

JENNIFER ERNISSE

SNL boasts comedy's best, worst

Comedy is a big part of our lives. Humor is the one thing that can unite us all in the face of adversity. It is a commonality we all share as humans. We use jokes in all types of settings; at the beginning of a speech to loosen up the crowd, in the middle of a jam-packed elevator or in many of life's most embarrassing moments.

We use humor as social and political commentary. But, most of all, we use humor to alleviate stress. Laughter is healthy.

So it is not surprising to me that in the openly dysfunctional society that we are all apart, humor is big business. Is it just me, or have you noticed about a billion new, high profile comedy shows popping up all over cable TV? In our desperation and depression, we look for comedy to be a universal language or common thread that leaves no one out.

Comedy is a science to me. I use it in my column, in the fiction stories I write, in my job and in everyday situations. I think most serious issues come across better if they are entrenched in humor and sarcasm. But being the comedy fanatic I am, I can't really pass up the opportunity to comment on what is thought to be the greatest assembly of today's comedians — the cast of "Saturday Night Live."

Although my view takes a critical stance, SNL has come far in the last five years. Case in point: "Wayne's World," which grossed more than \$100 million at the box office last year and was developed from just one of the popular 3-7 minute skits that make up an 1 1/2 hour show every Saturday night.

SNL has a great legacy behind it: Chevy Chase, Dan Akroyd, Gilda Radner, Steve Martin, Jane Curtain, Eddie Murphy and even a Wayans before his brother got a deal with Fox. And the list goes on.

It used to be that SNL was seemingly a stepping stone to super stardom in television and the big screen. Maybe, with "Wayne's World," Lorne Michaels and his crew will establish their monopoly on the comedy world once again. But with the recent failures of Martin Short and Dennis Miller, I wouldn't count on it.

Here's my run down of the best and worst core skits of SNL and their creators:

- I used to really like the nauseating sorority skits lead by, most notably, Melanie Hutsle. Maybe I laughed because they were parodying not only the entire greek system but its mentality, which I found to be semi-accurate.

- But it was probably because I was a Tri Delt and, damn it, I never knew that many Tri Delt clothes existed or that someone else besides me had actually thought of answering the phone with an inspired "Delta Delta Delta, may I help ya, help ya, help ya?"

- Poor Chris Farley. I think this is such a waste of some decent talent, but it seems as though the SNL conscience wants to go for the easy laugh about the fat, dumb guy. I hate "The Chris Farley Show;" the bit moves so slow.

- In a way I feel sorry for Kevin Nealon. It's hard to follow in the footsteps of Dennis Miller, who was only behind Johnny Carson in quick-witted comebacks and Chevy Chase, deadpan extraordinaire.

- My two favorite "new recruits" are Melanie Hutsle and Adam Sandler.

Hutsle as Jan Brady is so perfect that the "Bradys" are a ripe target in lieu of the Dan Quayle aftermath of accusing TV shows of mocking family values.

Sandler's greatest contribution is "Cajun Man." Sandler, in his deep Creole accent, could make getting a UNL parking ticket hilarious.

The greatest thing about these two is that they know the limitations of their characters and how much time they should be the focus of the skit. It is never overdrawn and overused and therefore, funny. The supply is little and my demand to see them keeps going up.

- I can't say enough about Dana Carvey. His performance at the MTV awards sucked, but so did every one else's. One glitch is excusable.

No one touches him. His impression of George Bush is so good that every time I see Bush, I see Carvey in my head and wish Carvey's Bush was our president instead of the real thing.

- Everyone knows The Simpsons would be nowhere without the booming voice of Phil Hartman. Neither would SNL, and Hartman is the perfect sidekick and foil. Carvey's Carson is not as good without Hartman's Ed McMahon.

- I saved the best for last — Pat! Our androgenous friend mimics life in such a realistic fashion that I have noticed more Pats walking around on the street, eating in the restaurant I work at, living life as he/she/it. No skit is more dependable, more laughable and more true. If I didn't know Julia Sweeney was the face behind the amorphous body and incessant whining, I would still be guessing what sex was under that costume.

Ernisse is a senior pre-med major and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

SAM KEPFIELD

Clinton's past proves shiftiness

Anyone following the presidential campaign with even a remote interest has to sense something deep inside. Bill Clinton is the most flawed candidate that the Democratic party has offered up in recent memory.

George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis had their problems, but they were confined to their public lives. Their policies either were tried and failed or struck Americans as likely to do so.

Bill Clinton, on the other hand, has shortcomings not just with his policies, but with his non-public persona as well. It's a symbol of the hysteria whipped up by the media about how awful things are in the United States that this man could get within a mile of the nomination, much less the presidency.

A disturbing pattern has emerged, from Gennifer Flowers to the draft and now to Clinton's journey to Moscow in 1969 and his anti-war activities.

The charges are aired. Clinton denies them.

More evidence surfaces, contradicting the denial. Clinton hedges, hems and haws, admitting they're true but putting his own little gloss on it. Still more evidence surfaces, showing anyone with a functioning higher brain that the man is flat-out lying.

And then Clinton gets this sad, insufferably sanctimonious look on his face, and tells America how sad it is that the Republicans have to stoop to this to win an election, when they should be talking about change — that already-overused buzz word of 1992. And the media lapdogs play into Clinton's hands.

Let's take a look at the facts in this latest episode in Bill and Al's Excellent Adventure.

Clinton went to Moscow in the second year of his Rhodes Scholarship for 40 days in the winter of 1969-

70. He never went to classes and never got his degree.

A search for Clinton's passport records, requested by Newsweek magazine, showed that the data from that period is missing. The FBI is investigating.

There's nothing wrong, I suppose, with traveling to Moscow at the height of the Cold War. The problem I have is not with Clinton's actions in 1969, but his explanations of them in 1992.

Asked about the charges on "Larry King Live," Clinton nervously laughed it off, and made the incredible claim that in 1969, "there was a warming of relations between our two countries."

It's a flat-out lie. The Soviets were giving aid to North Vietnam, shooting down our jets and enslaving their own people at the time. Nixon didn't make it to Moscow until 1972, to inaugurate detente. Warming, indeed.

There's something here yet to come out. Anyone who looked in Clinton's eyes when he made those denials could sense the impending sense of fear, of entrapment, that the hounds were drawing ever closer.

Moreover, Clinton has lied about his antiwar protest activities while at Oxford and in the United States. Clinton claimed in a 1978 interview with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette that he only attended two protest marches, as an onlooker. Maybe it was a great way to meet women — who knows?

Now, though, a pro-Clinton book demolishes his alibi. He not only attended and participated, but also helped organize protests. Clinton took a leading role in helping form the Moratorium Committee, the premier anti-American protest group, which held a demonstration in Washington in November 1969. This from Robert Levin's "Bill Clinton: The Inside Story," quoting Moratorium founder David Mixner.

While at Oxford, Clinton organized a March of Death on the U.S. Embassy. And, according to Father Richard McSorley, another Clinton

ally, he carried a coffin to the embassy compound, and negotiated with police to allow it inside. This from "Peace Eyes," McSorley's 1978 book.

McSorley also figures in a trip Clinton took to Oslo. Clinton's take is that he ran into McSorley by accident at the train station and tagged along.

McSorley claimed in his book that Clinton planned the trip ahead of time and met with conscientious objectors and members of the World Peace Council. The group was declared in 1980 by the Senate Intelligence Committee to be a KGB front.

Last week McSorley said of Clinton: "He'd be foolish to tell the truth about what he did, now that he's running for President." Several days later, McSorley endorsed Clinton's version of events, no doubt after frantic calls from Little Rock, Ark. Unbelievable.

Surveying this train of half-truths and outright lies, I am amazed that this man has gotten away with it all. As the stories of his youthful indiscretions broke, for the first time I felt fear for the consequences to my country if this man is elected president.

And I am stunned that so many people want to ignore it, say: "That's history, it doesn't matter." Funny — history did matter when it was Clarence Thomas or Robert Bork.

Well, it does matter, people, and you had better realize it. It's not about questioning patriotism, it's about judgment, about character, about truthfulness.

Let's not get so carried away with change and the misty depths of a promised future that may or may not come to pass. People don't live in a vacuum in the present — they are formed by their pasts. And that is why Bill Clinton's past, and his present interpretations of it, disqualify his claims for the presidency.

Kepfield is graduate student in history and an alumnus of the UNL College of Law and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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