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Comedy



Comedy Inc.'s Roman Danylo looks forward to performing his unique mix of standup and improv jam in a theatre setting, without scantily clad dancers.

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Roman Danylo serves jokes with jam

By Guy MacPherson

Like most working comics, Roman Danylo has had his fair share of gigs from hell. He's had a hex put on him by a drunken club patron, he's been spotted by a heating light on a buffet, and had to perform as a follow-up to scantily clad dancers.

"It was an all-guy audience. As soon as the Extreme Bikini Dance Team was done, so was the audience. They had no interest in me," he said over drinks at the Players Chophouse in Vancouver. "I've been fascinated for years with trying to create that ideal environment which we get so infrequently as comics, which is in a theatre and they're there to watch a comedy show."

Now, with a bit of fame behind him thanks to five seasons as the star of CTV's sketch series Comedy Inc., Danylo is getting his wish—for 11 nights, anyway—with an almost cross-country tour. It comes to North Van's Capilano Arts Theatre on Friday (July 4) and the Chilliwack Arts Centre the next night.

The 38-year-old triple threat will perform standup, do some characters from Comedy Inc., and follow that up with an improv set. Then the evening will end with, as producer-costar Diana Frances says, "a big jam-a-rama fuck-around". In layman's terms, that's an improv jam, where improvisers, be they professionals or rank amateurs, are invited on-stage to join in the fun. (Danylo encourages anyone interested to contact him via his Web site, www.romandanylo.com/.)

"We really like the idea of giving back to the younger generation of improvisers because, you know, we're getting up there and who knows how much longer we'll be able to do arms scenes," says the creaky 38-year-old Frances, referring to a standard bit that finds one performer standing behind the other and putting his or her arms through the other person's.

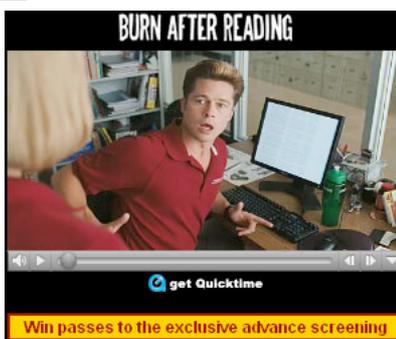
Danylo concurs: "Inviting the next generation is good business development because they'll be the ones hiring in about 10 years. They'll be making all the decisions, so we want to befriend them."

But seriously, Danylo and Frances know how important the experience of performing is at any level, but especially when you're starting out.

"If I had an opportunity like this when I was in high school and was interested in improv, I could have saved myself about seven years of waitressing at Earls," says Frances. "Because it took me about that long on my own to figure out what I wanted to do with my life and to get to a point where I could actually do it."

At his high school, the precocious Danylo was performing a weekly variety-type show, much like he's doing now, 20 years later. What sets this experience apart for kids is that the audience won't be made up of parents and teachers and friends only.

"The first time you get a laugh in front of a really full, regular audience it's the best feeling in the world," he says. "When I was younger starting out, you dream about that. You go to sleep at night and relive the thing you said that got a laugh. Seriously, you'll stay up at night reliving that joke. That's the best feeling in the world. That's where you



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“We’re dealing out some improv crack to these kids. We want to get them hooked,” says Frances.

Of course, with amateurs sharing the stage, there’s always the remote possibility it all ends in disaster. Danylo, who says he loves chaos, wouldn’t mind. “Mistakes are hilarious,” he says. Adds Frances: “There might be some crashing and burning, but it’ll be damn fun.”

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