

Exploring the psychology of normal people in *Roll For Damage*

By: Jasmine Cheng (<http://ubyssey.ca/author/jcheng/>)

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(<http://ubyssey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/christine-1.jpg>).

Roll for Damage is a part of this year's ComedyCoup Competition. Photo courtesy Roll For Damage

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It is an exciting time for comedy shows across Canada as CBC's Comedy Coup is underway. It's mission: to launch the funniest and most original project into comedy stardom with \$500,000 in funding and a 30-minute CBC prime time special broadcast slot which will be airing in 2015.

Already, over half of the original 285 submissions have been cut during the first round of selections. Of the top 110 teams, one project has caught the eye of many and impressed fans immensely — despite being a relatively new creation. *Roll For Damage* is a comedy show brainstormed by three talented comedians. Max Mitchell is a producer, writer, director and editor; a jack-of-all-trades. Adam Pateman is an actor, stand-up comedian, writer and authentic funnyman. Brian Fukushima is the group’s graphic designer and prolific pen-and-paper gamer who ensures the project scripts remain true to the game it pays homage to.

Mitchell and Pateman are both UBC alumni who attribute much of their success — and where they are now — to their time spent as students at UBC.

“For me, taking the theatre program here at UBC was tremendously advantageous,” said Pateman, who has since then gone on to have a video featured on FunnyorDie.com, co-create a popular web-series and host his own half hour comedy special on CTV and the Comedy Network.

For Mitchell, his years as a student on campus were full of opportunities to learn, create, produce and hone the skills that would later on become crucial to his path as a video-producer.

“[W]hen I was doing my degree at UBC, I would look for any opportunity to make a presentation to the class or to make a video or something like that because I knew that’s what my strong-point was,” said Mitchell. “I used my time at UBC to learn how to produce things. Produce shows, produce videos, produce things.”

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Equipped with these skill-sets and their sense of humour, the pair with the help of their friend Brian Fukushima created *Roll For Damage* from the ground up. If you haven't figured it out already, a significant theme of the show is based on the popular tabletop role playing game *Dungeons And Dragons*, abbreviated D&D, and the title references the damage roll, a common play of the game that determines the amount of damage a player inflicts with an attack. The concept revolves around five friends who get together once a week to play a pen and paper world campaigning game to escape their daily lives, which inevitably seep into the game and are slowly revealed along with their individual psychologies and personalities.

“It's the opposite of *The Big Bang Theory*,” said Pateman. “Because that's a show [about] nerds doing normal things.... This is a show about relatively normal people, although everyone has flaws, doing something that has the stigma of being nerdy, but they're not playing it up as nerdy characters at all. These are not nerd characters we've written; they're normal people characters who happen to have interesting lives that you could relate to.”

Mitchell advises against stereotyping, and suggests checking their trailer out. “I can't stress it enough to reiterate — this isn't a show about nerds playing D&D, this is a show about people. Period. I mean it's got D&D in it, but it's a show about these characters and their lives.”

“We use the D&D one, as a way to bind them all together, and two, as a way for them to explore the psychology of the characters. And to show some really cool pictures of dragons and stuff like that,” said Mitchell.

So far, the concept has been a raging success both as a contender in the ComedyCoup, as well as with fans of online forums and social media like Reddit and YouTube.

Each week ComedyCoup sets out requirements for additional submissions, in the form of videos, scripts and artwork aimed to help the remaining 110 projects in their development. The competition is currently in its third of a 10-week process.

“We’ve got a lot of pipe dreams about this project, but really I would say that if anybody who is interested in a show like this taking fruition, right now is the absolute best time to get involved in following this project.”