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Dead Ringers star Jon Culshaw makes an impression at Mim's Comedy Night.

Comedy night for Mim

Four hundred people gathered in The Comedy Store in the West End on 9 July for a truly memorable evening. They were remembering East Finchley resident Miriam Hyman of Holyoake Walk who, aged 31, was killed by the bomb on the Number 30 bus in Tavistock Square on 7 July 2005. Here, Josie Dobrin tells us about the event.

The idea was simple: to remember Miriam not as a bomb victim but as someone with whom we laughed and shared many happy times. In addition to having a truly memorable night, at least £8,000 was raised for the charity ORBIS UK, which helps to alleviate blindness in the developing world.

With a phenomenal line-up of comedians the audience were in for a treat. Compered by Muswell Hill resident and hugely talented comedian Mark Maier, the line-up included Simon Amstell, Simon Brodkin, Jon Culshaw, Marcus Brigstocke, Francesca Martinez and Mitch Benn. There really was something for everyone.

Jon Culshaw gave everyone a taste of his impressions from BBC's *Dead Ringers* and delighted the crowd by taking requests from the floor. And then there was Mitch Benn who treated us all to a number of his hilariously acrid songs accompanied by his tiny guitar. The laughter just kept on coming.

Mark Maier said: "Although I didn't have the privilege of knowing Mim it's clear that she enjoyed a good laugh, so this was the perfect way to raise money for a great cause." Many of the people who did have the pleasure of knowing Mim felt she would have approved of the evening wholeheartedly (minus maybe some of the

bluer jokes told within earshot of her mother).

Esther Hyman, Miriam's sister, said: "Mim's Comedy Night was overwhelmingly successful. Laughter is the greatest remedy, so best of all is that we laughed until our sides hurt. I will have a smile on my face every time I remember the evening. It could not have been a more fitting tribute to Mim."

Free films at festival

This year's Muswell Hill Festival on 16 September in Cherry Tree Wood will feature a film tent showing free screenings courtesy of the Phoenix Cinema. The tent was a popular feature at the East Finchley Community Festival in June.

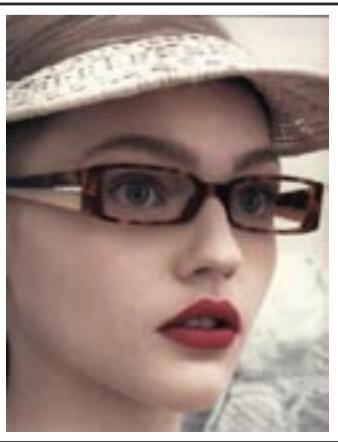
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Rooting for visitors

As part of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society Open Day in June, Janet Maitland opened her garden in Trinity Road to visitors. Here she reveals what it's like preparing for the hordes to arrive.

"The right time to do anything in a garden is when you feel like it" (Christopher Lloyd).

Inspired by this maxim, gardening for me has always been a deliciously sensual experience. I potter about in a languid trance, doing whatever takes my fancy. Buying new plants is a simple matter of falling in love.

This all came to an abrupt end when Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society kindly allowed me to participate in their open day, even though East Finchley is technically on the wrong side of the tracks.

The month before the big day saw me frantically manicuring the garden and hunting slugs with a torch at midnight. I worried that the visitors would disturb my robin's nest or step on the frogs. I even managed to buy plants I hated, one sporting acid yellow flowers more suited to a retirement home in Torquay.

As I tied the Society's purple balloons to the gate just before opening time, I felt as relaxed as if I had invited the public to rifle through my underwear drawer.

All right on the day

My garden was first or last on the route, depending on where people started. There were three visitors in the first 20 minutes. I then sat anxiously on my front doorstep for over two hours, wondering if anyone else was going to appear.

Suddenly visitors appeared in droves, bedazzled by the 21 gardens they had already seen. By closing time I was wrapped in a warm fuzz of compliments. Everyone was startled by the huge number of plants in such a small garden, admiring in particular the serene white foxgloves and giant black bamboo.

Right now I never want to do this again. However, like childbirth, I'll probably soon forget the pain and view the whole experience through rose tinted spectacles.

Stop Press: Janet has already forgotten the pain, having just agreed to become part of the National Garden Scheme, which is on the look out for new gardens in East Finchley. Anyone prepared to open up their garden once or twice a year for charity should contact Susan Bennett on 020 8883 8540.

Photos -
Waiting game (top) Janet Maitland prepares herself.
Bottom: The garden in full bloom



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