

Local comedians hone their craft while observing pros at work

Comedy

By [Name]

followed by a headliner. Last month's lineup included Jimmy Brogan, a former writer and talent coordinator for "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno."

On Wednesday, Dan Barton of El television's "Talk Soup" and "An Evening at the Improv" will perform. On Aug. 15, Cowboy Ricky Betts will bring his Western Comedy to San Marcos. Scaduto will be the master of ceremonies.

Kyle Smith, 21, also got his start last year at the Comedy Co-op, a venue where comedians younger than 21 can get experience outside a bar setting.

To increase their chances of landing a gig with no name recognition, Smith and fellow Chicken Pie regulars Kaszas and Stuart Swanson formed the Boy Band of Comedy.

"It was a bunch of upstart young comedians," Kaszas explained. "We had a really hard time getting gigs, ... so we decided to band together. It's been really paying off for us."

Smith recently performed his 100th show. He's appeared at places such as the La Jolla Comedy Store and the Ice House Comedy Club in Pasadena. His influences range from Demetri Martin and Daniel Tosh to Robin Williams. To mix up his routine, Smith adds guitar.

"My closing bit is a pseudo-song called, 'Some Jokes are Funnier When You Tell Them to Music,'" he said.

Smith offered an example of a bit best accompanied by guitar strumming: "I saw a woman playing the accordion the other day, and I thought to myself, 'Wow, the only thing more attractive than a woman playing an accordion is a woman doing anything else.'"

Localized jokes

Kaszas said he finds comic mileage in everyday life, such as family and relationship problems.

"I don't have a limit to how personal I get," Kaszas said. "Audiences can tell if you're pulling one over on them, but if you're being honest they relate to that. In the beginning, I was really nervous on stage, but I wasn't being myself. I was trying to imitate other comedians I had seen on TV."

A graduate of San Marcos High, Smith said peppering his routine with local references gives him a leg up on his competition.

He has yet to mention any former teachers in his routine.

"I don't have any jokes about my old teachers, so I'd be happy if they came out," Smith said, with a laugh.

Schoolteachers and parents alike might appreciate the venue's policy of discouraging profanity.

"We caution the comics about not dropping too many F-bombs," Pearl said. "We like to call it 'no foul humor' because we are a chicken place."

Military laughs

Oceanside resident Ibo Brewer began honing his comedy routine while serving in the Marines.

Three years ago, on the advice of comedian Vicki Barbolak, he took a chance and tried out at the La Jolla Comedy Store.

His first joke was about the white lies people tell when they coo over ugly babies.

Though his first material was improvised, Brewer has since written his own show, during which he assumes the character of "Dirty Dave," a composite based on exchanges between the Southern blacks and the whites he served with in the military.

The cultural disconnect he observed fuels the comedy. "I just thought they were a hilarious group of people — the people from corporate world ... and the people from the 'Dirty South,'" said Brewer, 27.

In an episode Brewer did for ComedyTime.tv, a man advised his co-worker to walk over and "holla" at an attractive woman (meaning to express his romantic interest).



"I always chat with the audience at the end. ... I stand at the door as they're going out, and a lot of them have said, 'You're funny, but I actually learned something.'"

Naveed Mahbub, comedian

Instead, the man walked over and started screaming at the woman.

"He gets it all twisted in his head, and he goes over and yells at her and she maces him," Brewer said. "In my experience, I find it's always funny when somebody gets maced."

While macing the socially inept might have its appeal, Naveed Mahbub prefers a more socially conscious brand of humor, touching on everything from globalization to the conflict in the Middle East. The Rancho Dehesitas resident opens the show Wednesday night.

International humor

A native of Bangladesh, Mahbub got his start telling jokes in Bengali to family and friends. He decided to try his hand at comedy in English after coming to the United States to attend the University of Michigan.

"I found out I was able to translate a lot of humor into English ... among my college friends or my co-workers," Mahbub said. "I found I

actually had some advantage because I'm new to this culture and I was seeing America from a different angle."

Mahbub took an eight-week comedy course with Sandy Shore (sister of comedian Pauly Shore) at the Comedy Club in La Jolla.

"At the end of the eight weeks, I had to do a showcase in front of a live audience,

which I did, and I sucked, but ... I've been going to open mikes and trying to improve myself."

The practice has paid off. Mahbub nabbed the Best Male Comic title at the Play Vegas Stage at this year's Las Vegas Comedy Festival.

Through the use of observational self-defensive humor, Mahbub hopes to expose

people to a different side of issues they might not otherwise consider, such as outsourcing, arranged marriages and his Muslim faith.

"I start by saying, 'I'm here as a comedian because comedy is now being outsourced,' and it gets me a laugh. Then I say, 'Guess what? I have a University of Michigan engineering degree and my job as

an engineer just got outsourced out to India.' ... There is actually some truth in there, because I'm working with this company and everything is in Southeast Asia. I'm the sole person here in the U.S., but I'm seeing a shift of responsibility away from me."

Mahbub said he also hopes to debunk stereotypes about Muslims.

"I always chat with the audience at the end," he said. "I stand at the door as they're going out, and a lot of them have said, 'You're funny, but I actually learned something.'"

Keeping hecklers at bay

Naturally, hecklers never seem to learn. Smith said his approach is to ignore them.

"I'm not as much of a crowd worker," Smith said. "Zoltan is, like, the king. He's good at getting back in their face."

Smith said he writes his sets so that gaps are minimized, leaving little room for deriding shouts.

"If you can make (the audience) laugh hard enough, then the heckler's just going to feel stupid and shut up on his own," Smith said. "A heckler expects me to make fun of them and stop the whole show and pay attention to them, but if I defy that expectation and just ignore them, they will usually just shut up because they aren't getting the attention they were expecting."

Brewer takes a somewhat less psychological approach.

"I'm a large African-American man, so nobody heckles me," he said. "I tell them, 'Just because you're drunk doesn't mean you got bigger.' ... It's all in good fun."

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