

Podcast 137 – Australia's Comedians

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 137 – Australia's Comedians

<https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/slowenglish/podcast137.mp3>

(This podcast is 12 minutes and 26 seconds long.)

Hi,

Australians enjoy a good laugh just like everyone else around the world. Therefore it's no surprise that we have produced our fair share of comedians. In this podcast I would like to talk a little about comedy in Australia.

Our humour is sometimes a little hard for people in other cultures to understand. Quite often our humour is directed at ourselves. I think it relates to the fact that we don't like to take ourselves too seriously here in Australia. Taking yourself too seriously means being too proud of your own achievements, or thinking you are better than the people around you. Australians like to think that being imperfect is not something to be ashamed of – we are all imperfect in some way. In fact, laughing about our own shortcomings, or weaknesses, is almost a national pastime. Of course, what is considered funny is always a little controversial and open to debate. What one person thinks is funny, may be offensive to someone else. Running the risk of offending someone is part of being a comedian. I think that Australians are generally pretty hard to offend so Australian comedians normally don't have too many problems on that score.

In the field of entertainment, I think Australians are perhaps

strongest in the categories of acting and music. Indeed, many Australian actors and musicians have made it big overseas. Actors such as Cate Blanchett, Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman, Russel Crowe, Sam Worthington and Chris Hemsworth are just a few of those Australians who have had worldwide success. Successful Australian musicians would include Kylie Minogue, Sia, Olivia Newton-John, and Keith Urban just to mention a few. Famous Australian bands include ACDC, INXS, the Bee Gees and Crowded House.

However, in general, Australian comedians are not so well known overseas. One example comedian who has made it overseas is Paul Hogan, who made the Crocodile Dundee movies which were very successful not only in Australia, but overseas as well, especially in the USA. However, comedy is a peculiar thing. In another podcast, Podcast 38 (<https://slowenglish.info/podcast-38-an-australian-film-the-castle/>), I talk about the Australian film called The Castle. This is a comedy and showcases really well what is unique and interesting about Australian humour, while also having a serious message to give its viewers as well. It is interesting to note that this great film did not enjoy overseas success. I think it is too typically Australian in its approach to humour to appeal to large audiences overseas. I believe the same applies to most Australian comedians in general. You really need to spend some time watching Australian comedians to understand why, but I think it relates to the inward looking nature of the comedy. It only makes a lot of sense to Australians who understand what our faults and weaknesses are. The truth is, we can often recognize ourselves in the jokes and stories of Australian comedians.

So who are some of Australia's best comedians? I mentioned Paul Hogan. His humour is dry and laconic and his work in the Crocodile Dundee films is quite well known around the world. I think the first film is the best, when his style and humour really was fresh, quite unusual and interesting. I can

remember really enjoying it when I saw it in the cinema back in the 1980s. He seemed so typically Australian and contrasted sharply against the American characters as shown in the film.

All the other Australian comedians that I like are probably unknown in other countries outside Australia. My list of favourites includes Kitty Flanagan, Judith Lucy, Shaun Micallef and the duo of Lano and Woodley. With a comedy performer, you really have to see them live or watch them perform on video or television in order to appreciate their work. Each of these have their own style and you may or may not like them, as comedy is such a personal thing. On <http://www.youtube.com> you can find a variety of videos for all these performers.

When you see a comedy act live, you can really feel the audience response which can be very contagious. When everybody is laughing around you, it seems to make you enjoy the performance more. You also appreciate more the skill of the comedian, as they obviously respond to the audience in ways which makes their performance more lively and spontaneous. I especially admire the clever way they can respond to an interjection from the audience, turning it usually into a laugh as well.

The one Australian comedy act which I would like to talk about in a little more detail, is Lano and Woodley.

They are my favourite Australian comedians of all time.

This duo consists of Colin Lane (Lano) and Frank Woodley (Woodley). My family and I have seen them perform live on 4 or 5 occasions over the last 20 years. They have worked together doing comedy shows since the early 1990s. In 2006, after almost 20 years of performing together, they decided to separate and perform individually. That was a sad time for their fans. Luckily, in 2018, they once again teamed up and

Lano and Woodley are again a team. We went to see their reunion show called Fly. It was hilarious. Here is a short clip.

I would describe their comedy as zany – different, unconventional, sometimes crazy and always hilarious. It includes a strong component of slapstick humour as well as their own music. Slapstick is quite rare to see these days, especially when it is done really well. They write their own material and have even starred in their own television show called The Adventures of Lano and Woodley. It is a fictional comedy series showing the duo living together in a flat in a suburb of Melbourne, getting into all sorts of ridiculous and funny situations. I never missed an episode of the 2 series which premiered on ABC television from 1997 to 1999. You can check clips from this series on Youtube (see below).

Like most comedy duos, each comedian in the duo plays a different role. In the case of Lano and Woodley, Lano plays the role of the smart one who supposedly has all the answers, while Woodley plays the role of the silly and stupid one, usually doing most of the slapstick activities. Of course, it turns out that Lano is not as smart as he thinks and his plans usually result in some hilarious failure where he and Woodley make a mess of everything.

Australia has five great comedy festivals each year where you can see many live performances of Australian and some overseas comedians. These are the Melbourne Comedy Festival, the Brisbane Comedy Festival, the Perth International Comedy Festival and the Sydney Comedy Festival. These festivals run sometime in the February to May period. The large Adelaide Fringe Festival also has a large comedy component and it runs from mid-February to mid-March. Seems like the best time to see live comedy in Australia is in February to May period. And that's no joke. <https://www.comedyfestival.com.au/>

If you have a question or comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 137 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

- Play achievements = the things you have done which are good
- Play appreciate = when someone likes something or is thankful for something
- Play approach = (here) the way something is done
- Play ashamed = embarrassed about, sorry about
- Play categories = groups of things
- Play characters = the people in a film or book
- Play cinema = the building where a film is shown
- Play clip = a small section of a longer film or video

- Play comedians = people who tell jokes and funny stories to make an audience laugh
- Play component = part
- Play contagious = it spreads from one person to another
- Play contrasted = compared to
- Play controversial = some people think it's good and some people think it's bad
- Play culture = the common things people do in a particular country
- Play debate = when people argue about something
- Play directed = (here) pointed at, about
- Play duo = when there are 2 people in a comedy or music team
- Play enjoy = (here) receive, get
- Play entertainment = the process of being provided with enjoyment e.g. by a singer or actor
- Play failure = when things don't work out as expected
- Play fictional = not true, made up
- Play field = (here) area, grouping of things
- Play hilarious = very, very funny
- Play humour = that which is funny or makes you laugh
- Play imperfect = not perfect, with faults
- Play interjection = when someone interrupts you
- Play inward looking = to look inside the personality or character of people

- Play laconic = when very few words are spoken
- Play lively = in an excited way
- Play made it big = (here) have been successful
- Play mention = when you talk about something
- Play offending = the process of saying bad things to you
- Play offensive = rude, unkind, when people say bad things to you
- Play pastime = hobby
- Play peculiar = strange, unusual
- Play premiered = was first shown to the public
- Play recognize = see
- Play relates to = there is a relationship, refers to
- Play response = how a person or animal will react to something
- Play ridiculous = very silly
- Play separate = (here) to split up, to leave a partnership or team
- Play shortcomings = faults, things we do badly or wrongly
- Play showcases = (here) to show, display
- Play situations = how things are at a particular time
- Play slapstick humour = comedy that is based on falls and unexpected physical movements
- Play spontaneous = to do something immediately without thinking about it

- Play supposedly = things are not really as they seem
- Play teamed up = to join up with others to make a team
- Play unconventional = not normal, not as expected
- Play unique = when there is nothing else like it
- Play variety = many different types or examples
- Play viewers = people who watch a film or show