



Comedic Gold:

Second City Comedy Troupe visits Elon

Jerod Hollyfield

Reporter

Elon students tired of getting their comedy fix from reruns of "Saturday Night Live" and "Whose Line is it Anyway?" were treated to a breath of fresh air Saturday night when the Second City Comedy Troupe left its McKinnon-Hall audience in stitches.

Hailing from Chicago, the troupe has been in the entertainment business for 42 years and claims comic legends John Belushi, Mike Myers, Chris Farley, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray and SNL head writer Tina Fey as alumni.

More than 200 students packed into McKinnon for the standing-room-only Student Union Board sponsored show. The room was decorated in traditional comedy-club fashion with candlelit tables and a self-serve soft-drink bar.

The show opened with a hilarious musical rendition of "The Pledge of Allegiance" that became more politically incorrect and absurd with each execution. "The word 'flag' is just one letter away from being gay," one performer joked.

The troupe followed up the musical skit with a host of short, Seinfeldian dialogues on a variety of topics, including everything from the size of SUVs to annoying waiters that sing "Happy Birthday" in restaurants.

After an introduction of the troupe's history, the show officially started on an upward trajectory of comedy that involved old-folks homes, a man who came to funerals for fun, a clown named after a four-letter word and a town where white middle-

aged men were perceived as old black women.

Second City was at their best when things went wrong. The troupe turned a tardy light cue and an audience member's cell phone ringing into improv skits. "Sorry about that, I think I'm so important," one comedian commented to his skit partner as he pantomimed turning off a cell phone to the tune of the audience's uproarious laughter.

While Second City may be most renowned in theater circles for their writing, the troupe also excels at improvisation. Almost half of the show consisted of improv skits performed following suggestions from the audience. Numerous variations of games made famous on "Whose Line is it Anyway?" were incorporated into the show.

A crowd pleaser was the game "Debate." Two cast members left the room while the audience suggested words for them to guess. When the actors returned, the remaining cast members gave them clues in a manner that can only be described as charades on acid. The crowd was so pleased by the show that the troupe offered an improvised encore.

For those that missed Saturday night's show, Second City continuously tours the college and night club circuit around the U.S. and Canada. As an alternative to the mundane comedy currently invading television and multiplexes, Second City is comedic gold.

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Hot Hot Heat warms up listeners

Mike Aceto

Reporter

Musical talents such as Alanis Morissette and Avril Lavigne have gotten their start across the boarder in Canada. The country has another reason to be proud with the release of "Make Up the Breakdown" by Hot Hot Heat.

The album is the band's first release with a major record label. The gritty edge to the album, Hot Hot Heat's style is melodious, with a pop-punk influence that defines the band.

Originally from Victoria, British Columbia, Hot Hot Heat is a four-piece band led by lead-singer/keyboardist Steve Bays, who sounds much like Brit-pop legend Joe Strummer of The Clash.

Bays and guitarist Dante DeCaro are newcomers to the band, but their presence is felt on songs such as "Get In or Get Out," as DeCaro lays down a chunky rhythm, then harmonizes with Bays on keyboard when the bridge kicks in.

"Make Up the Breakdown" sounds like the early works of Elvis Costello. "Bandages" is a catchy song dominated by

a thick synthesizer organ reminiscent of Costello's "Pump it Up." Bays' vocals are appropriate, fitting the style of Hot Hot Heat precisely. Drummer Paul Hawley holds the beat together well, the

band sounds tight on this album because of his playing.

"Make Up the Breakdown" is a tuneful album and very danceable from the beginning track "Naked in the City Again." Hot Hot Heat seems to have specific influences.

The band's brief history began in the late 1990s when the music scene in Vancouver was frustrating for Brit-pop-influenced artists like Hot Hot Heat. The band is definitely one to check out for those into the Brit-pop music scene.

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Steve Bays photo courtesy of SubPop

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