



BACKGROUNDER

January 24, 2011

The folks bringing the funny to the Falls in 2011

**Komedya for Kidneys Rodney Pentland Memorial Benefit Show – February 3 at 8pm
Greg Frewin Theatre, 5781 Ellen Avenue, Niagara Falls**

Darren Frost

This native of Brantford is uniquely eccentric and one of the reigning kings of “way-out” comedy – a man whose sole purpose is the “slam a stapler against the forehead of popular culture.” He thrives on driving criticisms, dark revelation and lunacy. His ability to command the undivided attention of an audience is remarkable. Darren has numerous movie and TV appearances to his credit, including performances in the feature films *Hairspray* (John Travolta and Michelle Pfeiffer), *Assault on Precinct 13* (Ethan Hawke), *Fever Pitch* (Drew Barrymore and Jimmy Fallon) and *Don't Say a Word* (Michael Douglas). Darren has twice earned a Top Ten Comedy Moments of the Year award by *Now* magazine. At the 2005 Just for Laughs Comedy Festival in Montreal, Darren performed an incredible 22 shows, more than any other comedian in attendance that year.

Johnny Gardhouse

For the past fifteen years Johnny Gardhouse has been a touring stand-up comic, making him a true road warrior. From coast to coast, across Canada and the United States, and all the way to the other side of the planet, Johnny has played colleges, universities, nightclubs and hosted numerous corporate engagements. He is quick on his feet and never at a loss for words. His razor sharp comebacks and unique blend of current event and storytelling comedy make this Canadian 'Gordie' able to hold his own on the world stage. From his turn as the "Cash for Life" postman, to the boomerang ducking guy in the Sensodine Toothpaste ad, he has been invading your living room for more than fifteen years. For insomniacs and the unemployed he is most recognizable from his co-host duties on the Comedy Networks hit series *Gutter Ball Alley* where pushing the envelope of dignity was their mandate. Recently Johnny returned from a trip overseas where he performed for the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan. This trip of a lifetime was one of his proudest moments as an entertainer.

Paul Haywood

This instantly likeable Scarborough native has been seen on The Comedy Network's *Club 54*, *Open Mic with Mike Bullard*, *Elvira Kurt's Adventures in Comedy* and been heard on XM radio. Paul is an instant crowd pleaser, with hard hitting, side splitting material based on his zany everyday life. Paul is a free-wheeling hybrid who is able to work absolutely clean – or not! – with ease.

Mark Matthews

It all began 21 years ago in 1986 when Mark Matthews stepped on stage for his first ever, stand-up appearance at the *Funniest Person in Hamilton* Contest and out of 15 comics ...placed dead last. The next year he obviously figured something out as he returned to win the contest and then perform in New York City at *Catch a Rising Star* and *The Comic Strip* - two of Manhattan's premier comedy clubs. Mark has performed in Canada and the United States. He's opened for Jerry Seinfeld, Gilbert Gottfried, and Jimmy "JJ" Walker to name just a few. In Niagara Falls, Mark was the guest Emcee at the opening of Planet Hollywood appearing with Bruce Willis. T.V. appearances include: *Crystal Comedy Quest*, *The Fruitopia Comedy Fest*, and *Comedy at Club 54*. Mark has also appeared in the CBC show *Comics* playing the simple-minded brother of comedian Jeremy Hotz. At home in "The Honeymoon Capital", Mark spent three years as the co-host of a local talk show *Daytime*. He was also the guest co-host on the morning show with Jack Peets on 97.7 HTZ-FM and has voiced numerous commercials. Twice the producer of Niagara Falls' Misty Awards, Mark works with Tangerine Music writing and voicing commercials and shares executive producer credits with Rick Rose on their independent music CD series *Spirit of the Falls I & II*. Rick and Mark also acted as promoters for *Pink Floyd Niagara*, North America's largest touring Pink Floyd tribute band. Mark is the founder of *Mark Matthews and Friends* a fund established to help kidney patients in financial difficulty; he is also a spokesperson for the Jim Hughes Charity, a local organization that has raised almost \$100,000 to help people living with ALS.

Nikki Payne

Growing up in a trailer park with a speech impediment may sound tragic to many, but it is comedic gold to Nikki Payne. Not letting anything stand in her way, she has been nominated for two Gemini Awards and has won countless Canadian Comedy Awards. She is most known for her appearance on NBC's *Last Comic Standing* and Much Music's *Video on Trial*. Nikki has written for *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, *Comedy Inc* and *Pop-Cultured*. Nikki's CTV's *Comedy Now Special* is one of the highest rated ever in the entire world's history! Nikki also lent her unique voice to Disney's *The Wild* as a monkey with braces. It is no surprise to learn that Nikki has garnered a lot of attention south of the border. The Hollywood Reporter publication raved about Nikki's performance at the Just For Laughs Festival in Montreal. Nikki also finds the time to sit on the board of directors for a charity called "Making Faces", a group that teaches improv and acting classes to promote self-esteem in children who are afflicted with facial deformities.

Marc Sinodinos

Marc Sinodinos prides himself on being a refreshing voice in the world of stand-up comedy. Marc is known for having some of the most ridiculous and thought provoking material and is also considered to be one of the most original and well-versed comics in Canada. Edgy, silly, unique and clever are just some words used to describe Marc. With no boundaries and no remorse, Marc will either charm or harm the audience with his off-the-cuff banter and his well crafted and absurd material. Marc has found an original way to be universally funny without sugar coating his opinions or comments. Some people think he's offensive, some think he's a genius, most find him hilarious. He has performed at various comedy festivals around North America including Just For Laughs, Washington DC Comedy Festival, New York State Laff Bash, and the New Jersey Comedy Festival. Marc was also named the 2005 Canadian College Comedy Award Winner and the 2006 CBC Radio Comedy Champion.

Winston Spear

Winston Spear is a unique comedian with a deep, deadpan delivery who has been called the King of the Obscure. Winner of the Canadian Comedy Award for Best Stand-up Comic in 2003, Winston has been performing in comedy clubs and festivals throughout North America for more than a decade. He's appeared a number of times at the Just For Laughs Festival in Montreal, as well as comedy festivals in Vancouver, Winnipeg and Halifax. Winston refers to his ability to incorporate physical comedy into his act as "comedic modern dance." For the past several years, he has been the resident host of the ALT.COMedy Lounge, a hip alternative showcase for comedians in Toronto. Winston's experience extends into a variety of television and film projects. He has been featured on *Comedy Now!*, *Comics!*, and *The Conan O'Brien Show*. Winston has also written and performed his own video shorts entitled *Crack Doll House*, and been featured on sketch series *The Bobroom* on The Comedy Network. Winston was a guest star on CBC's long running *Air Farce*, *The Holmes Show*, and as "Winston the Cellar Dweller" on the 6-part series *The Sean Cullen Show* and on Toronto 1's *The Toronto Show*.

Mark Walker

Mark Walker is a comedian with an incredible ability to combine razor sharp comedy with a dazzling array of celebrity impressions. His insights into the idiosyncrasies of life combined with his impressions of everyone from Jimmy Stewart to Joe Pesci have led him to become one of Canada's most celebrated comedians and voice impressionists. Originally from Truro, Nova Scotia, Mark has been headlining at comedy clubs across Canada and internationally since 1988. Mark has also been invited to numerous comedy festivals including Montreal's Just For Laughs Comedy Festival, the Halifax Comedy Festival, and the Cape Town Comedy Festival in South Africa. And Mark has been entertaining corporate audiences for the past 12 years at various events. Mark's talents have branched out from the stage to include television and radio appearances. He has had a special on the Comedy Network's *Comedy Now!* been featured on *Comedy at Club 54*, and has had guest appearances on CTV's *Open Mike with Mike Bullard* and *Canada AM*.

The "X Factor" Show – February 4 at 8pm Seneca Queen Theatre, 4624 Queen Street, Niagara Falls

Kate Davis

A speaker, writer, mother, comedian and actress, Kate Davis has the unique ability to find humor in any situation. Theatrically trained in England, Kate returned to Canada to a successful run on Canadian stage. From the theatrical stage to the many stages of motherhood, Kate found her newest passion at an open mike one night at a local comedy club. Now, a five-time nominee at the Canadian Comedy Awards and star of her own hour-long comedy special on CTV and the Comedy Network, Kate headlines across the country and is a favorite at corporate events. She has appeared on Breakfast Television, Star TV, Toronto 1, Prime, WTN, TVO, CBC Radio One *The Debaters* and *The Mom Show*. Purpose met destiny when Kate created her successful parenting with humor workshops. These have now transformed to the full range of presentations, exploring the positive effects humor has on all aspects of life. Kate has a monthly article in the *Mom and Caregiver* magazine and has been published in *Today's Parent* magazine. Kate also has a book out called *The Breast Feeding Diaries* with Meadowbrook Press in the USA, which won the parenting media award.

Laurie Elliott

In the last five years, Laurie Elliott has made a name in Canada for both her character and stand up comedy. She is a winner of the Tim Sims Encouragement Fund Award and is this year's winner of the Canadian Comedy Award for best female stand up. Television credits include a Comedy Award nominated recurring role on Toronto 1's *The Toronto Show* and recurring roles on CBC's *The New Red Green Show* and Global's *Train 48*. Other credits include CBC's new series *This is Wonderland* and *The Sean Cullen show*, Showtime's *Soul Food*, CTV/Comedy Network's *Endless Grind* and a half-hour stand up *Comedy Now!* special. She is a recurring panelist on Global's *Out of Bounds with John Oakley* and Men TV's *Real Men*. Most recently she was featured in a Canadian Comedy Short produced by The Comedy Network and directed by Denise Blinn. Laurie enjoys the world of animation having already lent her voice to cartoons such as *Bob and Margaret*, *Medabots*, *Braceface*, *Timothy Goes to School*, *Moville Mysteries*, *Atomic Betty*, *Time Warp Trio* and more. Currently Laurie is writing and performing on The Comedy Network's new series *Popcultured with Elvira Kurt*.

Allyson Smith

Allyson Smith has been tickling Canada's comedy scene from the moment she put down the chalk brush and picked up a mic. With her sassy blend of in-your-face stand-up and hilariously insightful commentary, playing to packed rooms is just another day at the office for this former high-school teacher, whose credits include CTV's *Comedy Now*, MuchMusic's *Video on Trial*, CBC's *The Debaters* and the Just for Laughs Comedy Festival. As a child, Allyson knew she was weird. While other little girls were flailing around in baggy ballet leotards, she was introducing her fellow sixth graders to power of a perfectly timed punch line. A natural born entertainer with the pipes to prove it, Allyson was soon leaving locals laugh-drunk in sketchy bars across the prairies. But it wasn't long before dodgy backroom deals turned into legitimate front-of-the-house bookings and a packed dance card of appearances at the Edmonton International Fringe Festival, the Winnipeg Comedy Festival, the Seattle Comedy Contest and Yuk Yuk's across Canada. Today, the "embarrassingly varied" teacher-cum-comic is a sought-after fan favourite, headlining shows from coast to coast and popping up in living rooms wherever there's a cable signal ... often uninvited but

always charming. Despite emerging as one of Canada's rising stand-up stars, Allyson has remained true to her talent show roots. Her down-to-earth nature and girl-next-door approachability have earned her the respect and friendship of fans and fellow comics alike.

The Late Show – February 4 at 10:30pm
Seneca Queen Theatre, 4624 Queen Street, Niagara Falls

Donnie Coy

Always a bit twisted and mysterious, Donnie Coy has excelled in comedy for decades. Easily identified in Canada as the Mad Hatter of comedy, his blue-collar approach to humour is a hit across North America. He's witty, a little dangerous and always first-class. His real-life observations are contemporary and often wander to the edge of the abyss. There's something wild smouldering under his rough-and-tumble exterior. His comedic approach is challenging and his topical range is provocative. Coy is a true comic genius – smart, sarcastic, sweet and sour.

Frank Spadone

As a child, Frank Spadone showed his comedic side early in life, imitating people (famous or not) and doing various accents. After visiting a few Toronto comedy clubs as a young man, he decided to give it a try. In 1997, Frank stepped on stage for the first time as a stand-up comic. He didn't tell many people about it and there were just a few select friends in the audience. He was on stage for only five minutes, but those five minutes told everyone in the room that this guy truly had something special. He continued working amateur and open mic nights in Toronto, constantly building his material and starting to create a buzz. In less than a year he would perform in his first professional spot. Soon he was headlining at the top comedy clubs in Toronto and then taking his act to many other cities across Canada. Frank has appeared at the Just for Laughs Festival in Montreal and has shared the stage with the likes of Adam Sandler, Chris Rock, Joe Avati, Howie Mandel and Tommy Davidson.

The Big Show – February 5 at 8pm
Seneca Queen Theatre, 4624 Queen Street, Niagara Falls

Jeb Fink

An award winning host and comedian, Jebb Fink has spent the last 25 years performing in comedy clubs and specializing in corporate comedy. Born in Los Angeles, and now living in Calgary, his life was the inspiration for the Gemini Award winning CBC comedy *An American in Canada*. In fact, Jebb's life is the theme for most of his comedy. He credits his success as a comedian in Canada to living in a city with an International airport. It also helps that he lives there with his second wife and she refuses to move to the States. It is hard not to recognize Jebb Fink from eight years on the A-Channel's *Big Breakfast* or more recently as the host of City-TV's *Your City*. In addition to his local work, Jebb has also been the host of CBC's Just for Laughs *All Access Pass*, a writer and performer with the Just for Laughs Festival, and a writer and performer for the Winnipeg Comedy Festival. When he is not on television he can be found hosting numerous events throughout North America or performing on cruise ships.

John Wing

John Wing is the number one comedy export of Sarnia, Ontario, and one of Canada's greatest gifts to the comedy industry. Now living in Los Angeles, John has been a professional stand-up comedian for more than 20 years and has performed on network television countless times, including appearances on *The Tonight Show*, as well as A&E's *An Evening at the Improv* and ABC's *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher*. He has appeared at numerous prestigious comedy festivals and is a regular on the CBC, where he has appeared on *The Debaters* and *Definitely Not The Opera* as well as on his own show, *Man, Woman and Child*.