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[Event INFO](#)**Kunal Nayyar****A Tribute to Nerds: Just for Laughs**

By: Dan Laxer

Jul 13, 2011 - 12:39

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On *The Big Bang Theory*, supporting characters Raj Koothrappali and Howard Wolowitz are like two peas in a pod, 2 of a quartet of science nerds who act as each other's friends and foils. They provide the comic relief, as it were, if a sit-com even needs comic relief. So it makes sense to have the two actors who play them, Kunal Nayyar and Simon Helberg, host **A**

**Tribute to Nerds** at [Montreal's Just For Laughs Festival](#).

I reached Kunal Nayyar in L.A. by phone. He made it clear that he's not coming to do stand-up, but to MC a comedy show. "I'm terrified of stand-up," he says. But it's not so much the standing up. "I'm an actor," he explains. "I love being in front of people." That's his domain. While acting in *The Big Bang Theory*, a show he describes as "pretty comical," does indeed count as doing comedy, "I would never want to try stand-up," he says. "It's not my cup of tea," an apt expression for an Indian actor born in London, England.

Nayyar's Indian accent is not as pronounced as his character's. In fact, the two hardly resemble each other at all. Nayyar is handsome with longer, curlier hair than Raj, and he doesn't dress as nerdy. Fans see him walking on the street in jeans and a t-shirt and say "Oh my God, you're so cool in real life." Which is, of course the point; Nayyar is an actor who plays a character. But is there anything of Nayyar in Raj? The heritage and the accent, of course. "I speak (as Raj) the way I did when I first came to America." And inasmuch as ethnic characters and comedians are hot right now, Nayyar doesn't mind being typecast. "I'm Indian," he says, "so being cast as Indian is not a problem for me."



So, what can you expect from **A Tribute to Nerds**? "Something epic," says Nayyar. A Tribute to Nerds is a gala dedicated to an identifiable group that's finally come out of the closet. At least one comedian in the Nerds line-up is one; Chris Hardwick is, according

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to his bio, "A nerd and techno-enthusiast at heart, he contributes to Wired Magazine and writes a popular blog at Nerdist.com." Brian Posehn is a comedy television veteran, having appeared in and written for several shows, including *Seinfeld*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, and *The Sarah Silverman Program*. The Canadian delegate is the award-winning Mark Little. And then there's Sammy J & Randy, an Australian comedy duo of sorts – one of them is a puppet (the

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aforementioned Randy).

Nayyar is also a writer working on a film version of his own play, *Cotton Candy*, currently running in New Delhi. But he tells me he writes for fun. Right now he's happy to just be working as an actor. So where does he go from here? "Only downhill," he says with a laugh.



[A Tribute to Nerds](#), Friday July 29, 10:00 pm, Place des Arts.

[See event profile page](#)

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Simon Helberg

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