RUSSELL HOWARD STANDS UP TO THE WORLD PREMIERES ON SKY ONE AND STREAMING SERVICE NOW MONDAY 31 MAY

"one of the world's top comedians"
Martin Hemming, The Sunday Times

"relentlessly funny"
Iman Amrani, The Guardian

17th May 2021 – After being invited to perform in Australia and New Zealand, Russell takes a trip to explore these distant lands where Covid has been kerbed in this brand new 3 x 60" series premiering on Sky and streaming service NOW on 31st May at 9pm. All three episodes will be available on demand.

Following two weeks in quarantine to gain access, Russell travels the length and breadth of New Zealand, throwing himself headfirst into everything from Manu divebombing to championship sheep shearing, underwater driving to Mauri hot pool cooking. He'll meet legendary kiwi **Sam Neill**, famous first-man **Clarke Gayford**, comedian **Urzila Carlson** and the wonderful old age woodworkers of Coffin Club.

Then Russell heads across the sea to Australia, where he cooks shrimps on the barbie with **Tim Minchin**, meets real life mermaids and gets up close and personal with Koala's in the care of **Robert Irwin**, son of the Aussie zoo legend **Steve Irwin**. He also faces his fears up close and personal with sharks and races toilets in an Aussie pub tradition.

In each location Russell notices the subtle and delightful eccentricities of each country and presents them back through his stand-up performances across the land. Experiencing the unique local humour (and heckling) of the locals first-hand and revelling in our similarities and differences.

Whilst filming the travelogue, Russell became the first international comedian to perform in New Zealand and Australia since the global lockdown. Following the Australasian legs and a sold-out and critically-acclaimed UK arena run in Autumn 2019 for his world tour *Respite,* Russell is set to perform the second UK leg, including 5 Hammersmith Apollo and 7 hometown venue Bristol Hippodrome shows, from 22nd June to the 29th August 2021. *Respite* will in total take Russell to 77 cities across 24 countries in 5 continents.

Russell was most recently on our screens with the fourth season of *The Russell Howard Hour*, attracting the largest viewing figures since season one, which was the biggest new non-scripted entertainment show to land on Sky One since 2010 and resulted in a recommission for a further two seasons. A huge hit online, content has been seen over 400 million times across social media since the show's arrival. The fifth, 14 x 60' season, will see Russell continue to offer his acclaimed satirical take on global news, politics and stories dominating the cultural zeitgeist on Sky One later this year**.** Every episode is available to watch globally via Russell Howard's YouTube Channel which has over one million subscribers.

Russell has over 6 million followers on social media.

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What The Press Have Said About *Respite* so far:

"In 2021, what does gratitude sound like? Having witnessed it firsthand, I'd say it's the sound of a 2000-seat auditorium lit up with laughter…Howard is one of the world's biggest comedy stars. His flow is punchy and unstoppable"
Maggie Wicks, The New Zealand Herald

"Howard is a megastar" ★★★★
Allan Radcliffe, The Times

"Howard's presence and manner are honed art forms, and his pacing is close to perfection. His set is tightly-packed, relentless, accelerating and energetic. But every word is crystal clear. This tightrope between rushing and dragging is rarely so well walked." ★★★★
Alex Bruce, Chortle

"In Respite he takes stock of the current chaos and concludes that we need more fun…. Howard says laughter brings people together. It certainly did last night."
★★★★ **Bruce Dessau, Evening Standard**

"Hero's return for the uplifting comedy king...Howard is undeniably one of the biggest names in comedy"
★★★★ **Josh Stephenson, Metro**

"Howard masterfully builds a show that is hilarious and convincing in equal manner"
★★★★ **Owen Richards, The i**

"It's safe to say this show went down a storm"
★★★★★ **Tabitha James, Young Perspective**

"Arguably one of the funniest blokes to come out of the United Kingdom right now, you can rest assured Russell Howard will be keeping the laughs coming"
Mina Kerr-Lazenby, Stuff (New Zealand)

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Russell Howard:

- Russell became the first stand-up comedian from the Northern Hemisphere to perform in New Zealand and Australia since the global lockdown in 2021.

- Whilst on tour in New Zealand and Australia, Russell filmed a new 3 x 60 min series, *Russell Howard Stands Up To The World* premiering on Sky One and NOW on 31st May.

- Ratings and critical hit *The Russell Howard Hour* was recommissioned for a fifth and sixth season, whilst the fourth season was still on air, by Sky One and TV streaming service NOW TV. The latest season of the topical entertainment show attracted the largest viewing figures since season one, which was the biggest new non-scripted entertainment show to land on Sky One since 2010. A huge hit online, show content has been seen over 400 million times across social media since the show's arrival. The fifth, 14 x 60' season, will see Russell continue to offer his acclaimed satirical take on global news, politics and stories dominating the cultural zeitgeist in 2021.

- During lockdown in 2020, Russell was on our screens twice a week presenting a new Sky One show, *Russell Howard's Home Time*, from his childhood bedroom for which he donated his fee to NHS Charities Together and The Trussell Trust. The series saw Russell give his unique perspective on current world events, as he chatted to some famous faces and interesting people in lockdown including Marc Maron, Jack Whitehall, Louis Theroux, Katherine Ryan, Greg Davies, Michelle Wolf, John Richardson, Guz Khan, James Bay, Stephen Merchant, Kasabian's Serge Pizzorno, and heroes on the front line including Bafta and Emmy award winning film maker Hassan Akkad, intensive care doctor Aoife Abbey and mental health volunteer Caitlin Grant.

- Russell began his third and largest world tour *Respite* with a sold-out and critically-acclaimed UK arena run in Autumn 2019. In total, the rescheduled tour will take Russell to 77 cities across 24 countries in 5 continents with 250,000 tickets already sold to date.

- Russell Howard and his mum Ninette were on our screens with the fourth series of Comedy Central's *Russell Howard & Mum: Globetrotters* in 2019. The first three series reached 4.2M individuals, with the first series being the highest rated new commission on the channel the year it launched. After achieving as much as +241% on the 16-34s slot average and +172% on the adults slot average, series three and four were commissioned with extended episodes.

- A Netflix special of Russell's previous critically acclaimed world tour titled *Recalibrate* launched worldwide in December 2017.

- Russell's 2017 sell-out international tour, *Round the World* saw him play a total of 87 dates with runs in the UK, USA, Canada, Europe, China, New Zealand and Australia. This tour also saw a record-breaking 10-night run at the Royal Albert Hall, overtaking eight in a row jointly held by Frank Sinatra and Barry Manilow, and performing the biggest ever stand-up show in China.

- Whilst Russell was touring *Round The World* in 2017, his previous stand-up show *Wonderbox* (2014) went viral with 15 million views in China (with Mandarin subtitles) and 55 million views worldwide. Russell Crowe and Stephen Fry are amongst some of the Twitterati who shared the heart-warming story of Russell and a sick fan's triumph over adversity.

- The last series of *Russell Howard's Good News* saw multiple sections go viral, including a passionate backing of junior doctors and the NHS (8.2 million views), an interview destigmatising Tourette's (4.9 million views) and a demonstration of the absurdity of the tampon tax (10.2 million views).

- *Russell Howard's Good News* is available around the world via a YouTube channel launched in 2014 – allowing fans to watch full episodes of the show (without piracy) in countries where the show wasn't already broadcast – and has had over 48 million views and been watched in 180 countries (including North Korea and Vatican City)

- Christmas 2015 saw Russell's first comedy-drama with the premiere of, *A Gert Lush Christmas* (BBC Two). As well as co-writing the special, Russell starred for the first time along-side his sister Kerry Howard (*Him & Her*, BBC Three), Greg Davies (*The Inbetweeners, Man Down*, Channel 4), Neil Morrissey (*Men Behaving Badly, Waterloo Road*, BBC1), and Sophie Thompson (*EastEnders*, BBC1).

- Russell's stand-up series, *Russell Howard's Stand Up Central*, which aired from April 2015 on Comedy Central (UK) achieved viewing figures of 159% above the slot average for its first episode.

- Episodes of *Russell Howard's Good News* have even been subtitled and uploaded to Chinese video site AcFun, where the show has also been watched over 4 million times.

- Russell has over 6 million followers on social media.

- 10 series of *Russell Howard's Good News* has seen Russell write and star in 96 episodes.

- *Russell Howard's Good News* was regularly the most watched show on iPlayer across all BBC Channels.

- On the 10th anniversary of the channel, a poll of over 10,000 readers of *Digital Spy* voted *Russell Howard's Good News* as the best ever BBC Three Show, beating shows such as *Little Britain* and *Gavin & Stacey*

- Russell's 2014 *Wonderbox* tour saw him perform to over 285,000 fans at 40 shows across the UK and Ireland, including four consecutive nights at London's Royal Albert Hall.

- Russell extended his 2014 *Wonderbox* tour across the world following over 17,000 suggestions from his fans after he asked them via Facebook where they'd most like to see him perform. The extra sold out dates saw Russell travel to New York, LA, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington DC, Denver, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Auckland.

- Russell's tour in 2011, *Right Here, Right Now* saw him perform to over 240,000 fans across the country, including three sold out dates at London's O2 arena.

- Russell performed to over one million people on his UK and international tours from 2006-2014.

- Russell Howard has four bestselling stand-up DVDs, 2014's *Wonderbox Live*, 2011's *Right Here, Right Now*, 2008's *Russell Howard Live* and 2009's *Russell Howard Live – Dingledodies*, which have sold over 619,000 DVDs and all been in the top 5 DVD comedy chart.

- Russell was voted Heat Magazine's "Weird Crush of the Year 2013"

- Russell made 58 appearances on *Mock The Week* between 2006 and 2010.

- In addition to being a regular on *Mock The Week*, Russell was twice featured on *Live At The Apollo* and appeared on *Would I Lie To You* (BBC One), *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* (BBC Two), and *8 Out 10 Cats* (Channel 4).

- In 2010 Russell took part in the Sport Relief Million Pound Bike Ride with David Walliams, Jimmy Carr, Fearne Cotton, Miranda Hart, Patrick Kielty and Davina McCall – cycling 874 miles from John O'Groats to Land's End in 4 days and raising over £1,337.099.

- In 2010 Russell ran the London Marathon, raising money for the National Society for Epilepsy – a condition from which his brother suffers. He completed the 26 mile course in 4 hours and 15 minutes and raised over £7,000.

- Russell Howard's fifth ever stand-up gig got him to the final of Channel 4's *So You Think You're Funny.*

- In 2006 Russell Howard was nominated for the Edinburgh Fringe Comedy Award for his show *Wandering*, which followed with a nationwide sell-out tour.

- From November 2006 to July 2008, Russell co-hosted The Russell Howard Show (BBC 6 Music) with fellow comedian Jon Richardson in a Sunday morning slot previously hosted by Russell Brand.

About Avalon

Avalon is a multi-award-winning talent management, television production and live promotion group with offices in London, Los Angeles and New York.

Avalon, Artist Rights Group (ARG) and The Agency represent a prolific roster of artists including comedians, actors, presenters, writers and directors. Avalon's numerous ground-breaking returning television shows currently in production include: Not Going Out (BBC), the UK's longest running sitcom on air; Taskmaster (Channel 4), the BAFTA-winning hit entertainment format showing in 100 countries; multi Emmy-winner, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO); The Russell Howard Hour (Sky), the network's most successful entertainment show launch since 2010; Starstruck, a new sitcom from the 2018 Edinburgh Comedy Award winner Rose Matafeo (HBO Max/BBC); Everything's Gonna Be Okay, from creator Josh Thomas (Freeform); Breeders, a sitcom starring Martin Freeman and Daisy Haggard (FX/Sky); a new series of the iconic British satirical puppet show, Spitting Image (BritBox UK); and multiple comedy specials for Amazon Prime Video, HBO Max and Netflix.

Other landmark Avalon shows include BAFTA winning and multi Emmy nominated Catastrophe (Amazon Prime Video/Channel 4), Fantasy Football League (BBC/ITV), multi BAFTA-winning TV Burp (ITV), and Workaholics (Comedy Central USA). Avalon also distributes its catalogue of programmes to over 150 countries worldwide. Avalon has produced many globally successful podcasts and is at the top of the UK iTunes chart with the multi-award-winning Shagged. Married. Annoyed by Chris and Rosie Ramsey.

About Sky

Sky is Europe's leading media and entertainment company and is proud to be part of the Comcast group. Across six countries, we connect our 24 million customers to the best entertainment, sports, news, arts and to our own award-winning original content.

Our technology, including the market leading Sky Q, connects people to everything they love – with entertainment from Sky TV, Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video and BBC iPlayer, and apps like Spotify, YouTube, BBC Sounds, Highbrow, Fiit, and more, in one place, easy. Our streaming service, NOW, brings viewers all the enjoyment of Sky with the flexibility of a contract-free service.

Building on the success of Sky Originals like Chernobyl, Bulletproof and Brassic, we are doubling our investment in original content by 2024 through Sky Studios. Sky News provides impartial and trustworthy journalism for free, while Sky Arts, the UK's only dedicated free-to-air arts channel, makes the arts accessible for everyone. Our new TV and movie studio, Sky Studios Elstree, which will open in 2022, is expected to create over 2,000 new jobs and generate an additional £3 billion of production investment in the UK over the first five years.

We believe that we can be a force for good in the communities in which we operate. We're committed to being Europe's first net zero carbon entertainment company by 2030 and we're proud to be a Principal Partner and Media Partner of COP26. We take pride in our approach to diversity and inclusion: we've been recognised by The Times and Stonewall for our commitment to diversity and we've set ambitious 2025 targets to continue to increase diversity and representation. We're also committed to investing £30million across our markets over three years to improve our approach to diversity and inclusion, and to tackle racial injustice.

About NOW

NOW is a leading UK streaming service, giving you the best TV, box sets, movies, sports and kids entertainment whenever, and wherever, you want it. Pick from the range of content passes including Entertainment, Sky Cinema, Sky Sports, Kids and reality TV with hayu.

You can stream content to watch through the NOW app, available on over 60 devices including the NOW Smart Stick and Smart Box and even download your favourite shows and movies to watch on the go.

NOW is the home of the best new and original British comedies, Oscar, BAFTA, and Emmy award winning dramas, Sky originals and movies. NOW customers can enjoy over 30 new movies every month and Sky Atlantic shows, without a contract.

Sports fans can enjoy all the action across all 11 Sky Sports channels through day, week or month passes.

NOW also offers great value reliable broadband as a standalone contract-free service with NOW Broadband.

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