

# Messiah or maniac? Only Brad Stine knows for sure

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Brad Stine unusual? Not really.

He's just your average fire eating, razor blade chewing, steel rod swallowing and nose flossing screaming comedian. Oh, and yes, Stine adds, he's the chosen "Messiah of Improv."

"What can I say, I'm the comedy of the '90s," said Stine in a telephone interview from Anchorage, Alaska. "Lenny's called and he's quitting Seinfeld's quitting. They said, 'Please get out of the business. We have families to feed.'"

Messiah of Improv is perhaps stretching it a bit. Funny, definitely. Stine produces more laughs during a 15-minute phone conversation than a feather licking contest.

Every question is promptly turned into a stand-up routine on the war in the Persian Gulf, the slumping automobile industry and alleged comedie horbed of Indianapolis, Ind.

Then he stops abruptly. "Are you getting this all down?" he asks, sounding concerned. "Don't ask me to repeat any of this. I just rambled."

From the ramble this much is gleaned: Stine was born in Indianapolis, Ind., and moved to Los Angeles when he was 9.

STINE, ORIGINALLY started out as a magician but switched to stand-up comedy four years ago. He always wanted to be a comedian.

"Besides when's the last time you've seen a magician having a TV sitcom."

Stine has appeared on the It's a Wonderful Life Showtime. He's a growing force on the club circuit, though his upcoming appearance at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle this week is his first engagement at that club.

Much of his act, such as swallowing nose floss and then having it re-emerge from his nostrils, was perfected as a magician. His comedy heroes are Steve Martin and Monty Python, both masters of the absurd and off-beat.

"Steve Martin and Monty Python were geniuses," he says. "What's amazing is they did that show in 1969. Also, they come from England, and no one is funny from England."

Stine screams a lot during his stand-up routine. He also sweats "like a pig." Since his act is high-energy, improvisational, comparisons to Robin Williams are natural. Stine doesn't like it.

"That's like saying the wheel on the tractor and the wheel on the car are the same," Stine said. "Just because it's improvisational and high-energy, they look for a hook."

But, unlike Williams, Stine's routine is squeaky clean. He prefers it.

STINE STILL shocks audiences. In his magician days, apparently too much. His razor blade chewing routine included fake blood running out

of his mouth. People eating dinner at a club in Newport Beach, Calif., didn't appreciate it and complained to management.

For the most part, though, Stine said audiences appreciate something different than the regular stand-up pap.

"I never had that problem of losing control," Stine says. "You might have an audience that is conservative who don't know what's going on."

You still have to sell yourself. You have to get them involved. When they trust you, they'll let you run with it."

How far Stine runs remains to be seen. The ability to make up comedy routines as you go along is left but to a few.

Then again, this is a "Thor-like" guy we're talking about here. Comedy comes natural.

"It's like passing the mantel down," he said. "We had Jonathan Winters who was a god of improvisational comedy, and then we had Robin Williams."

"It's like they said, 'It's Bradley's turn now.'"

Brad Stine will appear Tuesday through Saturday, Jan. 22-26, at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 542-9990.



Brad Stine may be stretching it a bit in classifying himself as the Messiah of Improv, but his audiences do admit that he can make them laugh.

## COMEDY CLUBS

Here are listings of some comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is appearing at your club, send the information to Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoecraft, Livonia 48150.

### COMEDY NIGHT

Greg Russell, Stacey Duford and Kevin O'Neill along with Ken Dumm will perform in "Comedy Night," presented by St. Hilary Youth Commission, Saturday, Jan. 26, in the church social hall, Elmira Road, just east of Telegraph Road, Redford. Show time is 8 p.m. Tickets are \$7. For information, call 533-4561.

### CHAPLIN'S EAST

Don Reese will appear along with Dan Dillina and Shawn Scarborough Tuesday-Saturday, Jan. 22-26, at

Chaplin's East, 34244 Groesbeck, Fraser. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1902.

### CHAPLIN'S PLYMOUTH

Brad Carver will appear along with Chris Barnes Wednesday-Saturday, Jan. 23-26, at Chaplin's Plymouth, 14707 Northville. Show times are 8:30 Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 454-4680.

### CHAPLIN'S WEST

Jack Marion will appear with Tommy Nolen and Ray Elfler Wednesday through Saturday, Jan. 22-26, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph, one block south of Six

Mile Road. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 533-8866.

### MAINSTREET

Kirkland Temple will perform Friday-Saturday, Jan. 25-26, at Main-Street Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and 7, 9 and 11 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 956-9080.

### COMEDY CASTLE

Brad Stine will perform with Gary Thlson Tuesday-Saturday, Jan. 22-26, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show time is 7 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9900.

### JOEY'S LIVONIA

Stunt Johnson Theatre will perform with Ken Brown and Danny Gray Wednesday-Saturday, Jan. 23-26, at Joey's Comedy Club, Plymouth Road between Wayne and Levan roads, Livonia. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 241-9555.

### JOEY'S ALLEN PARK

Chas Elstner will perform Wednesday-Saturday, Jan. 23-26, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 15246 Southfield Road, Allen Park. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 382-7041.

### MISS KITTY'S

Steven Iott and John DeCove will perform Thursday, Jan. 24, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. For information, call 628-6500.

### DUFFY'S

Bob Posch Comedy Show will perform at 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays at Duffy's, 6635 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake. Admission is \$7. For information, call 363-9469.

### HOLLY HOTEL

Joe Duncel will perform with Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 24-26, at the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday. For reservations, call (313) 634-5208 or 634-1891.



Stacey Duford will perform with Greg Russell, Kevin O'Neill and Ken Dumm in "Comedy Night," presented by St. Hilary Youth Commission, Saturday, Jan. 26, in the Redford church's social hall.

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