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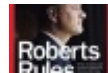
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5 Questions with Matthew Inman, the Brain (and Hand) Behind *The Oatmeal*

By **NICK CARBONE** | @nickcarbone | March 25, 2011 |



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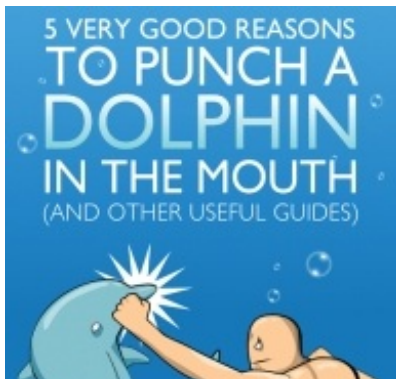
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Courtesy Andrews McMeel Publishing

Have you grumbled about a misused semicolon or been annoyed by the airport check-in line? Webcomic **The Oatmeal** has probably featured a comic about it.

The man behind the crude drawings and crass jokes is 28-year-old Matthew Inman. In 2009, Inman put his hand to the page, and the world hasn't stopped laughing since. For a man with no art training, save for a few oil painting classes in high school, the Seattleite's diatribes about "**How to Suck at Facebook**" and "**The 9 Types of Crappy Handshakes**" (are you a Sweaty McSweaterson?) have struck a nerve with readers – primarily the funny bone.






After two years of potty-mouthed humor, Inman compiled the best into an **anthology** called *5 Very Good Reasons to Punch a Dolphin in the Mouth* and embarked on a whirlwind book tour across the nation. He took a breather in Brooklyn to chat with NewsFeed. Hopefully we played it cool and didn't provoke him to gripe about us in a future comic.

(**More on TIME.com:** See *The Oatmeal* as part of the best blogs of 2010)

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You've drawn everything from riding polar bears to navigating awkward phone conversations. How do you come up with the seemingly disjointed and random ideas for your comics?

I typically focus on something I want to write about, whether that's polar bears or cheese or Japanese toilets, and I just iterate on my thoughts until I come up with something that makes me chuckle. Fortunately, my sense of humor seems to coincide with that of a lot of people. So I'll get my notebook and scribble for hours and at the end I'll have garbage – but then I'll be showering or running or shopping for taquitos and be like 'I got it!' and have to go write it down. It's like a two-day delay where the thoughts have to incubate before they can sprout.

Do your comics reflect the real Matt, or is this a hidden side of you that not many people see?

These ideas come out quite a bit in my daily conversation. I definitely have a knack for words, especially when I'm ranting or criticizing things. Usually I'll have a little tiny notebook with me, and my friends are always worried that they're doing something that's aggravating me and that's why I'm writing it down. A lot of my comics are very gripe-y, so if they see me writing they're like "What did I do? Did I say something?"

(More on TIME.com: [See the creator of the blog "Stuff White People Like"](#))

What has the critical reaction been to your unique drawings?

It's hard to gauge because all I see is people tweeting "LOL" at me, which isn't super rewarding, but it's the best I can do as a comic artist. Sometimes I get criticized for my artwork, because it's very simple and crude. No one ever goes after Charles Schultz for his work, but people seem to blend my work with graphic novels. And they're like 'This is not art!' but this isn't a graphic novel, it's a poop joke – I'm not making a profound statement here.

You started drawing comics to promote a dating site you founded. When did you realize these comics deserved their own forum?

There was one comic in particular, "[How to Tell if Your Cat Is Plotting to Kill You](#) ," that I made while working at the dating site, and that one just blew up. Millions of people read it, and that's when I sort of realized I was a cartoonist. But I didn't want to be a marketing gimmick for a dating site. I didn't like the thought that my comics had been turned into an ad. It would be like a concert pianist



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doing Gatorade commercials.

We hope you keep drawing forever, because we nearly suffocate from laughing so hard when reading *The Oatmeal*. But what does your future look like?

If I run out of jokes or the humor becomes stale, I'm not just going to string it out for 20 years. I'm sort of impulsive, so if I get bored with it, I think I'll have to try something new. I've been thinking about standup, animation, podcasting, video, or even long-form comedy.

(More on TIME.com: [See the 5 best blogs you should know](#))

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