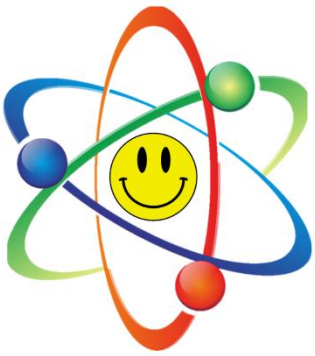

THE SCIENCE OF HA!

Science has some impressive achievements: splitting the atom, charting the cosmos, plumbing the mysteries of life itself. But it has trouble telling a joke.

Artificial intelligence can generate programmed quips ("Siri, will you marry me?" "My end-user license agreement is commitment enough for me"). But while the A.I. program ChatGPT gets headlines for its human-like responses to questions, its original jokes are mostly childish word-play ("Why don't oysters give to charity?" "Because they're shellfish"). So why does A.I.'s funny fully fail?

Because even the world's most powerful computers can't match the human brain's ability and agility in humor: instantaneously ferreting out unexpected associations then gauging whether humans are likely to find them funny, lame or WTF.

With the help of Monty Python, Indiana Jones, Amy Schumer, HAL 5000 and R2D2, this talk explores the roles of dopamine, deception, pattern recognition, rejection of the random and perspective shift in both comedy and science.

Learn how and why humor evolved from reflex to strategy to favored evolutionary trait (as with so much in life, the answer involves wooly mammoths), and how the structure of jokes reveals that Humankind's greatest strength – our compulsion to find meaning in everything, which has fueled science's greatest achievements – is also the weakness that provides the foundation for all humor.

Among David Misch's screen credits are the Emmy-nominated "Mork and Mindy," the Emmy-losing "Duckman," the Emmy-engorged "Saturday Night Live" and the Emmy-ineligible "The Muppets Take Manhattan." He's the author of "Funny: The Book" and is also a playwright, songwriter, blogger, teacher and recovered stand-up comic. He's spoken at the Smithsonian, Yale, the Grammy Museum, Oxford University, Austin Film Festival, Raindance Film Festival (London), American Film Institute, Cinestudio Paris, University of Sydney (Australia), Trinity College Dublin, VIEW Cinema Conference (Torino, Italy), USC and UCLA. Too much more at davidmisch.com.