

...BULLET POINTS...

STUNTING

“How To Go To Jail... And Get Great Audio In The Process!”

In morning radio, nothing beats a stunt. Ten years from now, your listeners may not remember the interview you did with Jennifer Lopez to promote *Gigli 2*, but they will sure as heck remember the time when your stunt guy was nearly beaten to death by an old lady for improperly yelling “BINGO!” There’s an old morning radio saying that says “Every morning should have a ‘Didja’ Hear?” A “Didja Hear?” is the moment on your show that everyone will be talking about at the water cooler...that awesome moment when the phone lines explode, the emails start pouring in, and you can almost hear the people in their cars laughing themselves to tears. And no interview, no phoner, and no ‘Battle of the Sexes’ provides a bigger “Didja Hear?” than a well-executed stunt.

Street audio adds a whole new level of depth to your show, because life doesn’t just happen in the four walls of the studio. Which brings me to...

GOLDEN RULE #1 – ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS, BRING YOUR RECORDER WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO.

How many times have you been in the right place at the right time and said to yourself, “Man, I wish I could play this on the air”? Two years ago, I went to the NASCAR opener down at Daytona. As I was leaving the race and walking back towards my car, I noticed that there was a skinny, drunk redneck with his pants down...peeing on my car. Press record. I asked him why he was peeing on my car, and if he would mind cleaning it up. He then proceeded to yell at me, call me a communist, and try out some of his redneck karate moves that he apparently learned from Patrick Swayze in *Road House*. Now, if I would have just told this story on the air, it would have still been pretty funny...but hearing the guy in all of his drunken glory try to give me the Crane Technique with his pants down...*that’s* radio gold.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

There are three items that every stunt person MUST own:

1. **A Minidisc Recorder:** Too many shows try to collect street audio using a DAT recorder or some other clunky device. Minidisc recorders are small enough to be hidden from view, and for audio quality, MD is the best choice. Try to get one with self-compression, so you don’t have to waste time adjusting the input levels. I suggest the Sony MZ-N 707.
2. **The “Butler 2000” Pen Mic:** One of my good friends, Todd Phillips over at 99X in Atlanta, makes this amazing high quality microphone that looks exactly like a pen. The sound quality on this sucker is amazing. Todd sells them for about \$120 each. Email him at todd_themorningx@yahoo.com for all the technical info. Stop thinking, and buy one now.

3. **Clothes With Holes:** Buy a couple of inexpensive shirts with a front pocket. If you put a hole on the inside of your shirt pocket, and another hole in your pants pocket, you can run the pen mic cord all the way from your pants to your shirt without anyone noticing. The minidisc stays in your pants pocket, the pen mic sticks out of your shirt pocket, and you're rockin' like Dokken.

PLACES WHERE YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND GREAT AUDIO

There are several locations where getting great audio is like shooting fish in a barrel. Here are a few places that will provide you with a boatload of great stuff:

- **Any Metal, Rap, or Country Concert:** If Slipknot, 50 Cent, or Hank Williams Jr. is in town, roll that mic. I guarantee that you will find at least a few people with opinions on their minds and liquor on their breath.
- **Frat and Sorority Houses:** Lots of talkative drunk people. However, beware of excessive "Woo-Hoo"ing.
- **The State Fair:** Carnies have stories. Carnies love the ladies. Carnies sound funny on the air. Play a game of "Carnie-Piece Theatre" or "Will The Carnie Let Me Brush His Teeth". Then go grab a Pabst together and party in his camper.
- **Foreign Countries:** If you're going on vacation, bring that mic! The only thing better pulling a great stunt is pulling a great stunt on people with funny accents.
- **Any Bar After 1AM:** Once again, drunk people are funny. They like can't speak and stuff.
- **Monster Truck Show:** Try the "Monster Truck Fan Spelling Bee". Stump them with the word "Engine".
- **Rodeo:** Yee-haw! Ask a rodeo fan what he thinks of Hillary Clinton. I promise that he'll try to punch you. Bonus!



And GOLDEN RULE #2: "YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND GREAT AUDIO AT ANY PLACE THAT SELLS A FUNNEL CAKE."

LIVE BITS Vs. RECORDED BITS

There is something exhilarating about pulling off a street stunt live on the air. Your stunt guy is in place and talking to you over the phone, you're able to feed him great one-liners, and there's an amazing feeling that anything can happen. Unfortunately, many bits that look foolproof on paper can bomb badly on the air for one reason or another. We've all been there before... your street guy's cell phone connection sounds like dookie, you can't hear what the people around him are saying, it takes ten minutes to get any sort of reaction, and then to add insult to injury, your call is dropped. You've wasted ten or so minutes of the listener's time, and at this point it would have been better to have aired an old Skeet Ulrich interview.

I am a complete and total advocate of pre-recording all stunts. *When you pre-record, you always have a great bit. If you don't, don't air it.* It's that simple. Obviously, pre-recording takes a lot more time and effort, but leave the slacking to your competition.

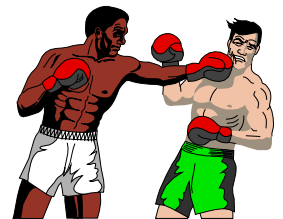
When you pre-record a bit, you can use a minidisc recorder to insure that the audio will be crystal clear. Many times, the success of a bit rides solely on the reactions of the people around your stunt guy. If you can't hear them, the bit will probably fail. But when you pre-record, you will be able to boost the volume of the audio wherever needed. That guy yelling way in the background could end up having the home run punch line of your stunt. *And never underestimate the value of a well-edited street bit.* Would *Star Wars* have been as good a movie if it was released without any edits, cuts, or special effects? Unless you're a 40-year-old man who owns a light-saber and lives with his mom, the answer is no. Pre-recording means you can manipulate comic timing, cut out the fat, and rearrange the audio to tell a better story.

SHOULD I FAKE ANY OF MY STREET BITS?

No. Don't be lame. Just go out there and do it. Remember, you have an Army of listeners behind you cheering you on. Plus, fake bits *sound fake*. And if your competition or, even worse, your *listeners* ever find out...expect a Milli Vanilli style backlash.

HOW TO GET GREAT AUDIO FROM SOMEONE (and not get punched in the process)

Some of the best bits involve confrontation and somewhat hostile environments. A few years ago, I walked into a Bingo hall with my hidden mic and just started randomly yelling "BINGO!" The audio of old ladies and rednecks threatening to kick my butt was priceless. <http://www.randylaneco.com/audio/Dallas/8-2005/RichBingoHall.mp3> Here are a few secrets to getting the best audio out of a hostile situation, while also keeping yourself out of harm's way:



- **Master the art of the facial expression.** People can't see facial expressions on the air. You can sound completely serious, and yet be smiling in a way that tells the other person "I'm no harm to you". They will be confused enough to keep talking, but will usually take no physical action. I said "usually".
- **Pretend like you don't hear them.** For example, let's say the BINGO manager (there is one, by the way) says to you, "You're an idiot!" Answer with "Excuse me?" or "I'm sorry?" They will usually expand on their original statement and answer with something along the lines of, "I said you're a stupid freakin' idiot, and if you don't leave right now, I'm calling the police." Mission accomplished, amigo!
- **Don't dress like you're looking for a fight.** The more conservatively you're dressed, the more slack they'll give you. More slack means more audio. There's a reason that I don't have any tattoos. I try to be as inconspicuous as possible, so that I don't get targeted as a troublemaker and the bit is over before it begins.
- **Never underestimate the power of free radio station swag.** If they get a little angry and things get tense, tell them who you are, that you have no ill will, and give them some free stuff to calm them down. Always be armed with a decent amount of gift certificates or concert tickets. If none of that works...run.
- **Here are links to a couple of other street stunt examples illustrating my points, one at the premiere screening of *The Matrix* and one at the Masters Golf Tournament:**
<http://www.randylaneco.com/audio/Dallas/8-2005/MATRIXMP3.mp3>
<http://www.randylaneco.com/audio/Dallas/8-2005/MASTERSMP3.mp3>

ON-AIR PRESENTATION

Your street bit is recorded, edited, chopped, and done. It's finally time to let the world hear why you were nearly arrested or beaten. Here are several tips to make the most of the on-air presentation of your audio.

- **Never let the on-air staff hear your bit before it airs.** The second laugh is never as strong or as genuine as the first. Surprise them on the air. If you need a second opinion on your bit, play it for either a producer or production director whose opinion you trust.
- **Describe the scene in vivid detail.** If you're about to play a bit you recorded at the State Fair, describe the odd details that stand out such as the smell of fried food and gasoline, the amount of teeth that the carnies had, or the cheesy Poison song blaring from the Tilt-A-Whirl. The more vivid the picture in the listener's head, the more effective the bit.
- **Use Vox-Pro or another program that allows you to stop, start, and rewind the audio.** That way, if someone says something hysterical, you can rewind the tape and hear it again, as well as stop the tape to ask questions or comment on the situation. Just be sure not to overuse these features because it could kill the flow of the bit.
- **DO NOT rush through a great bit.** If you only have four minutes until you have to hit your commercial set, it's better to save it for another break. Don't throw all of your work down the drain because of a half-assed presentation.

If you have any questions or need advice on any of your street bits, please feel free to Email me anytime at richshertenlieb@yahoo.com. Now go out there, knock 'em dead, and always remember...

GOLDEN RULE #3 – IF YOUR STUNTS FAIL MISERABLY, IT'S RANDY LANE'S FAULT.

Rich Shertenlieb, brilliant author of this article, is Stunt Guy Extraordinaire! As you can hear from the linked clips, he is absolutely fearless. He is currently one of the primary on air players with The Kidd Kraddick Show syndicated out of Dallas, and was formerly on The Morning X, 99X in Atlanta.

Talent Tip: Beware of Jocking...

"Jocking" or announcing is formula. It is being on automatic pilot without any feeling or emotion. Feeling it involves intention and emotion. No feeling, no emotion, no intention equals no communication. Even "coming up next" can either be read or communicated with meaning.

Ways to become more real, one-to-one

- Put your life experiences on the air in a way that relates to listeners
- More listener interaction and interviews to put you in conversational situations.
- Work without headphones, one side only, at low volume.... avoid listening to your voice.
- Feel the moment, display more genuine emotion.
- Save tape and listen back to when you are conversational and real.



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