



'You must laugh at it, because it's ridiculous': Michael Rapaport to go 4 sets at City Winery



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Actor and comedian Michael Rapaport has had a lot on his mind lately, and he's going to lay it all out for you during four shows at City Winery this weekend.

He reeled off a list of inspirations for his new material in quick succession:

“Being married, remarried, being divorced, having kids who are trying to figure out their life, you know, having two parents that are alive, but getting older,” Rapaport said. “It’s just dysfunction in general. You know, I was raised in dysfunction and, ultimately, I think I’ve raised my kids in dysfunction.

“Coming to terms with that – a lot of it can be frustrating, disappointing – but it is hilarious.”

Since breaking through as a young man from New York City in the early 1990s, the 53-year-old has appeared in dozens of movies and TV shows from “Friends” to “Basketball Diaries,” from “Next Friday” to “Deep Blue Sea,” “Hitch” and his most recent turn on season two of “Only Murders in the Building,” Hulu’s critically acclaimed riff on America’s grim fascination with murder podcasts.

On Wednesday afternoon, he was set to appear on the picket line in New York City amid the ongoing [SAG-AFTRA actors’ strike](#) before making his way to Pittsburgh for [6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. sets at City Winery](#) on Friday and Saturday.

“It sucks. The whole thing sucks. Picketing sucks,” Rapaport said. “The social media aspect of it makes it seem like, you know, people are having a good time, and I understand there’s moments of seeing friends and you get excited about getting out there. But it wasn’t fun doing it in the hot weather.

“It wasn’t a cool thing to do. It wasn’t fun. It wasn’t cute. It wasn’t a fashion show. It’s a beautiful fall day in New York, but the idea of doing this much longer is daunting, especially with the writers [strike] being settled.”

Long before the strike began, Rapaport dusted off his dormant comedy career roughly five years ago. Alongside his podcast “I am Rapaport,” having other outlets like stand-up has come in handy during a strange time for those working in Hollywood.

“There’s nothing like it. When you’re an actor, you’re in control of only so much. As a stand-up, you’re the performer, you’re the writer, you’re the editor,” he said. “You take the good, the bad and everything in between. But the instant gratification, the instant gratification and unpredictability of stand-up is like nothing else.

“There’s nothing like being in front of an audience and getting uproarious laughter.”

Still, comedy doesn’t come without its challenges.

With social media the dominant force in popular culture, the world has changed since Rapaport packed up his things for Los Angeles to pursue a

stand-up career in 1989 at age 19. And in recent years, legendary comedians who've met with controversy like [Dave Chappelle](#) have publicly railed against the idea of social media's "cancel culture," which they see as potentially harmful to the traditionally no-limits craft of comedy.

Rapaport tries to keep it all in perspective when he's writing.

"I think it's scary. I don't care how brave you say you are. Nobody wants that to happen to them," he said.

"I think ultimately, audiences, fans, people know when you're being blatantly disrespectful or mean-spirited and when you're telling a joke. And I think that's where the line needs to be drawn, and people need to be fair, and agendas need to be halted, because people are very aware of that."

But he sees both sides of the line, too.

"And also being sorry is OK. Apologizing is OK," Rapaport said. "Some people say 'I don't apologize' and think it makes them strong or apologizing makes them weak. I don't believe in that if you're sincere about it."

Like many of his peers, he tries to make his home there.

"I know the line. I'm aware of the line. I play around with the line, but you have to also understand that you can't do the crime if you don't want to do the time," he said. "So you got to just be conscious of what's going on. Because it's f***ed up, but it's real. ...

"I'm aware of who I am, and I'm aware of my persona. I'm aware of the rules and regulations of being a disruptive personality. I'm not surprised when I'm suspended on social media. I'm not surprised when people, you know, say things back because it comes with the territory."

Beyond observations on his own family life, the weight of the current political reality in America is the other major source of fuel for Rapaport's comedic fire.

"There's so much crazy s*** going on in the world and we're heading into an election year. And the sort of bracing ourselves of it all is something that's very, very tangible and very palpable, and something that I think ultimately we must laugh at and poke fun at," he said. "And it's so f***ing exaggerated and over the top and we're heading into such an

unprecedented election year that you must laugh at it, because it's ridiculous.”

The political escapades of one figure in particular has driven him to use his voice more.

“I've always had something to say. I've always been comfortable with myself. No matter how frustrating it might be to people around me, frustrating it might be to teachers growing up, frustrating it might have been in my family, I've always been a wise guy,” said Rapaport.

“But as I've gotten older, and it's really just the last six years, it's really just Trump that inspired me to start speaking on things a little bit more social and political. It's really him to be honest with you. But I've always been comfortable talking and speaking, comfortable with myself.”

Despite his animosity toward the legally embattled former president, Rapaport's not exactly pulling partisan punches with his left hook either.

“It's a f***ing joke. The whole thing is a f***ing joke — both sides. Every one of them is a f***ing joke. Pathetic,” he said.

“The candidates are pathetic, both sides. The supporters of the candidates are pathetic. The whole thing is ridiculous.”

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