

# Ogden pays off for comic - Standard-Examiner

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Tom Clark ventured to Ogden in 2003 for his first headlining gig. Now the comic returns to the magical scene.

"I love coming out there. Ogden was the first clubs that headlined me when I first moved out to L.A.," said Clark in a phone interview in advance of next weekend's shows at Wiseguys Comedy Cafe. "I've always appreciated them for helping me out."

A lot has happened to Clark in the last eight years — including some Comedy Central performances and being a murderer on TV.

Clark, a Wisconsin boy, started in comedy in 1994.

Being funny takes time. Clark said he had to endure growing pains in the early years of his career. He looked at his material and realized that he was not the comic he wanted to be. His set resembled a talk show monologue.

Clark said he chose to transform himself, using Steve Martin as a model. It was through that process that he turned to improv.

"So I started doing improv along with stand-up, and it really changed my stand-up," Clark said. "It helped me be more spontaneous onstage and be more willing to be physical with acting out certain material. It just gave me more confidence."

The expressions and flailing onstage — such as demonstrating how to attack a mugger with your car keys — advanced the jokes.

The new skills took him to Comedy Sportz and the famous Second City improv troupes in Chicago. It was through Clark's work in Chicago and Wisconsin that he met Frank Caliendo, who gave him crucial career advice.

The famous impressionist, Caliendo, told Clark that in order to break out, he had to go to Los Angeles.

"He had moved out here a year or two earlier and he had encouraged me to move out and give it a try," Clark said. "He was like, 'You are always going to wonder what if.'"

He heeded that call in 2001 and moved, then was immediately dropped by his agent. If Clark was going to make it, he needed to do it himself.

He said he "got lucky" after seven months in the City of Angels. He entered a Comedy Central comedy competition and finished second. That provided much-needed cash prizes and notoriety as Comedy Central featured him on its "Premium Blend" program.

## **Drama act**

Los Angeles brought with it an opportunity for acting roles. He has seen increased exposure in the last two years with Hallmark's "The Wish List" and NBC's "Outsourced."

A major surprise came last year when he was booked for an audition with TNT's "The Closer." He played a killer in a 2010 episode.

"That was a real surprise to me. I am like super dramatic and I am a murderer," Clark said.

To make the experience even more difficult, he had never trained for a dramatic role.

“It was hard. Sometimes you do 10-12 takes of that scene that was very emotional,” Clark said. “It was surprising how exhausting that can be.”

Acting has always been a complement to his comedy. And while he won't give up comedy, the drama has its place.

“I think there's always room for drama in a character actor's life,” Clark said.

**Watch a YouTube clip of Tom Clark's work**