



Episode 1,128: Comedian Owen Benjamin, and the Deranged Leftists Who Stalk Him

Guest: Owen Benjamin

WOODS: All right, listen, I've started listening to your podcast. I love *Why Didn't They Laugh?* I frankly like your solo episodes. I like the old-timey, classic, vintage *Why Didn't They Laugh?*, like the Caesar salad days of *Why Didn't They Laugh?*, when you would take a joke — and this must have been a bear to put together, audio-wise. All of the different clips you had to isolate and then insert into the audio. But I don't care how much work it was for you because it's a lot of enjoyment for me, because I get to watch the comedian's craft right before my ears, as you're going through material that you know there's something there and yet it's not quite — it's not killing at all, and so then you improve it a bit and then it gets somewhat better, and you speculate on why it might have gotten better, and then finally you just crush it with that joke. That's a really, really interesting process for a non-comedian. In fact, I told my friend Bob Murphy about this. I said, "Yeah, he's got this podcast," and he turned to me and he said, "I think that's the best idea for a podcast I've ever heard, is that."

BENJAMIN: That's awesome, thank you. Well, if you like that, have you seen my documentary, *60 Minutes in 7 Days*?

WOODS: I've been meaning to watch it. We linked to it the last time you were here.

BENJAMIN: Oh, if you like *Why Didn't They Laugh?*, it's a fully documentary, and it's pretty clean. I know we were just talking about kids when we first started talking. It's just me trying to write an hour in one week, and just it shows the bombing and the tweaking and the interaction that I have with my family and my friends and where the jokes come from and what things I don't know about a story or a culture that makes me have a blind spot that I have to recorrect. And it's that process, that *Why Didn't They Laugh?* process, that *60 Minutes in 7 Days*. It's on YouTube for free, too, if anyone wants to watch it.

Like, that's just such evidence of the importance of free speech, because comedians and artists and academics and scientists and all these people, we don't go into something knowing the answer, and we have to be allowed to make mistakes. And so much of my career has been showing the world my mistakes, and that's one reason why I've had such backlash, is because my fearless nature of hyperbole and irony and exaggeration and satire is what makes me a good comic at the end of the day, but you have to let it play out for the artist and the scientist to even know what is true and what isn't true. And that's something that I think we're really seeing right now in our culture, is our inability to accept growth and learning through mistakes.

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding. And in this thing, at least the episodes of the podcast that I've heard, you are just showing the world: look, I'm not infallible. I learn through trial and error just like everybody else. And of course other comedians do this too; they just don't document it for the whole world to see. And by the way, you've had jokes sometimes where I have actually been sitting there literally asking, "Why didn't they laugh? That was great. That thing was brilliant. What the heck's the matter with these people?"

BENJAMIN: Thanks.

WOODS: Now, incidentally, I've listened to some of your — because you interact with your fans really, really well. It seems to me, even though I haven't been to one of your shows in person — you seem like you've got just some of the best, nicest people, most encouraging people supporting you that you could possibly ask for.

BENJAMIN: They're unbelievable. Like, it was very organic that they started calling themselves the Unbearables and it was a bear theme, because I've seen that in entertainers for years, how different fans of an artist will call themselves a certain name, and I never really understood it until it happened very organically in my career because of my last special — not the recent special, but the one before it called *Feed the Bear*. And the bear archetype is so fitting for so many people that people started just going with it. And the closer I get to a lot of these people, the more they're just lovely. A lot of them, they range from molecular engineers to truck drivers to stay-at-home moms to anything you could imagine, but the unifying factor is trying to find the right answer.

You brought up Dave Smith earlier, our mutual friend. A compliment I gave him years ago when I first met him was: if I give you information that contradicts your opinion and you think it's right, you look excited, not threatened. And I think that that's a thing I've always liked about the libertarian community, is where it's more like, *What's the right answer?*, versus, *What are my talking points?* And I just think that it's a really amazing time for comedy, because a lot of these people are now being linked by the Internet and by YouTube and all this stuff that they never would have.

And I still do *Why Didn't They Laugh?* episodes, but this is the thing about *Why Didn't They Laugh?* is it used to take me two or three weeks to do an episode, and now I do a morning livestream every day at YouTube/OwenBenjaminComedy. And I just don't do enough standup to be able to do it every day, and I really enjoy doing it every day and having that contact with listeners. So I will be doing more *Why Didn't They Laugh?* because there's still — I mean I want to do *Why Didn't They Laugh?* about some of these tricky concepts, but again, I need a lot of audio and it takes more time. It's more like a radio lab than it is a normal podcast, where I have to really analyze and face that mirror of who I really am like *The Neverending Story* and then let it out.

WOODS: I was listening to a recent episode of yours called "I Know Who You Are."

BENJAMIN: Oh, yeah.

WOODS: And in that one, that's — I want to get to that in a few minutes, because the issues you raise there are so interesting and important about the kind of comedian you want to be and the kind of comedian you have no intention of being forced into being by this bizarre

situation you find yourself in. So let's jump in there. You've been having some episodes recently with venues and with enemies of yours in what we might call the comedy community, so bring us up to date on that.

BENJAMIN: Oh, sure. Well, it all started, the main thing that really started was I did Steven Crowder's show a while ago, and we just had a blast, and I started getting these weird vibes from people. And then when I came out against transgender children — not the children — you understand what I'm saying.

WOODS: Right.

BENJAMIN: But like giving hormone blockers to five-year-olds type of thing. And I was arguing with a specific guy who's doing this with his kid, and he's a big NPR host and he has clout in the left-wing entertainment community. And so I was CAA and they basically told me straight up: apologize or we have to let you go. And I'm like: oh, you so you mean lie? Like, say I believe something I don't. And so I didn't. I stuck to my guns, and a bunch of colleges cancelled on me. I even tweeted out one of the letters, because I think that there's a big thing that happens where people don't always believe — Like, I'll say something like that, and people are like, *Oh, okay, whatever*. I'm like, no, read the letter. Read that this is literally about the fact that I don't agree with five-year-olds going on hormone blockers. And then there was a cascade of cancellations, and that's when I really started seeing these boycott-type moves.

And so what I would do is — And I've had some great people in my corner throughout all of this and a lot of really great comedians and a lot of really great media people. But I realized that I would probably have to start renting my own venue and then selling them out through my website and then just doing it like that. And then I found that they would cancel those as well, especially if it's linked to a school. Like Merit School of Music in Chicago cancelled me and Brooklyn School of Music and all these music schools. And I play classical piano, so I thought it was a no-brainer to do music. And then it just kept going and going. And the thing about some of these bands is I want to do a lot of relationship material, material about how men and women are different, and I like to play songs and just really normal stuff.

But the more people keep backing me into a corner, the more I have to become more political, because of that old quote: you can ignore politics, but politics won't ignore you. And to see my livelihood getting so threatened and to see active campaigning against me by a very small and very loud group of people that I consider at this point to be straight-up authoritarian socialists, anti-American, just really disgusting people, the more I know that this fight is something I can't back down from. And for me, it's just a very simple First and Second Amendment, I think if we can keep those we're okay and we can keep squabbling like we always have as America, but if we give up the freedom of speech or the freedom to arm ourselves, we're absolutely — we could be Venezuela, and historically that happens.

WOODS: You know, I have a private Facebook group for people who support my show, which, by the way, if you don't have that, that is probably the one thing that I offer that got the most people to come on board to support the show. I never in a million years would have guessed it would be that, but everybody loves it. Anyway, we've got a great community in there, and one person in there has an active Twitter account, and somebody impersonated her to make you look bad. The whole point of impersonating her was to portray her as an

Owen Benjamin supporter, as an Unbearable, which she is, and then to spout kind of insane nonsense constantly so as to reflect badly on you.

BENJAMIN: Oh, they do that all the time.

WOODS: Yeah, that's unbelievable. That's insane.

BENJAMIN: Oh, and this is why we aren't easily taken down and why there's so much vitriol and so much money being spent to try and take me down, because these things aren't cheap, is we really know each other. Like this guy Coddington Bear, he's a mathematician, literally. Great guy. I have a rental property in my town when I shot the special, and I let a bunch of the Unbearables just stay there just because I was so honored that a lot of them made huge journeys just to come to the taping, and it was just unbelievable. And I let them stay at my home, and I know them. And so when I see him getting cloned and saying all these vicious things about black people and Jews and all this stuff, it's so obvious to any of the Unbearables that this is a clone and this is a way to try and make my followers appear to be racist, which will then discredit any of the fun, non-PC jokes that I do that are not racist.

And it's really pathetic, but it's effective in a lot of ways. It's effective for people that don't know what's really happening behind the scenes. And it's just this crazy culture war that these people keep getting cloned, and then Twitter will suspend their account for a day or a week for some inane tweet. And then they will be cloned, and then everything about their Twitter account is masked, except their name is like one digit off, and then they will just start ranting about me being in the Ku Klux Klan or just any absurd nonsense because it just discredits me for any venue or any sponsor or anybody that just, even if the odds are one in a thousand that it's true, they just want to avoid any conflict.

WOODS: Right.

BENJAMIN: All it's done, though, is make my support more galvanized. It's made me more focused and more fearless, honestly. It's done the opposite of what I think they thought it would do. It's made me just be able to hit the heart of some of these dragons and not worry about the many-headed hydra that just keep popping up. And I'm really not worried about it. I'm willing to just go with the war of it, because I like culture wars because no one dies, and I would much rather fight this war than if our freedoms are actually taken away. I really would hope that we never have to fight a real war, because I have children, but so that's why as long as it's tweets and retweets and venues and stuff, I'm fine. I think we'll win. But the leftists are really, really vicious, nasty people capable of doing some real weird stuff.

WOODS: Yeah, you know, and look, it's not to say that our side doesn't have its share of nasty people, but I just find it quantitatively and qualitatively different. And I also find just even something silly like on Amazon, a lot of our people — I don't want to say "our people," but some people were giving Mark Levin really bad book reviews because he'd been critical of Ron Paul, and so some Ron Paul people thought: we'll show him. We'll give him one-star reviews for his book. So then his people started giving Ron Paul one-star reviews for his book. There's no winner in any of this. And so I told my listeners that I think this is an extremely juvenile thing to do. This is totally beneath us. We don't act this way. The other side acts like this. We don't act like this. And Levin thanked me on the radio for doing that, because enough's enough. That's just stupid.

But in general — but I think most of us in general would say you can't do that. You've got to stick to the ideas, you've got to stick above the belt. But in general, my experience from the other side has not been that way. It has indeed been quite vicious.

Now, listening that podcast episode that I mentioned called "I Know Who You Are," I was really struck by this conflict that is still unresolved I think in your mind about exactly how to proceed, given that what you're being put through is almost compelling you to become a shock comic or a comic whose whole shtick is that he's put upon by the left and he's shut down at different venues. But that's not the comedian you want to be. You just want to go and do your stuff.

BENJAMIN: Exactly.

WOODS: And even some of your supporters are saying: you've got to do this; you've got to do that. But you just want to be you, and they're making it hard to be you, and I wish I had a good answer for you on that.

BENJAMIN: I almost feel like that grizzled detective that just wants to put his gun and badge down and go home. Like, I try really hard and in general I think I'm pretty successful at keeping my show the standup I want to do. I don't want to be defined by my enemies. And that being said, the social media world, it's not really possible. It's like, when you're called all these names and people keep coming at you, I think one of the things that people seem to like about me is that I won't back down. I won't kneel. I won't accept it. I won't have this — like one of my things I say on stage is I have no white pride, but I also have no white shame, and I won't have false shame. But I also don't have pride; I have pride in my individual accomplishments.

And I think that it's a very, very fine line that I have to always figure out between being a comedian and being political, and I just think the government has expanded to a point where it was tough not to be. And there was a long time when I didn't think about politics at all because it didn't expand to this degree, where gender doesn't exist in first grade classes. I just don't know the future that they want to have. And just people actively trying to ban the Second Amendment and comedians going to jail in England and being fined in Canada, it's like the word "censorship" is more triggering to me than the C word — that's my C word.

And like the political correct world is such a scam. Like, Lenin said that he would get rid of all the tsars' political prisons, so all they did is call it political isolators and build 40 times more and send them all to Siberia. It's like the way people handle problems is just to switch the name of the problem and then get mad at anyone who says the name to avoid the problem. And that's the trick of the politically correct censorship world, and I'm just not going to buy into it because the stakes are too high.

That being said, you're right, though: I don't want to be a shock comic. And I'm actually really not. It's like, I still maintain — like I'll make fun of Bernie Sanders on stage. Like I do him as Bane, where it's, you know, "You people all deserve everything you've ever wanted." Like I'll make fun of socialism in a fun way, but other than that, I try not to go too crazy with it. But my whole career has been somewhat provocative, because that's kind of what people pay comedians to do.

And if anybody looked back at like 2010 comedy, most of these people that are now these holier-than-thou, statist-religion comedians, and you know, the Jimmy Kimmels and the Sarah Silvermans and all these people, Jimmy Kimmel was in blackface. Sarah Silverman used to talk about how she wanted to murder Jesus. It's like, these people are not clean people. It's like they're all provocateurs, and I have no problem with anybody doing any joke, but you can't be the joke police as well as doing these satirical, hyperbolic jokes. And I think I've been put in this weird position where I'm one of the last people in comedy that isn't going to pretend that there's something wrong about being male or something wrong in being white or something wrong in having your wife stay home and raise your children. I'm not going to say that there's shame in that. And for that, I am getting just this crazy backlash.

WOODS: Tell me the specifics about what's been happening in Pittsburgh, and let's see what we can do to promote April 28th.

BENJAMIN: Oh, well, I had a venue in Pittsburgh cancelled because basically what's happening is these local comedian scenes are becoming just straight-up socialist. It's like they're the word police. They all have the same political agenda. They're all pushing the same thing. I've noticed that, and it's really disturbing. It's almost like when I was up and coming, I wanted credits. I wanted to get on Leno, which I got on. I wanted to get on Fallon, which I got on. I wanted Comedy Central; I've had two specials. I wanted to be on a sitcom; I've had three years as a regular on a sitcom. Like, those are the things I would look for.

And nowadays, it seems like these young, open-mic comedians — not even young, a lot of them — their credit is to get in a Twitter fight with a famous person and to virtue signal and to say, "Don't say this word. Don't say this word." And so they're organized, and most of them are in other political activist groups, and they just scare the heck out of other venues until everybody won't allow me to go.

But the thing is is any venue that's just a free market — the free market will make it so that any venue that isn't like that will make money, and they'll see that my crowd is really, really nice and they're not hateful and they're just multi-cultural, I guess they call it these days. It's just so ironic how people portray me versus what reality is. And so we have other venues that are down to have us, but I can't really list them on my website, so it'll be like the day before I'll be able to announce where I'm performing.

But yeah, like Minneapolis cancelled me at a venue that I'd already paid the money for. And then I got another one, and another outraged calling thing happened, so I had to get another one. But now we're good, because I know the owner. But like people think it's always the current outrage thing that I'm involved in that day and I should apologize or whatever. They've been doing this since I condemned — not "condemned," that's the wrong verb, but criticized Beyoncé for doing that Black Power salute during the Super Bowl. Ever since then, it's been just a constant war with like people trying to ban me from places, and there's no end. And they don't want an apology and they don't want forgiveness and they don't want any middle ground. They just want to take me down. They see the world as a zero-sum game. They don't understand that the free market lifts all boats. They think they're owed stuff, and it's just crazy.

It's a crazy time to be a comedian, but it's important that I don't stop, because a lot of people email me and DM me their horror stories at where they work or where they go to school or what's happened in their life, and straight up, they're like, "You give me strength to get out of

bed sometimes, because this world is so insane." And I'm like, those are the people that help me stay strong. And my wife, you know, who's half Mexican and she's being called racist by white women, and she's like, "These people drive me crazy, and we've got to win." And so I won't stop.

And even if it becomes some weird speakeasy-type comedy situation like when alcohol was banned, where the, *Knock, knock*, "Who's there?" to get into the club that no one really knows about, because comedy's starting to become illegal. And people don't see it yet, but I see it and a lot of other comedians see it, but it really is starting to become like comedy is illegal. And they do it in this real sneaky, Marxist way, where it's through middle management, through lies, and through these campaigns, like your follower who had her account cloned, where the public doesn't see it until it's too late.

WOODS: Yeah.

BENJAMIN: And I'm sounding the alarm.

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding, because a lot of alarms that were sounded before people said, "Ah, come on, you're exaggerating. No one will ever advocate that. No one will ever advocate A, B, and C." And now they're already on to X, Y, and Z. So yeah, I am a little bit worried.

Now, if people want to stay up on the news about your venues, do you have an e-blast you send out or is it social media or your website directly? Where do you direct people?

BENJAMIN: Well, when people buy tickets, they do it through my PayPal at HugePianist.com, and so we have all the emails —

WOODS: Ah, smart, okay.

BENJAMIN: Yeah, so if there's any venue change, if there's any issues, we can literally be in contact with everybody, because that's why I don't use any box office from any club or venue, because — except for the improvs, Funny Bones, places that I trust. Like I'll be at the Brea Improv. Because comedy clubs, the good news about a lot of comedy clubs is they aren't as susceptible to this stuff. Like, hats off to the Improv for keeping my weekend, because I know they took a lot of heat. And I'm friends with a lot of these improv owners, so I know what these activists are saying. And the lies, you wouldn't believe. Like they say that they're a comedy club owner in L.A. and I'm in the Ku Klux Klan and just all this stuff. And people that are just — these venues, these theaters, these rock clubs, maybe they don't know enough about comedy or know enough about what these people are saying, but they just believe it and cancel me, and they do it in a pretty — if I wasn't so focused and so — if I didn't have as much purpose as I do, it would be horrifically embarrassing to have venues say that they can't host someone like me. But it's all good. I've been through worse, so it's all good.

WOODS: Well, the whole thing is a real illustration to the world if they're paying attention of — it's a microcosm of what's going on in society. Your life is a miniature reproduction of what's going on in the whole society.

BENJAMIN: Yeah, and I allow it to be dramatized publicly. And I love Joe Rogan. He's my boy. And I've done his podcast like three times in the last six months, but this last one, Rogan was

saying I tweet too much and stuff, and he does have a point; I probably do and I probably engage with certain people that I shouldn't, and I don't need — you know, the eagles don't peck with the pigeons and all that stuff, but at the same time, I allow the drama to unfold in front of the public, and that's something that's very powerful. And it's something that people need to see, because the thing that would ascend me to more power and more wealth would be to keep the cards close to my chest, act like — I know comedians that I've opened for in the past that have not sold enough tickets, so they'll say that they hurt their back or something and not show their weakness to the audience, to the people, because it hurts their hierarchy image of power.

But for me, when something like this happens, I reveal it. And not friends, not people that mess with me that I respect; it's not like that, but it's like a venue or something like this. And I'll let it unfold. I'll do those livestreams every morning. I'll show what happens to my friends and my family, the shrapnel in the town I live in that people have had to deal with. And that way people can see examples. It's like *The Gulag Archipelago*, the reason it was so powerful was because it was the journey of a Stalinist, military, full-blown, rah-rah communism guy into the gulag and then back out again through his reconnection to Christianity and to a higher calling than the secular things that the Soviets had promised him and just the redemption story that's possible. But it had to be dramatized. You had to see what they did with women and how they fed you in a railway car. You have to see the details.

Like, human beings are programmed for stories, and so I have no problem revealing these stories and letting them play out on social media and showing where the monsters are, because this is not my first tango with monsters, and so I know what they're scared of. They're constantly seeking approval. They want social approval over any virtue. So if you put them into light, if you show what they are, it's the best defense that you have against them. I just hope that more people haven't been corrupted by this really disgusting, leftist way of viewing the world. Like equality of outcome, not equality of opportunity, it's genocide. And it's like the only way to make a forest equal is with an axe, not with seeds.

And I think what you were talking about earlier with Levin and the Amazon stuff, I think the thing that makes the right a little more productive is we're more in the conservation business than the building business, and the left seems to be more like the Joker from *Batman*, where it's just about burning everything to the ground. And even in that example, which I do agree with you that it hurts everyone if everyone's just in this one-star rating BS, at least they're still doing it as themselves and not cloned bots claiming someone's a racist.

WOODS: Right.

BENJAMIN: It's like the left takes it to a degree where they don't just want your career hurt; they want your life ruined. If you killed yourself, they'd be happy. Like, it's just so mind-blowing to me the depths the at the personal just attacks that they're willing to do that I'm just incapable of doing, because it goes against — the things that makes the right strong and the Achilles heel is principles that you try to follow even when they go against you. And that's good for the long term, but in the short term, it can be very, very hard to deal with.

WOODS: You know, in the meantime, I think about people who are held up to as being "brave." And I don't want to mention names, but people who do sort of politically correct things or enjoy the favor of politically correct groups. Well, we're told this person is brave because they changed their gender or whatever it is. But how is that brave in that they're

going to be cheered by Hollywood, the media, the political classes, academia, popular culture in general, every elite everywhere, the CEOs of all the Fortune 500 companies? Yeah, you could call that bravery if you wanted to, but how about people who come out and say what really in the grand scheme of things are extremely mild things, have their livelihoods destroyed, their reputations ruined? Not a word about them, but those are the brave ones.

BENJAMIN: Right. Well, that's the irony about "brave." When you're dealing with a government our size and with just how everything's set up, it's becoming doublespeak, where "brave" is literally cowardice. And it's like tolerance is intolerance. It's the opposite. And it's like the things that they're claiming are brave is just the biggest example of compliance they can find, and they'll call that brave. Like people that agree to nonsense, and that's bravery, and the kid from the "Emperor With No Clothes" was not called brave. He was probably banned from Pittsburgh.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, no kidding. Now, speaking of Pittsburgh, tell us about other cities you have coming up in the future. Of course people will have to keep an eye out for what the venue is, but they can certainly go ahead and get tickets.

BENJAMIN: Kirkland, Washington, and yeah, venue change on that one, but we already have another one that we'll email anybody. And then where else? Brea, California, I'm doing Friday and Saturday there in April, and then Pittsburgh, and then there's some more down the line, but that's it for right now because I'm having another baby in August, so I'm trying to pull back on the road a bit. But every morning, [YouTube.com/OwenBenjaminComedy](https://www.youtube.com/OwenBenjaminComedy), and then my website, [HugePianist.com](https://www.HugePianist.com), there's two self-produced hour specials. One from England, I produced *Feed the Bear*, and then the most recent one was *How Dare Me?*, and you can get those, and that's about it.

WOODS: All right, so I'm going to link to all that stuff also on the show notes page. This is Episode 1,128, so [TomWoods.com/1128](https://www.TomWoods.com/1128). Go out there and support Owen Benjamin if you can in person. If you can't support him in person, support him behind the scenes in one way or another, because, well, frankly, he deserves it and he's up against evil, terrible people, so to me that's plenty good reason. Plus, he's just a good guy, so why are you still listening to me? You should be going over to [HugePianist.com](https://www.HugePianist.com) and checking out what he's got, following him, and spreading the word about him. Well, Owen, best of luck. You are fighting the good fight, and I'm really glad to have been able to talk to you again.

BENJAMIN: Thanks, Tom. You're the best.