

6 Ways to Not Suck at Stand-Up Comedy

 www.cracked.com/blog/6-ways-to-not-suck-at-stand-up-comedy_p2/

Gladstone



#3. Don't Pretend to Be Edgy

For more insight, I looked up north to our Canadian friends, but was informed that the very funny [Will Weldon](#) is now an LA-based comic. (It's so hard to tell. They look just like us.) I've never met Will in real life or spoken to him outside of Twitter DMs, but he was kind enough to give me his insight via 140-character messages. Here is a completely invented transcript of our exchange:

Listen. Can you hear it? It's Canada still mourning his loss.

Will: Hey Gladstone, huge fan of your Twitter account and work on Cracked. I eagerly await the formal publication of your novel [Notes from the Internet Apocalypse](#) in early 2014 by Thomas Dunne Books.

Gladstone: That's not really relevant, Will, but thank you. Also, isn't that more than 140 characters? How is that possible?

Will: Anything's possible when you're trolling your haters of self-promotion! Anyway, let me switch to Skype so this is easier. [switches to Skype]

Jupiterimages/Photos.com/Getty Images
Behold, the power of the reverse troll.

Will (continued): Anyway. I once got a job making fun of videos on Canada's version of MTV, and I wanted to establish how edgy I was. I kept calling Scott Stapp a cunt during a Creed video. They barely used anything I did and never invited me back.

Will has a good point. Scott Stapp is a cunt. But more importantly, feigned "edginess" is typically a recipe for disaster.

#2. Don't Overindulge

Despite what the worst people in the world (singer-songwriter [Aimee Mann](#), comic [Nikki Walter](#)) will tell you, our next expert is not a morbidly obese comedic hack. Indeed, in real life he's actually quite svelte. You might know [Kevin Seccia](#) from his appearances on *Premium Blend* and *The Late Late Show* or his book [Punching Tom Hanks](#).

Here's something you might not know: Comics spend most of their time in comedy clubs, and comedy clubs have alcohol in them. I wasn't aware, but Kevin assured me this was true. And something that comics like to do when there is alcohol around is drink. I won't bore you with the complete biochemical reaction that takes place, but according to Kevin (and he's the comedy expert here), if you drink enough alcohol, you get drunk -- even if it's your job to get on stage and tell jokes.

Now some of you might already know that, but here's the other thing: If you hang around comedy clubs enough and you are friends with all the promoters and comics, sometimes you might get asked to go on stage at the last minute. Someone is late, someone doesn't show, it doesn't matter. There may come a time when there's a spot to fill, and there you are.

Are you following me so far? OK, now here's the deal: If they need you to perform, but you're already drunk or, let's say, tripping on psychedelic calzones (which slanderous rumors lead me to believe Kevin is totally into), you'll be in no shape to do a good job on stage. So Kevin's advice in a nutshell (which he also finds delicious) is to always be ready to perform, because you don't want to squander good opportunities.

If I could take that advice a bit further and out of Kevin's wheelhouse of eating and drinking, I'd advise that it's a good idea to be prepared with all sorts of material for different occasions and different timed sets, because, y'know, you never know.

#1. Know Who You're Dealing With in the Crowd

Our top spot goes to comic [Fred Stoller](#), who you might know from appearances on *Dr. Katz, Professional Therapist* and *Everybody Loves Raymond* or his book [Maybe We'll Have You Back](#). Fred's advice is about dealing with hecklers. I'll be completely honest. I took a couple of passes at trying to find a fun way to deliver Fred's advice to you via the ol' Gladstone magic that has led so many of you to send me unsolicited porn and/or name your firstborns after me, but, try as I might, I couldn't really improve on it. I'm just quoting it outright. But before I do, let me point out that fortunately there are fewer and fewer people believing that heckling is part of the comedy experience these days. It's almost as easy to scream stupid shit at a comic on stage as it is to leave half-wit trolling comments online, and people seem to be doing it less. Sober people.

Hemera Technologies/PhotoObjects.net

Pies in the face? Squirting lapel flowers? Sure. But there's no place for heckling in comedy.

There are all sorts of ways to deal with a rude audience, but as Fred points out, before doing so, you should probably get a good look at who's heckling you:

"Once, in San Antonio, a crowd wasn't with me and these two women in the front were talking during my whole act, but no one heard them except for me. Usually the ushers tell people who are disrupting a show that if they're not quiet, they'll be kicked out. I told the usher to tell them that. He misinterpreted that as 'Kick them out.' Turned out one of them was on crutches and it looked like I kicked a crippled woman out. The crowd booed me off the stage."

Well, there you have it. Six pieces of advice for not dying on stage. But that's not to say you couldn't apply each and every one of these entries to your real life as a real estate broker or fishmonger. Each of these is universal, especially if you don't understand what words mean. Words like "universal," for example.

If you're in New York City, come see how well Gladstone applies these lessons at his April 12 stand-up set at [The Saloon](#).