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comedian.com.au | Rodney Marks

Written by [lloyd bradford \(brad\) syke](#)

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Rodney Marks is a dangerous comedian. You have been warned. Oh, not in the overtly controversial way of Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor or Whoopi Goldberg (well, she used to be, before *The View*). But in the most understated possible way. A wolf, in sheep's clothing: a pinstriped suit. I mean, let's face it, the world's most dangerous people wear pinstriped suits.

He walks quietly, unobtrusively, onto the small stage at The Factory's 'Other Room', one of a number of adjunct small theatres up the back passage, as it were. He begins speaking. It's quickly evident he's 'circumlocutory, in a roundabout kind of way', to use his own words. So where's the harm, the danger? Alarmingly, it's both in and between the lines, so one needs to be fully alert, on one's mettle. He can catch you unawares and bowl you out before you've had

a chance to swing your bat. The ridicule comes quickly, usually in the form of riddles, wrapped in mysteries, inside enigmas. (Or is it enigma, plural of enignum? That's precisely the kind of thing **Mr Marks** mind ponders aloud, just as he claims fullotics is the doubly intensive equivalent of semiotics.)

The real threat **RM** poses is in the fact he's almost indistinguishable from, say, your common, garden-variety, flatpacked, prefab corporate high-flyer. He could be the head of the Reserve, Telstra, or ASIC. No, he really could be. As a matter of fact, I'm sure he'd screen well, pass all the psychometrics with flying colours and, were he hired, it'd probably take years (if then) before anyone realised he was, in fact, not completely kosher.

Just as Divinyls delineated the fine line between pleasure and pain, **Marks** treads the highwire, performing feats of derring-do, an elocutory Errol, teetering between the saving grace of biting satire and the certain death of comedically-unmediated bureaucracy. His process implies even greater danger; for him, mainly, but we somehow suffer in sympathy since, like KRudd sobbing after a bigger bully pulled a flick-knife at little lunch, he is a pitiable figure. That process is scriptless, organic, responsive; he even has the unmitigated fortitude to field questions. It ensures no two performances will be alike.

It isn't laugh-a-minute. It's a bit like comedy test cricket. The player has no better or clearer sense of what might happen, or when, than the punter. There are stretches when the game's being played, but there's no real action. It's latent, probable, but unpredictable. But when a wicked wicket is taken, one's laughter comes unbidden, surrendered to helplessly, involuntarily, uncontrollably.

The delivery is deadpan, downright monotonous (albeit a veritable fever-pitch compared to, say, Elliot Goblet), so unrelentingly corporate. It doesn't just come with the territory, it's part of the terrain: a long, undulating boulevard of management-speak, infused with jargon, buzzwords and systems thinking. This makes it all the more deadly since, as one's cruising, going with the adjectival flow, one never sees the speedbumps.

Be afraid, be very afraid. The world needs more of him, lest we start to take ourselves, our institutions, governments, corporations, processes or systems too seriously; a constant danger we must vigilantly guard against. **Rodney Marks** is a genius, wrapped in linguistic parody, inside a suit. Any resemblance to any executive, official, spokesperson, expert or authority is purely unavoidable.

Full Marks!

Part of the Sydney Fringe Festival

Venue: The Other Room

Dates/Times: 11-12 Sep @ 6.30pm, 18-19 Sep @ 9.30pm, 24 Sep @ 6.30pm, 2010

Duration: 55 Minutes

Tickets: Adult: \$20.00, Concession: \$16.00

Bookings: thesydneyfringe.com.au/