

The Bay Area Festival That Helped Launch a Generation of South Asian Comedians Returns for Year 12

North America's Premier South Asian Comedy Festival Brings 25 Comedians to Six Cities Across the Bay Area and Sacramento, August 18-23

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: What began in 2014 as a single Bay Area comedy festival has grown into North America's premier South Asian comedy festival, helping introduce audiences to comedians who have gone on to appear on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, NBC, ABC, CBS, Comedy Central, Just For Laughs, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, and stages around the world.

Now celebrating its 12th year, Desi Comedy Fest returns August 18-23, 2026 with six unforgettable nights of stand-up comedy across the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento, featuring 25 comedians from the United States and Canada.

Founded by comedians Samson Koletkar (Mahatma Moses) and Abhay Nadkarni, Desi Comedy Fest was created to give South Asian comedians a stage while welcoming audiences of every background. Over the past twelve years, the festival has evolved from a local showcase into an internationally recognized comedy brand, producing shows throughout North America and India while championing diverse voices in stand-up comedy.

Today, Desi Comedy Fest is recognized as one of the world's longest-running festivals dedicated to South Asian stand-up comedy, bringing together established headliners, festival favorites, and rising stars performing smart, original comedy that ranges from observational humor and storytelling to cultural satire and universally relatable experiences.

"Desi Comedy Fest has always been about creating opportunities for talented comedians while



DCF 2026 Festival Poster

bringing people together through laughter," said Samson Koletkar, co-founder of the festival. "Over the past twelve years, we've watched our audiences become increasingly diverse, proving that great comedy doesn't need a shared ethnicity - it just needs a shared sense of humor."

"When we started Desi Comedy Fest, there were very few spaces dedicated to showcasing South Asian comedians," said Abhay Nadkarni, co-founder of the festival. "Today, we're seeing South Asian comics appear on major streaming platforms, television, and comedy festivals around the world. We're proud that Desi Comedy Fest has helped create opportunities, build audiences, and demonstrate that these stories resonate far beyond our own communities."



Beyond producing memorable live shows, Desi Comedy Fest has become an important platform for discovering and developing comedy talent. Festival alumni and featured performers have gone on to release comedy specials on Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, perform on NBC, ABC, CBS, and Comedy Central, appear as Just For Laughs New Faces, tour internationally, and headline comedy clubs and festivals across North America.

Although inspired by the South Asian experience, the festival has always welcomed audiences of every background. Its mission remains simple: to bring people together through laughter while celebrating the rich diversity of voices that make comedy universal.

Since its inception, Desi Comedy Fest has expanded beyond the Bay Area with successful tours across the United States and Canada, performances in India, and recent debut runs on the East Coast and in the Midwest, further establishing itself as the leading showcase for South Asian stand-up comedy.

Notable Comedians Performing

- CRYSTAL FERRIER : internationally touring comedian, writer, and actress known for her fearless, high-energy storytelling who has appeared on CTV's Roast Battle Canada, Kevin Hart's LOL Network, and opened for Russell Peters
- FARAZ ABIDI: San Jose-based stand-up comedian and 2024 Rooster T. Feathers Comedy Competition winner who brings sharp, relatable humor to the complexities of South Asian

identity and Silicon Valley tech culture

- HARPREET SEHMBI: Toronto-based stand-up comedian, writer, and Second City alumna whose sharp storytelling, featured on SiriusXM and Kevin Hart's Laugh Out Loud Radio via her album Irregular Harpbeat, blends wit, warmth, and cultural insight
- JESSE SINGH: a fast-rising Toronto-based stand-up comedian featured on Just For Laughs, CBC's Laugh Out Loud, and SiriusXM, known for transforming his real-life immigrant household experiences into sharp, highly relatable storytelling
- RAZA JAFRI: Austin-based Pakistani-American stand-up comedian, producer, and founder of East Austin Comedy Club and Brown Noise Comedy, known for blending cultural observations with absurdity and good-natured nihilism.
- UZAIR MALIK: Boston-based stand-up comedian and New England's Funniest Comedian Competition runner-up who blends sharp global perspectives and immigrant experiences with smart cultural observations
- ABHAY NADKARNI: a global third-culture stand-up comic, Just For Laughs New Face alum, co-founder of Desi Comedy Fest and The Setup, and creator of the Amazon Prime special Brown Jesus
- SAMSON KOLETOKAR: a stand-up comedian whose smart, clean style fuses his Indian upbringing, Jewish roots, and American life, co-creator of Desi Comedy Fest, and has been featured on NBC, CBS, NPR, Ha'aretz

Festival by the Numbers

12 Years of Desi Comedy Fest

25 Comedians from the United States and Canada

6 Cities across the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento

6 Nights of live stand-up comedy

2 Countries represented by this year's performers

Hundreds of comedians showcased since 2014

Thousands of audience members entertained across North America

One mission: Bringing people together through laughter.

Festival Information

Event: 12th Annual Desi Comedy Fest

Shows:

1. Tuesday August 18 7:30pm at Punch Line Comedy Club in San Francisco
2. Wednesday August 19 7:30pm at The Sound Room in Oakland
3. Thursday August 20 7:30pm at Sunnyvale Theater in Sunnyvale
4. Friday August 21 7:30pm at Firehouse Arts Center in Pleasanton
5. Saturday August 22 7pm at Douglass Morrison Theater in Hayward
6. Sunday August 23 7pm at Punch Line Comedy Club in Sacramento

Tickets & Full Schedule: www.DesiComedyFest.com

About Desi Comedy Fest

Founded in 2014 by comedians Samson Koletkar and Abhay Nadkarni, Desi Comedy Fest is North America's premier South Asian comedy festival. Over the past twelve years, it has grown into one of the world's longest-running festivals dedicated to South Asian stand-up comedy, producing shows throughout the United States, Canada, and India while showcasing established stars and discovering the next generation of comedy talent. The festival celebrates the universal power of laughter by bringing together comedians and audiences from every background.

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