

# OUCH!

## The Pain of Comedy: Why Your Body Is Hilarious



with David Misch



“Tragedy is when I cut my finger; comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die.” – Mel Brooks

What is it about people getting hurt that we find so funny?

The human body, whether grotesque or gorgeous, can be hilarious. Its capacity for stretching and squashing (not to mention expelling noise, smells and fluids) is so damn funny that even pain makes us laugh... as long as it's not ours. Comedy achieves that by seeing our bodies as things that aren't us; strange-looking appendages to our minds, hearts and souls... what might be called *the foreign body*.

To show this, we'll look at TV and movie clips ranging from Monty Python to Melissa McCarthy... and especially Buster Keaton, who embodied not just physical comedy's current tropes of awkwardness and embarrassment, but grace, athleticism and power; the body swinging, sailing, diving and surviving as it moves through the world.

By showing its relationship to both human appetite and our capacity for suffering, we'll see how watching the pain of other people helps us giggle past the graveyard.

*Among David Misch's TV and movie credits are the Emmy-nominated "Mork & Mindy", the Emmy-losing "Duckman", the Emmy-engorged "Saturday Night Live", and the Emmy-ineligible "The Muppets Take Manhattan". He's the author of "Funny: The Book / Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Comedy" and is also a playwright, songwriter, blogger, teacher and recovered stand-up comic, and has lectured at Yale, Columbia, Oxford, the Smithsonian, the University of Sydney (Australia), the VIEW Cinema Conference (Torino, Italy), the Austin Film Festival, the Actors Studio, the American Film Institute, USC and UCLA. Among his screen credits are the Emmy-nominated "Mork and Mindy", the Emmy-losing "Duckman", the Emmy-engorged "Saturday Night Live" and the Emmy-ineligible "The Muppets Take Manhattan". He's also a playwright, songwriter, blogger, teacher and recovered stand-up comic. Too much more at [davidmisch.com](http://davidmisch.com).*