

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(O&amp;E)

## 'Average Joe'

### He's a one-man band but just an ordinary guy

By Victor E. Swanson  
special writer

**W**HAT SOME PEOPLE don't realize is, often, an entertainer can simply be an "average Joe."

That's especially true if the entertainer is one-man band Joe Tackett, who appears from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday during October at Carlos Murphy's restaurant, 29244 Northwestern Highway, Southfield.

Although he has opened concerts for such artists as Dolly Parton and Buddy Rich, Tackett really is an average Joe, as he showed himself to be during a recent interview at his home in Ferndale. He was dressed in a casual shirt, shorts and tennis shoes and sipped cherry-flavored pop.

"It's a real versatile show," Tackett said for openers. "I'm trying to pull all of my prior knowledge together." That knowledge includes playing a few years with a 1950s-type band called Rock's Gang and being part of a duo called a Couple of Jerks.

"It's still sort of experimental, because I'm using a synthesizer, which is computerized, and a drum machine. And I sound like a band," he said.

On stage, though, he doesn't sit at the synthesizer that would hide him from the audience, as most one-man bands do. He works the stage with a guitar of some type in hand all the time. And he plays the guitars and sings and jokes.

HE ADDED, "There are six life-sized pictures of myself on stage that look like a band. It's done, of course, as a joke. . . . It helps fill up the stage and it gets people's attention. And I figure, if I'm going to sound like a band, why not look like one."

The music he performs is, usually, well-known.

Tackett said, "The bulk of my material is '60s, a lot of Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, Kinks, Rolling

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— Joe Tackett

Stones. And I do some '80s also, Elvis, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley." The 33-year veteran performer said that he does some familiar songs from the 1970s and 1980s, too, such as ones by Harry Chapin and Jim Croce.

"Mainly, people — the audience I'm going for — are into having fun. I try to be that with people. . . . I'll do songs and try to get them to sing along or whistle or clap or anything. And when you can get a good audience doing that, it's just a ball, because it just gets bigger and bigger and you have people come on stage and sing and act like screwballs. It's a riot!"

From time to time, audiences get to hear some of Tackett's own works or some of his parodies. One parody is called "Wake Up Little Floozy." He has a song that's a take-off on "Puff the Magic Dragon."

"When I program this stuff, it takes roughly about eight hours per song to program," he said. "I have to play everything. . . . sit down and listen to a record and figure out the drumbeats, the bass, the piano and everything. I play keyboards well enough to program it."

TACKETT CONFESSED, "I'm not a 'keyboard player.' " Then he chuckled. "When I can get it at my leisure, I can get it right."

However, he has musical training on the piano. For instance, as a teenager, he had some piano lessons, and while at Macomb Community College, he took a piano class and studied classical guitar.



Life-size cutouts of himself surround Joe Tackett when he entertains as a one-man band. Here he performs at Carlos Mur-

phy's in Southfield, where his music is featured Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

The mostly self-taught musician, who started with drums at age 9, said the classical guitar lessons he got at college really helped him get his finger work perfected. "Most people who teach themselves — finger picking — they don't do it the right way," he said.

At Macomb Community College, Tackett minored in music and in 1979 received a degree in applied science in Business Data Processing.

His computer background is somewhat helpful in a new project he's working on with friends for United Cable, which covers such communities as Troy, Rochester, Royal Oak and Ferndale.

He is hosting a public-access cable show called "Average Joe's Neighborhood," soon appearing weekly on Channel 52. Basically, it's a talk show hosted by a computer programmer named Joe (played by

Tackett), who has a talking computer named P.C. Wisenheimer.

TACKETT WANTS the show to have a different topic each week and to be "heated — but not as bad as Morton Downey Jr." He said, "I want it to be a controversial show. I don't want to just play it safe."

For comedy relief in the show, Tackett's friend David Kilgore plays four regular roles — peaky neighbor,

Joe's wife, Joe's cheerleader daughter and Joe's punk-rock son. Another friend — Paul Swiss — is the voice of P.C.

Besides working on the television show, Tackett is looking for a publisher for a book he wrote about how to be a rock performer.

He's searching for a manager for his musical career. He has written

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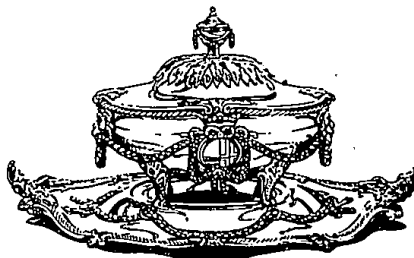
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