

## YOU GET THAT LAUGH ...

WANDA SYKES HAS CONQUERED ALL OF SHOW BIZ, BUT STAND-UP, SHE JUST CAN'T QUIT YOU

BY ROBERT FAIRES

Is there anything Wanda Sykes hasn't done? Over the past decade, there's scarcely a corner of the entertainment business that hasn't rung with the sound of her inimitable voice – that proud, sharp, steam whistle of a voice that never met a power it couldn't blast some truth to. She's done it famously in the sitcoms *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, and her own series *Wanda at Large*; in feature films such as *Evan Almighty* and *My Super Ex-Girlfriend*; in the animated films *Over the Hedge*, *Barney*, and *Ice Age 4: Continental Drift*; in her short-lived entry in late-night TV talk, *The Wanda Sykes Show*; at the 2009 White House Correspondents' Association dinner; and in her book, the title of which captures this outspoken comedian's spirit to a T: *Yeah, I Said It*. Considering that she's even taken a turn at musical theatre – as Miss Hannigan in *Annie*, no less! – it seems there's no limit to what this writer and comedian can do.

And yet, when she appears in Austin this week as the final headliner in the Moontower Comedy & Oddity Festival, the multi-talented Sykes will be doing just what she did at the start of her career more than 20 years ago: stand-up. "I love it," she says, and you can hear through the phone line a warmth and enthusiasm that stretches back years. "I love it. And it's so funny, traveling to the show or in the hotel and going, 'Oh boy, showtime,' and all of that. I go, 'Why in the hell am I still doing

this? There are so many people who want me to come back to TV, I could easily just get cast in this part.' And I think about it and go: 'What am I doin'? What am I doin'?' And as soon as I get onstage, it all makes sense, like, 'Yeah-yeah-yeah, that's right. This is why I do this.' You get that laugh, and there's nothing like it. I've written for other people, and it's a good feeling hearing them deliver a joke that you wrote and hearing them get a laugh, but there's nothing like getting it yourself."



That rush from an audience's laughter was something Sykes discovered when she took a stab at stand-up when a post-college job at the National Security Agency in Washington, D.C., proved unsatisfying. (She was a contracting specialist. Can you blame her?) Of course, the Wanda Sykes at the mic then wasn't the outspoken figure you've seen slaying audiences by the thousands in the HBO specials *Sick and Tired* and *Im'a Be Me*. Early on, Sykes says, she was doing more of an impersonation of what she thought a stand-up comic was, with observational humor that was safe and generic. A comic can't find her voice, she says, "until you figure out how you feel about something and get your point of view. And that takes confidence and maturity and just being comfortable onstage to get to that place. At first you're all about, 'Here's a funny joke,' and regardless of whether that joke means anything to you personally, you go, 'That's a funny joke,' and you do the joke. But it's not until [the jokes] get personal, I think, where people go, 'I want to hear what she has to say on this.'"

For Sykes, that shift occurred when she went through a divorce. "It was when I was getting out of a marriage," she says.

"Because you're in this place that's somewhat liberating but also painful. It's raw. I think that's when I said 'what the hell' and opened up a little more." As her onstage personality evolved, so did Sykes' attitude toward the audience. That young comic's need to get the audience on her side was replaced by a desire to give the audience their money's worth.

"You know, when you first start out, if you're just a comic on a show, you can have that attitude of 'I have to win these people over,' but now, at the level where I am, it's 'I don't want to disappoint these people.' Because they're there to see you. You have them already. They like what you're doing. They're your audience. So I'm at the place where I just want to give them a good show. It's more like, 'Oh boy, they have these expectations now.' I can't – I don't want to say 'play around,' but you don't have as much wiggle room when they're there to see you."

Feeling that weight of responsibility toward the audience might push some comics to stick with their tried-and-true material, but not Sykes. "Pretty much every show, it's something new," she insists. "The show I'm doing now, I would say maybe 80 percent is new. Very little from *Im'a Be Me*, my last special. And if I do bring up something from that special, it's kinda refreshed. Like people love the bit where I talk about Esther, my fat roll. But there's a new story with Esther, what she's up to now, so even that's fresh. I like trying out new stuff. I can't keep doing the same thing over and over again. It would just drive me nuts. It really would. [laughs] So I have to keep it fresh."

In between stand-up gigs, Sykes will no doubt continue to be heard on television, film, and whatever other media she has a mind to. (Her latest forum of choice is Twitter, where she's lately served up some choice political jabs at Mitt Romney and those secret service agents in Colombia, among others.) Is there anything she hasn't done?

"The only thing I have left to do is porn, and I think I missed that window," she says. "Especially now, with the kids, I can't go do porn."

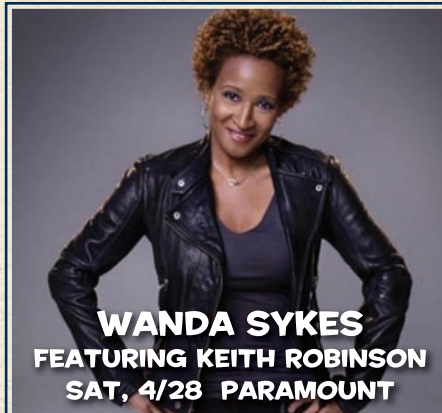
Never say never, Wanda.

Wanda Sykes appears Saturday, April 28, 10pm, at the Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress. For more information, visit [www.moontowercomedyfestival.com](http://www.moontowercomedyfestival.com).

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# WHERE HE GOT THAT PONY

## THE ORIGIN OF COMEDY ORIGINAL STEVEN WRIGHT

BY ROBERT FAIRES

If stand-up legend Steven Wright didn't exist, I'm not sure anyone could have invented him. His trademark one-liners – those surreal riffs on everyday expressions and experiences – come out of no comedy tradition the way jokes about politicians and mothers-in-law do. While they share some of the semantic playfulness of George Carlin and the philosophical bent of Woody Allen – two of Wright's heroes in the biz – they're more twisted and refined: Zen koans distilled into comments as precise and brief as a haiku – or better yet, a Henny Youngman punch line. And when he began serving them up in the late Seventies, stand-up hadn't seen a comic so deadpan since Jackie Vernon schlepped the Borscht Belt. Wright was an original, and he continues to be in the fourth decade of a career that has included the comedy recordings *I Have a Pony* (1985) and *I Still Have a Pony* (2007); the cable television specials *Wicker Chairs and Gravity* and *When the Leaves Blow Away*; the short films *The Appointments of Dennis Jennings* (which won an Oscar), and *One Soldier*; and the 23rd spot on Comedy Central's list of the 100 greatest stand-up comics. Prior to his appearance in the Moontower Comedy & Oddity Festival, Wright described his start in the business.

**Austin Chronicle:** I hear stories from time to time about the Ding Ho, which sounds like a really trippy place to get a start as a comic. Can you describe that a little?

**Steven Wright:** Well, there were two clubs in Boston in '79. There was the Comedy Connection in Boston, which was more of a traditional comedy club, and then there was this thing in Inman Square in Cambridge. The back of it was a Chinese restaurant, and the front was a stage. It was used for music earlier. It only seated like 100 or 80 people. You know, it was like a folk-music-type place with a big bar in it. One of the comedians, Barry Crimmins, I don't remember how it happened, but he went in there, and the next thing you know, the Chinese guy agreed to try comedy out in the front room. And it had a lot of character, you know, half-Chinese restaurant, half-comedy club. Barry's running it. He never ran a place before. All the comedians are brand new, like maybe some of them had been doing it for two to three years, but most everyone else was just starting. So there was all this new, naive, young energy. It was like being on an island. We were detached. We had nothing to do with show business. There were no managers, no agents. So there was no one there to say, "You should do it more like this." Maybe we suggested things to each other, but there was no one saying what would help you overall. We were just on this island, learning how to be comedians. So all these distinct characters came out of there. Kevin Meaney. Bob Goldthwait. Paula Poundstone. Lenny Clarke. Denis Leary. Steve Sweeney. Barry Crimmins. Don Gavin. You didn't know it *then*, because sometimes when you're a younger person, you don't realize how special something is *while* it's happening. Thinking back on it like, seven or eight years later, one of the highlights of my life was that time. There's a movie about it called *When Stand-up Stood Out*. One of the comedians, Fran Solomita, he directs commercials and stuff now, he

made a documentary about what you just asked me. There's footage from then, there's interviews, people talking about that time.

**AC:** Was it hard for you to find the act as you're known for it now?

**SW:** No, but it just evolves. It just happens. All I did was try to sit down and write stuff that I thought was funny. That's all I thought about. You go onstage, and you don't know what you're doing. You're your own teacher – you're the student and the teacher at the same time. I did a lot of one-liners right from the beginning, but they weren't all [one-liners], and then, as time went on, I focused more and more on that, but it wasn't like I went, "Oh, I'm just gonna write these things." That's just what happened. And this is how I talk. Onstage, I was very nervous, so I had a blank face, and my monotone was more than it is [now]. So: I'm afraid, I talk in a monotone, I'm sayin' the one-liner jokes – the whole thing just mixed together as a nice combination thing, but nothing was thought out about it other than trying to write funny things. The way I talk, the fact that it meshed well with *what* I was saying was by accident.

**AC:** Did you have inspirations – people you thought were funny who helped you find your own sensibility?

**SW:** Yes! There was a radio show in Boston. I used to listen to the Boston Bruins when Bobby Orr was on the team in the Seventies, and one night I stumbled onto this radio show [where] this guy played two comedy albums every Sunday night. Two entire albums. He'd play a cut from one, a cut from the other – back and forth – until he played them [all]. And I started listening to that. I tuned in every Sunday. And I loved watching Johnny Carson. That's the main reason I wanted to do this. I loved Johnny Carson. I loved him. I loved when [he] talked to the guests. I loved the monologue. I loved the comedians that came out on that stage. So to answer your question: all these comedians on Johnny Carson, all these comedians on



this radio show. And my two favorite ones were George Carlin and Woody Allen. 'Cause George talked about just little things that everyone deals with but no one ever even discusses. Everyday things – you know, that really influenced me. George Carlin, he's the best. And Woody Allen had this comedy album. He had stories, long stories, but within the stories there were sometimes jokes within the stories, and those jokes influenced what I did. Wait, wait. George and Woody Allen are the best. Let me clarify.

**AC:** That AM/FM album of Carlin's was such a breakthrough piece. It felt like such a shift – not just for comedy but the culture overall.

**SW:** I never thought about it like that. I have to agree with you. That album ... I memorized that album. When I was in high school, I'd come home, put it on – I don't know why I memorized it, I just heard it so many times. When I was in college and had public speaking class, I did something from that album – I think it was the rules to the game show. I said: "This is from George Carlin" – I didn't try to pass it off as me – and I did a thing that I had memorized from high school. And

then the guy who went on after me read from the Bible. [laughs] But yes, that album, comedy-wise, it was a big move [for stand-up] – it was like how *Saturday Night Live* was a big move for sketch comedy. George was a big move [for stand-up]. And then Steve Martin. And Robert Klein. He was even before George, so he was involved in that move, too.

**AC:** I'm with you. I feel like *The Tonight Show* still doesn't get enough credit for how much attention Carson paid to comedy. As a kid in junior high and high school, the reason I'd tune in to *The Tonight Show* was to see George Carlin, Albert Brooks, Robert Klein, Steve Martin, David Steinberg, Steve Landesberg ...

**SW:** David Brenner.

**AC:** All those guys who were so new and fresh and doing really different stuff.

**SW:** All of those guys are in my main time of watching Johnny Carson, too. All brilliant. And none of them are anywhere near each other. In style, I mean.

**AC:** So what was it like for you actually getting on the show?

**SW:** It was amazing. It was surrealistic. 'Cause my fantasy was to be a comedian and [to] someday go on *The Tonight Show*. I had that in my head since I was like 15 years old, 17 years old, when I was watching it all the time and listening to that radio show. So there I am, I'm 26, and I'm *there*, and I'm backstage, and I got so nervous, I think I got numb. Like, I couldn't be any more nervous, so I had no nerves. And it was amazing. Still the highlight of my entire career is going on that show. You know how that show was perceived, the place it had in show business comedy – sort of go to the mountain, go and visit the king. And have him like you. Talk surrealistic: It's like a kid making believe he's in the World Series for years and years and years, and then he's up at bat in the World Series. That's what it was like.

**AC:** And you've had a tremendous time since then.

**SW:** Yeah. My fantasy was to go on there, and then maybe be in a movie, one movie. I never thought what would happen actually would – I never even thought about *after* that. But the fact that Peter Lassally, producer of *The Tonight Show*, saw me in the Ding Ho, [and] put me on there; and the fact that Johnny Carson liked me – everything completely changed. It was like a giant fork on the road of not only my comedy but my whole life. I'm so grateful to him. Both of them. ■

Steven Wright appears Saturday, April 28, 7:30pm, at the Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress. For more information, visit [www.moontowercomedyfestival.com](http://www.moontowercomedyfestival.com).

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## DANG ALOUD

### DANA GOULD LIKES HIDING THE PILL IN THE BANANA

BY STEVE BIRMINGHAM

"I'm happy to be part of anything with 'oddy' in the title," comedian/writer Dana Gould declares from his home in L.A. about his upcoming appearances at the Moontower Comedy & Oddity Festival. [Disclosure: I am in the employ of the Paramount Theatre as a house manager, serve as the festival's assistant artist relations manager, and helm the festival's blog.] The 47-year-old Gould has a slight rasp in his voice these days, but his buoyantly wry POV is as brisk as ever (and evidenced by his recent sets on *Conan* and *Kimmel*). Renowned for his caustic wit, Cheshire cat grin, and seven-year stint writing and producing for *The Simpsons*, Gould has been performing stand-up for three decades. The Irish Catholic from "the world's most ironically named town" – Hopedale, Mass. – hit his first open mic at the tender age of 17.

"It was two weeks after high school, and I was at the now-legendary Ding Ho, a Chinese

restaurant/comedy club in Cambridge. Lenny Clarke was the emcee, and it was right at the beginning of the big comedy boom in Boston," he recalls. "It was the week after Steven Wright was spotted and the week before he went on [*The Tonight Show*]. I was always a big stand-up fan, and I was in high school during the heyday of the original *Saturday Night Live* and when Steve Martin was huge. So it always seemed like if you could figure out how to do it, it was a way to go. I had very few other applicable skills, other than jazz and tap." [Laughs]

Comedians Kenny Rogers, John Ross, and Albert Brooks heavily influenced Gould: "Kenny's material was really dark in a way that appealed to me, but he didn't deliver it in a dark, spooky way. Albert Brooks and John Ross, they're both storytellers, but I liked the way their energy was so contained. What I liked about all of those people was that on the surface they looked like normal people, but if

you really listened to what they were saying, there was a lot going on there. I always liked hiding the pill in the banana, as they say."

When Gould moved west, he found another bustling scene. "San Francisco was a little more tolerant, a little groovier," he says. "So I went into this more indulgent audience with a lot of heavy artillery because I came out of Boston, and I think that's why I was able to develop so quickly there. All my stagecraft had already been set in stone since I came out of such a rough-and-tumble area. It's like being in Marine boot camp, and then you're ready for anything. Then you'd go on the road and go down to North Carolina, these places where they hated you [laughs] for dint of not being them. A lot of that Boston training really paid off."

Two years after making a base in the Bay Area, Gould moved to Los Angeles, where he witnessed the comedy-boom bust and was then instrumental in the creation of a seismic shift in stand-up. "In a way, it was inevitable, and it was sort of the natural order of things, that something that had become so prevalent would crash and burn. The reason that we started what has since become known as the alternative comedy scene was

## DR. JOKER AND MR. 'WTF'

### MARC MARON ON HIS DOUBLE LIFE AS A COMIC AND A PODCAST STAR

by Dan Solomon

Marc Maron spent two decades of working relentlessly as a stand-up comic, as well as dabbling in radio at Air America, and in TV hosting on Comedy Central's *Short Attention Span Theater*. But of all his extracurricular activities, only his *WTF* podcast, in which he interviews entertainers – mostly comics but also the occasional actor, filmmaker, show-runner, or musician – helped him achieve the sort of broader success that he'd sought his whole career. He was just in Austin for South by Southwest but is already back for the Moontower Comedy & Oddity Festival, and the *Chronicle* caught up with him to learn how he balances his success as an interviewer with his ego as a performer.

**Austin Chronicle:** You've been working for 25 years as a stand-up, and you did radio at Air America, but it seems like it took you having the opportunity to work on your own terms with the podcast for you to finally break out. What made that work for you?

**Marc Maron:** I don't know, man. There was no plan. I've been doing comedy for fuckin' half my life. But I never had a career goal, other than to be a comic – and a great one – and to speak my mind. I didn't have a plan. I just thought things would sort of naturally happen if I just became a great comic. But for whatever reason, before the podcast, I had fans – people knew who I was – but I never clicked with any cultural relevance. And the podcast was born out of desperation. It was not some sort of career plan. I was broke, I couldn't get work as a comic, I had just gone through a second divorce, I was about to lose my house. I got fired from a job at Air America, and I didn't want to be working there again to begin with – then they ran out of money. They were about to kick us out of the building, so me and my producer started breaking into the studio and doing this shit. We didn't really know what it was going to

be, but I learned how to be engaged in the medium of audio and radio a lot. We just sort of started doing shows like that, and it built from there. And now the people who know me from the podcast aren't necessarily comedy people. I get people who come to my shows who've never seen me do a stand-up show. They're not sure if I can do it. They're just there because they like me. People who listen to the podcast know me in a fairly deep way, and they have a relationship with me, so they're bringing that to the show.

**AC:** Does the fact that you're getting a lot of attention for talking to other comics ever get in the way of your own stand-up? Do you have a reaction like, "I'm a performer, too. I want people to know me as the star"? Where does your ego fit into being an interviewer?

**MM:** I've had to adjust to that. I find that over time a lot of people resonate with what I am, and who I am, and my voice and disposition. The way I engage people is fairly specific, and people like that. Initially, there was a little bit of pride, but I knew what I was getting into. As time goes on, I'm doing a lot of stand-up, and I'm killing. So whatever people are taking from it, people are coming to see me, and the shows are good. I can be proud of both things, and I have to live with that. I do wonder sometimes when people say, "I love the podcast." There's a part of me that's like, "Well, what about my stand-up?" But you have to let people have their own experience. The podcast doesn't exist without me. And these entertainers are on other shows, too, but people dig what I'm doing and the way that I engage with people. That's still me.



**AC:** Your stand-up is really personal and about you, and it always has been. But now your audience has a relationship with you via the podcast. How does that affect what you do as a performer?

**MM:** It makes it easier to be onstage as myself, and that's an amazing thing to have finally arrived at. I still do what's necessary to protect myself, but I'm very open when I'm up there now. And I think that's what I've always been trying to achieve with my stand-up. Obviously, it's more fun to perform for people who know you, but part of the job of the stand-up is to entertain strangers. And I've done plenty of that. I think the answer to your question is obvious: It's more fun to perform for people who are very familiar with you. But when they aren't, it's even more gratifying in a

different way. When people come up to me afterwards and say, "I've never heard of you before – where do I get your podcast? That was a great show." That's amazing, isn't it?

**AC:** What's it like for you, at this point in your life – 25 years into your career – to finally have reached a point where you've got the lightning-in-a-jar of cultural relevance?

**MM:** It's very gratifying, and humbling in a certain way. Before, I was still evolving as a person. I don't think my journey as a comic was ever to be Billy Crystal. My evolution as a comic was to have a voice and to be a whole person. That's a psychological issue, too, but this was the medium I chose to grow up in. A lot of those years, I wasn't the full Marc. I wasn't the whole thing yet. Now I'm a little closer to the whole thing. I have a little more control over my talent. A little more focus. And a little more context in terms of who I am and what I'm doing; and I have a lot less fear in general. And that makes a big difference. ■

Marc Maron appears Thursday, April 26, 9pm, at the Mohawk, 912 Red River; Friday, April 27, 10pm, at the Parish, 214 E. Sixth; and Saturday, April 28, 10:30pm, at Scottish Rite Theatre, 207 W. 18th. For more information, visit [www.moontowercomedyfestival.com](http://www.moontowercomedyfestival.com).



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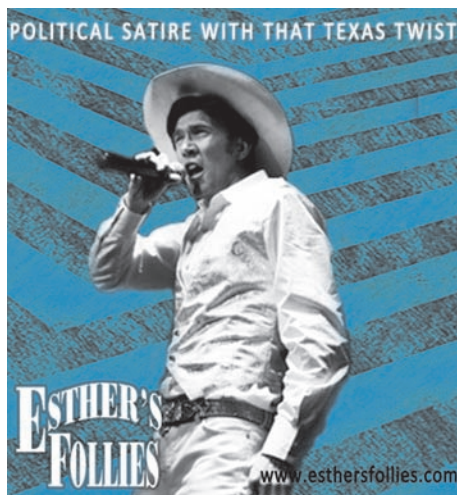
just trying to find a venue where comedy fans would want to go, which at that time was anywhere but a comedy club because comedy clubs were so overcommercialized and there were three in every town. The whole idea came in 1989 at an Elvis Costello & the Rude 5 concert at the Universal Amphitheatre; it was the *Spike* tour. We were sitting with a bunch of people and [wondered], ‘How do we get these people to come see us?’ It was me, Janeane Garofalo, Kathy Griffin, Bob Odenkirk, Ben Stiller, and a couple of other people – it was just our social circle at that time.” Along with Andy Kindler, Gould kept a foot in both factions and “could apply the lessons that we learned in the alternative venues and use them in a mainstream club.” Gould adds, “Having a great act is meaningless if you don’t have the tools to put it over to people that aren’t predisposed to like it from the get-go.”

Preeminent *Simpsons* writer/producer George Meyer invited Gould to come in once a week to punch up jokes, which led to him becoming a staff writer. Reflecting on his oeuvre, Gould says, “I think the first episode I wrote, called ‘Homer the Moe’ from season 13, was actually the funniest of the ones that I wrote. I’m very attached to ‘Goo Goo Gai Pan’ from season 16; it was when they went to China to adopt a baby for Selma. That was based on my wife’s and my experience in China with our daughter. So, obviously it came from a very personal place and I thought the episode came across really well. A lot of the stuff that you’d laugh at was stuff that came from just the lunacy of the writers’ room. I remember

George Meyer in the midst of a heated argument about a joke, literally pounding the table like Khrushchev, saying, ‘Look, nobody wants cargo pants in this punch line more than me!’ [Laughs] That is the stuff that you remember.”

Gould and his wife, Sue Naegle, president of HBO Entertainment, now have three daughters, and his happily hectic domestic life has allowed him to focus his outlook. “It didn’t become so much about how I was screwing up; it became about my perception of stuff, and that’s when that jelled for me. I actually think I’m a better comic now than I was then. I feel like I have more colors in my palette than I did then.”

Dana Gould performs Thursday, April 26, 8:30pm, and Friday, April 27, 10:30pm, at Scottish Rite Theatre, 207 W. 18th Street. For more information, visit [www.moontowercomedyfestival.com](http://www.moontowercomedyfestival.com).



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# SAUSAGE BANG

CHRIS CUBAS AND KATH BARBADORO CALL THE SHOTS ON MOONTOWER'S ALL-GUY AND ALL-GAL SHOWS

BY WAYNE ALAN BRENNER

Because we're gonna sit here on our high journo horse and give you some tips about what's good to see at this Moontower thing, right?

C'mon. For that, we call in experts – say, Chris Cubas and Kath Barbadoro, because when it comes to stand-up, *they* know what's up.

Cubas took second place in last year's Funniest Person in Austin contest. And even if you buy into the immutable truth of those rankings, well, 2011 winner Andy Ritchie has moved to L.A. – so that makes Cubas No. 1 in town. (Never mind this year's FPIA; we're making a point here.) The man's an increasingly successful stand-up, sure, having killed at Cap City's Punch! and South by Southwest and the Altercation Comedy Tour and so on, but, really, Cubas is one of those guys who just *breathes* funny.

And Barbadoro? After moving to the ATX from San Antonio less than two years ago, she hit the local comedy stages like a Kath-shaped chunk of phosphorus in water (hello, Wikipedia) and has been burning brighter and brighter ever since.

So these are the comedy pros that we asked to tell us why the all-male Sausage Fest and all-female She Bang shows are worth seeing.

**Austin Chronicle:** OK, *Sausage Fest*. All these guys, but with Jackie Kashian as the host. What's good about this gig?

**Kath Barbadoro:** Joe Mande's the one that sticks out, as far as being for people who like comedy but may not know about him. I think he's one of the best, the most distinctive of his age group. He has the funniest Twitter account – I'm obsessed with his Twitter account. He's the best retweeter; he retweets all these terrible corporate tweets, like Carl's Jr. ....

**Chris Cubas:** And White Castle!

**KB:** And stuff about Malcolm X's assassination. And he got in this huge Twitter fight with [NBA star] Gilbert Arenas. It got to the point where Joe Mande was the only person Gilbert was following, and he was obsessed with taking Mande down. It was awesome.

Sean Patton's awesome. I got to do a show with him in New Orleans, and he's like

a gaseous element that will fill any space you put him in. He's not super loud or abrasive; he's just got a very big personality – and super funny. I like him a lot.

**AC:** Are any of the comics in this show really guy guys? Like, brewski-swiggig types that you'd expect to find at something called *Sausage Fest*?

**KB:** No, they're not necessarily the most macho types. They're definitely dudes; they do things from a dude's perspective, their comedy is male-oriented, but I don't think it would be alienating to anyone who isn't into, you know, beer drinking, football watching –

**CC:** Yeah, like "Oh, these bitches," that's not the kinda stuff you're gonna get from those guys.

**AC:** What's good about *She Bang*?

**CC:** Ah, *everything*? Chelsea Peretti's obviously, like –

**KB:** She's my hero.



Chris Cubas



Kath Barbadoro

COURTESY OF ALLISON NARRO

**CC:** An absolute genius – and another person whose Twitter account is fucking hilarious. She tweeted a picture just last night: "I feel weird getting into this bed." And the picture was of a fold-out couch with a giant picture of Chelsea Peretti over it. I mean, where does that even exist? She writes on *Parks and Rec*, she's superhuge right now, and you're getting to see her at a small bar in Austin. That's awesome. Plus, you got Maria Bamford, who's maybe the top female comic? I hate *ranking* people, but you know what I mean? She's so brilliant and so weird. And Rachel Feinstein's amazing. And Mary Lynn Rajskub – she was on *Mr. Show*, and she's so funny, and I don't think people get exposed to her as a stand-up that much.

**KB:** People are like, "Oh, she was on 24!"

**CC:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, she does all the *acting*, but she also does good stand-up, and getting to see that aspect of her is a *treat*. She Bang, it's another group of people who – I mean, I hate even mentioning that stereotype of "Oh, I'm gonna talk about my *period*" kind of thing.

**KB:** Yeah, that's not –

**CC:** Good comics *don't do that!* It's like, when people shit on stand-up, they always shit on stand-up the way it was 25 years ago. They're like, "Oh, it's all airplane-food jokes." What are you even *talking* about? Stop watching A&E *Evening at the Improv* tapes and fucking catch up a little bit!

*She Bang and Sausage Fest take place Friday, April 27, at ND at 501 Studios, 501 N. I-35. She Bang is at 8pm, Sausage Fest at 10:30pm. For more information, visit [www.moontowercomedyfestival.com](http://www.moontowercomedyfestival.com).*



Matt Bearden

# GUARANTEED GAGS

MATT BEARDEN KNOWS WHAT JOKES YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR AT MOONTOWER

by Wayne Alan Brenner

Matt Bearden. Funniest Person in Austin contest winner in 2002. Best Comedian in the *Chronicle*'s 2008 "Best of Austin" issue. Beloved component of the *Dudley & Bob Morning Show* on KLBJ-FM. Curator and host of Cap City Comedy Club's Punch! show, which has made Tuesday nights in the ATX worth staying awake for. With all this going for him, it's no surprise that Bearden will do four shows during this first Moontower Festival.

**Austin Chronicle:** What can Moontower audiences look forward to from Matt Bearden? The best of sets you've done in the past or mostly new material?

**Matt Bearden:** I hope to bring audiences a hybrid of both. I'm looking forward to having old fans come out, so I'll have new stuff for them, and I'd like to show some of the new – or *potential* – fans some of the old favorites. And, honestly, since I'm lazy and I've

never memorized a set, it's always a little different anyway – just 'cause I don't know what I'm doing. If I was good at memorization, I'd be an actor, not a stand-up.

**AC:** Stand-ups have to be current, they have to address the zeitgeist. So, from what you know of the scene, what are five subjects that we're guaranteed to hear mentioned at Moontower?

**MB:** 1) Hipsters. Making fun of hipsters has now become so passé, it's actually enjoying a second life as something ironic to do. 2) Tacos. Austinites will put anything in a tortilla. I just had a peanut-butter-and-jelly taco for lunch. Don't expect visitors not to mention it. 3) "You guys sure do drink a lot." Comics love to drink; so do Austinites. Hence, no one has to feel guilty when they crack open a Pearl-Snap at 10am. 4) "Really? Ninety degrees in April?" Our weather sucks. Seriously. Comedians won't be prepared for it. Why? Because they come from a place where it's 70 degrees year round: comic-book stores. 5) Queso. Outsiders aren't always clear on the concept. If I asked you if you wanted to eat a huge bowl of hot cheese with fried spoons, would you do it?

*Matt Bearden can be seen with the Dan Band Wednesday, April 25, 8:30pm, at Mohawk, 912 Red River; in TX Stew Thursday and Saturday, April 26 & 28, 10:30pm, at ND at 501 Studios, 501 N. I-35; and headlining his own showcase, Friday, April 27, 10:30pm, at Mohawk. For more information, visit [www.moontowercomedyfestival.com](http://www.moontowercomedyfestival.com).*



# FESTIVAL FACTS, FILMS & FUN!

WEDNESDAY

	PARAMOUNT	STATESIDE	MOHAWK	PARISH	BEALE STREET	CAP CITY	ND	SCOTTISH RITE	29TH ST BALLROOM	VELVEETA ROOM	NEW MOVEMENT
6:00											
6:30		THE DIVORCE SHOW									
7:00											
7:30											
8:00	AZIZ ANSARI CHELSEA PERETTI			HANNIBAL BURESS 7:45 - 9:15	AUSTIN SHOW	MARIA BAMFORD JACKIE KASHIAN		MOONTOWER MASH-UP			THE MEGAPHONE SHOW
8:30											
9:00		LUNATIC FRINGE	THE DAN BAND								
9:30											
10:00	AZIZ ANSARI CHELSEA PERETTI			HANNIBAL BURESS	COMEDY CLOSE-UP 10:15 - 11:45						THE MEGAPHONE SHOW
10:30											
11:00		TOP SECRET SHOW 10:45 - 12:45	DEEJAY HONEYCOMB (INSIDE)								
11:30											
12:00											

THURSDAY

	PARAMOUNT	STATESIDE	MOHAWK	PARISH	BEALE STREET	CAP CITY	ND	SCOTTISH RITE	29TH ST BALLROOM	VELVEETA ROOM	NEW MOVEMENT
6:00											
6:30		THE DIVORCE SHOW									
7:00											
7:30											
8:00	SETH MEYERS			CHELSEA PERETTI 7:45 - 9:15	DOUBLE HEADER RACHEL FEINSTEIN BARON VAUGHN	MARIA BAMFORD MOSHE KASHER	SWITCH	DANA GOULD AND FRIENDS	AUSTIN WILDCARDS	3'S A CHARM	TWO FANCY LOSERS
8:30											
9:00		ANDY KINDLER	MARC MARON								
9:30											
10:00	NICK OFFERMAN & FRIENDS			SHOW HOUSE	DOUBLE HEADER ERIN JACKSON SEAN PATTON 10:15 - 11:45	THE AMAZING JONATHAN IAN KARMEL	TX STEW		AUSTIN WILDCARDS	3'S A CHARM	THERE'S WALDO RARE BIRD SHOW
10:30											
11:00		MASTER PANCAKE	CHARLIE HODGE 10:45 - 12:00								
11:30											

FRIDAY

	PARAMOUNT	STATESIDE	MOHAWK	PARISH	BEALE STREET	CAP CITY	ND	SCOTTISH RITE	29TH ST BALLROOM	VELVEETA ROOM	NEW MOVEMENT
7:30											
8:00	JEFF ROSS ROAST'S AUSTIN			JOHN MULANEY 7:45 - 9:15		THE AMAZING JONATHAN JONATHAN PACE			LEFT, RIGHT & RIDICULOUS	THE GAME MASTER	HANDBOMB TRIGGERFINGER
8:30		FUNNY OR DIE			AUSTIN SHOW		SHE BANG	THEME PARK			
9:00											
9:30			JB SMOOVE								
10:00											
10:30											
11:00		FUNNY OR DIE	MATT BEARDEN 10:45 - 12:00	SHOW HOUSE	DOUBLE HEADER RORY SCOVEL PAUL VARGHESE 10:15 - 11:45	THE AMAZING JONATHAN CHASE DUROUSEAU	SAUSAGE FEST	DANA GOULD AND FRIENDS	W. KAMAU BELL	3'S A CHARM	ROGUE SPIRIT DESIRE
11:30											

SATURDAY

	PARAMOUNT	STATESIDE	MOHAWK	PARISH	BEALE STREET	CAP CITY	ND	SCOTTISH RITE	29TH ST BALLROOM	VELVEETA ROOM	NEW MOVEMENT
7:30											
8:00	STEVEN WRIGHT			JOHN MULANEY 7:45 - 9:15	DOUBLE HEADER IAN KARMEL JACKIE KASHIAN	THE AMAZING JONATHAN BOB BIGGERSTAFF			W. KAMAU BELL	3'S A CHARM	UNSUSPECTINGLY SPONSORED BY
8:30		SUPER SERIOUS					SWITCH	THEME PARK			
9:00											
9:30			BLUE MOONTOWER XXX								
10:00											
10:30	WANDA SYKES KEITH ROBINSON			SHOW HOUSE	AUSTIN SHOW 10:15 - 11:45	THE AMAZING JONATHAN MATT SADLER			LEFT, RIGHT & RIDICULOUS	THE GAME MASTER	STUPID TIME MACHINE THE LATE 90'S
11:00		SUPER SERIOUS	WRAP PARTY W/ COVER GIRLS 10:30 - 2:00 LANCE HERBSTROG 12:00-1:30 INSIDE				TX STEW	TRIPLE PLAY			
11:30											

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## PARAMOUNT

713 Congress Avenue

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## CAP CITY COMEDY CLUB

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## MOHAWK

912 Red River Street

## THE PARISH

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## BEALE STREET TAVERN

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## THE VELVEETA ROOM

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## ND

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## NEW MOVEMENT THEATRE

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## 29TH STREET BALLROOM

2906 Fruth Street

## SCOTTISH RITE THEATER

207 West 18th Street

VENUE LIST

## THURSDAY

### 2PM: JOAN RIVERS: A PIECE OF WORK

(84 min, directed by Ricki Stern and Anne Sundberg)  
A documentary on the life and career of Joan Rivers, made as the comedienne turns 75 years old.

## FRIDAY

### 3PM: AMERICAN: THE BILL HICKS STORY

(102 min, directed by Matt Harlock and Paul Thomas)  
A captivating animated documentary drama on the legendary Texas outlaw comic Bill Hicks, whose profound observations on American life changed the face of comedy forever.

## SATURDAY

### 1PM: FREAK DANCE

(90 min, directed by Matt Besser) A spoiled rich girl who wants to be a dancer finds herself caught into between two rival dance groups set to do battle at an underground competition.

### 3:30PM: COMEDY SHORTS (80 MIN)

Featuring the shorts Modern Man directed by John Merriman and Kerri Lendo, Kittywood Studios directed by Joe Nicolosi, 92 Alonzo Mourning Skybox Rookie Card directed by Todd Sklar, Somone Like You (Pug Version) directed by Mark Potts and Don Swaynos, Billy's Birthday directed by Thomas Wohlford, Hands on a Hard Cart directed by Sam Eidson, Sexy Chat directed by Caroline Connor, The Arm directed by Brie Larson, Sarah Ramos, Jessie Ennis



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