

## Steve Martin

Steve Martin has become one of the world's best-known comedic personalities. Oddly enough, he started out studying philosophy and wanted to become a college professor in the subject. He is a member of Mensa International (an organization for people with very high IQs). His studies, though, turned him in the exact opposite direction. He dropped out of college to pursue a career in comedy writing for numerous television shows before going solo as a stand-up comedian. His experience in philosophy taught him to try ridiculous twists that launched a great career and numerous world renowned catch phrases.

Stephen Glenn Martin, born August 14, 1945, is an American comedian, writer, producer, actor, musician and composer. He was born in Waco, Texas and raised in Orange County, California, he worked at Knott's Berry Farm and Disneyland in concessions. Steve credits this with the beginning of his love for entertaining. He developed his skills in playing the banjo, lassoing, juggling, making balloon animals and improvisational comedy. When he went to college at California State University, Long Beach he majored in philosophy. His goal was to become a philosophy professor, but something in his studies changed his mind. "In philosophy, I started studying logic, and they were talking about cause and effect, and you start to realize, 'Hey, there is no cause and effect! There is no logic! There is no anything!'" Then it gets real easy to write this stuff, because all you have to do is twist everything hard - you twist the punch line, you twist the non sequitur so hard away from the things that set I up, that it's easy... and it's thrilling."

In 1967 he got a job through a girlfriend writing for *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, where he won an Emmy. Later his comedy writing skills went into shows like: *The Ray Stevens Show*, *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*, *The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour* and *John Denver*. Steve wanted to perform on stage, so he honed his comedy act and opened for various rock bands. By the end of the 1960's he was performing his own material in clubs and on television. As Martin appeared in front of more people his popularity rose. He made several appearances on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* and his fame went nationwide. His style was off kilter, bizarre and ironic, often poking fun at stand-up comedy traditions.

Steve went on to host several shows in the innovative *Saturday Night Live* series. He, in fact, holds *SNL* records for most guest appearances, most times hosting and most times hosting the show in one year (3). He starred in and co-wrote four highly rated television specials. When performing on national concert tours, he drew standing-room-only audiences in some of the largest venues in the country. He won Grammy Awards for his two comedy albums, *Let's Get Small* and *A Wild and Crazy Guy*, and had a gold record with *King Tut*. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band had formed a friendship with Steve during his opening act days and they

appeared on *King Tut*, calling themselves *The Toot Uncommons*. An accomplished banjo player, he appeared in Earl Scruggs and Friends on the *Foggy Mountain Breakdown* video, for which he won a Grammy for Best Country Instrumental Performance. This is a rare achievement since he has won Grammys for both comedy and music.

Steve was taking the comedy world and college scene by storm coining catch phrases like: "Excuuuuse me!", "Wild and crazy guy", "Let's get small." It was now that he made his move into films. Martin's first film project, *The Absent-Minded Waiter*, a short movie he wrote and starred in, was nominated for a 1977 Academy Award. In 1979, he moved into feature films, co-writing and starring in *The Jerk*, directed by Carl Reiner. In 1981, he starred opposite Bernadette Peters in Herbert Ross' bittersweet musical comedy, *Pennies From Heaven*. The actor then co-wrote and starred in the 1982 spoof of detective thrillers, *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* and the sci-fi comedy *The Man With Two Brains*, both directed by Carl Reiner. In 1984, Martin received a Best Actor Award from both the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics Association for *All of Me*, with Lily Tomlin and his then wife Victoria Tennant. Steve starred in several other comedies with veteran comedians: *The Three Amigos* and *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, with the late John Candy.

A member of Mensa International (an organization for people with very high IQs), he wanted to do more than comedy and avoid being type cast as a buffoon. Hollywood noticed his talents in the 1987 remake of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Roxanne*, starring opposite Darryl Hannah. His role in *Roxanne* won him a Writers Guild of America award. He went on to star in *Parenthood*, with Goldie Hawn in both *House Sitter* and *The Out-of-Towners* and the family picture, *Cheaper by the Dozen*. At the same time, articles he wrote for *The New Yorker* magazine appeared as a collection in his book *Pure Drive*. As a playwright, he authored *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, which had a successful run in several large cities. He hosted the 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Academy Awards in 2001. In 2003 he was listed as #50 in *People Magazine's* "50 Most Beautiful People" List.

Steve Martin is a testimony to doing things your own way with a certain style that is off the wall. His success has been steady and almost always in the direction he set for himself. He is a trustee of the Los Angeles Museum of Art, and collects the art of O'Keefe, Diebenkorn, de Kooning, Kline, Twombly, Frankenthaler, Hopper, Hockney, Lichtenstein, and Picasso. He summed it all up himself, "I think I did pretty well, considering I started out with nothing but a bunch of blank paper." Some of his other funny quotes are:

"I wrote a novel this year called 'Shop Girl,' and several producers came to me and wanted to turn it into a movie. And I said, "If you think you're going to take this book and change it around, and Hollywoodize it and change the ending... that's going to cost you."

"All I've ever wanted was an honest week's pay for an honest day's work."

"Chaos in the midst of chaos isn't funny, but chaos in the midst of order is."

"I believe entertainment can aspire to be art, and can become art, but if you set out to make art you are an idiot."

"It's very hard being one of the most beautiful people. Having this kind of beauty is actually a burden. Sometimes I go to a party and not one of the other 49 most beautiful people is there. That makes me feel very solitary and alone, because it means I am the most beautiful person in the room. If I'm going to a party where I know there will be 'less-beautiful people,' I try to 'dress down' in order to hide my beauty. But this seems to have a counter-effect of actually making me more beautiful. I guess me and dungarees are a pretty potent combination. I try not to lord my beauty over others. This is very hard. I try not to mention that I am one of the most beautiful people, but somehow it always comes out. I will usually only bring it up when I'm asked to do a task, like open a garage door. People seem to enjoy my beauty and are genuinely happy for me, because after I mention it they always say, 'How nice for you.'" -- From *People Magazine*, 20 May 2003, in which Martin was listed as one of the 50 Most Beautiful People.

***Permission is granted to reprint this article provided the following paragraph is included in full:***

**Jim Mathis, CSP is an international Certified Speaking Professional, executive coach and trainer. To subscribe to his free personal and professional development newsletter, please send an email to: [subscribe@jimmathis.com](mailto:subscribe@jimmathis.com) with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject. An electronic copy will be sent out to you every month. For more information on how Jim and his programs can benefit your organization or group, please call 888-688-0220, or visit his web site: [www.jimmathis.com](http://www.jimmathis.com).**