



**Eddie Brill was interviewed by Terry Moore on Oct 17 ,2005.**

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### **EDDIE BRILL INTERVIEW**

How long have you been the booker for Letterman? 5 years, I started working here about 9 years ago, Letterman and I have talked a lot about comedy since the time I've been here. After about 4 years of chatting about comedy Letterman said why don't you book the comedians? I thought it would be an intense job to be a comedian and to book the show. I'm glad he suggested it because it's the greatest thing I've ever done. It was definitely a good move.

How many tapes do you get a week?

Eddie: It is hard to say. This week I received 20 tapes, sometimes I get 50 and sometimes I get 2. I never know what to expect. There are three in that pile I'm going to look at today and I'm going to look at this next pile tomorrow. I get them all the time. Today was a rare day that I didn't even get one tape!

How many do you get a month...I would say approximately 50 month. but again it is hard to say. It depends. I'll perform at a comedy festival or I'll speak at a seminar and a lot of young comics will come up to me after I speak and they want to send their tapes.

There is not true essence of when or how I'm getting them or how many I get. There is a constant flow. I look at 10 and then I receive 12 more. I do look at all of the tapes I receive.

What type of comic are you looking to book?

A smart, intelligent unique comic who has their own voice. who stand out among the many thousand comedians because they really truly are their own comedian. Someone my say, Hey this guy is another George Carlin, well, oh then why don't I just book George Carlin. You want someone to be so who they are that they stand out.

Specifically...

Eddie: If you are true to your own voice which many people are not, that really makes a difference in the performance. To come from integrity to be smart, to be silly to be funny those are the key ingredients.

Who has the last word about which comic gets to perform you or Dave?  
I have the last word on it. I know the kind of comics Dave likes so it works out pretty well.

How do you get on a Letterman showcase in a Manhattan club?  
Again, there are so many different ways. If I decide to run a showcase it is because I want to see someone I've never seen before, I want to see someone I've worked with or seen before but who needed more time before he/she was ready for Letterman. There is no rhyme or reason but as often as I can I do showcases just because it is part of my job.

What topic should a comedian avoid?  
Sex and drugs. Drugs they should completely avoid. They can talk about sex as long as it is very unique and clever. Don't take the easy way out. Take the road of integrity. And I think that they should avoid making fun of anyone less fortunate than they are. You know, the homeless or people who have cancer. There is no reason to make fun of someone who is less fortunate. The strength of comedy is vulnerability. Look at Richard Pryor he never attacked other types of people, he was the vulnerable one.

What types of comics are suited for Letterman and what types are not?  
Well it's pretty much the same thing if you have your own voice if you are unique and you are smart and you are funny you belong on the show. There are other comedians who are characters comics, prop comics, musical comics those are the comics who aren't suited for this show.

What is the process for someone who wants to be considered by you?  
Either they can send a video, tape or dvd. They can have an agent or manager contact me or I can see them at a showcase. I get invited to shows all the time and sometimes I'll put a bunch of people on a showcase that I'm interested in seeing who contacted me. Sometimes a comedy club manager or a comedian will tell me who they think are worth seeing. I want to see someone who is smart, funny, original and unique.

What advice would you offer someone who is just starting out about how long they should wait before submitting a tape? Again, it's all relative if you are doing it just for a couple of years you shouldn't submit a tape. I can't say this as a fact but it takes about 5 or 6 years just to get a way from "acting" like a comedian. So your first 5 or 6 years it is very hard to have that much poise or have that much experience. Although Dave Chappelle was a different story, he was smart and poised early in his career. There are some exceptions. Most comics would say there is no rule. If you look at the history of stand ups on television any comic who has had a successful TV show has probably been doing comedy for 10 years or more. And every time they put a comedian in a sitcom who has been doing comedy less than 10 years it usually does not last.

If you see someone and they are not ready how long should they wait to re-submit a tape? If they work really hard it could be 3 to 6 months. Sometimes you have to write new material or re-invent yourself. Just get on the stage and be genuine. I saw someone the other day who had really good material but was

acting like a comedian so when she works hard and busts free from the shackles of a comedian I think she'll go far with her career.

When you say "acting like a comedian" what do you mean? The material is not coming from their soul it's just coming from their head. They saw Lily Thomlin or Brian Regan or George Carlin or Jerry Seinfeld and they want to be that on stage because they don't know who they are yet as a comedian. But what makes those comics so great is that they are who they are.

How many sets do you watch a comic perform before they do a show? It's different. There is not real cut and dry method. Enough times until the comic is ready for the show.

Who are some newer people who have broken on the show? Daniel Tosh is a guy who did real well, Bill Burr, Demetri Martin.

Who can avoid that and who gets right on the show? That never happens, unless it is a major star, of course.

There was a guy I saw who was brilliant and 14 months later he got on the show. His name was Dwayne Kennedy. Letterman loves him he is going to be on the show again.

What is it about him?

He is very original, very original. He's smart and he knows who he is on stage.

Who are the more established acts who have appeared? Greg Giraldo, Colin Quinn, Nick DiPaolo, Lewis Black. People I know who are great comics but for some reason were never on the show before, I put them on the show.

How do comics on your show differ from Conan and the Tonight show? It's hard to say, they are all very similar. We don't say that if you did our show you couldn't do The Tonight Show. There are comics who have done Conan and The Tonight Show and Late Night. There is no variable to classify that I don't see anything specific or that there is a difference.

Who are Dave's favorite comics?

I would say Jake Johannsen, Brian Regan, Jim Gaffigan.

What are your favorite comedy websites?

I don't have any favorite comedy websites.

Who are some of your favorite comics?

George Carlin and Richard Pryor.

What specific advice would you give a comic who has been doing comedy for one year? Get on stage as much as you can. Stage time all the time. It's the best teacher, you can't learn without getting on stage.

What advice would you give a comic who has been doing for three years?

Same advice, stage time, stage time, stage time.

When did you know you broke through into the professional comedy circle? Long Pause, I guess, hmnn, that's a hard question. I started in the late 70s in college and we thought we were big stars back then. I quit and I started again in '84 then about 86 I got Star Search. I went out to L.A. and got work there. It's hard to say. I feel like I've broken through and then broken through again and then re-invented myself and redefined myself and even in the last 6 or 7 months my career has gone a thousands times better than it ever has. I've been writing more and being even more truer to my voice. It's been a great time. You are always growing in this industry and if you are ever satisfied than it's over.

What are your writing secrets? Do you have a unique process?

No, there are no secrets I do a lot of writing on stage, I come up with ideas and then I flush it out on stage. For everyone it is different. The key is to keep a journal so that you are constantly writing and keeping your mind busy.

When you first started how did you overcome stage fright?

Stage time. It's the only way. Some people never get over it. The more you get on stage the more comfortable you are.

What was it like for you starting out as a comic in New York? I started in college in Boston and then I quit. I started in New York around 1984 with my own comedy club which made it easy because I booked myself every weekend. It was called the Paper Moon it was in the village where the Boston Comedy club was but downstairs.

New York City is not the place to start as a comedian, Los Angeles is not the place to start as a comedian. Los Angeles and New York are the places to end up. But if you come to New York and work, work, work and find stage time, then you can do well here. It's hard in New York City there is not that much stage time for comics so you have to create your own. Some of the best comics come from other places than New York and Los Angeles. From Houston came Bill Hicks and Sam Kinison. There is a great group from Minnesota like Liz Winstead and Louie Anderson. And Boston has some of the best comics, Steven Wright, Denis Leary and Mario Cantone, Anthony Clark. Some of whom I went to college with at Emerson College.

You began a career in advertising? What made you move to comedy? Advertising was lying for a living and I wanted to tell the truth. I thought it was much more fulfilling and much more lucrative for me. The person I worked for had no integrity and I was right out of college. Although what I learned in advertising helped in all the other things I do. Anytime you do anything creative it helps you with other things. Right now I'm involved in music, and writing and stand up and acting and doing voice overs and it gives me a broader range. It makes me a better performer.

What was the most emotional show? When we came back from September 11. I was never more proud to be part of the Letterman show. It was very cathartic we didn't know what to do and Dave made it right again to laugh and have a good time.

What was the funniest moment/show for you? I guess when Farrah Fawcett was on the show. She came out in a daze and it was funny. We still don't know what really happened. I had just started working here too.

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