

JAMES CAMPBELL'S COMEDY 4 KIDS

MEMO TO THEATRES

Please distribute these memos to your relevant departments. Some of the items may seem extremely obvious but they are responses to problems that have occurred in the past. All of the items are intended to make the show the very best that it can be.

TECHNICAL MEMO

James has the following technical requirements.

Sound: One radio clip mike.

Lighting: A general wash.

House lights on at between 0 and 25% during the show depending on spillage and intensity of houselights. He needs to be able to see people if he shades his eyes but throughout the show it really focuses the children if they are pretty much in darkness.

Stage: One stool (preferably with a back)
One glass of still water on the stool.

Occasionally, James is asked to play in front of someone else's set. This is fine, within reason. James needs a good 4 metres of depth.

James will arrive for a technical check one hour before the show.

The show runs like this:

1. You play some music as the audience comes in. James will bring a CD of music that he likes. Nice pre-show lighting if possible. Sometimes James forgets to bring some music so anything you have is usually fine as long as there are no swear words. Elvis is good.
2. You get front of house clearance.
3. You tell James that we're about to start.
4. You wait two minutes because kids are easily delayed.
5. You kill the music, the house lights and the stage lights.
6. You make James' mike live while he is in the wings.
7. James introduces himself through his clip mike.
8. He walks on – you put the general wash up.
9. You put the house lights on a little bit.
10. James talks for about an hour. He finishes.
11. You leave the lights as they are. Do not raise the house.
12. James comes on for an encore – about five minutes.
13. James leaves – you raise the house lights.
14. Everyone leaves and we have a nice cup of tea.

Seating: This is a theatre show, not a cabaret show. Cabaret seating doesn't work for children (they can't see over the tables).

ARTISTS RIDER:

James is extremely difficult to please. He needs a towel and some water in his dressing room. If you want to give him a Mars bar and some orange juice he will be overjoyed. And he loves café latte. Mint Aeros are quite nice. Sometimes James will bring his wife. Her favourite cake is sponge cake with cream and raspberries. If this is available she will be very happy. James is very allergic to nuts.

BOX OFFICE MEMO

The show is billed and aimed at children over the age of six, their parents and anyone who likes top-quality comedy without the swearing. We occasionally get queries from people who get confused by this. Sometimes they ask if it will be too babyish for their nine-year-old. You may have to explain to prospective audience members that the show is suitable for EVERYONE over six.

Sometimes, people just see the word "kids" in the title and bring their babies and toddlers. This is unacceptable and they get disappointed. The show is not aimed at under sixes. Sometimes, particularly attentive four-year-olds love it but you must explain to people that they won't get most of it.

Younger children can be disruptive and have on many occasions completely wrecked the show, forcing James to lower the target age range as he goes in order to keep the little ones quiet. This means that the older ones (who are usually in the majority) don't get as much out of it and James gets quite annoyed. Children under four should not be allowed in at all.

Sometimes, families come along with, for example, one nine-year-old; one six-year-old; and one three-year-old. Their argument is that they can't leave the three-year-old outside and they want to watch the show as a family. This is entirely reasonable but you must insist that the three-year-old won't get most of it and should be held on someone's knee throughout the show and if they start crying or playing up, be taken out. If possible, please seat these families at the end of a row at the back.

Often grown-ups who don't have any children come and see James' show. This is fine and they should be encouraged to do so. According to quite a few reviews, they will enjoy the show more than most 'adult' shows.

FRONT OF HOUSE

We normally find that it is best not to let an audience of children into the auditorium too soon. They just end up getting fidgety and needing the toilet. We have found that fifteen minutes before the show is a good time to open the house. This is only a recommendation, however.

Some theatres allow eating and drinking in the auditorium, others don't. Some only allow plastic glasses. We would prefer it if our audiences were not allowed to eat or drink at all. There are lots of reasons for this – mainly that it is distracting for James and the children themselves. It is very difficult to laugh while your eating. Also, there will be less mess for you to clean up afterwards and they are less likely to choke, vomit or wet themselves.

In recent years we have become aware that a lot of theatres and festivals are taking on sponsorship and these deals often seem to take the form of giving away lollies, sweets and the like in the foyer. This is not acceptable. Children being given things for free are less likely to buy our merchandise (on average about half as likely) and hits our budget quite severely.

MERCHANDISING

Talking of merchandising: James currently has two types of CD for sale after the gig. We require one member of your front of house staff to sell these after the show. It normally takes about fifteen minutes. We are happy to pay whatever your normal commission is but usually expect it to be in the region of 15%. Cheques should be made payable to Fat Cat Productions and your percentage should be taken in cash at the time. It is not acceptable for you to take all the money and then stick it on the payment cheque in a few months time.

EDUCATION

It may be possible for James to visit a few primary schools in your area during the week before the date you have booked him for. This has an undoubted benefit in drumming up extra business for the show. If you have any particularly good relationships with any schools, please let us know. Also, if you are involved in any extensive outreach project, which we would detract from, please let us know and we make sure we don't cross.

MISCELLANEOUS:

James Campbell's Comedy 4 Kids is a really easy show to put on. It is also easy to sell. There is no reason why this booking shouldn't be a great success. If there is anything we can do to help make this happen, please don't hesitate to get in contact:

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