

Canadian comic lives his dream

Comedy Inc.'s Danylo headlines cross-country tour -- in theatres, not bars

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ROMAN DANYLO

Where: The Timms Centre for the Arts, University of Alberta campus

When: Friday night at 8

Tickets: Through Tix on the Square, 420-1757

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EDMONTON - Journalists are duty-bound to shed light on dark corners, even if in doing so they cause discomfort to comic Roman Danylo, who seems so gosh-darn nice in a quintessentially Canadian way.

"So you're probably going to mention that in your article, right?" says Danylo, on the phone from Vancouver.

Mention what? That Danylo was born in dreaded Calgary? Maybe we'll mention it. Maybe not.

"If I'm doing a show in Edmonton," says Danylo, "I generally don't mention the fact that I was born in Calgary because really, the audience might turn on you."

So now that he's in Vancouver, why doesn't he just tell us what he really thinks of Calgary.

"OK, uh ... I hate the Bow River," says the star of CTV's Comedy Inc. "What a useless river. I mean -- the Bow -- what kind of a name is that?"

"Now Edmonton, they got a river. And it's downtown. I mean, come on. Downtown is, like, on a cliff, too. It's unbelievable. And dangerous, which I like. I like a thrill."

He must. Danylo is headlining his own cross-Canada tour this summer, playing dates as far west as Vancouver and as far east as Ottawa. He opened the tour, by the way, in Calgary. Just thought we'd mention that.

Danylo said the tour is the culmination of a dream. For a comic, there's no better venue than a modern theatre. Generally, the crowds aren't drunk. The sound and lighting are top notch.

"And the audience is facing in the right direction," he says, laughing.

He's done corporate and club gigs without lighting, amplification or decent sight lines.

"I was at one place where they had no lights, so they used the heat lamp from the buffet," he says. "At the end of the night I was well done on one side."

Even in some comedy clubs, the serving staff hands out food-and-beverage tabs during the headliner's act. Or some drunk heckler will try to take over the show.

"I just read Steve Martin's book and he said distraction is the enemy of comedy. And absolutely, it is."

But not every standup comic can simply decide to book theatres across the country. Danylo is at that point in his career where he can take the risk.

He's famous -- or at least as famous as you can get in Canada, when your TV show is on Saturday evening, up against Hockey Night in Canada.

Comedy Inc. has five years under its belt. That's good for a Canadian comedy show, right?

"It also means you can have a show on for five years in Canada and have people go: 'Wow, never heard of it.' But yeah, we're up against hockey. It's a killer spot."

Danylo promises a mix of standup, sketch comedy and improv at this Friday's tour stop in Edmonton. He'll also be picking an improv partner, which he does for each date.

"As well, I'm putting out an invitation," he says. "At the very end of the show we have what's called an improv jam.

"If anyone wants to participate, no matter your level of experience, contact us and maybe we'll throw you on at the end."

(Go to www.romandanylo.com to apply to join the jam).

What else can the audience expect? Danylo says he'll be doing a small part of his standup act as David Caruso, the unsmiling star of such hits as CSI: Miami and NYPD Blue.

"Yes, there will be a couple of minutes of the comedy stylings of David Caruso, the funniest man on the planet," says Danylo, who proves the point again that Canadian comics are some of the funniest men on the planet.

His self-deprecating sense of humour also speaks well of a comic who performed at the prestigious HBO Comedy Festival, as well as Montreal's Just for Laughs Festival in the same year.

He's done American TV, including Outer Limits, and appeared in such feature films as Duets with Gwyneth Paltrow and Happy Birthday with John Goodman. He's worked with such comedy giants as David Steinberg and Martin Short.

He also moved to Vancouver in 1992. So give him a break on the Calgary thing.

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