

## Ventriloquist Rumba joins magicians, illusionists and comics on stage for ‘Nothin’ Up My Sleeve’

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Similar to the way organizers describe the upcoming magic show, “Nothin’ Up My Sleeve,” a conversation with Bob Rumba, ventriloquist and the show’s emcee, is non-stop.

He reflects on elevator music – how it’s gone from classical to ’80s.

“I’m wondering when we get really old if I’ll have to rap,” he said.

He moves on to a story about the how-to video he filmed on ventriloquism. It’s been sold worldwide, including China, where he once spoke with someone at a ventriloquism convention who’d purchased it.

“I shot that, and I don’t think I’ve ever watched it,” he told the woman.

Relaying the conversation with a Chinese accent, Rumba said she responded, “You should. It be good for you. It easy to understand.”

And, of course, he talks about “Nothin’ Up My Sleeve,” scheduled for 7 p.m. March 9 at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake. An 11th-annual fundraiser for the Raue, the show is believed to be one of the longest-running annual magic events ever produced.

“I don’t know that Crystal Lake realizes that nobody else has a show like that,” Rumba said.

This year’s show includes six routines, with Rumba, a Midwest-based ventriloquist, comic and Hollywood-lookalike (Groucho Marx, Charlie Chaplin, Barney Fife), entertaining the crowd between acts.

Rumba lived in the Chicago area for roughly 30 years and has performed at the Raue before. He’ll also perform there March 16 as part of a Celebrate St. Patty’s event. He’s also appeared on “America’s Funniest People” and “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” among numerous television shows, and done a variety of television commercials, such as McDonald’s, Sunkist, Nine Lives and United Airlines.

At “Nothin’ Up My Sleeve,” he’ll introduce his goose bodyguard. Other people in show business have security guards or guard dogs. He has a goose.

“Geese can be mean,” he said. “I have this goose that guards me so nothing will happen. He usually gets mad and I get beat up by the goose. ... I think it’s funny.”

As for his famous portrayal of Groucho (the legendary Marx brother comedian and film star), he said his mother proved

to him with a picture she dug out that he's been doing the act since age 5.

"I'm sad that not as many people know who he is now," he said.

"(Ventriloquism) is a form of magic, even though people don't think of it as magic," he said. "It's a magical thing to be able to make a character come alive."

Rumba is very aware of what perhaps can be considered the "ventriloquism of the future," having provided a couple gags to ventriloquist John Pizzi, who appeared on "America's Got Talent" with an app that allowed him to manipulate photographs of people by making them talk.

Pizzi gave him the app, as well, making him one of only a few who have it in the country.

"I'll be doing that at the Raue," he said, adding that he brings along a flat-screen TV to display the routine. "Most people have never seen it. ... You can actually imitate anything."

He'll also be doing a ventriloquism and magic combination trick with Glenn Chelius, a magician and one of the producers of the show. Nino Cruz co-produces. Other acts include Shayna Reed, Benjamin Barnes, Jania Taylor and Bob Higa.

"It's just a big montage of anything and everything," Cruz said. "They're all new acts. This year is totally different."

More details would give away the surprises. But be prepared for a Cruz and Chelius illusion in which one of them disappears and reappears as the other.

Another act will challenge an audience member to lift a \$100 bill. "If they can lift it, they can keep it," Cruz said. "I can't give it away, but there are no strings attached. It's not going to be stuck to the ground. Let's see if they can do it."

Taylor and Reed are manipulators, while Higa does stand-up with illusions. Dan Neilson will be entertaining audience members in the lobby before the show.

"We're always bringing something bigger and better," Cruz said.

**"Nothin' Up My Sleeve" WHEN: 7 p.m. March 9 WHERE: Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake TICKETS: \$17, \$20 and \$23 at 815-356-9212 or [www.rauecenter.org](http://www.rauecenter.org)**

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