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Comedy legend Robert Klein comes to the Raue Center

By: Annie Alleman | For Sun-Times Media

If you watched Jay Leno's last "Tonight Show" in February, you might have caught Billy Crystal referencing Robert Klein.

He was reminiscing about visiting Leno's "bomb site" apartment in Boston when they were up-and-coming comics, and Leno had a poster of Klein above his bed.

Robert Klein, the legendary comedian who influenced a generation of comics, is coming to the Raue Center for the Arts on April 5.

Although born and raised in The Bronx, Klein got his start at Second City.

"I reported for work with Fred Willard in March of '65 on Wells Street in Chicago," he said.

That led to a career that has included Grammy, Emmy and Tony award nominations, 82 guest appearances on "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson," plus about 50 appearances on "Late Night with David Letterman."

In 1975, Klein was the first comedian to appear in a live concert on HBO. He has gone on to do nine one-man shows for HBO. His most recent special, "Robert Klein: Unfair and Unbalanced," aired in 2010.

He co-starred in the NBC series "Sisters," and had a recurring role on "Law and Order." Recently, he's been on "Royal Pains" and "The Good Wife" — he just finished shooting an episode which will air in a couple of weeks. On April 1, he recorded an episode of Jerry Seinfeld's web series, "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee."

To this day, he favors standup comedy over acting, dancing or even sitting behind a microphone.

“I do not stand at a mic or sit at a stool. I patrol the stage. I like to give a one-man show. My long-time colleague Bob Stein will be with me. We sound like a law firm — Stein and Klein,” he joked. “We’ve worked together almost 30 years. We’re going to do some music. I always like a little music in my shows.”

He talks about a lot of things in his shows; topic like getting older — “I no longer kiss the girls, I play their fathers. I played Sandra Bullock’s father in ‘Two Weeks Notice.’ I played Kyra Sedgewick’s father in ‘Labor Pains.’”

He tells funny stories about his career, along with some observational and political jokes.

“There will be some music and I guarantee there will be some good laughs,” he said. “It still gives me a kick to make people laugh.”

He will even be in the lobby afterwards to shake hands and sign copies of his book, “The Amorous Busboy of Decatur Avenue: A Child of the Fifties Looks Back.”

“It’s a memoir. It starts when I’m 9 and ends when I’m 25,” he said. “It’s just a series of stories which connect in my lifespan, including my time in Chicago at Second City. There’s a lot of funny stuff in it, some moving stuff, but mostly it documents the change between the ‘50s and the ‘60s. That was like going from the 19th to the 20th century, in a way. From Pat Boone to Sly and the Family Stone. From the passive, Eisenhower years into assassinations and pot and hippies.”