

diversions

diversions

FRANKEN

AND

DAVIS



Andy Manhart and John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

1980-89: The Al Franken Decade

By Tom Lauder
Senior Editor

Most of us were wee lads and lassies when Al Franken announced on "Saturday Night Live" the start of the Al Franken decade (as a counter to the selfishness of the "me" decade). So what does he, Al Franken, think about how his decade is turning out?

"Saturday Night Live" writing team Franken and Davis will appear at the Nebraska Union on April 18. See related story on 11.

On college crowds: "College crowds are great. And I like going out to places like Lincoln because it's better than doing colleges in New York. Colleges in New York, they can go see pretty much anything anyway. (Lincoln audiences) don't get to see things like us much. People in New York are jaded."

On the stand-up comedy scene today: "There's actually an incredible number of stand-ups who are adequate. I mean, they can do a really good 20 minutes. It's astounding how many of these there are compared to when I was starting. When I was starting you could count the number of people who can go in clubs and do 20 minutes and be good on two hands. And now, it's like hundreds of them. Because of all these clubs."

"There's a lot of good people. I think they tend to bump into each other all the time — see each other. There's a 'club' style and that some people fall into being good in clubs and not being able to verge from it."

On television: "When I was a kid I did watch sitcoms all the time. I was one of these kids who watched TV a lot. But now I don't watch anything but news and information and sports. That's just about all I watch. I have a hard time watching sitcoms. I just can't. I can recognize when they're good and stuff, but I just can't sit still for them."

On his partner Tom Davis: "It's good that we spend time apart. Because if we have to spend too much time together, we'd drive each other crazy."

"But we've been best friends for a real long time. We're very different and very much the same."

"I think he's really funny."

On the original cast of "Saturday Night Live": Danny's (Aykroyd) the guy I'm closest to of the cast. I see Chevy (Chase) every once in a while. I see Gilda (Radner). I see Laraine (Newman) probably more frequently than anyone but Danny. John (Belushi) I haven't seen in a while. But him I would see. Billy (Murray) I see every once in a while but not that frequently. Danny's the guy, when he's in town, I see him. When I go to L.A., I see him. And I work with him here and there."

On writing comedy: "It's a wonderful feeling coming up with stuff. And it's a wonderful feeling laughing and working with people when people come up with stuff. That's why I like being a comedy writer. I love it."

"My craft level, I think, has improved. There's hunger, and hopefully you get better."

On pulling off a great sketch: "There's nothing I like better than 'scoring.' We did a piece this year — the Republican Debate. It'll probably be on a week from Saturday. But it was the hottest piece of the year. Danny (Aykroyd) was in it. He played Dole. It was just one of these things that worked in every gear."

"It transcended just being a good, solid, funny sketch. It was just one of these things that got airborne. It was really exciting. And the feeling I had after that was the best feeling. Just exhilarating. You can't explain it. It's like winning a national championship."

On the present "Saturday Night Live": "I thought this year, it felt like we were beginning to do it. I felt like the continuity of the people there, plus we got some new blood this year in writing, and that made it feel like we were going to be able to put on some good shows."

On the presidential campaign: "This year I sort of asked Lorne (Michaels) before the show, 'I'd like to cover the elections this year.' So I've been doing that. I started doing the Satellite Guy . . . to cover the elections for Update. In doing the Satellite Guy, I went to Iowa for one of those debates."

"So I started following the campaign real close. And I've always been caught up in them anyway."

On super-stardom: "You notice I'm not on the Oscars tonight."



Photo by Edie Baskin courtesy of Barry Secunda Associates

Al Franken (right) and Tom Davis stand next to a box of Placenta Helper. The Placenta Helper sketch, written in the mid-'70s by Franken and Davis for "Saturday Night Live," was censored.