

But instead you're treated to tears-inducing giggles throughout the show. Thanks to the likes of familiar faces, Josie Lawrence, Colin Mochrie and Greg Proops and new stars, American comedians Brad Sherwood and Jeff Davis - their chemistry and quick wit leads to bonkers story twists and hilarious punchlines.

The [show](#) is hosted by Clive Anderson who encourages the audience to contribute ideas for the five comics to talk about and, no matter what they're given, they adapt instantly. Who knew "elbows" could be so funny?!

If you were a fan of the show - which was aired in the UK until 1998 - then be prepared to see [classic](#) games such as Kick It and Hoedown. If you're questioning whether something could still be funny almost thirty years on since it started - you're going to be more than just pleasantly surprised.



Above: *Whose Line is it Anyway*

At the London Palladium until 19 June. [Tickets](#): 0844 412 4655  
Or book at [ticketmaster.co.uk](https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)



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# WHAT'S ON STAGE

## REVIEWS

### *Whose Line is it Anyway?* (London Palladium)

Clive Anderson leads a familiar improv troupe in this stage presentation of the hit '90s TV show

**Ben Hewis • London, West End • 10 Jun 2016**

WOS Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Reader Reviews: [Be the first to review this show](#)



Josie Lawrence, Brad Sherwood, Clive Anderson, Colin Mochrie and Greg Proops

© Manuel Harlan

The Palladium provides an impressive backdrop for '90s improv show *Whose Line is it Anyway?*, whose fans will be more used to watching it on a 32 inch telly than a 47 foot West End stage.

And those fans won't be disappointed as the stage production is a carbon copy of the beloved sketch show. Clive Anderson hosts and most of his topical gags (Trump, EU referendum etc) land, but he's better behind his familiar desk than he is pacing the stage between skits. His nervous physicality looks out of place under the imposing proscenium arch of the Palladium.

The lineup includes usual suspects Brad Sherwood, Greg Proops, Josie Lawrence and Colin Mochrie, who are joined by Jeff Davis, a regular from the US version of the show. Even the musicians, Laura Hall (keyboard) and Linda Taylor (guitar) are imports from the televised production.

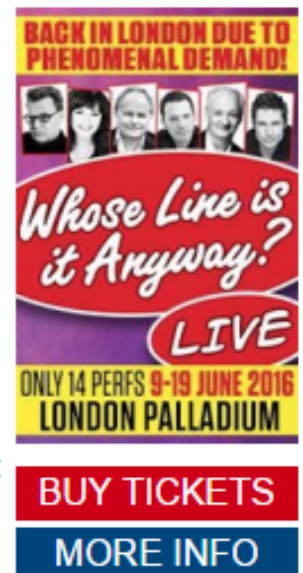
Sticking close to a proven formula, general hilarity ensues. The improv troupe rocket through well over 20 games with varying comical success. Particular audience favourites include a section where two bashful punters provide sound effects for Proops and Mochrie as they navigate a robot invasion on New Years Eve in Times Square, and a brave attempt by Mochrie and Lawrence to act out a cow milking scene in the style of Stephen Sondheim.

Improv is by no means new to theatre or indeed the West End - the wonderful Showstoppers enjoyed an extended run at the Apollo just last year - but there are several drawbacks to mounting a production on this scale. The moments of audience interaction, of which there are many, interrupt the show's pace as Anderson struggles to hear shouted suggestions over the din of a 2200 capacity crowd.

There's also the issue that most West End theatres require an interval (and accompanying bar revenue). At 30 minutes in length the TV episodes left you wanting more - as all good comedy should - but when the stage production lasts over two hours everything becomes a bit samey. On a separate note to the lighting designer: being blasted with blinding spotlights every time the audience laughs becomes really annoying, rather quickly.

All in all what *Whose Line is it Anyway?* lacks in originality it makes up for in bucketloads of laughs, but in this time of Netflix and on-demand telly, one wonders why anyone would pay West End prices when they can watch it at home for free.

*Whose Line is it Anyway?* runs at the London Palladium until 19 June.





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the **arts** desk.com *best specialist journalism website* 

## Whose Line Is It Anyway?, London Palladium

Terrific fun from an old favourite

by [Veronica Lee](#) | Saturday, 11 June 2016

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Josie Lawrence, Greg Proops, Brad Sherwood and Colin Mochrie get up close

At least half the audience for this live version of the short-form improv show, which was shown on Channel 4 between 1989 and 1998, couldn't possibly have seen *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* when it was first broadcast, so one assumes they must have become fans via YouTube or rerun channels – testimony to the idea that good comedy is timeless and ageless.

“Anderson is an astute judge of when to buzz the end of a game”



He introduced original performers **Josie Lawrence**, Colin Mochrie and Greg Proops, who have developed both a chemistry and an innate understanding of where the others may go with a joke, while making sure they get their own in too (there is always healthy competition in good improv). New to UK audiences are the equally quickly witted Brad Sherwood and Jeff Davis – regulars on the US version, which is enjoying a renaissance of its own. They are both outstandingly good, bringing a different, more laidback vibe – although, like Proops, they aren't above throwing in an obvious sexual reference to get a guaranteed laugh.

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“ *It doesn't fall into the trap of becoming a nostalgia-fest* ”

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Like sketch comedy, improv – even the best – can be a mixed bag; some games work better than others, and one section may pan out terrifically well one night and fall flat the next. But Anderson is an astute judge of when to buzz the end of a game, and all the

old favourites (with exception of the props game) were here – including World's Worst, Freeze Frame, Party Quirks and Hoedown – in a packed show lasting more than two hours where the quality only occasionally dipped (usually because the audience volunteers weren't up to snuff and there's only so much the performers can make out of their participation).

Highlights on the night I saw the show were Sherwood and Davis serenading a woman from the audience who works as an osteo-archaeologist (try rhyming that), Proops getting in an anti-Trump joke wherever he could, Mochrie as the Hollywood Director making the others play out a wilderness scenario in various film styles, and anything involving Lawrence belting out a song made up on the spot (to great accompaniment by the two musicians on stage, Laura Hall and Linda Taylor).

While *Whose Line...?* hasn't entirely reinvented itself – and why would it? – neither does it fall into the trap of becoming a nostalgia-fest. This is a terrific night's entertainment by performers who make a highwire comedy format look as easy as falling off a log.

- ***Whose Line Is It Anyway? is at the Palladium, London W1 until 19 June***

rating



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YAHOO!  
NEWS

## 5 Reasons To Watch Whose Line Is It Anyway? Live



Stephanie Soteriou

12 June 2016

In case you missed it, something big has happened at the London Palladium this summer.

Popular improvisation comedy show *'Whose Line Is It Anyway?'* [has returned to the stage](#) for a brief period and it is perhaps one of the most exciting live shows in London at the moment.





Whose Line Is It Anyway? first came to our television screens back in 1988 and it is still running in the US to this very day with a huge international fanbase.

We were lucky enough to attend the opening night for this year's popular stage show, and we've compiled this handy list of reasons why you, yes you, should check it out too:

### 1. It's Completely Legit

Well, we mean, obviously it was always going to be *legit* but what we mean is TV-favourites comprise the live show line-up, you aren't being fobbed off with anybody who is a bit sub-standard or a complete unknown.



It would have been easy to call in just any old improvisers and get them to play the huge variety of games in front of an audience, but instead we get to see the show's legends in the flesh with presenter of the British version of the show, Clive Anderson, hosting the night and Colin Mochrie, Josie Lawrence, Greg Proops, Brad Sherwood and Jeff Davis playing.

Original co-creators Dan Petterson and Mark Leveson are also responsible for bringing the show to the stage, so it has literally everything working in its favour.

### 2. It's Absolutely Hilarious

If you ever watched even just ten minutes of the TV show you'll be aware of just how funny it is, with the comics' ability to think on their feet mindblowingly impressive to say the least.





Host Clive guides the audience through a huge variety of games that we have seen on our screens in the past, including 'Kick It!', 'Sound Effects', 'Living Scenery' and, of course, the famous 'Hoedown'.

The differing situations that Clive and the audience put the players in means that any round can turn into an all-singing, all-dancing performance, slapstick hilarity, or direct, to-the-point comedy. It really couldn't be any better.

### 3. You Can Get Involved!

The key part of the show is the audience's participation, and it's no different for the live performance. Most of the suggestions come from Clive asking the audience what they think should happen and him picking the best ideas, basically proving that there's absolutely no way any of the show could have been rehearsed.



There are also some games that require an audience member to go up on stage, with one lucky fan being serenaded by Jeff and Brad during our show and Colin and Greg also enjoying rummaging through two brave women's handbags on stage...

#### 4. Anything Can Happen

The fact that it is all improvised means that there really is endless possibility about how the night will go and yes, anything can happen.

In the interval there are boxes left out for audience members to put in lines for the players to use during the game 'Whose Line?', leading to a touching and witty tribute to popular Whose Line Is It Anyway? comic Ryan Stiles midway through the sketch.

[Read More](#)



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## Comedy Whose Line Is It Anyway? London Palladium, W1

★★★★☆

**Y**ou do this for a living? asks the improviser Colin Mochrie in response to the amiably awkward way that Clive Anderson has brought him on to the Palladium stage. "Not any more," replies our host, boasting the same brittle, breakneck bonhomie as he did in his television heyday. "Just for one week a year, with you."

So is this live resuscitation of the show that brought comedy improv to the masses — starting on Radio 4 in 1986, then Channel 4, before heading to America in the 1990s — just an exercise in nostalgia? Not a bit of it. Content will vary over the course of this week, as Anderson sets different tasks demanding different bursts of quickfire imagination from a panel of one familiar Brit (Josie Lawrence), one familiar American (Greg Proops), one familiar Canadian (Mochrie) and two Americans new to us (Brad Sherwood and Jeff Davis). Yet to judge by

a consistently inventive, busy and often inspired opening night, this will be one of the happiest shows in town.

Many of the games are old in this production by the show's creators, Dan Patterson and Mark Leveson. Yet the nerve required to triumph at them remains firmly present-tense. How did "Mick Jagger" end up strutting around the stage singing about feeding snakes to other snakes? How did Proops end up donning *Muppet Show* underwear? How did Sherwood and Davis end up singing a priapic stadium-rock duet inspired by an osteoarchaeologist from the crowd? A lot of imagination, an awful lot of watching and listening and trusting each other.

So, if the heart sinks at some of the audience's suggested genres (film noir? Sondheim? *Rocky Horror Show*?) the cast's speed and determination to avoid the obvious wins out. And when the frenetic five find room to develop running jokes (Sherwood's delight at

playing the Palladium, Proops and Anderson's needling banter), this feels doubly in-the-moment. Not everything is a corker, but a really remarkable amount of it is.

**Dominic Maxwell**

**Box office: 0844 4124655, to June 19**