

# 'Saturday Night Live' vets arrive

By Tom Lauder  
Senior Editor

The Franken and Davis Show is coming to Lincoln.

The University Program Council Talks and Topics Committee and KFMQ are presenting "Behind the Scenes of 'Saturday Night Live'" with Emmy-award winning writers Al Franken and Tom Davis on Monday at 8:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. Admission is \$2.00 for the general public and free to UNL students with a student ID.

Franken (the short one with glasses) and Davis (the tall one with glasses) have been writing and performing comedy for 16 years since their start in stand-up to their stints with "Saturday Night Live" and their work in movies.

The show is being billed as part comedy show, part discussion on comedy writing.

"It's basically a comedy show," Franken said in a phone interview. "I think the agent said, would you like to go out doing half a show, half lecture or something like that. And our lectures are just usually people ask questions, stuff that they want to know about the show and show biz."

The two attended Blake School in Hopkins, Minn., where they worked up a comedy act. After high school, Franken studied social sciences at Harvard while Davis went to rock concerts, washed dishes and hitchhiked. They came home to Minnesota in the summers, performing their act in a club in Minneapolis.

**'It was healthy in a way. . . It's like comedy boot camp.'**

—Franken

Davis hitchhiked his way to Harvard during Franken's senior year and the two "shared" Franken's room. They began performing at the Improvisation in New York City on the weekends.

Franken and Davis moved to Los Angeles in 1973 and soon were performing at the Comedy Store, at rock concerts, on college campuses, and in Vegas and Reno.

Their break into television came in July 1975. Their agent had given samples of their material to producer Lorne Michaels. Michaels was putting together a late-night comedy show and hired the two as writers. The show, of course, was "Saturday Night Live."

Franken and Davis moved back East. They were the youngest writers on the young show, and they found themselves at the bottom of the pecking order.

"We were treated like we were the youngest," Franken recalled. "Not too bad, though. There was definitely sort of an inner circle at first, but we broke into that fairly soon."

"But the whole atmosphere of the place was such that everybody was merciless with everybody else."

Franken said he and Davis didn't feel any different from anyone else.

"Everybody abused everybody

else," he said. "It was healthy in a way. It's hard to understand. It's like comedy boot camp."

The prolific duo churned out some of the most memorable sketches of "Saturday Night Live's" early run (such as Nixon's Final Days, Dr. Shockley's House of Sperm, the Afro Lustre commercial) and many sketches that never made it past the censors. Davis was instrumental in the creation of the Coneheads, along with Dan Aykroyd. The pair also performed their own act, the Franken and Davis Show, during the early seasons.

When Michaels left "Saturday Night Live" in 1980, Franken and Davis moved on. They continued to write and perform, especially on college campuses. They worked with Michaels again on the short-lived "New Show." The team also appeared in "Trading Places" and wrote and starred in their own film, "One More Saturday Night," with Aykroyd as executive producer.

When Michaels returned to "Saturday Night Live" in 1985, he hired Franken and Davis as his producers. Franken hated the job.

"It was terrible. But it was because

we weren't really the producers. We had that in name only. And we had a lot of unpleasant duties to do."

"It was a tough year for us. And we took a lot of heat for the show. The show wasn't very successful that year."

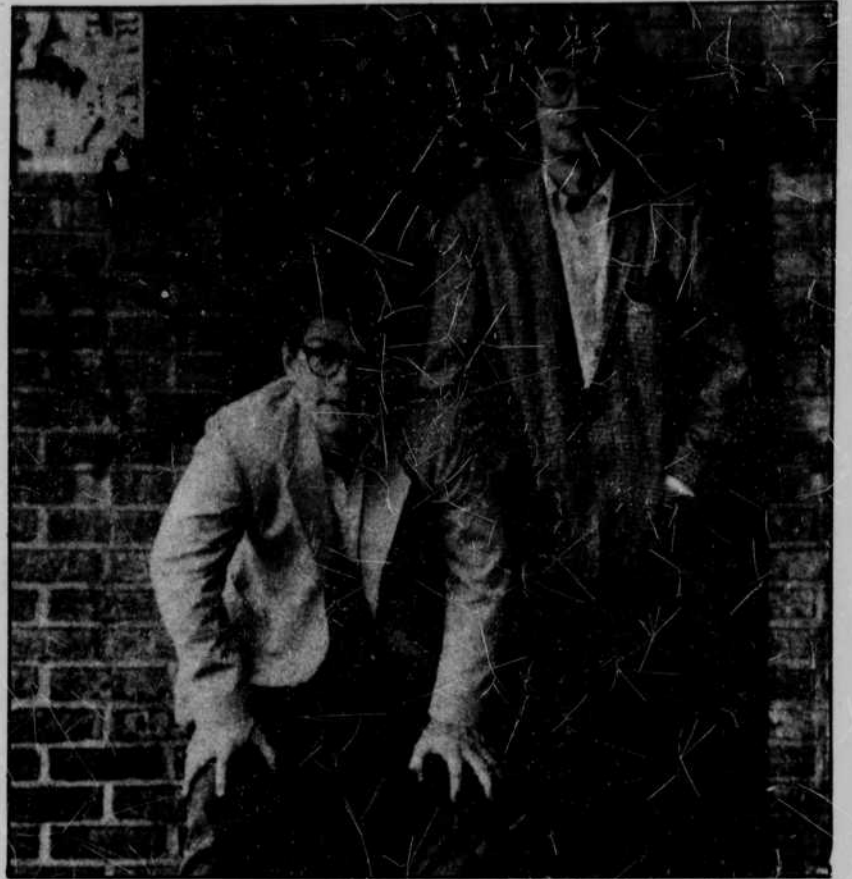
After that season, Franken and Davis went back to writing and working on outside projects. Lately, the two have been senior writers for "Saturday Night Live." Davis performs occasionally, and Franken has been on camera more frequently, doing bits like the Satellite Guy (a human satellite news-gathering unit covering the presidential campaign).

They have just completed writing a TV movie for SCTV and "Little Shop of Horrors" star Rick Moranis.

"It's like a two-hour 'Nightline'-type thing," Franken said. "It involves Rick as a live hostage reporter in Central America."


Franken and Davis also were planning to write a movie this summer, but the Writers Guild strike ended negotiations.

Davis, 32, is single. Franken, 33, is married and has a daughter, Thomasin (named after his partner). Both writers are currently on strike.



Courtesy Brian Winthrop International

Franken and Davis



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