



**Interview conducted by Andrew Engel on January 7, 2006 with Paula Davis.  
She books the comedians for Late Night with Conan O'Brien.**

1. How long have you been working at NBC? Since 1993.
2. What shows did you work on before Conan? SNL, Def Comedy jam, an MTV show called Lip Service.
3. How long have you been booking the comics on Conan? Since 1993.
4. How do you decide who panels and who doesn't? If we think it will be a good fit with Conan, or if there's a great story that works better on panel, or if there's an extra minute or two.
5. Do you and Frank Smiley ever disagree on a bit? Very rarely.
6. If you disagree how do you resolve it? We talk about it, maybe get a third opinion.
7. How many tapes do you receive in a week? A month? Probably 5 a week, 20-25 monthly.
8. Who has the last word about comedians who get on the show you or Conan? Frank and I.
9. What exactly do you look for in material? Please be specific. Smart, funny, not hacky or clichéd, new, refreshing viewpoint, real jokes.
10. How do you get on a Late Night Showcase in a Manhattan club? Usually we have seen a tape and would like to see more material.
11. What topics should a comedian avoid? Airplanes. Not really—but it's best to avoid stale, over-used topics.
12. What types of comics are suited for Conan and what types of comics are not? Please be specific. It's very subjective and hard to pinpoint, but basically, if it makes us laugh, it's good. We've had many different types of comics on, from your dark and edgy types to your more crowd-pleas-y.

13. What is the process for someone who wants to be considered by you? Get yourself out to a club, in front of a good crowd, and send in a tape with about 5 or 6 minutes of material.
14. What advice would you offer to someone "who is just starting out" about how long they should wait before submitting a tape? Wait until you can do really well in front a crowd that is mostly people who don't know you.
15. If you see someone and they are not ready how long should they wait before re-submitting? About 6 months.
16. How many sets do you watch a comic perform before they do the show? Anywhere from 2 to 5, could be even more.
17. Who are some of the newer comics who have broken on the show? I.e.: First major Late Night appearance? Wanda Sykes, Fred Armisen, before he was on SNL; BJ Novak who is currently on The Office. I'm sure there are more...
18. Who are some of the established comics who have appeared recently? Jim Gaffigan, Tom Papa, Jimmy Carr.
19. Specifically, how do comics on your show differ from Letterman and The Tonight Show? Just a different sensibility—I think we can take more risks because we're on a little bit later.
20. Who are Conan's favorite comics? He likes Jimmy Carr, he liked Mitch Hedberg, Dave Attell.
21. How do you determine where you put a comic on the show? Traditionally the comics are the 3<sup>rd</sup> guest on the show.
22. When you are running someone's sets in the clubs, how much does the audience reaction matter to you in selecting material? Somewhat—not entirely.
23. Do you ever encourage a comic to do extremely edgy, over the top material that would never be cleared by the sensors, and then reign him in? No.
24. Do you want to see only material that has never been done before on TV? (The comic has never done the material on any other shows.) We prefer it.
25. Do you feel you have put your stamp on Conan since you have been their since the beginning? I suppose?