

# THE COMEDY GAZELLE



## 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 annihilate a sold out Laugh Factory. *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 can pass you by.

That's why I started The Comedy Gazelle – to bring outsiders into the heart of Chicago comedy, and to share knowledge that can hopefully make the scene that much stronger. It was also the pandemic and I had fuck else to do.

Thanks for your support.

– Jerry

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**INTERVIEW: SAM MORRIL, 3**

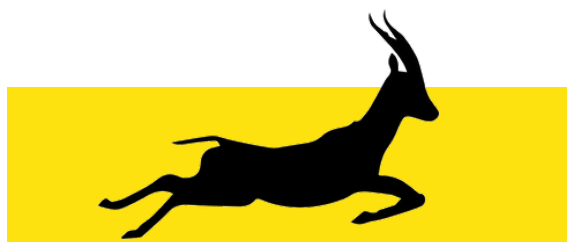
**THE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION (HOA) COURT, 10**

**MY 'E.T.' (EPIC TIME) IN SIN CITY: AN UNSOLICITED REVIEW OF KATY**

**PERRY'S LAS VEGAS RESIDENCY 'PLAY', 12**

**KARATE SENSEI MARK'S PLATINUM BELT TEST, 14**

**ART: BENITO DOUGLAS, 17**



# INTERVIEW: SAM MORRIL

*Five recordings into a seven-show run at the Den Theatre, I sat down with Sam Morril (@sammorril) to discuss the point of the whole weekend: his upcoming Netflix special. We talked specific jokes, crowd work, the road, family, and much more.*

## **How do you feel? Do you think you already have it, and you're just messing around at this point?**

Yeah, filming seven shows is completely insane. People don't do it for a reason. I like to riff a lot, and I like to do crowd work too – just to make sure each show is different and unique. And, also, I'm just sick of my jokes. I've been touring with this shit every week. I'm run down, but I like to do it this way. I could be playing bigger venues, but I like the repetition. It's a good venue, too. You want it to feel intimate, but also like a theatre. What is it, like 350? It feels right.

## **So you really wanted the intimate crowd work.**

Yeah, it's harder to do crowd interactions in a really big venue. And, also, seven shots – you never know what you're gonna get. So, let's take some chances. You can't hide from the truth when you're doing seven shows. If a joke's just not pulling its weight, you're like, "Well, that one's done." And obviously you *know*, but there are certain jokes you believe in. I'm watching this and I'm like, "Yeah, I gotta drop a couple of these."

## **Are there any jokes you're still pulling for, or trying to make work at the last second?**

Yeah, I'd say there's a couple. But, sometimes when those jokes don't work, they hurt the joke that comes after them. They're like Draymond Green. You need every joke to do its part.

## **Do you think you'll use any of that floral jacket guy at all?**

We'll see how it plays out. I don't want it to be too crowd work heavy. But, if the crowd work serves the joke, then oh my God, it's perfect. We had one Thursday night where I'm doing a joke about jerking off with my friends when I was thirteen. I kinda just pause like, "Anyone else do that?" And some guy chimed in like, "Yeah me and my brother!" and his dad was there. It was a great moment, so that'll probably make it.



## **I wanted to ask you about that bit. How do you make a weird topic like that approachable?**

Well, it's so real. Clearly it happened. You gotta be aware of the different types of laughs you're getting. Some are like, "What the fuck is wrong with you?" Some are like, "Oh, this is a funny coming-of-age story." You get some of the "we used to do that" laughs. You're getting a nice mix, but really it's a story about being young and dumb. Why do people laugh at South Park? They're kids; it's funny that they do insane shit. I like bits that are through the lens of a kid's eyes – not knowing any better. I like that bit a lot. I was telling my friend at a bar one night, and he was cracking up, and he goes, "Oh yeah, I did that." A friend saying he did that made me think, "Oh, this might be something." And sometimes you just explain a scenario with good detail and it gets laughs if the image is funny enough. Then you add in that little arc that one of them died and it's this major loss of innocence.

## **Did that guy actually die?**

He really died. He was a heroin addict. It was terrible. He was a great, great guy. But I'm like, "Well, that made me sad, so let's make this funny."

**Did you put that at the end of your set for a particular reason? How do you decide on stuff like that?**

It's a weird bit, and it's a little dark. Not to me, but to the crowd. That's a tough joke to do in a 15 minute set. That won't work at the Comedy Cellar. I have to do that in a longer set, and I'm okay with that. You learn placement for your hour, so that's there for a reason.

**You mean you have to earn the audience's trust first?**

Yeah, it's interesting. I think you keep figuring that out. When I was a young comic and there was no one there to see me, you really have to be conscious about it. "Let me put these jokes towards the end." Then you kind of have your people, so they expect a certain type of comedy. And I can move some of those jokes towards the front; then there's new jokes I have to push towards the end. You kind of grow with your crowd. But that's at the end for many reasons: the tone of it, the length of it. I don't like doing super long bits in the beginning. I like to do a lot of quick punchlines, just to get them ready.

**I also wanted to ask about your Dr. Seuss Jew in The Zoo bit. Is that something where you came up with the punchline, then were trying to build around it?**

No, I know it sounds like I did, but I was just trying to break down how crazy it was. I think it started with me trashing Tucker Carlson too much and I was like, "I need a funnier angle." You always have to distance yourself because you're like, "Man, that guy's always got the wrong take." But then you don't wanna be too predictable with your views either. I try to shit on both sides in this hour. I try to mock people on the right and people on the left. Just him being like, "How could they? Shame on them!" It hit me like, "How are you this passionate about Dr. Seuss?" Like the way Stephen A Smith and Colin Cowherd lose their shit about sports, he does that with *the world*. Then I was reading that because of Tucker, people were spending all this money on Amazon buying those books. That's where it came from. "Just think of a funny name for a Dr. Seuss book that doesn't exist." So, it wasn't backwards. That's kind of what led me to it.

**Last night there were some people sitting up front, and they weren't giving you a whole lot in terms of crowd work. What do you do when you're not getting anything out of people?**

You try to get something, or you just move on. You can kind of joke about the fact that it's going nowhere, but there's ways to weave it into material and get little

trapdoors out of there. All the time people give you nothing. Sometimes people answer. Then they're like, "Oh shit he's talking to me." I think there's moments people will volunteer, then get a little nervous - and I don't want them to be doing something they don't wanna do. I'm not here to embarrass anyone. I'm just trying to make the show as funny as possible. And if I tell crazy shit about myself, I feel like that invites people to feel comfortable.

**You started in New York, where it's short, tight sets, and you're focused on getting out as many jokes as possible. It's similar here in Chicago. How did you even start building that crowd work muscle?**

Yeah, whenever I see people doing crowd work in the city, I'm kinda like, "What are you doing? You've got 15 minutes, work on jokes." But when I'm doing an hour, and with the amount of sets I do on the road, it's too much probably - I get bored with the jokes and that's really where the crowd work and new material comes in. It's not a muscle you really work on in cities. Also, crowd work is a thing I think is mostly for headliners. There's a lot of hosts who do crowd work in New York for some reason. When I hosted in New York, I would do a lot of material cause I thought the material would better set up the comics for the show. I think sometimes when you do too much crowd work, you're making the show about you. But if you're headlining, then they're there for you, so you can do that. If it's a showcase, it can derail the show sometimes. It's hard to follow crowd work, cause not every comic wants to talk to the crowd. There are times you have to, like if you get heckled. But if you're inviting it, sometimes people get annoyed following it. The crowd work is there, I think, to make it seem conversational, so you're not on autopilot and reading from script. We've all been trapped in that place where you're just like, "Here's

a monologue.” The greats made it feel so conversational – like Patrice O’Neal – but they’re doing material.

**I saw an old Reddit AMA you did years ago, and you said you try to make things sound conversational, but also be as succinct as possible. How do you strike that balance? Sometimes I feel like I’ll take the heart out of a joke, or it’ll be like, “Nobody talks like this.”**

It’s like another language kinda, right? You’ll read a Raymond Chandler book and you’ll be like, “This isn’t how people talk.” But you buy in after a minute. You’re like, “Oh, this is how they talk in this world.” You ever watch a foreign film and it takes you like five minutes? This is like a lesser version of that. It’s English, but it’s your comedic rhythm. People get comfortable, and you just have to not get shaken. I remember doing a terrible show at Caroline’s years ago – many years ago – and Nate Bargatze was on the show. And everyone’s bombing, and everyone’s trying to adapt to them, and Nate just did what Nate does, and they eventually – he wasn’t doing amazing, but he did better than everyone else. You could tell by the end they kind of got it. Sometimes you get them quickly and sometimes you get them at the end.

**He strikes me as someone who’s very much like, “This is who I am.”**

He’s got the skills to adapt, but I think there’s a level of confidence where he’s kinda like, “I’ll get ‘em.” And calm. It’s like anything in life. If you’re desperate in any scenario, people are put off. But if you’re just kind of relaxed and chill – you just kind of have to trick yourself into thinking it’s gonna work out. And also, most of these sets don’t really matter at the end of the day. I don’t mean that in a way that I don’t care about each set, but if I bomb a show on the road, I’m going to be okay. It’s not like my career’s over. Even if you bomb a TV set, who gives a shit? These things come and go. I care, but it’s not going to be the end of me. You have to just brainwash yourself and say, “Hey, none of this matters.”

**As you’re waiting to get on stage are you trying to calm yourself down? I’m curious what’s actually going on in your head when you’re about to film a Netflix special.**

I think it’s the same thing. You have to say, “This isn’t that big a deal.” I just did the Letterman thing, and I had to be like, “Dave is just a dude you’re talking to.” I know he’s an icon, I know he’s a legend, but I’m not gonna be funny if I’m looking at this guy with reverence during my

set. I have to look at him like I belong here. Even if I don’t think I belong here, I have to trick myself into thinking that. But then there’s that other part of comedy, where if you’re faking it too much, people can almost read that. There needs to be some sort of honesty there, too. With Dave, I’m very honored to be talking to him, but I know I’m pretty funny. I’m here for a reason. You really just have to think, “All I can do is what I’m gonna do. The rest of it is out of my hands.” As for this special, I’m doing seven shows, so I’m gonna get it. And it’s Chicago – there’s a reason I’m taping in Chicago. I like Chicago crowds.

**Yeah, what is it about them that made you decide to film it here with [Director] James [Webb]?**

I think a lot of it is your gut. I did a bunch of shows here and I really enjoyed the venue and the crowds, the people who ran the venue, the look of it – and I met James here. I think that Saturday I said, “Why don’t we film my next special together here?” He was just like, “Really?” I was like, “Yeah, I got a good feeling about you.” It just felt right. Chicago’s great cause it’s this cosmopolitan city, but it’s still the Midwest. You get a good mix of people. I love New York City crowds too, but I don’t wanna film a special in New York.. especially for four nights. That would be fucking hell: the amount of people I’d have to hang out with, I’d probably get COVID night one. It’s too stressful in New York. If I do one night it’s fine, but four nights – even doing it here there’s been a hang every night, and I have to avoid getting shitfaced.



Sam and Director James Webb

**Yeah, just have a few glasses of wine.**

It's not that bad, that natural wine. The hangover's not that bad. That's why it's in there. So I can drink and be a human the next day.

**Are you gonna go hard tonight after you wrap?**

We'll see. I have a flight tomorrow and I hate flying hungover. But it's hard to not let loose a little bit. I mean, shit, seven shows in the can, it'll feel good just to be done with this. But then it's tough. I panic a lot in this career, where it's like, "Alright I need a new hour now." It's really hard to keep writing these. It definitely takes a toll.

**Do you already have any ideas for jokes or are you starting from square one?**

Pretty much square one. I don't really have shit. I mean, fear's a good motivator, but, goddamn, I feel like I put out a lot of material in the last few years and I'm running out of shit to say. It's definitely taken a hit on my life. I don't really have a life; I just do a lot of comedy. I think the mindset was always, "Well, I'm not the funniest guy, so I gotta be a fucking workhorse." I gotta have so many jokes that people are like, "Oh shit, he writes a lot." And it's a way to keep getting an audience.

**You gotta be able to live life though – so you can get material.**

That's the problem. I gotta live again. I will. It's very hard for me to turn down shows. I'm still in that early career brainwash like, "I need to do four sets a night!" Why? Why can't I do one? It's stupid. Then you're just tired all the time. But I like doing it. I like being out and doing shows and hanging at the Comedy Cellar. It's hard for me to say no, and I'm gonna have to be a little better about it. And I'll try. I was about to say, "I will," and then I said, "I'll try." Cause that's more honest.

**Are you just gonna go up with some half-baked premises and riff?**

Probably, yeah. It's gonna be a little dicey.

**How long do you think it is before you have the skeleton of a set?**

A while. I'm a little nervous about it. I mean, shit, what're you gonna do? It's tough. I think the longer you do this, the better you get at knowing what's funny. But you also get pretty good at knowing what's not funny. And then even if a joke has potential, you're like, "You're cut, dude. You're off the team." So, although you feel like you're writing at a better clip, you're also cutting at a

higher rate. That hurts. I'll start my new hour, and I'll go up with like 45 minutes of half-baked, terrible shit. And then I'm like, "Alright there's something here." Then it whittles down to like 22 minutes, then you go back up and you're like, "I'm at 45 again!" Then you're at 21 again, and it keeps fluctuating.

**Are you reviewing all your sets or, in your mind, are you just like, "This worked; this didn't?"**

You gotta force yourself to listen to at least the new shit. But I hate that, man. I hate doing that. It's tough. Writing's fun. Editing is not fun.

**What're you listening for?**

You're just like, "Did it work? Is the angle wrong?" This is such a weird form of entertainment, where the audience is really part of the editing process. Where you listen, and you're like, "Huh, they didn't like that?" Should I be going harder on that angle? Am I too in the middle? Should I be pulling back? Should I be trying a different angle? Is this not that funny yet? Is there a funnier angle? I think it's just: how does it grow? How does the set keep growing?

**How quick are you to give up on an idea?**

It depends. Sometimes I'll run it by a friend and, if they're really excited by it, I kind of gauge their reaction. If they're like, "Ehh" then I'm like, "Alright." If they're like, "Ah that's something really good," then I'm like, "Okay let me hold onto this for a little while."

**How often are you looking for new tags on a joke that you think is already done?**

If it's done, I'm probably onto the next one. The one you heard me do last night about the trans swimmer, Lia Thomas – I added the condom line at the very end cause I was like, "I bet there's a way to wrap a bow on this." Sometimes when I have two parts that

are getting laughs, I'm like, "I bet there's a third thing that will really bring it home." So that's when you get really hung up on that.

**Something I noticed is that it seems like a lot of your jokes are "Frankensteined" together. Like it's a lot of jokes from different times that you pulled together and made one bit around a topic. Or do you tend to write in big chunks?**

No, I'm not great at writing big chunks. Sometimes I'll have another idea and I'll be like, "This goes here." I'm not like a Gary Gulman or a Jim Gaffigan, where I can just bang out 12 minutes on food or something. They're both so good at that. I'm not like that really. Sometimes you'll write pages on something and then it whittles down to two lines. That's kind of what happened to me. It's funny, my mom will always say, "Why can't you write like that?" I don't know. Why don't I write like Jim Gaffigan? Why don't I write like Chris Rock? You write the way you write. You find a way to make it flow and make it sound as natural as possible, so you're not starting at zero every joke.

**I've heard you say you've gotta treat it like a job. How often are you sitting down and writing?**

It's gotten worse because there's just so many other things to do. People are always like, "Do my podcast!" Then when you're promoting a special, you have to do so many podcasts. I only have so many hours of creativity in me every day. It's not like I get off doing three podcasts like, "Time to write!" No, you're tired. It's tough. I used to be super disciplined about it, but now you just have to make time. So, I'll find ways to do it, but it's not easy. I'll take walks or I'll go to the coffee shop. It's funny: you have your routine, but if you want material, I feel like you gotta do different shit every day. You can't get trapped in that routine. And that's tough, cause my life already lacks stability because I'm on the road every week. So, you kind of want some routine at home, but then you have to fight against that.

**Do you enjoy being on the road?**

I do. I'll put it this way: I don't like being at home too much. Because if I'm at The Cellar on weekends, I'm just gonna get fucked up. Cause I'm doing like 15 minute sets and I'm just gonna go to a bar with a friend and get drunk or something. On the road, I'm weirdly better behaved and more productive. You'd think it's the opposite, but it's not. At home I have friends hitting me up. On the road I bring Gary [Vider], who doesn't really drink, so that's already a good thing for me. He's a father, so he's up early as shit. He's a good influence, where he's

like, "Let's go to the gym!" Stuff like that. And you're doing an hour long set, so you're like, "I gotta have something new to say." I like the road because it makes me productive. Obviously, I don't like travel and I don't like flying, but you just learn to love it. This is the life. So, you try to make it as comfortable as possible. Let's stay at a decent hotel, let's get good food, and it'll make us work harder. My agent has repped comics who are huge now, but when they were at my level, he said one thing they all did was they made the road very luxurious for themselves. "If I'm gonna be here every week, let's make it so I wanna be here every week." I'm pretty frugal, but, at the same time, you can't be a total cheapo and be miserable. It's your life.



**Dave [Letterman] asked you a similar question, but where do you see yourself going in the next few years? Are you still trying to do the road?**

I have a lot of things I wanna do. I wanted to be a comedian since I was a kid, but I didn't think I was gonna be a stand up. I thought I was gonna be more of a Bill Murray type. Then I fell in love with stand up and I was like, "This is what I'm good at." When you're good at it — not at first, obviously — but when you're like, "I feel

like I could be good at this,” you start putting in the work, and you start enjoying it, and you become obsessed. I think there’s other things I wanna do. I don’t wanna get burned out on stand up. I wanna stay loving stand up. It’s like drinking: I don’t wanna become an alcoholic and then I can’t enjoy a fucking whisky. You wanna always love stand up. Am I just gonna put out an hour every year and a half, two years until I die? I’d like to do other shit. I have other ideas. I wrote a show with Dana Gould that I always wanted to make. Couldn’t sell it, but I loved creating it with Dana. I learned so much from that guy; he’s such a great comic mind. I wanna make a great show, but I don’t wanna just make a show. I wanna make a show I love. You don’t make a show just to make a show. I’m not in a rush. When it happens, I’ll be ready.

**Yesterday we were talking about your family and them being supportive of your comedy.**

Yeah, my parents are very supportive. They always think I’m gonna be thrilled they’re there. When it’s a small room I just see my mom covering her face in embarrassment. I’m like, “Alright.”

**Do you like it when they’re there, or no?**

It’s a mixed thing cause you appreciate the support. It means a lot they wanna be there, but it’s not like my favorite gig. So you’re grateful you have the types of parents that would show up, but at the same time it’s not the most fun. I know a lot of people whose parents refuse to watch their comedy, and I feel for those people. That’s pretty shitty to have parents who don’t support you. So, in that way, I feel almost guilty that my parents are supportive.

**Were they supportive of you initially? You said you started really young.**

My first set I was 18. I think they were a little nervous. My dad was like, “At least he’s doing something.” Then my mom is an artist, so it would be kind of hypocritical for her to be like, “How dare you.” This is a much more vulgar art, obviously. I mean, I don’t even consider it an art. I think I’m an entertainer. But, I think at first they were pretty nervous. In my mind, I’m like, “You’re playing with house money. You got two older siblings who are lawyers.” And holy shit did I identify as a black sheep. But on my mom’s side of it, I’m her only biological son – like those are step siblings, so I think she was kind of like, “Can you not fuck this up for me? You’re the one I’m bringing to this family?” I remember the night I think they really were like, “Oh, okay.” I was opening for Jim Jefferies at the Best Buy Theatre in New York, and it was like a 2,000 seater. They saw me, and it was when Jim was first developing what ended up being that gun control bit – which is like one of the best bits of all time. Just incredible, incredible, chunk. I think they were like, “Oh wow, this guy wants Sam to open.” They saw me kill in a huge room and they were like, “Wow, he was able to connect with this larger audience.” They definitely came around. You get little nuggets where you’re like, “I’m doing the right thing.” Colin Quinn would always say, “You get just enough not to quit.”

**That’s so true.**

I mean, how many comics do you see where you’re like, “You should’ve quit a long time ago.” But I think my parents started seeing it and I was trying to point them to other comics. “Well, this guy did what I’m doing and look at him now.” So I think stuff like that helps. Then you have comics who take you on the road and help out. When you’re opening for these people you learn a lot, you get better more quickly, you’re making money, and you kind of have a path. You have people who, for lack of a better word, mentor you. I was very lucky people like Gary Gulman, Dave Attell, Amy Schumer – people helped me out a lot. And I try to help out comics too. You try to pay it forward because it’s important. It’s important if you see someone funny to be like, “How can I lift this person up?” Because the business is very cruel.

**It really is. Looking back on when you were a kid, what kept you going and motivated?**

Utter delusion. The good thing about starting that young, aside from being young and having time to grow, is that you don’t know how bad you are. I knew how to write a joke. I think I was kind of ,



decent – I wasn't great. You're handing out fliers in the street and shit and it's fun. You kind of find this community. You're pursuing this for many reasons, but when you're super young, a lot of people are kind of aimless. When you think you know what you wanna do, you wanna be surrounded by other people like that. When they're passionate about the same thing, it's exciting. You're kind of sharing this cool thing with them. At the time I hated it, but looking back, I'm like "Man, those handing-out-fliers days were awesome." I remember working the door at Broadway Comedy Club, and I hated it. But those days were great, too. It's so much better now, but you just don't know it's shitty cause it's all you know. So when things start getting good, you're like, "Oh my god, this is great." Now I'm on the road and my agent is like, "They didn't have the right wine you wanted!" I'm like, "This is so fucking... I don't give a shit." I'm doing what I like. I'm very, very happy with how things are going. You have a chip on your shoulder for a while, and that's good, as long as you don't get bitter. As long as you use it as fuel and you're like, "I need to write a new fucking hour." If you take the bad things and you use them to make things, you can go kinda far in this weird pursuit. But I've seen really funny people get really bitter. They're looking at other people's shit and what they're getting, and it's just such a long career. Great comics can pop later and bad comics sometimes pop right away. Just because someone's getting something now doesn't mean they're going to tomorrow. Also, I've seen a lot of people try to find meaning in an unjust, arbitrary business. They're trying to be like, "But this doesn't make sense!" And you're just like, "I know. It's not fucking right."

### **What are some lessons you learned early on to keep you out of that bitterness?**

I remember Bill Burr once said to me, "Don't ever let them fucking see you bitter. The stink follows you around like a fucking fish." He said, "You think the industry wanted me? You think they wanted another balding redhead? You think that's what they were looking for?" And your best friends, so many late nights with your friends where you're just like, "Alright good vent. Back to work." There are so many people who are just angry on Twitter and you're like, "If you put half that energy into your fucking act, you'd be so much happier." So many people treat Twitter like a therapy session. I'm like, "This is for everyone to see. Do you not realize this is a terrible look for you?" You're allowed to have thoughts, but when you make that your persona, I don't wanna hang out with you. You're allowed to be upset, but then reset. Do some push-ups or something. I don't know, hit a punching bag. There's people who I like on a personal level, but their bitterness – I can't really hang out with them. Cause those people are a drain. You gotta surround yourself. You saw who was in my green room yesterday. It's all positive people. I could say, "Could we get crack in here?" and it'd be like, "Yeah, let's get crack! That'd be great!" You need people like that in your life.



# THE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION (HOA) COURT

by Jessica Misra (@jessicamisracomedy)

In the mid to late 90's, courtroom dramas ruled daytime television. Popular shows like *The People's Court* and *Judge Judy* inspired a new kind of courtroom drama. They were sure it would capture the hearts of America. Instead, it was canceled before it aired.

This is, *The Homeowners Association (HOA) Court*.

**MR. MILLER:** It's legal to smoke what I was smoking, in my own backyard, in this state. I have a lawyer.

**THE COURT:** We all have lawyers. This is the HOA not a dispute at a carnival.

**MRS. JOHNSON (HOA BOARD MEMBER):** It's not WHAT you were smoking, it's what you were smoking OUT of!

**THE COURT:** Can you describe the offense again?

**MRS. JOHNSON:** Greg was smoking out of an unauthorized object on his patio. It was May 15 at 7a.m. My dog, Mitzy, was having some stomach issues which is why I was out earlier than usual and probably why I saw it. I bet he does it every morning.

**MR. MILLER:** Objection! She doesn't know that.

**THE COURT:** Overruled. I do, I live on the other side of you. Can you describe the object Mrs. Johnson, how big was it?

**MRS. JOHNSON:** Excuse me?

**THE COURT:** How big was the object?! Did you hear me that time?

**MRS. JOHNSON:** It was about (Mrs. Johnson places one fist on top of the other) this big. Well not that big, maybe like 1 and a half of these.

**MR. MILLER:** It was a joke gift one of my friends got me. I only use it because it works and I'm not going to buy another.

**THE COURT:** Mrs. Johnson, about the irregular size, was the object not HOA regulation?

**MRS. JOHNSON:** It seemed to me to be standard size.

**THE COURT:** Do you not know the name of the object?

**MRS. JOHNSON:** It goes by many names.

**THE COURT:** Like Elvis Presley?

**MRS JOHNSON:** I've never heard that one before.

**MR. MILLER:** Johnson is another one actually.

**THE COURT:** Enough!

**MR. MILLER:** Look, this is ridiculous. It's a godd\*mn dildo bong Janice. Just say it. You're uncomfortable with my penis piece that you happened to see me use while on a morning walk. Why? Because you think you're godd\*mn Batman. Well guess what, you're not! You're not Batman, you're a joke. Like the Joker. Also your cookies at the block party were dry. That's why no one ate them. I was out of my mind and I couldn't finish it.

**THE COURT:** Order! Order!

**MRS JOHNSON:** My cookies weren't dry.

**THE COURT:** Janice, don't lie to the court or yourself.

*(End of excerpt.)*



# MY 'E.T.' (EPIC TIME) IN SIN CITY: AN UNSOLICITED REVIEW OF KATY PERRY'S LAS VEGAS RESIDENCY 'PLAY'

by Perry Carter (@perrywestcarter)

To be clear, I did not set out to make a one-night pilgrimage to the city of Las Vegas for the sole purpose of seeing Katy Perry's residency play at Resorts World. I was going to go to Los Angeles beforehand to "network," or pay to do open mics and talk with other comics about how much Ubers cost there versus in Chicago.

I bought my Katy Perry ticket before making any other travel arrangements and, suddenly, it was a week before I was supposed to leave, and the only ticket I held was to Katy Perry's residency Play at Resorts World Las Vegas. So I made quick work of booking a flight to Las Vegas on a Friday, a return flight the next day on Saturday, and a room at a hotel on the Strip.

Why not an AirBnb? Because Vegas is a hotel town, and I wanted the experience of staying in one of the famous ones like Caesar's Palace, the Venetian, or Treasure Island, but not Circus Circus. My dad stayed there as a child in the 70's and found the carpet "gross" so I can never be a guest there.

The best deal I found was at Mandalay Bay. I may have seen the wrong movies growing up because I assumed that the hotel had a million-gallon shark tank in the lobby or at least the steakhouse. I was mistaken. Evidently, the bay at Mandalay Bay is its own ticketed thing. At least, the one with fish is. You can go to the bay for people for free (read: a daily resort fee of \$44). The hotel is proud of its 11-acre pool complex and fake wave pool. Well, the waves are real but their genesis is not. Is the next breakthrough in science going to be a wave pool with waves created by the gravitational pull of a man-made moon? Check out "Uncontrolled Variables" monthly at Lincoln Lodge!

After killing a few embarrassing hours walking up and down the Strip, I made it to Resorts World Las Vegas for doors at 7:30. The other concertgoers were mostly 48-year-old white ladies who had already bought t-shirts for their daughters and gay nephews. After getting my bag checked, I met Frannie, one of the event photographers. She made me admit I was alone and then took several photos of me in front of a Play-branded step-and-repeat and told me to come see her after the show to buy prints to commemorate what she and I both knew would be the best night of my life.

At the bar, there was a sign on the frozen daiquiri machine that read "StrawPerry." If this were a McDonald's, it would have read "out of order." That one kills on the road. I only took a picture of "StrawPerry" versus ordering one because it cost \$40. Two of those would have been \$80, which supports my earlier point. Oh my God, I just looked down, and I'm wearing jorts.

The first song Katy did was “E.T.,” which the moms around me didn’t like because of the loud space noises.

Overall, I’m happy to report that our girl Katy is slowing down, which I mean extremely lovingly. I was talking about the show with my friend Charlotte, and she said: “you know, enjoy your baby and Legolas, and feel free to slow down.” I love that. Certainly the show was lively, but Katy rested when she felt like it. She did a lot of sitting and laying on setpieces, and did the diva thing by dwarfing herself giant set pieces (e.g., mushrooms and a toilet at 1:50 scale) and taking breaks to yield the stage to costumed dancers (e.g. walkie talkies and a sexually aggressive frog at 1:30 scale).

The show was divided into five acts and, between each, a short video would play to introduce the next section and give the audience (and Katy) the opportunity to sit down. These videos pulled a *lot* from *Toy Story*. So much so that I wonder if any royalties are being paid to Pixar, Tim Allen, or Mattel. For example, there is a mean kid character with a reputation for abusing toys who buys Katy (in doll form) from a claw machine. That’s not even where the parallel ends. The carpet in the mean kid’s house is *also* the same pattern as the hallway in the *Shining*.

I was surprised to hear Katy lament the viral fame of “Left Shark,” which became a meme after her halftime performance at Super Bowl XLIX in 2015. Because the show is filled with other memeable artifacts such as a bra made of crushed beer cans that actually have beer in them and a poop puppet that has a solo during “California Girls.” In this regard, her aims for the show are self-conflicted, which is me referencing her song “Self-Inflicted” from *One of the Boys* (2008).

Harvey Fierstein has a speaking role in the show as a lightly scary, hack rat comic (think: Jerry Hamedi) named Ratso. This also felt borrowed from *Toy Story III* because, if you recall, the villain teddy bear in the movie is named Lotso.

I’ve been a KatyCat since I was 12, and will likely always be one. I mean, she killed that nun, and I’m still here. When the show ended promptly at 10:30 (another expression of Katy’s new, relaxed lifestyle), I practically floated back to my room at Mandalay Bay and left Las Vegas the next day having gotten everything I needed out of the experience. But I did not buy commemorative photos from Frannie because they were \$106!



# KARATE SENSEI MARK'S PLATINUM BELT TEST

by Luke Ipsum (@lukeipsum)

*Karate Sensei Mark's House of Karate is located in the East State Shopping Center conveniently off Interstate 269 in spectacular Canton, Ohio.*

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Jeffery, your karate skills are incredibly impressive for your age. I think that you are ready to take on *the platinum belt test*.

**JEFFERY:** Karate Sensei Mark.. are you sure? I'm still so young. I'm only but 27 years old!

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Jeffery, if anyone can take on *the platinum belt test* it's you. Now, to complete the test we will do a role playing exercise.

**JEFFERY:** Okay, so I'll be me and you'll be a burglar that is robbing a bank like the brown belt test?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Yes, you will be you, but this time I will role play your mother.

**JEFFERY:** Okay, yes. Wait, my mother?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Jeffery, focus. This is important, if you want to become a karate sensei *platinum belt* I need your full undivided attention.

**JEFFERY:** Okay okay, I'll be me and you'll be my... mother.

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Yes perfect. Now as your super hot and horny mother, I just came home from a long day at work as the middle school nurse. It was a 14 hour shift and I spent the whole day saving young lives and now... I'm tired. What do you do?

**JEFFERY:** I'm sorry Karate Sensei Mark, but what does this have to do with karate?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Do not question the process! Now, what do you do to help your sexy and supple mother relax after a long day of hard work as a first responder?

**JEFFERY:** Okay, I suppose that I'll get her a glass of water and maybe some snacks?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** WRONG!

*Karate Sensei Mark slaps Jeffery in the face.*

**JEFFERY:** OUCH!

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** It's Thursday night and that means it's karate practice night! And since you're 27 and still don't have your driver's license you need to demand that your voluptuous mother drive you to your private karate lesson.

**JEFFERY:** Okay, uh alright... Mom? Can you drive me to karate practice?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Oooooo honey oooo little Jeffy I can't drive you today sweetie. I'm so exhausted from being a middle school nurse, you know the first responder. You know how hard it is to be a first responder? Anywho, little Jeffy sweetheart sugar, how long are you going to keep taking these karate lessons? You're 27. I thought karate was just a kid thing.

**JEFFERY:** Yeah that's okay mom I get it. We can skip this one.

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** INCORRECT!

*Karate Sensei Mark slaps Jeffery in the face.*

**JEFFERY:** OUCH!

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** SKIP KARATE PRACTICE?! Are you out of your fucking mind Jeffery?! Try again!

**JEFFERY:** Okay okay... Karate Sensei... I mean... mother, I really need to go to practice. I want to be a *platinum belt*.

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Oooo sugarcakes and splenda is a *platinum belt* even a thing? It seems like this Karate Sensei Mark guy just keeps adding belts so there is always a "program" for you to take and you can never really finish it.

**JEFFERY:** Huh, I never thought of it that way.

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Oooo little Jeffy oooo cuddle bumps yeah what it seems like to me sweetie is that he just keeps setting up these artificial goals that you need to jump through, and they don't really mean anything more than what you create them to be in your own mind.

**JEFFERY:** So you're saying that all of these classes are just a big scam? They don't help me at all professionally and I'm just wrapped up in some sort of multilevel marketing scheme where I keep tossing mountains of cash to a weird old guy in a strip mall?

*Karate Sensei Mark slaps Jeffery in the face.*

**JEFFERY:** OUCH!

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** SNAP BACK INTO IT JEFFERY! THIS IS THE TEST! Don't make the same mistake twice you fuck! Now karate your busty mother and steal her purse.

**JEFFERY:** But...Karate Sensei Mark! That's my mommy!

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** You heard me Jeffery... steal your busty mother's purse and take her credit card to sign up for the next round of classes! Quick! Time is running out!

*Jeffery karate chops Karate Sensei Mark to steal his purse.*

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Oochie oochie little Jeffy! Mommy hurt soooo bad. Mommy is a first responder and angel. Why you hurt mommy? Oochie ouchie!

**JEFFERY:** I-I-I-I'm so sorry mommy! I never meant to do that. I just... I just...

*Jeffery starts to cry.*

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** YOU PUSSY! DON'T BACK DOWN NOW JEFFERY! Take your steaming hot mother's credit card so you can get the early term registration discount!

**JEFFERY:** I'm so s-s-s-sorry mommy... it's just that I need to get the early term r-r-r-registration d-d-d-discount.

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Oouchie oochie little Jeffy my sweetheart you hurt mommy so baaad! Are you stealing my credit card? Why are you doing this little Jeffy? Please stop, I'm your mommy and I'm only here to love you. I nurse first angel responder!

**JEFFERY:** Okay okay I-I-I have all of the credit card information Karate Sensei M-M-Mark. Now I can sign up for the next round of karate I-I-lessons.

*Karate Sensei Mark slaps Jeff in the face.*

**JEFFERY:** Ouch! Why did you do that?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Congratulations. Jeffrey you are now a *platinum belt*.

**JEFFERY:** Really?

**KARATE SENSEI MARK:** Yes. Now, only 114 levels to go.

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# PHOTOGRAPHY: BENITO DOUGLAS



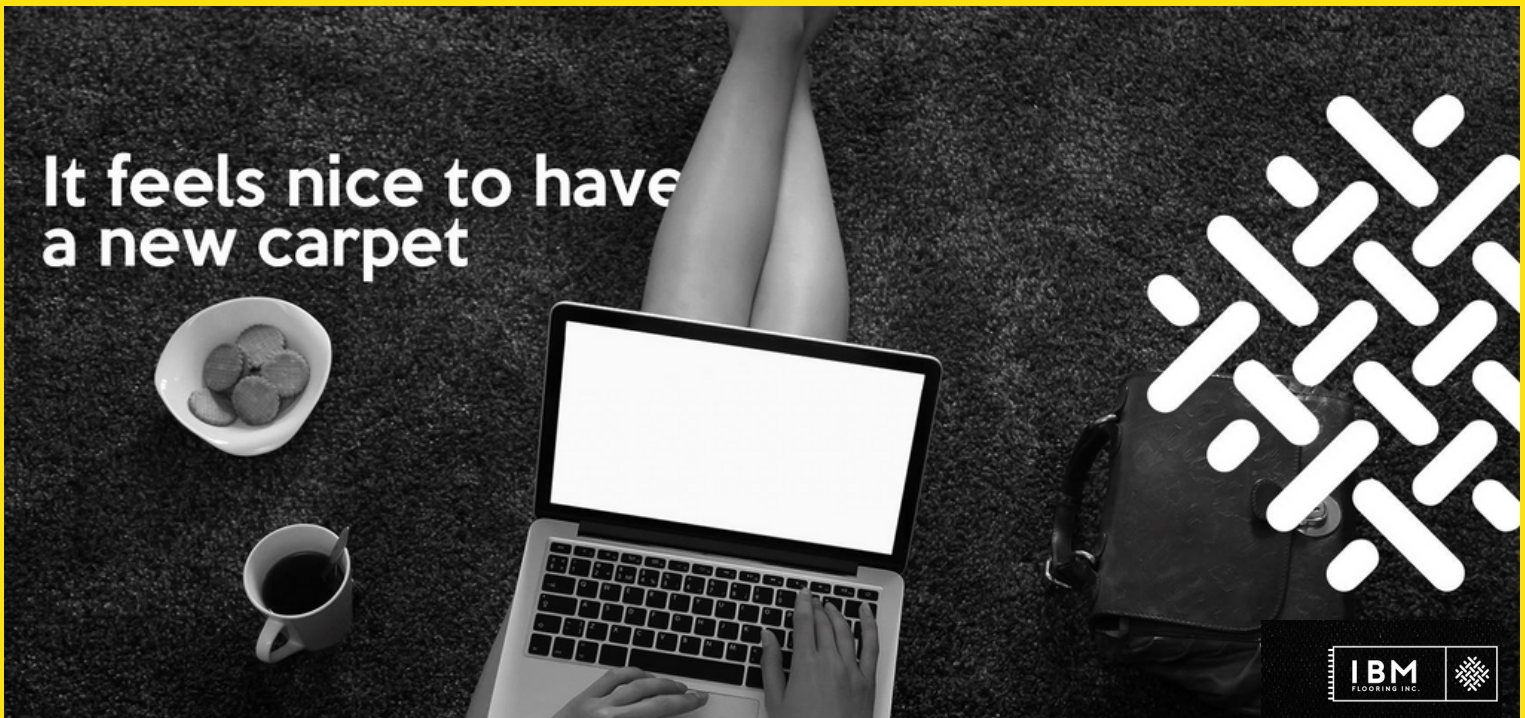
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