

# [***Why Jon Stewart's return to 'The Daily Show' makes sense all around***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B9T-DJX1-JBSS-S010-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

February 12, 2024 Monday 1:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Cable News Network All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 771 words

**Byline:** Analysis by Brian Lowry, CNN

**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Reactions to Jon Stewart [*returning to "The Daily Show"*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/24/entertainment/jon-stewart-daily-show/index.html) after more than eight years - hosting one day a week and overseeing the rest - were decidedly mixed. While some embraced the news with enthusiasm, others, including writers in Time and the Huffington Post, saw it as a step back, even "regressive."

Turning to the show's former host of 16 years, after more than a year of thumb-twiddling since successor [*Trevor Noah signed off*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/09/entertainment/trevor-noah-daily-show-final-episode/index.html), doesn't appear risk-taking or bold. But it does make considerable sense on both ends, with Stewart reclaiming a prominent platform during an election year, and Comedy Central benefiting not only from his skills as an entertainer but perhaps more importantly, as a proven developer of comedy talent.

Although it's easy to forget, the sons and daughters of "The Daily Show" represent a truly impressive roster, including Noah, Stephen Colbert, Steve Carell, [*John Oliver*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/01/entertainment/john-oliver-says-working-for-jon-stewart-was-a-dream-despite-breaking-his-nose-on-the-job/index.html), Samantha Bee, Jessica Williams, Rob Riggle, Jason Jones and Jordan Klepper.

In his final episode back in 2015, Stewart spoke proudly of "the talent that has passed through these doors," while Colbert lauded his former boss for being "infuriatingly good at your job."

Stewart hasn't exactly remained dormant during his time in the wilderness, doggedly [*advocating for veterans*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/28/politics/pact-act-burn-pits-jon-stewart/index.html) and hosting a program for Apple TV+, [*"The Problem with Jon Stewart."*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/20/media/jon-stewart-apple/index.html) Yet that show never really caught on, and he hasn't enjoyed the same cultural footprint he commanded during his time on Comedy Central, where he emerged as one of the most astute observers of ***politics*** and media, delivering a four-night-a-week balm of much-needed wit and sanity to those who shared his criticisms and concerns.

"I very much wanted to have some place to unload thoughts as we get into this election season," Stewart said during an appearance on "CBS Mornings" on Monday. "I thought I was going to do it over at - they call it Apple TV+. It's a television enclave, very small. It's like living in Malibu. They decided, they felt that they didn't want me to say things that might get me in trouble."

Assuming this new setup amounts to a temporary, stopgap arrangement, the real benefit for Comedy Central is less Stewart's Rachel Maddow-like begin-the-week presence than the knack he exhibited for cultivating future hosts and stars - and unlike Oliver, who parlayed his "Daily Show" showcase into an HBO program, finding a way to keep those players in the network's fold.

Stunningly, "The Daily Show" and its alumni have received every Emmy for outstanding variety series for more than 20 years, dating back to 2003. Stewart's old version won 10 straight times, "The Colbert Report" twice, and Stewart had an encore in 2015 before Oliver's "Last Week Tonight" began its seven-year streak, until he moved into another category and the Television Academy honored Noah's "Daily Show" swansong.

Even in a part-time on-air capacity, Stewart should generate the kind of viral clips and buzz that have increasingly become key currency for such franchises, despite the significant erosion and dilution of linear TV's influence during his extended absence.

Granted, that dynamic serves as a reminder that Stewart comes back to a very different media and entertainment environment than the one that existed when he left Comedy Central. Just think about the evolution of terms like "MAGA" and "streaming" in the intervening years.

"I'm hoping to have a catharsis and a way to comment on things and a way to express them that hopefully people will enjoy," Stewart told CBS. "But as far as influence, and you guys know from doing this, just about everything I had wanted to happen over the 16 years that I was at 'The Daily Show' did not happen."

Stewart is hardly the first person in entertainment (or indeed, even the first late-night host) to realize an old job was a pretty good one. Sometimes you can go home again, and sometimes, you can't.

Given all that, it's easy to see why some critics would conclude Comedy Central has simply kicked the can down the road by seeking to go back to the future, instead of starting fresh by betting on someone new.

Yet that overlooks Stewart's track record nurturing those who can and have credibly filled his shoes. Besides, even if the reunion doesn't pan out as planned, amid unsettling times, the network has at the very least bought itself - and Stewart's admirers - a few more moments of Zen.

"The Daily Show" marks Jon Stewart's return February 12 at 11 p.m. ET on Comedy Central.

Analysis by Brian Lowry, CNN

TM & © 2024 Cable News Network, Inc., a Time Warner Company. All rights reserved.

**Load-Date:** February 23, 2024

**End of Document**