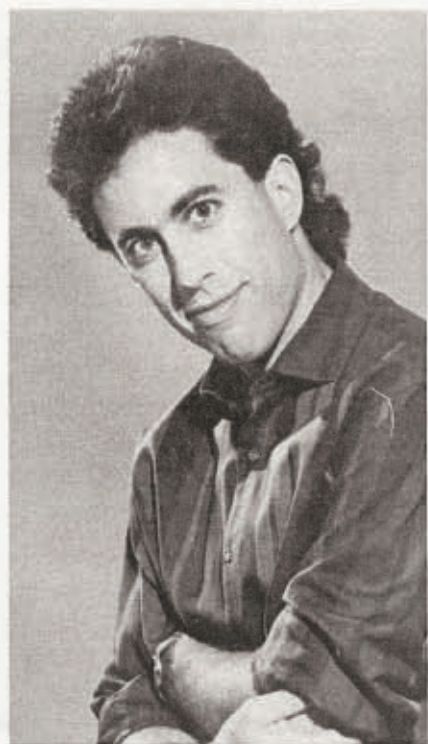


# Jerry Seinfeld: What Is Really Going On Here, Anyway?



Comedian Jerry Seinfeld is shifting gears onstage, warming up the audience, drawing them closer with his reassuring confidences.

*"I'm here. Most important, you're here. More important than the show or the comedy or anything else — you're out. You planned, you waited, you showered, you dressed, and now you're here... When people asked you today, 'What are you doing tonight?' you said, 'I'm going out.' Tomorrow when they ask, 'Where were you last night?' you can say, 'I was out; I was OUT THERE.'"*

Jerry Seinfeld isn't as well known as Robin Williams or Billy Crystal — yet. But he's standing right behind Jay Leno as one of today's fastest-rising young comedians.

He doesn't rely on catch phrases like "EXCUUUUSE ME" or "You look mah-velous," yet he's tapped into America's funnybone with an unerring instinct on how to make mundane existence comedic. Not for Seinfeld the overblown: this is a man who thrives on the humor of real life.

Some of his bits are visual. He does a routine these days about moving a couch with his father.

*"Ever notice how parents always say 'Easy!' when you're lifting the thing? It's not easy, it's difficult! And my father always has a cigarette in his mouth, with*

by Kip Kirby

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*the smoke going right into his eyes. Because that's what you want, your eyes blinking and tearing, when you're walking backward down a staircase holding a sleeper sofa..."*

Seinfeld's humor comes from observing everyday events with the incredulous levity they deserve. For instance, he does a routine about "new & improved" Tide, declaring himself amazed that anyone would still be trying to improve a laundry detergent that's been around since the pre-enzyme era.

*"They show you on television how it gets out blood stains on a t-shirt. I think if you've got a t-shirt with blood stains on it, then maybe laundry isn't your biggest problem."*

*"Life for clothing is a lot of waiting, just hanging there in the closet... Right now, your shirts and pants are hanging there whining, 'He never picks me.'... Laundry day is the only exciting day for clothes,*

*'cause the washing machine is like a nightclub for them: Lots of action, bubbles, meeting other clothes..."*

He wonders aloud at how America's two-party system ever came up with its four-legged symbols.

*"You gotta wonder what was going through their minds when the Democrats chose a jackass to represent them... And the Republicans didn't do any better. They said, what we need is something that represents wisdom and dignity. So they came up with a slow-witted, smelly circus animal..."*

Offstage, Seinfeld is polite, intelligent and cleanspoken. He's the same onstage, a rarity in an age of comics with four-letter vocabularies. He resembles an overgrown fraternity graduate inviting laughs situation by situation. He enjoys audiences who are willing to enter his environment without disrupting it; and relies on live performances to fine-tune his routines.

"The audience itself really shapes the material," he says. "They let you know what's funny and what isn't, what to keep doing and what to drop. A comedian has to risk not being funny in order to grow; it's the only way. I try new things in every show."

## Who Makes Jerry Seinfeld Laugh?

Jay Leno, Robert Klein, definitely David Letterman. He remembers his first appearance in front of Johnny Carson on the "Tonight Show" as "the scariest and most exciting thing that can happen to a comedian — like the Olympics of comedy." Since then, he has been on the program 17 times, and turns up two or three times a year on Letterman's "Late Night."

Seinfeld's credits include stints at major comedy clubs from Los Angeles to New York; concert dates with entertainers from Kenny Rogers to rock singer Laura Branigan; appearances on tv's "Benson" and "The Investigators;"

## Classic Seinfeld

*"I wonder why the guy who stands up for the groom is called 'the best man.' If he's the best man, why's she marrying the other guy?"*

*"I had glasses at 10, braces at 12. Wrap all that up in a Cub Scout uniform, and you can just imagine that the girls went crazy for me! I told my parents, 'Let's go all the way. Next year, get me a hearing aid, and the year after that, orthopedic shoes.'"*

*"I hate it when a woman's cat comes through the room and gives you that 'Just because you know HER doesn't mean that WE have a relationship' attitude."*

*"I'm an adult now. In supermarkets, I don't have to plead with my mom for food I want. Today I can get whatever I want, and if I decide I don't want something, I can put it back wherever I am in the store (To store manager) 'Yeah, that's my bag of peaches on top of the Penzoil — what about it?'"*

*"Remember your first wallet? A brown plastic thing with a cowboy on it? The white spiral binding? It was the only wallet you'll ever own where you actually fill out the I.D. card."*

and a just-taped Rodney Dangerfield special for HBO.

Seinfeld's appearance at Zanies in Nashville in late August is an encore performance. So what does the Brooklyn-born comedian find funny about Nashville?

"Shoney's," he replies unhesitatingly. "I think Shoney's is a very funny place. I go in there, and they always say, 'Come back, you come back now.' Come back? I'm already here!"

And so he is.