

Funny forums for comics

COMEDY from G4

re-evaluate and wonder if performing to absolute silence, and often even discontent among the patrons, is beneficial."

Bill De Luso, who owns Wyld Chyld Tattoo and co-owns the adjacent Wyld Chyld Tattoo Café with Peter Karavas, hopes to do more marketing to promote the comedy night as well as the music open-mic nights they hold on Mondays.

Trying out new jokes

De Luso, who plans on eventually opening locations in New York City and Las Vegas, gets a sense of satisfaction from knowing the comics are getting comfortable with the place. "They know they can come here every week and bounce new jokes off of us and each other, even if it's sometimes at their own expense," he said.

And while De Luso is a big fan of comedy, especially of Jim Breuer and George Carlin, it was his café partner who was approached with the comedy night idea by Karavas' cousin, Carie Karavas, a well-known local comic who performs at special events and festivals while caring for her two young children and running Gyorlicious, a Greek restaurant in East Meadow, with her husband.

Karavas, whose 20-year comedy career has included appearances on "New Joke City with Robert Klein," "Tough Crowd with Colin Quinn," and feature spots at the Montreal Comedy Festival, doesn't attend open mics these days but is no stranger to performing at odd venues.

"About five years ago a comic friend asked me to do a gig in Bellmore. I'm thinking it's a catering hall. It's a house with about 15 people inside. One man was even sleeping on the couch," she recalled. "Meanwhile, the woman who lived there said it was the best birthday she ever had." Karavas made \$500 and got a \$100 tip for her 30-minute set.

"An odd venue doesn't necessarily have to be a place where

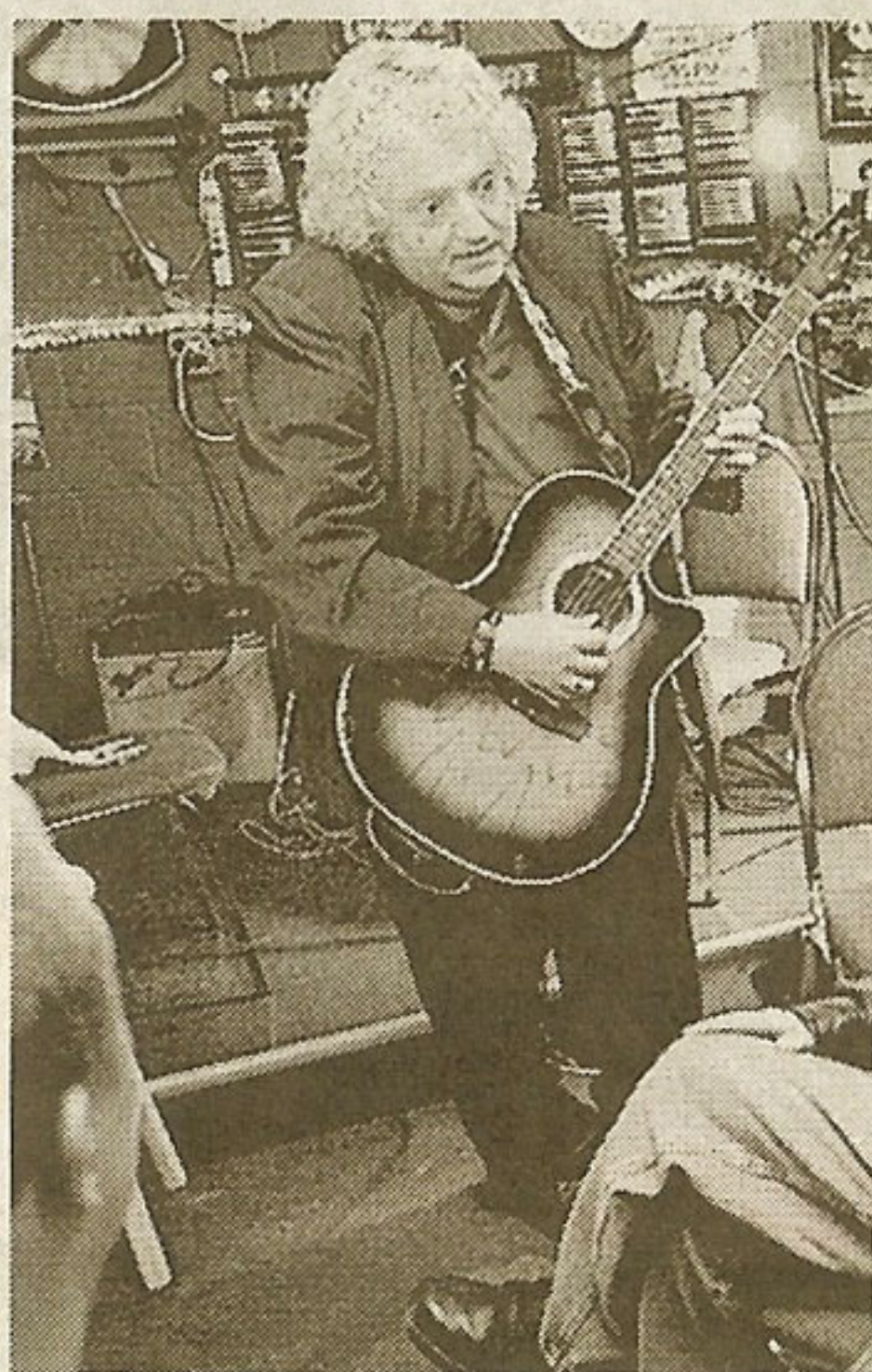


And tat ain't all: Stand-up comic Keith Godwin does his routine at Wyld Chyld Tattoo Café in Merrick.

they're not necessarily expecting comedy," said Rich Walker, 45, of Deer Park, a 15-year comedy veteran who recalled a performance in a bar a few years ago where there was no mic stand so he and another comic stuffed a broom into a flower pot of dirt and taped the mic to it. "You just do it and then make a joke about it in your set. I think I said something about feeling like I was on 'Gilligan's Island' or 'Survivor.'"

Gallo, who from 1986 through 1991 was a sponsored, competing, touring BMX freestyle rider, welcomes any kind of comedy rebellion and has been known to do bits in elevators and on the LIRR. He recalls getting his car towed one day in 1992 and doing "shtick" in the New York City Tow Pound along the West Side Highway. "People get into it. As a joke on one of the videos I did on the subway, called 'Please Give' I took out a hat to collect money. I even made a few dollars," he said.

"When you're a comic you'll go anywhere and everywhere and any laugh is good," said Karavas, who was an instructor at Governor's Comedy College. "You just need to read the crowd. I've done whole sets where I've just ad-libbed and made fun of people. Then they'll come up to me afterward and tell me how much they loved it."



"Sparky" Drakonis Schneider performs for patrons at the Starry Nite Café

While "crowd work" is good for a house party or even an eatery, it gets a bit tricky at venues such as Starry Night Café or Samantha's Li'l Bit of Heaven, an East Northport ministry/coffeehouse that holds a "Squeaky Clean Comedy Night" the third Friday of every month.

"Playing in 'Heaven' requires a little more skill and ingenuity," said Walker, who is also an instructor for Stand-up University, a seven-week comedy course held at Brokerage Comedy Club in Bellmore. "Many inexperienced comedi-

ans fail to understand what is, and what isn't, appropriate humor for 'Heaven.' A comedian must know his audience, size them up accordingly and perform suitable material."

Letting offense be known

While there are no hecklers at 'Heaven,' the audience will let you know when they find material offensive by shaking a cup of pretzels placed on every table.

"It was a little more uptight than I thought," said Gallo who performed at Samantha's in March 2008. "The Christian market can be a great market, but some of the older people looked like they were afraid of what they were going to hear . . . there are certainly rigid boundaries you have to stay in while performing there."

Even the founder, the Rev. Samantha Tetro admits it's tough. "No question, Heaven's guidelines have been a challenge for some, but on the good side it has stimulated creativity on levels most comics never thought about. I adore watching them grow in their gift," she said.

Godwin, who co-owns Comedy to Go Inc., which provides comedy talent for events, can certainly appreciate the gift. Godwin spearheaded the comedy nights at Starry Night Café and runs monthly shows at drug rehabilitation facilities,

including Charles K. Post center in Brentwood, Catholic Charities / Talbot House in Bohemia and Phoenix House in Hampton Bays, as well as the Northport VA Medical Center, where he works full-time as a peer specialist.

Godwin, a former drug and alcohol addict who lost his right hand in a car accident in 2000, prefers to perform his comedy at these types of venues because of the audience. "Regular comedy fills the glass three-quarters for me. This kind of comedy fills it up. I actually started teaching humor therapy. You have to pick how you are going to make a difference," he said.

"One of my best comedy experiences was at an AA meeting in Anaheim, Calif., in '96. I had them as soon as I plugged in the guitar," said Schneider who also performs at some of Godwin's rehab shows. "After the show a woman who had suffered a heart attack six weeks prior told me that was the first time she didn't need to use her pain medication because 'laughter really was the best medicine' that night."

"My favorite thing about comedy is knowing you just made someone forget about their life even if it's just for a half-hour. I love when people tell me they had such a good time because of me," Karavas said.