

The Weekend in Preview

The following is a brief guide to weekend events. Please call venues for more information.

CONCERTS:

Duffy's, 1412 O. St.
Sunday: Marlee MacLeod with Melee and Thomas Irvin

Duggan's Pub, 440 S. 11th St.
Friday: Owen Mutch and the Debtors
Saturday: Flyin' Blind with Skinny Logan

Knickerbockers, 901 O St.
Friday: 6 to 9 p.m. Catch 22, 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. Spelling Tuesday Complete 180°
Saturday: Meelee and Picknee

Mo Java Cafe, Suite D, 2649 N. 48th St.
Friday: 8 to 10 p.m. Mark Lowe

The Royal Grove, 340 W. Cornhusker Hwy.
Friday and Saturday: GesWerk

Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St.
Friday and Saturday: Baby Jason and the Spankers

THEATER:

Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater, 12th and R streets
All weekend: "Slam"

Museum of Nebraska History, 15th and P streets
Sunday: "Easter Parade" starring Fred Astaire and Judy Garland

Lied Center for Performing Arts, 12th and R streets
All weekend: "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum"

Lincoln Community Playhouse, 2500 S. 56th St.
All weekend: "Birth Mark"

Star City Dinner Theatre, 803 Q St.
All weekend: "Closer Than Ever"

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Studio Theatre, Temple Building, 12th and R streets
All weekend: "Childe Byron"

GALLERIES:

Burkholder Project, 719 P St.
Friday and Saturday: "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues," "Places in Europe"

Gallery 9, 124 S. Ninth St.
All weekend: "Fruits of Passion"

Haydon Gallery, 335 N. Eighth St., Suite A
Friday and Saturday: "Jazz Photographers"

Joslyn Art Museum, 2200 Dodge St., Omaha
All weekend: "Dali's Mustache: A Photographic Interview by Salvador Dali and Philippe Halsman"

Noyes Art Gallery, 119 S. Ninth St.
Friday and Saturday: recent works by Amy Sadle, Carol Sexton, Steve Settles, John Gillett, Olive Bishop, Bonnie Goochey

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, 12th and R streets
All weekend: "Icons of Public Memory: Photographs from the College of Journalism"



LINCOLN'S DARRIN MEYER performs his comedy routine at Duffy's Monday night. Meyer started his comedy career at Duffy's about six years ago.

Laughing at the Locals

Nebraska spawns own comic talent

By JOSH KRAUTER
Staff writer

Jim Kuddes saunters to the microphone. He's dressed in black from head to toe. A large, silver belt buckle reflects off the stage lights. He's puffing a cigar.

One expects him to belt out "Folsom Prison Blues" or "Ring of Fire." Instead, this bastard child of Johnny Cash and Robin Williams unleashes a string of jokes about politics, sex and the photographer taking his picture.

Kuddes, who first started comedy five years ago, is now the first comedian on stage for Duffy's Comedy



ARLO STONE OF OMAHA works the crowd Monday night at Duffy's Comedy Night. Stone said he started in Omaha and is now working as a comedian in Los Angeles.

Night, which takes place every other Monday around 10 p.m.

"I had been going out to Duffy's with friends, and I was in the audience for three years before I got on stage," he says.

Comedy is just a hobby for Kuddes, albeit a passionate one.

"I do comedy more as sanity maintenance," he

says. "It's a release."

That release may be needed from his day job. Kuddes is a self-described headhunter. He's an executive recruiter for nationwide companies, such as Best Buy and Kmart.

Kuddes is not the only career man in town moonlighting as a comic. Mark Patton, a special-education teacher at Lincoln Public Schools, has been gracing comedy stages off and on for the past 15 years.

"It's more of a sideline," Patton says. "I'm not really interested in world tours or movie roles, but if something came along, I would explore it."

Patton's stage demeanor is almost the exact opposite of Kuddes' swaggering confidence. He is self-deprecating and makes fun of his own jokes when they bomb. His main target is himself and his sexual failures. Patton's casual street clothes and slight slouch in posture paint him as the "Everyloser" fans of comedy know so well.

The loser disappears in conversation with Patton. He comes across as a genuine professional who can shrug off not-so-hot shows because he believes in his ability. His background in local drama led to an invitation to try comedy in a special production in the Haymarket. He's been hooked ever since.

The music man

A guitar was Darrin Swanson's ticket into comedy. When he first attended college, he would play his acoustic guitar at parties. His song parodies got big laughs, and Swanson, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln junior broadcasting major at the time, got bit by the comedy bug.

He quit school but stayed with comedy. Now back at UNL, the non-traditional student has become a regular on the Duffy's stage.

"I've always used humor when I meet people, so I just decided to try comedy."

While his music act distinguishes him from the other comics, he manages to combine Kuddes' confidence with Patton's average guy persona. Swanson's act portrays him as a much more foul-mouthed and less nerdy "Weird Al" Yankovic. His parodies include odes to anal sex and hemorrhoids sung to the tune of the Kinks' "Lola" and Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire," respectively.

"For me, (comedy) is just to keep the creative process fresh," he says. "I'm married. I want to finish school and do sports broadcasting. I do comedy on the side."

Not quitting their day jobs

Keeping comedy a hobby and not a career is a pri-

"I do comedy more as sanity maintenance."

Jim Keddus

ority for all three comics. They say they are satisfied with their day jobs and have no plans to change their lifestyles. They express interest in pursuing something if it dropped in their laps, but say they are happy where they are now.

However, the comics still have to deal with the pitfalls of the profession, including hecklers, bad venues and crowds who aren't in tune with the material.

"I was doing a bit about dating divorced women with kids," Kuddes says. "This guy was drinking heavily, and he somehow thought I was involved with his ex-wife. He started for the stage, and a couple of bartenders and comics had to restrain him."

Kuddes says his worst job was playing five-minute sets between dancers at The Night Before club in downtown Lincoln. The crowd was there to see the strip-tease acts, and a comedian was not the entertainment they wanted.

Swanson was once booked to play a country club in York, despite doing song parodies for audiences of a younger generation. He was assured the crowd would love his material but when he arrived, the youngest person in the room was 50.

"I turned into Rich Little," he says. "I'm terrible at impressions, but I was doing John Wayne just to get them to laugh."

Getting crowds to laugh is sometimes hard work, especially if a comic's act is relatively gimmick-free. Patton's simple stage show has been put to the test by competition from some wilder, hard-to-follow acts.

"I've seen a guy smoke a tampon. I've seen a guy put electrodes to his groin," he says. "One guy put vise grips on his genitalia at Noodles in Omaha."

All three comics have had to deal with hecklers,

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