



Comedy

I was recently asked to change/erase some of the content in my live performance.

Doesn't bother me. I accepted the critique and the challenge. I had signed a contract agreeing to stay away from certain subjects, which is next-to-impossible of course, but that is part of my chosen field: pleasing both audiences and the people who pay me.

Call it whatever you want. You get to have your opinion. We live in a time that requires a lot of thinking (which I hate to do) if you want to succeed as a comedian.

The truth is: I signed a contract. I know who I'm working for and who I'm working with. I understand the rules and the ramifications of breaking those rules - and it's my responsibility to make things work.

Especially in a socio-politically-charged nation.

But that is, in a nutshell, the definition of my job. What it is, was and always will be: write it, edit it, re-edit it. NEXT! I'm getting paid. I am given every technical advantage there is. Let's put

on a show.

In a roundabout way it reflects on what's happening with the writers' strike across the ever-expanding labyrinth of new media platforms, old media cable-and-broadcast television and film, theater, show business, and entertainment. The problem is, as with all union strikes: fairness, pay, and job security.

Some of the pain is self-inflicted. Late night television talk shows garner less and less viewership. There are reasons, but the most glaring is the similarity you see on ABC, CBS and NBC post-11PM programming - all follow rote identical subject matter, punch lines and audience response. Which is not so much "laughter" as it is "applause" in our year of 2023 - as in, "Yes! We agree!" Writers, being the clever beings they are, have come up with a new word for the lack of outright laughs, but lots of applause:

"CLAPTER."

I'm not sure America wants to tune in at 11:30 to hear people clapping. My only justification for thinking that is the ever-dwindling TV ratings for those shows. 'Variety,' the erstwhile news source for the entertainment industry, recently did an article about advertisers cutting back on commercials during those late-night talk shows.

In 2018, seven late night programs — NBC's "Tonight" and "Late Night," CBS' "Late Show" and "Late Late Show," ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live," Comedy Central's "Daily Show" and NBC's "Saturday Night Live" — drew more than \$698 million in advertising in 2018, according to Vivvix, a tracker of ad spending. By 2022, that total came to \$412.7 million — a drop of approximately 41% over five years. (source: [Variety](#))

So who's out of a job when advertisers won't pay \$25K for 30 seconds of airtime?

WRITERS.



NOTE: there is one late night talk show that draws a sizable nightly audience on a cable news network (*Gutfeld!* - if you know, you know); there is Joe Rogan on his own social media platform channel; Bill Maher is still a very funny comic and interviewer with his own show. All three throw caution, political correctness, and “what is appropriate” out the studio window and concentrate on big laughs.

OH! There are live acts who are doing very, very well in 2023, working in comedy without needing punch lines or even broaching subject matter that could offend someone. Or some. One.

Jugglers, magicians, and hypnotists are dependent on audience interaction, the laughs coming from the moment where a card is revealed, or a lay person drops a jugglers tossed object, or Dave from Human Resources pretends he's a

chicken every time the hypnotist says the word “blue.”

Corporate conferences, meetings and conventions use these performers for a very good reason: few words, lots of action, nobody gets offended! I admire these performers - getting HUGE laughs without offending a soul!

(This is a good spot for an aside. When I use the word “hypnotist,” I’m talking about the person who seats 8 or 12 people up on a stage, puts them in a ‘trance’ and has one of them pretend to be Rihanna, singing and twerking to a booming music track as the audience cheers them on - that’s the current use of the word “hypnotist” in show business. Hypnotherapy is something different, and the reason I make the distinction is because I made the mistake - ONCE - of conflating the two. As I pointed out in the beginning: edit, re-edit. Lesson learned.)

The genre suffering the most is the big-time Hollywood film and hit comedy. Those movies are few and far between in the 2020s. It doesn’t matter who you are, how popular the star is, or how mundane the subject matter - every word and every premise is now examined for the negative impact it might have on a given segment of society. So, the big studios got the message: “Comedy isn’t worth the nasty feedback, the boycotts, the demonstrations and the hate.”

See ya.

Guess who is out of work when there aren’t any comedy movies going into production?

Years ago - working in Chicago at the Second City Theater - I was listening in to a conversation among some of the actors/writers (at The Second City, if you’re a member of the

troupe you are a writer... maybe you weren't when you auditioned, but as an improvisational actor? You are a WRITER). One of them made the point, "It's great if you can do a 30-minute comedy act! Because no matter what happens, if there is a strike, a disaster, or a studio stops production - you can always find someone to pay you to go on stage and perform live."

Truth.

Comedy clubs are doing very well, and there are so many good comedy acts now it's mind-blowing. The new-ish streaming comedy show *Dry Bar Comedy* has made stars of comics you've never known ([Jeff Allen](#), anyone?) So, for me? Writers' strike? I hope they get what they want. They probably deserve it.

I gotta go to work, even if doing my job gets me into trouble... remember when Will Smith, the superstar actor, punched or slapped or hit Chris Rock at the Oscars? Do you think that changed the way people see comedy?

I dunno... but I re-wrote the theme song to *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* in honor of the event:

*This is a story, all about how...
An actor got mad and punched a comedian out!
One little fight and everybody got scared...
So they gave him the Oscar;
And sent him back to Bel-Air.*

Thanks for reading!

Taylor



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