

Beyond Offensive: Louis C.K., December 14 and 15 at Penguins Comedy Club

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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Emmy-winning comedian Louis C.K. understands that some of the words he uses are offensive to many people, and that many people don't want to hear the things he talks about. His goal, he said, is to get beyond the offensive, and to find some truth. He wants people to laugh at things that might ordinarily make them wince.

"When people know you're being honest, they're just interested in hearing what you have to say," he said in a recent phone interview. "Because it's really just talk. It's harmless."

The performer won an Emmy writing for HBO's *The Chris Rock Show*, wrote for Conan O'Brien for the first years of his late-night talk show, had his own HBO sitcom for a season, performed specials on HBO and Comedy Central, and scripted the movies

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He said he doesn't consider himself a shock comic. Much of his material is drawn from his family life, increasingly about fatherhood but also his marriage.

"I don't insult people, or say taboo things, but I do talk about cleaning shit out of my daughter's vagina after taking off her diaper," said C.K., who will be performing at Penguins Comedy Club (in its new location in Davenport's Freight House) on December 14 and 15.

"That's not something people usually want to hear, but I take 'em to a place where they want to hear it," he continued. "To me that's the goal: to take people to a place that they didn't expect to enjoy, and have them enjoy it - have them discover humor in a new place. And in order to do that, often you have to go to places that they don't think you should be talking about."

Not that the disgust factor didn't appeal to him initially. "The first time I did it in front of my friend Chris Rock, he said, 'Even me, and you know me, I couldn't take it. I just don't think you can do that,'" said C.K., whose real family name is Szekely. "When he said that ... he just basically bit a coin and called it gold. I gotta do this. And what do I got to lose? Some people groaning at me? What, do I die from that?"

The key to comedy, he said, is to refine the material, to work it so that people listen instead of rebel against it. "The thing that's not right is to stick with it the way it is," he said. "The thing to do is to really, really work on it, and try with every new audience to say [implicitly] ... 'This is an important subject. ... I'm not trying to just gross you out here.'"

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