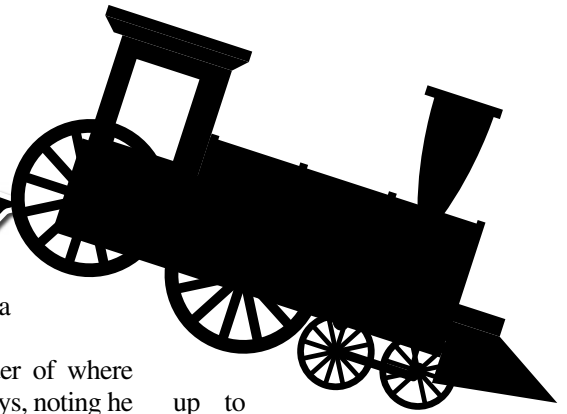


ARTS & EVENTS

Trainwreck Comedy



By Barb Brouwer
OBSERVER STAFF

Sometimes life is like a train wreck.

And whether you're blue or in the pink, laughter is still the best way to stay, or get back on, the rails.

Just ask Rob Balsdon and Garrett Clark, two Kelowna funny men who will yuk it up in Salmon Arm this Friday to benefit the SilverBacks Atom A Development team.

When asked why we need comics, Balsdon laughs and points out that it's just too easy to focus on the negative, whether problems are of a personal or more global nature.

"You need to shut your brain off sometimes and laugh," he says. "It's an escape from reality, a chance to enjoy, let loose, forget your problems, maybe even laugh at them once in a while."

The ability to make people laugh is a craft Balsdon has been practising for many years.

Originally from Ontario, the budding comic took home report cards that said his "behaviour sometimes distracts others."

"They didn't say that I was distracted, they said that they (other students) can't remain focused," he says. "I knew then I'd make money at that one day."

In radio for six years, Balsdon prefers a live show, where he can feed off the energy of the audience and know immediately if his material is working or not.

While the show is rated adult, Balsdon says it's mostly because the subject matter is familiar to adults.

"We're basically saying we're going to be talking about subjects that adults relate to and under adults can't," he says. "And let's face it, if comedy isn't relatable, it's not funny."

From life's guilty pleasures like

television and video games, to sports, school and relationships, it's fine fodder for laughter.

Balsdon says that while he now has his own voice, he was inspired by Bill Hicks, a man he describes as the kind of comic who said what he was thinking.

"As much as he made a joke, he made a point; you learned from him as much as laughed at him," he says.

Balsdon has shared the stage with some of the biggest names in Canadian comedy and he was thrilled to work with one of his idols when he opened for film star and SNL alum Norm MacDonald.

How Balsdon met and became partners in comedy and best friends with Garrett Clark was surely ordained by fate.

Both men spent many of their

school years in Newmarket, Ont. Both performed in the same Toronto comedy venues over the same five-year period – all without meeting.

For different reasons, both comics moved to Kelowna, where they appeared at Yuk Yuks Comedy Club. They became best friends and have since done shows all over the country.

The Comedy Train Wreck grew out of those open-mic days.

"To be honest, it was a train wreck most of the time," Balsdon laughs. "It was never a question of if it would fall off the tracks, it was a question of when."

Grateful for those days and the ones that have evolved over his professional career, Balsdon says he would now prefer to perform in

a show like Friday's benefit rather than a dingy night club.

"But it's a reminder of where we came from," he says, noting he has definitely earned his comedy stripes. "I stay true to my roots and I don't ever want to forget those rough nights in bars where there were more comics than audience members."

Clark, however, is still happy to perform in clubs, enjoying a wide variety of venues.

Like Balsdon, Clark began his comedy career early on and, got similar reports in school.

"I made a lot of noises and was good at impressions," he says. "But the teachers eventually warmed

up to me."

His inspiration came pretty much from the cradle, in a home where laughter reigned.

"It was very important to laugh; we watched comedies and my dad used to write comedy," he says. "It was very much a part of our culture – laugh, laugh, laugh."

Being Canadian born, but Australian raised, Clark shares cross-cultural content – imagine a Vegemite-eating hockey fan.

Considered to be one of Canada's fastest rising comedic stars, he is often on the road and in the air, touring from Hawaii to Halifax, and from Sydney to St John's.

He has shared the stage with some of the biggest names in comedy, including Jamie Kennedy and Russell Peters.

His answer to why the world needs comics?

"You'll live longer – it's so important to let go and forget all the %\$#@ that's in the world," he says, urging people to support the show and the young hockey players. "We're extremely talented, extremely good looking and we have lots of facial hair – and who doesn't like that?"

Balsdon and Clark will perform on their own in the Nov. 16 show that begins at 8:30 p.m. at the SASCU Rec Centre.

Tickets are \$15 and are available at Hideaway Liquor Store and at the door.



Yuk, yuk: Comedians Garrett Clark and Rob Balsdon laugh it up at the rec centre Friday.

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