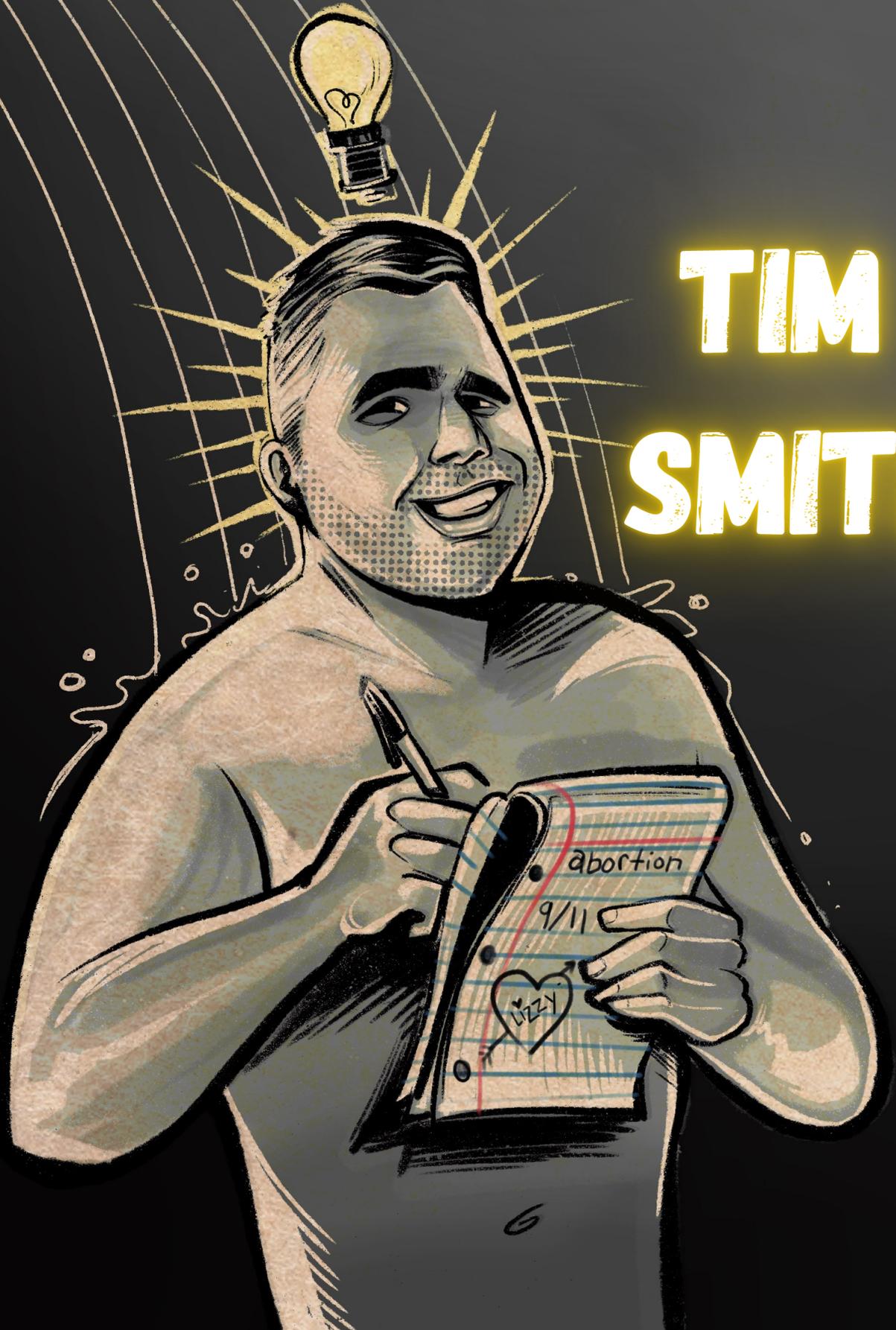


THE COMEDY GAZELLE



**TIM
SMITH**

ABOUT THE GAZELLE

When I first moved to Chicago, I was immediately struck by the level of talent in the scene. "Fuck, she's good," I thought as I watched Kristen Toomey supercharge herself with a firm slap of the puss.

Why haven't I heard of her before?

It's a question I come back to often, and a major problem here. The city's bursting with household-name-level talent, but unless you're in the midst of it, it's easy to miss.

That's why I'm starting The Comedy Gazelle — to bring outsiders into the heart of Chicago comedy, and to showcase this city's unrivaled talent. To keep everyone up-to-date on the scene, and to do it in a fun way. And not just in a one-off article, but all the time.

Each issue will include an exclusive interview, as well as whatever else I can pull together.

Hope you enjoy.

— Jerry

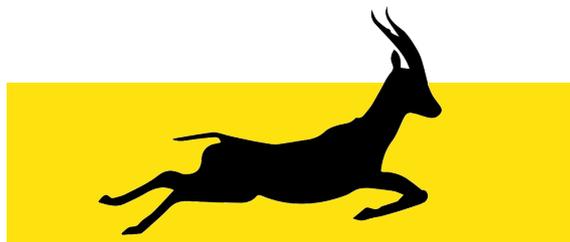
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INTERVIEW: TIM SMITH

Ladies and gentlemen, we got him: 30-something year old white guy! Fresh off his first headlining gigs, I sat down with the hilarious Tim Smith (@oletimmymith) to talk about his process, first starting, being honest with himself, and more.

I saw your first headlining set at Zanies and was curious: how did you prepare for that, knowing you had to put together 45 minutes of material?

Most of it's kind of already put together. I've been featuring for a while, so doing a 20-25 minute set was a pretty normal thing. Just building from there, and when you're doing those feature sets you'll mix in stuff, so you kind of have 45-50 out there. It's just a matter of putting it all into one glob of stuff that seems to make sense when you're saying it, so it's not just weird transition after weird transition. You know, talking about squirrels dying right into "My girlfriend's short." Maybe there's not a through line, but at least the transitions seem to make sense.

And did you learn anything from that that helped you with your next headlining gig at Comedy on State? I feel like the first time you headline is a big learning experience.

For me it was just like, "Alright dipshit, just remember all of it." I'm not really a comic that can bounce from joke to joke. Like if I forget this chunk in the middle, I'm a little screwed. I really have to remember all of it, because if I forget this 4-5 minute chunk I can't really put it at the end. Cause then I'm doing the thing like, "Hey do you guys remember what I said 33 minutes ago?" So I was really trying to hammer it into my head. It just felt like studying for a test, really. Say the order, do the set a bunch of times in the shower and then get out there and hopefully I can execute.

You were running the full set in the shower?

That's where I write. I do everything in the shower.

You don't sit down and write, you just think in the shower?

So I eat an edible. I get in the shower. I turn all the lights out. I have a waterproof notepad and a little flashlight —

I can't tell if you're kidding.

It's 100% true. I get in there and talk to myself and try to riff. And if I think something's funny then I get my little



Photo by @anfchicago

flashlight out and I write it in my little notepad. Then I turn it back out and go back to what I was doing. Then I'll get out and try to figure it out from there. It's the best. There's no distractions, there's no nothing. I have the white noise of the shower, it's pitch black so I'm not distracted by anything, it's awesome. Everybody thinks it's so weird.

How did you find out that worked for you?

Kind of my whole life I've taken like minimum hour showers. Every time I get in there I'm in there for like an hour, hour and a half. I just like being in the shower. I love it. I get in, I sit right down, and you can just be in your own world for a while. That's just how I started writing. I live with my fiancé and I'll get out and she'll be like, "Ooo was it a good one?" And I'm like, "Why?" And she's like, "Well, I heard you laughing a lot."

And how often are you doing one of those writing sessions?

A lot. I'll just get in the shower and go through certain sections of my act. There are points when I'm trying to get the wording down perfectly. Then there are other times I'm trying to be looser and riff some stuff to see if I can build on what I have already. But a lot. Most days.

You were talking about how if you fuck up a five minute chunk you're screwed. Does that also have to do with the content of the material you're talking about? Cause you do a lot of darker stuff.

I'm not like a riffy kind of guy on stage. I kind of know every word I'm going to say. I don't know if what I say is that dark, it just has to be sharp for it to work. I can never really find my way into the joke about the guy coming over and stabbing a dog to death. You kind of have to have that wording down.

Yeah, definitely not dark.

Well, I just have it all laid out so this leads into this naturally, that leads into that naturally. It all kinda leads into one another. What I'm hoping it does is that it feels more conversational and natural than just boom, boom, boom joke telling. If I miss this part up here, it's hard to get it in somewhere back here because it fits perfectly in this chunk.

When you're building longer bits — I've noticed that I'll build it "horizontally," like this happened, which leads to this, which leads to this. Then I kind of build the depth of each step along the way. How do you tend to build material?

I probably go horizontally. I think it starts out longer, then I try to cut, cut, cut until it's just the meat of it. Then I'll try to add — to what you're saying — like the depth of it. I'll try to find more in that juicy spot. When you first have the joke, if it's a five minute joke it's really probably a two minute joke, when you get rid of all the horse shit that's in it. Then from there if you can add little lines into that two minutes, now you're looking at 2:40, but you've added five laughs. Now you've got a chunk that's pretty dense. I try to just go back and cut all the horse shit out and make those good parts as dense as I can. I think it was Chappelle or Chris Rock who said you need to figure out what your joke machine is. That's where it makes it a lot easier to write material quicker. You know how to process the inputs well enough to where you can take that and turn it into a joke that you like quickly. I don't know if I've figured that part out yet. Like some guys have a style or a formula their jokes turn into. I feel lucky every time I find a punchline. "Holy shit it worked out!" I feel like I got away with something.

So you'll try something out, find the big laughs, crop around that and make those big pops stronger.

Yeah, stronger or if you can squeeze two to three tags after that big one. Cause you already have them on your side, so why not get 2-3 more free laughs out of them

while you're already on that topic. If you have that big laugh, they agree with you. So say more shit they agree with really quickly. I'm telling a joke about people doing their own research with the vaccines, and it's this sarcastic thing, "Oh, you finally dusted off that old lab equipment?" That gets the laugh, then after that it's, "Oh, you finally found a use for those beakers?" It's the same thing. "Are you coming out tonight?" "No I can't, I gotta fire up the bunsen burner." All those tags are pretty much on the same exact point, but if they already laughed at the thing about lab equipment, I can just rattle off a couple pieces of lab equipment and get four free laughs out of it.

Do you think your style has changed a lot since you first started?

Well, it took me like five and a half years to realize I'm allowed to have fun on stage. I'm serious. I used to think it was a thing that you're not allowed to smile or laugh on stage. I don't have a very friendly face all the time, and then if you're telling some of these jokes I was telling, people are like, "What is going on on stage right now?" This is just a very upset man. If people bought into it, it would go well, but if they didn't I was up there having a really tough time. It took me a long time to learn, "Yeah dude, you're supposed to have fun. This is comedy."

What did you start doing?

It was just kind of a mindset change I think, then everything else kind of happened naturally. It was like, "Hey dumbass, this is a fun thing you're doing here. Why would you not enjoy this extremely fun thing you get to do?" Instead of being stressed out about it the whole time: "Oh great, that line didn't work so now I'm mad at this audience. This guy's looking at this phone so now I'm gonna scream at him." I look back at some of these sets I was doing like, "This is humiliating. This is so bad." Just relax, have a fun time. If

you're having a fun time everything kind of takes care of itself. Then the added benefit is that some of the darker stuff that I say, people are way more on board with it now because they know you're goofing off. I'm not trying to be an edgelord, I'm just having a good time saying the wrong things sometimes, you know? I think people are more willing to accept that when they know the vessel it's coming out of is a goofy one and not some angry dude. I think the world's had enough of an angry dude.

How do you get out of that?

Try to write some goofy stuff or take a couple of shots at yourself, instead of it always going out. If you're a comedian I'd imagine you don't like who you are very much, so try to turn that lens around and look at the shit about yourself that annoys you or you're insecure about, and make fun of that stuff. I think people are more willing to accept when you're taking shots out if you're also taking them in. Cause if it's too much going out, people are like, "Okay, well, you're just a dickhead."

Do you structure your sets in that way? Where it's, "Oh, I'm gonna say this fucked up thing so I need to take shots at myself first?"

Yeah, for sure. And saving some of the darker stuff for after you've built up the goodwill of the audience. If you come out just slinging the dark stuff out front? I don't know, man. More power to ya. But I've rarely ever seen it work. A guy like Anthony Jeselnik, I just would've loved to see him coming up. Cause it just had to have been brutal. I take the coward's route I guess, and I try to build up goodwill before I start blasting some of the other stuff out there. I also preface a couple of the jokes with like, "Hey, are you guys okay with me telling a fucked up joke?" And almost invariably the crowd's gonna go, "Woooo!" So this is your fault now. You agreed to this. Cause then if they don't like it I'm like, "Hey, remember a minute ago?"

Maybe you just gotta start that way.

"You guys mind if I do 48 minutes of fucked up jokes?" I'm trying to get better at having a lot of different pitches in my set. I wanna have a curveball, I wanna have a fastball, I wanna have a change up, I wanna have all those things. I wanna have jokes that are "thoughtful" or observational or mean or dark or are shots at myself. I don't want to get to a place where it's like da-da-da-da-dah, punchline. Da-da-da-da-dah, punchline, where you can kind of pick up on the cadence. I'd like to have as many pitches as I can, as long as they all feel natural.



Well, going back to what you said about the joke machine, I feel like what's difficult about having one is that you start to pick up a certain cadence or style. Versus if you add all these different pitches, everyone's kind of on their toes.

And that's what I would love to be able to complete, but I would just like to figure out how I interpret information. That would make life a lot easier. Instead of it going in and getting lost forever and being a dumbass forever. It would make it a lot easier if it could come in, then come out this way and then maybe I could fiddle with it once it's out. I feel like it leaves a lot or just gets mumbled and jumbled. I don't know, my brain stinks.

I know what you mean. You have an idea, then instead of having an easy way to turn it into something workable you have to play around with it forever.

Yeah, and that's why I said I feel like I get lucky when something comes out. Cause I'm like, "I didn't think it was gonna come out that way, but that's pretty fun! That one kinda worked out!"

You mentioned you would've loved to see Jeselnik coming up. Can you talk more about what you were like when you were first starting and trying to find your way?

You're just trying to say anything that might get a laugh. Anything. One of the jokes that I first got a big laugh on at an open mic in Louisiana I still say. I said it at Zanies. I don't know. Maybe if the first thing you say that gets a laugh is lighthearted, maybe you lean into the lightheartedness for a little while. But unfortunately the thing I got a laugh on was something kind of dark and dirty. So maybe I traveled that path for a little while, just trying to find laughs. When I first started, I'm sure you're the same way, I was just digging in the dirt trying to find anything somebody would laugh at. I wasn't like, "What are my specific thoughts on the world here?" Comedy is just so hard. It's so hard to make people laugh, that's such a hard thing to do. So when I first started I certainly wasn't thinking, "Who am I? What's my style?" I was just trying to put together five minutes of comedy where people laughed roughly every 20 seconds. I think you find that thing later. It's like, don't try to do calculus if you can't do addition yet. Figure out how to get laughs, and once you're getting them, then maybe you start to figure out putting your own personality into it and thoughts into it. But like, number one is people have to be laughing. Nobody cares if you make a great point. You know what I mean?

Yeah, you have to be funny first.

I think if you get lost in that "comedians are the modern day philosophers" thing you get so far up your own ass you don't even know what's going on. Just try to figure out jokes first, then figure out who you are later.

So when you were picking your features for Zanies, what was the thought process that went into that?

Well, Tommy [Schneeman]'s a great host. He's a cute kid, he's a funny guy. People just like him. Him and I have worked together a bunch, he's got good jokes, he's ready to rock and roll. I wanted to be as comfy as I could. And then I worked with Jarrell [Scott Barnes] a bunch and he's just funny as fuck. He's another guy where people just like this person. Then Gena [Gephart] went up and Gena crushed. This is so stupid, but you just want it to be a fun show. You want everyone to be like, "I'm having a good time right now." I didn't want people to go after the crowd or any of that stuff. I wanted people to leave and be like, "Yeah, that was a fun time." And all those people are just fun cool people who are good comics, so it was kind of a no brainer.

I know you've featured for guys like Roy Wood Jr and Jim Norton. How did you start getting some of your own feature gigs?

Roy and I were on a show together at the Laugh Factory. I got lucky on that one cause it was one of those Laugh Factory crowds that was completely sold out. I didn't know he was there, so I wasn't nervous, and it was one of those nights where you just feel great. You know when you feel funny, and other nights you're like, "I'm a steaming pile of shit?" I just had a heater and he stopped me after. I didn't know who he was because he stopped me in the showroom. He was like, "Hey man, good set," and you're just doing the thing of, "Oh, thanks so much." Then he kept wanting to talk so I finally looked at who he was and was like, "Oh, fuck." Then your demeanor completely changes and you're like, "Oh, I'm such a big fan!" Just full fanboy like an asshole. But we just stayed in touch and he was like, "Hey, do you wanna come do this Madison feature spot?" I feel like I've gotten a lot of stuff through comedian recommendations. I think a lot of it is making it known what you'd like to do. A lot of people maybe keep their mouths shut a little too much and just assume that people know they want to do things. And a lot of people don't ask for stuff. I think put yourself in good positions and then when you get those shots, be ready for it. With Comedy on State, I was recommended to them through some comics in Chicago and they were like, "Alright, do you want to come feature for Jim Norton?" I was like, "Hell yeah!" and didn't feel like I wasn't ready for it. I was like, "Yeah, I can go here and cook for 20." And I did and it went great, so they were like, "Oh, for sure you can definitely come back." Instead of trying to reach too high too fast and maybe I had a hot eight, and then I go there and I'm struggling a lot. Then they're not gonna have me back.

So just kind of be patient.

Be patient, but go after the things you want. But you also have to be doing the work on your end. People aren't gonna rec you if you're not doing what you need to be doing to get that recommendation. Cause no one wants to put their name on the line, then have you absolutely suck. Then they look like a shithead.

Do you feel like you ask for enough opportunities?

I think I'm ok at recognizing where I am and trying to reach the step above me, instead of reaching ten steps ahead and it not working out and getting down on yourself. "Oh fuck, well I guess if they don't think I'm funny..." Well, no. It's just you've been doing it for two years. You don't get all the stuff right away. A great Chicago example is everyone shows up and immediately wants to do CYSK and get spots at Laugh Factory. Well, you've been doing it for eight months. You don't get those yet. I think I'm good at keeping high goals while being realistic with myself.

Were you always realistic? Or is that something you came to understand the longer you were in comedy?

I started when I was 28. I came into it knowing I was fucked from day one. Starting at 28 makes no sense at all. It's an objective bad decision. Quitting a career and moving here, also bad decisions. So I think I've always been realistic with like, "Look man, you're not a spring chicken. You're not a guy that's gonna get plucked. Nobody's looking, 'Where's the next 30 something year old guy?'" So I knew I was gonna have to dig and scrape around in the dirt. I think it's helped me keep more of a square head on my shoulders. I've gotten some of this headlining stuff, and gotten to do theaters with really cool people, but like I've never gotten a JFL audition. I think if I had started younger, that would've driven me insane. But now I kind of know what it is. They're not looking for me. They're looking for a 22, 23, 25 year old, hot, funny person they can maybe put into a show. I think knowing that stuff helps me keep my head down and keep moving forward. I just know nobody's looking for the 28 year old white guy. "Oh there he is!"

What made you want to start at 28 and leave your career?

I just kind of had to. It just wasn't who I was. I was trying to follow a path that didn't make any sense at all for me. Luckily enough, Lizzy, my fiancé, she always knew. I was like, "I'm gonna go do an open mic," and she was like, "Yeah you totally should." Then after a little while I was like, "I think we should move to Chicago." And she was like, "Yeah we totally should." She's an all timer. But I was trying to be something that I wasn't and I had enough of it.

You have an interesting perspective having started at 28.

I just think people get caught up in - I hear 25 year olds talking, "I've been doing comedy for three years and nothing's happening." What are you talking about? What did you think was gonna happen in three years? If you listen to any great 30 year comic, it takes 10 years to become a competent stand up comedian. Ten! If you're stressed out at three, you gotta cut yourself a little bit of slack, dude. I try to look at it year to year. Am I a better comedian than I was? Am I doing better things? Do I have more time? Am I writing jokes that I like? If you can look back and see that you are improving, I think that's all you can really do.

When you decided to move here, why did you choose Chicago?

We visited LA, we visited New York. LA was completely out. Nothing about that felt like it was gonna be right for me. New York felt good, but everything I listened to and read said that Chicago is the best incubator. You can come here and really get good for a little while with no eyes on you, and I liked that idea. Being able to just toil in obscurity for a little while. I wouldn't have wanted to go to New York and maybe had people see me and go, "Well this guy is just a wannabe edgy white guy that says the wrong thing." Cause that's not who I am. That's initially how comedy came out of me, but I think I'm growing out of that. And I want to grow out of that.

How are you trying to get out of that? What direction do you see yourself going?

I just think it takes a long time to be who you are on stage. Like who you actually are. I think I'm a goofy, fun guy, but then a lot of the comedy that was coming out of me was just dark shit a lot or saying the wrong thing a lot. I'm like, "These jokes are kind of working, but that's not really who I am." I don't know why that was the initial surface, maybe I was upset about things in my life, maybe I was upset that I was in a career that I didn't think I fit in. Maybe I was just pissed off about that and that's what initially came out. But I was happy to come here and be able to get rid of those layers a little bit more. Cause I'm having more fun on stage, I'm more self deprecating on stage. I'm telling jokes that I think sound like me and that I like a little bit more. And I don't know if I would've really gotten there if I had gone to New York or LA. Chicago is just kind of killer. There's a bunch of good comics around, a bunch of really good stage time, and a bunch of really good comics have come out of Chicago. So it just felt like the right fit for Lizzy and I, for sure.

If you could change anything about the scene, what would you want to change?

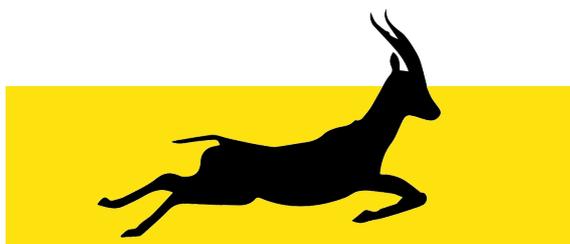
Me and my buddy were talking about it the other day. It seems to be a trend in other scenes where comedy managers are gonna start putting on shows so that talent can be showcased to agents or to management or other industry people, instead of it all being a comedian run, DIY kind of stuff. Which is killer for the stage time and meeting and seeing good comics, but at the end of the day it's kinda like, "That was great but..."

But what does it lead to?

There are managers in Chicago, there are agents in Chicago. It would be killer if those kinds of people were around more or putting on shows or hosting shows, or showing up to the great DIY shows, the Lincoln Lodges, the CYSKs, checking out the feature stuff at Zanies, the showcases at Laugh Factory. That would be killer, but you don't see them too much it seems like. Or maybe they're there, they're just certainly not introducing themselves to me. They're like, "Finally, the white guy in his 30s! We've been looking for you everywhere, dude!" What a horrible decision I've made.

Do you feel good about what you're doing?

I feel good, man. You just can't help but think, "What am I doing with my life?" But if six years ago you told me I was gonna headline some of these clubs and get to do some of the things I got to do, I would shit my pants. Instantly. Poop in my pants. It's just the thing of you're never happy with where you are, you always think you should be further or better. But it's killer. It's just the most fun thing you can do. You hang out with comics all day, all night, you laugh almost constantly. It's a very cool thing that we get to do. I 100% made the right decision, for sure.



BONUS: Tim Smith's Top 10 Chicago Comics

(IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

- 1. CALVIN EVANS**
- 2. GEOFF ASMUS**
- 3. ALI DRAPOS**
- 4. CHRIS HIGGINS**
- 5. ERICA CLARK**
- 6. ALEX DRAGICEVICH**
- 7. ANTONIO KAREEM**
- 8. MARILEE**
- 9. TOMMY SCHNEEMAN**
- 10. KENYON ADAMCIK**

BONUS: Quick Questions with Tim Smith

Most Underrated Chicago Comedian: I gotta toss my boy Patty Munz in there. Pat Bolduc. That guy just writes so many goddamn jokes and is so funny. Overall? A guy like Rory Scovel, who's just unreal. I don't know how he's not the most famous guy. It's just bananas, dude. He was at the Lincoln Lodge before the pandemic and he just improvised the whole show. He was murdering with shit off the top of his head, just murdering. It was one of those things where you leave and you're like, "I'm really really bad at this. This is not for me. It's time to move back home and get a job at Applebees."

Favorite Independent Show: CYSK. I used to watch everyone's sets when I was still in Baton Rouge. That was the show I fully idolized when I first got here. I was absolutely over the moon when they let me do my first set there. It has to be that one.

Favorite Open Mic: 2017-2018 Durkins. Willie Griswold and Collin Unger, free pizza Fridays, dollar beers. That was the open mic. That was very fun.

Dream Writing Job: Roommates in Law. It would be so fun.

Dream Venue: If I could ever perform at The Comedy Cellar, that would be top tier. That would be absolutely unbelievable. That's like the club.



SHOW SPOTLIGHT: THE HUMBOLDT JUNGLE

This month's spotlight is on The Humboldt Jungle (@thehumboldtjungle), an intimate basement / speakeasy show run by comedian Joe Eames (@_joe_eames).

If I'm looking for something to do on a Wednesday night, why should I check out The Humboldt Jungle?

There's always a lot of great comedy to be seen in Chicago, but I think the differentiating factor is that it has this word of mouth, speakeasy kind of feel to it. You're not just gonna stumble on it. That sort of vibe is what separates us, but the biggest thing by far is the space itself. It's literally in the basement of my friend Nathan's house. And it's not like you have to trudge someone's kitchen: you walk through the front gate, then there's a door that takes you straight to the basement. That little separation adds a cool dynamic to it. It's pretty intimate.

And if I'm someone that's never been to a speakeasy type show before, what can I expect?

I think everyone goes there with intention. It's far more intentional to go to a Humboldt Jungle show as opposed to, "Oh, there's this show that's in the back room at a bar. We're here, we might as well go in." When the show is in someone's house and you're all packed in with each other, it doesn't feel as much like you're surrounded by strangers. It's just a far more intimate setting.

How many people can you fit?

Right now, it's 50 or so fold-out chairs and we always have room in the back for comics to stand. Just get a hold of me first. You also need the address, so you kind of have to. Also, shout out to all the women who have come through, because it is a tough sell.

It's BYOB?

Correct. I buy White Claws for the comics, but I need some non-alcoholic options because more than a few comics don't drink. I feel bad cause they show up and they're like, "Alright, I'll just take a glass of tap water I guess." But it is BYOB which I think does contribute to the house party vibe of it. My favorite is when people bring a bottle of wine.



Photography by @james.yeamann

Do you get a lot of the same people coming to shows?

We've had six or seven shows, and the first three were the usual suspects with more and more people coming each time. I went from knowing all of the audience to most of the audience, then in the fall there was this tipping point. At our most recent show, I don't think I knew 70% of the audience. I think people who go come back, and every time they come back they bring people with them. The show's been really awesome.

What kind of goals do you have for the show?

Well, we're always going to be in that space. The day that space is unavailable, the show is no more. There's no anticipation of moving and we're already filling that room to the brim, so the only thing we can do now is to do it with more frequency. We sold out our March show on February 23, and I'd love to get to a place where we can do pop-ups. Where we go, "Hey, March 23 sold out, but good news on March 11 we're doing a pop-up show!" Just being able to throw together a really

stacked lineup on short notice and sell 50 tickets, that'd be huge. That's the goal right now. Get some food involved and make the post show hang a little more interesting, once we're not getting crushed by Chicago winters. It's gotten to a place where I don't know most of the people and it's still going really well. As long as nobody fucks up and steals something from Nathan's house, we'll be good.

If someone wanted to start their own basement show, what advice would you give them?

Your first few shows you're gonna need proof that the show is good, and in order for the show to be good, you need people there. So if you can fill a room with your friends and family or whatever, get a room full of people and then document it. Pay for a photographer. Don't post clips on your Instagram story and hope other people will see it, because the only people that are gonna see it are other open mic comics. Find a good space, book a good lineup, fill the room, and have people take pictures. Then people can go, "Oh, that looks fun!" as opposed to, "Joe wanted me to come to this thing." Word of mouth means sending pictures from Instagram to people saying, "This is what I was at and you should come to this." And don't advertise on Facebook. You can't put up a sponsored Facebook ad for a show that's in the basement of a home someone lives in. Also, don't give Facebook money.

Were there any shows that you borrowed from when putting this together?

You borrow from everybody, but when I started comedy, Parlour Car was my favorite show. It wasn't just, "Oh we're doing a show, come out." There was a very clear effort for it to have it's own aesthetic. And it wasn't gimmicky or bullshit. It was cool. I saw that and tried to emulate that with the Humboldt Jungle. But also talking to your friends who produce shows and asking them, "Who should I book? How often should I run a show?" Brian Lirot, terrible Chicago comedian, is the reason we call it The Humboldt Jungle and not The First Annual. The first show was called The First Annual and the artwork was done by a girl I matched with on Hinge. And she literally misspelled annual.

Did you unmatch her?

Christ, dude. It didn't work out. We never met in person, it was just an exchange of money for bad graphic design. But Brian did the first show and was like, "Why are you calling it The First Annual? There are 35 plants behind you. Just call it The Humboldt Jungle."

Yeah, can you talk about the plants?

Nathan has all these plants, and they don't stay in the basement because they would die. There's no sunlight. Every comedy show involves setting up chairs and sound, but I probably spend an hour lugging plants up and down a flight of stairs. And it sucks because you can't just hold it up against your chest. You have to squat down and walk like a crab while holding a giant potted plant. It ruins your back. We're actually hiring plant handlers: it pays two White Claws per show. If interested, inquire.



REMY THE RAT IS A PSYCOPATH

Exposing Remy from Pixar's Ratatouille

by Alexa Jaeger (@alexajaggs)

Introduction

We have been made to believe that Remy was the protagonist of the 2007 Pixar film, *Ratatouille*. However, recent analysis has brought to light that Remy is actually a psychopath and a verified piece of shit. We support Remy naturally because he seems more human-like than other rats. This earns him the love of a *predominantly human audience*. Remy is smart, creative, and seems more evolved than the other rats in his colony. He walks on two legs for hygienic purposes and practices mindfulness while eating. However, behind this facade is a rodent version of Ted Bundy or Jordan Belfort. In the following essay, Remy's behavior and relationships are exposed to reveal that he exhibits traits of psychopathy including narcissism, lack of empathy, manipulation, and lack of conscience. This rat fucking sucks and it is time the world holds him accountable.

Narcissism and Classism: Remy is Super Punchable

Narcissists believe that they are special and unique and can only be understood by and associate with other special or high-status people/rats. No fictional rat in history has a grandiose sense of self worth like Remy (not even Stuart Little and that fucker is extremely punchable). There is no room for other artists in Remy's mind. The pompous ass doesn't value advice from the more experienced chef, Colette. Remy is being sexist as fuck when he assumes he is better than her despite the fact that he has only cooked a few times and she is a seasoned Parisian chef. Remy has no tolerance for challenges to his ego. He also acts like a pretentious asshole. At one point, instead of saying "clean" while poison checking for the rat colony, he says "close to Godliness". The rat he is talking to looks confused. Remy is annoyed at this rat's ignorance. In addition to being narcissistic, this moment is classist. Remy, as the son of the colony's leader, has no doubt had access to the best of rat-education. He fails to acknowledge his rat-privilege and instead makes a marginalized rat feel stupid.

In addition to being harmful, Remy's ego is just annoying. Like an overly zealous study abroad student, he refers to Paris as "my town" after being there for only a week (which honestly should be a cancellable offense). Plus the film maintains a 1st person narrative throughout which turns out to be Remy telling his story to a bunch of other rats over dinner. You have to either be a narcissist or a stand-up comedian to talk about yourself for 90 minutes straight at a dinner table.

Lack of Empathy: Does the Art Justify the Means?

Remy is seemingly likable because he is a talented chef. He thinks outside the box and produces delicious results. However, one must ask, how far is too far to go for deliciousness? This rat of a rat will do whatever it takes in pursuit of his art because he lacks empathy. He is willing to put Linguini and Collette's careers on the line. He endangers his sweet brother, Emile, on a roof during a lightning storm just to cook a mushroom. After they miraculously survive, he immediately states that he is willing to do it again next storm. He shows no compassion for the injured and terrified Emile. Later, Remy literally has the former head chef and health inspector tied up and held hostage in the freezer. That's some *Criminal Minds* shit. One thing is clear: Remy cares more about soup than human lives.

Literal Manipulation: Remy's Toxic Relationship with Linguini

The film is built on the relationship between Linguini and Remy. The two form a pact to help one another because Remy can cook and Linguini can "appear human". Linguini has low self esteem and seems to believe that he needs Remy to keep his job more than Remy needs him. Remy takes advantage of this insecurity and weakness, trapping Linguini in a toxic relationship full of deceit, control, and thinning hair. Remy's first attempt to communicate with Linguini leaves the man covered in tiny rat bites all over his body. When Remy discovers that he can control Linguini's limbs by pulling his hair, he doesn't adequately explore the ethics of physically controlling Linguini before taking advantage of it. No boundaries or safe words are established. The manipulative little freeloader even lives with Linguini and doesn't even pay rent. Lastly, Remy forces Colette and Linguini to kiss without any consent from either of them. He does this to prevent Linguini from confiding in Colette so he can preserve complete control over his human pawn.

Conclusion: Anyone Can Crook

Chef Gusteau appears on television early in the film and says, "You must not let anyone define your limits because of where you come from." Remy took this to heart. Despite coming from humble beginnings, Remy demonstrates that there is no limit to how much a fucking asshole he can be. Remy's psychopathy is often overlooked by viewers because of his anthropomorphic qualities and the splendid culinary art he creates. Upon closer examination, it is apparent that Remy is a narcissist and shows no real empathy as he strives to achieve his goals by any means necessary, even obtaining complete physical control over his victim, Linguini. Remy is a wolf-of-wall-street-level psychopath, playing the role of a children's film protagonist. If *Ratatouille* weren't G-rated, we would've seen him doing coke off Colette's tits and brutally murdering the health inspector with a lemon zester. Remy can feign a conscience, but truthfully there is no law this rat chef would not break to get what he feels he deserves: really good soup.

DANGERFIELD'S

by Luke Ipsum (@lukeipsum)

Husband: Break it to me. How bad is it doc?

Doc: It's not looking good. It's the most severe case I have ever seen.

Wife: I was in the grocery store and people! It's like they ain't got no manners anymore!

Husband: So the test was positive?

Doc: Extremely. She has full blown... Dangerfields.

Wife: I don't get no respect around here I tell ya!

Husband: But she's pregnant... Octomom style.

9 months (or how ever fucking long it takes to have 8 god damn kids at one time) later.

Baby #1: Eight White Russians!

Baby #8: And make it snappy!

Wife: What do you think... I'm made of milk?!

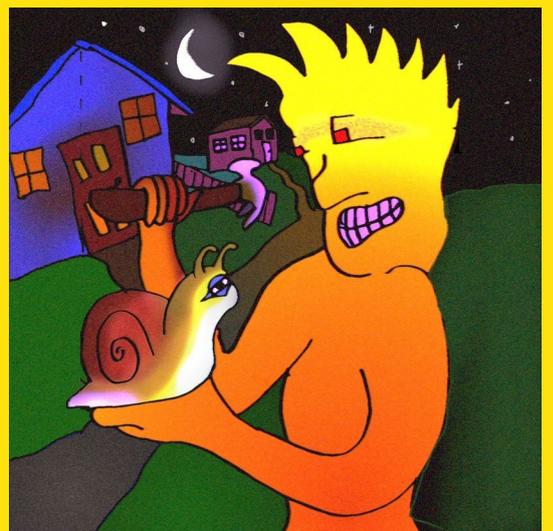
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ARTWORK: STEVEN BLACK



STEVEN BLACK (@NEOPOSTMODERNMAN) IS A CHICAGO BASED ARTIST AND STAND UP COMIC ORIGINALLY FROM TUCSON, ARIZONA. HIS WORK IS PSYCHEDELIC AND EXPLORES SURREAL THEMES. SELF DESCRIBED AS A DESERT BURNOUT, HIS ART REPRESENTS HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND PAST LIVES, WHILE TOUCHING UPON THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND ALLEGORICAL NATURE OF DREAMS. HE'S CURRENTLY STARTING INTO THE WORLD OF NFT'S AND HAS A PSYCHEDELIC ROCK ALBUM COMING OUT THAT IS SUPPOSEDLY UNLIKE ANYTHING HUMANS HAVE HEARD BEFORE.





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