

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

VETERANS AND RISING STARS OF COMEDY UNITE FOR FUNNY FESTIVAL IN LAS VEGAS

BY CAROLINE FONTEIN
Vegas.com

Now in its fourth year, The Comedy Festival is returning to Las Vegas with a jam-packed roster of the hottest comedians in the industry.

Since its debut in 2004, The Comedy Festival, produced by TBS and AEG Live, has turned into a comedy mecca where top-notch comedians and budding performers showcase their talents at venues inside Caesars Palace.

This year's festival will feature more than 50 comedians who will perform over a three-day period, including some of the biggest names in comedy like Jerry Seinfeld, Ellen DeGeneres and Dane Cook.

The festival will also feature a line-up of budding comedians who will perform in the LOL Lounge, a specially designed comedy club being set up for the event.

Jeff Garcia, Pete Correale and Tammy Pescatelli will serve as hosts at the LOL Lounge as rising stars of comedy take the stage. Their performances are open to the public and free of charge.

Steve Koonin the president of Turner Entertainment Networks, which oversees TBS and the company's other networks, said he is hopeful the festival will serve as a springboard for new talent while also showcasing the veterans of comedy.

"Between the top of the line with Jerry and Ellen, down to guys who haven't been discovered, the festival has something in comedy for everybody," said Koonin. "We really wanted to make it a festival like a music festival that has all kinds of unique talent ... not just one type of performer."

Several shows, including *Comedivas* hosted by Joan Rivers, *Laffapalooza* hosted by Tracy Morgan and *The Cheech and Chong Celebrity Roast* are also part of *The Comedy Festival* this year. Some of these shows were created by TBS while others, like *Laffapalooza*, were

pre-existing revues created by comedians participating in the festival.

The Cheech and Chong *Celebrity Roast* was created by TBS in honor of the legendary duo.

"We really wanted to do a tribute to them, coming back into the business after all these years. They've been such an inspiration," said Koonin. "We offered them a roast and they really got into it."

He said the roast is one of the new elements of this year's show that he is really excited about.

"I remember being in my basement listening to Cheech and Chong records back in the '70s and now having a chance to go see them and hear some of the amazing stories of their lives and their show business legacy as they get roasted, I can't wait for that show," said Koonin.

Along with Cheech and Chong, *The Comedy Festival* will also feature a slew of other entertainers who have carved their own niche in the comedy scene including Jeff Dunham and *The Kids in the Hall*.

Dunham, a comedian and ventriloquist, is known worldwide for his troupe of colorful puppets and their hilarious personalities. His regular posse of puppets includes Achmed the Dead Terrorist, Peanut, Walter, Jose Jalapeno and Bubba.

While he started as a ventriloquist when he was in third grade, it wasn't until he was college age that he decided to treat the ventriloquism as a vehicle for stand-up comedy.

Dunham explained that his puppets became the voices for the things that he could never say.

"It became some kind of little secret weapon. To this day I am able to get away with far more than I think the average guy could, standing on stage and talking by himself," said Dunham.

"It's a really interesting psychology in presenting comedy," he added. "It's just great, goofy fun."

Dunham, voted "Funniest Male Stand-Up Comic" at the American Comedy Awards and No. 1 in Comedy Central's "Stand-Up Showdown," credits his participation in *The Comedy Festival* to his enduring fans.

"There is this huge wonderful army of fans that have latched on to the characters," said Dunham. "I guess what I owe it to and how I got involved is this huge number of fans that have been nice enough to put me wherever I am right now."

Dunham is releasing his first holiday show and DVD "A Very Special Christmas Special" that will premiere on Comedy Central on Nov. 16.

The Canadian sketch comedy troupe *The Kids in the Hall* carved out their own place in comedy with edgy humor and off-beat characterizations that often resulted in the guys dressing in drag.

Made up of Dave Foley, Bruce McCulloch, Kevin McDonald, Mark McKinney and Scott Thompson, *The Kids in the Hall* started out as a punk rock sketch comedy group from Toronto in the early '80s. After gaining a cult following and pairing up with Lorne Michaels in New York, they de-

buted in their own HBO series in 1989. Their self-titled series ran for five years, winning Emmy and CableACE nominations.

"Our Comedy sprang out of the alchemy of five really unpleasant guys who were all completely convinced that they were the smartest guy in the group," said Foley. "At the same time we could all make each other laugh."

Foley described the group's evolution as "a product of us not wanting to be bored" since the five men found that a lot of the comedy going on at the time was boring.

"Everything in comedy, especially in sketch comedy, had become very polite and mainstream," said Foley. "We were trying to do something a little edgier, but mostly we were just trying to make each other laugh. The stuff that made us laugh was usually weirder stuff and darker stuff."

After "The Kids in the Hall" ended, each of the performers went on to pursue separate successful endeavors. In 2000, the performers reunited to bring their classic sketches back to a live audience. They later released a movie version of their "Same Guys, New Dresses Tour." In 2002 they launched another tour and DVD called "Tour of Duty," which was followed by another tour in spring of 2008.

Foley said the group is excited about bringing the new material from their recent 35-city tour to Las Vegas as part of *The Comedy Festival*. He said the group enjoys doing live performances because it takes them back to their club days, and it's a great chance to have fun.

"We sort of get back to the punk rock ethos that we started out with," said Foley. "We don't treat it like theater, we treat it more like a concert."

Whether you are looking forward to seeing one of the comedians mentioned above or you have another favorite performer flocking to Las Vegas for *The Comedy Festival*, it is sure to be a weekend of unprecedented comedy and talent.

"I've had people tell me that their jaw and stomachs hurt when they go back home from laughing so much," said Koonin.

THE COMEDY FESTIVAL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS NOV. 20-22

The Comedy Festival once again becomes the definitive destination for comedy fans Nov. 20-22 at Caesars Palace, in the entertainment capital of the world, Las Vegas. For tickets, visit www.vegas.com or call 1-888-LAS VEGAS (527-8342).

Thursday, Nov. 20

LOL Lounge: Hosted by Jeff Garcia
6:30 p.m.
in the Emperors Ballroom

Ellen's Even Bigger Really Big Show
7:00 p.m.
in the Colosseum

Josh Blue and Ralphie May
8:30 p.m.
in the Palace Ballroom

Joan Rivers with the Comedivas
9 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom



Ellen DeGeneres will present *Ellen's Even Bigger Really Big Show*.

Katt Williams
11 p.m.
in the Colosseum

Triple Threat Comedy with Jamie Kennedy, Mitch Fatel and Danny Bhoj
11:30 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom

Unleashed: Jim Breuer
11:30 p.m.
in the Palace Ballroom

Friday, Nov. 21

LOL Lounge: Hosted by Pete Correale
6:30 p.m.
in the Emperors Ballroom

Dane Cook
11 p.m.
in the Colosseum

Jerry Seinfeld
7:30 p.m.
in the Colosseum

Cheech and Chong Roast
8 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom

Russell Peters
11:59 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom

The Kids in the Hall
9:30 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom



Jeff Dunham performs at 10 p.m. Nov. 22.



Dane Cook

Saturday, Nov. 22

LOL Lounge: Hosted by Tammy Pescatelli
6:30 p.m.
in the Emperors Ballroom

Laffapalooza with Tracy Morgan
7 p.m.
in the Palace Ballroom

Jerry Seinfeld
7:30 p.m.
in the Colosseum

John Oliver & Friends
7:30 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom

Andrew Dice Clay
9:30 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom

Jeff Dunham
10 p.m.
in the Colosseum

David Alan Grier
10:30 p.m.
in the Palace Ballroom

Dave Attell
11:30 p.m.
in the Palace Ballroom

Mike Epps
11:59 p.m.
in the Augustus Ballroom



David Alan Grier



The Kids in the Hall perform at 9:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21 in the Augustus Ballroom.



Cheech and Chong will be roasted during the Comedy Festival.