



Comedy Central regular performs at Lucy's Café

By JAMI KUNZER | APRIL 17, 2014

Tim Cavanagh went from teaching at a Chicago Catholic school to performing on Comedy Central.

A big difference between the two?

“The good thing about teaching is they can’t stand up and walk out on you,” said Cavanagh, who will headline April 19 at Lucy’s Comedy Café at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake.

“They have to sit there and listen to you. I can tell the same joke over and over again, and eventually they have to laugh to get good grades.”

Another difference?

“The drunks – which I generally let the principal handle,” he said.

For years, Cavanagh taught by day and sang songs in Chicago’s comedy clubs by night.

His song, “I Wanna Kiss her (But She Won’t Let Me),” was the first to receive national radio airplay on the legendary “Dr. Demento” show. Other songs followed: “99 Dead Baboons,” “Get Drunk With Dignity” and “Really Safe Sex.”

Releasing his first CD, “Sounds Like Fun!,” in 1997, Cavanagh became a regular

on “The Bob & Tom Show,” a nationally syndicated radio show. He also landed on television, appearing on “Stand-up Stand-Up” on Comedy Central, “The Showtime Comedy Club Network” and “George Schlatter’s Comedy Club Special,” among other shows.

He’ll perform along with host Mike Preston and the Williams Street Repertory Improv Troupe at Lucy’s Comedy Café, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake. Tickets cost \$20 in advance at 815-356-9212 or www.rauecenter.org and \$25 at the door.

Here’s more of what Cavanagh had to say:

Kunzer: So tell us how you exactly how you became a comic.

Cavanagh: When I finished college, I had a degree in philosophy, which prepared me for nothing. When I graduated, I was like, ‘Now what do I do?’ I ended up applying for teaching jobs. I’d pretty much gone to Catholic school my whole life. ... I became a religion teacher at Maria High School [a private Catholic school in Chicago]. It gave me some experience getting up in front of people. ...

I walked into Zanies [Comedy Club] on open mic night one night. I went up and did some stuff, all songs. By the following weekend, they were paying me. It was like, ‘Oh, I guess I’m going to be a comedian.’ I told my wife, and she said, ‘I don’t like comedians.’ I said, ‘I don’t know if I do, either.’

Kunzer: How did you start writing songs?

Cavanagh: Since high school, I wrote songs. I was hoping to be James Taylor, but my songs weren’t that good, at least the serious ones weren’t that good. The funny ones really got the response from people, so I leaned on that.

Kunzer: Any favorites?

Cavanagh: I do a song called “Get Drunk with Dignity.” That is a song that has a little something for everyone. [At the Raue], we’re doing a show on Good Friday, so I don’t know if people will be in a drinking mood, but ‘Get Drunk with Dignity’ is one of my favorites.

The song that got the most notoriety in Chicago is “99 Dead Balloons.” ...

I do a love song called ‘23/7’ where basically I’m pledging my love to a woman for

23 hours a day seven days a week. There's one hour that I'm seeing someone else.

Kunzer: Were you a funny teacher?

Cavanagh: You know what, I tried. It was a very strict school discipline-wise. My class was a bit of an oasis for the kids. Part of the way I looked at it was it's religion class, you don't want them to come in hating religion. That's counterproductive. ... I did try to come up with interesting ideas and things that the kids would find memorable. It's basically the same thing – trying to get people to pay attention and get something out of it.

Kunzer: On that note, do you have any advice for aspiring comedians?

Cavanagh: My advice is generally don't take any advice from anyone. The real advice is get on stage and work it out as often as you can. A lot of people will give you advice, telling you you should do it like this because this is the way I do it and it works for that person. ... You're better off just trying to find your own voice.

Kunzer: Any comedians you admire?

Cavanagh: I'm a big fan of Steve Martin. I just thought he was hilarious, and if anything, he's probably been more of an influence on my comedy than anybody. He really would do just about anything to make people laugh, and yet, he was real smart about it.