

Hilarities celebrates 30 years of laughs with more laughter, food, drink, showgirls and music



Nick Kostis (*John Kuntz*)

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Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the host of the Laugh Track column, a man who hates that Kevin Love is injured ... Mike McIntyre.

Thank you, Cleveland. The Cavaliers forward suffered "an acute anterior inferior glenohumeral dislocation with the corresponding ligament/labrum tearing and humeral head bone bruising." In other words, his shoulder is too messed up for basketball, and he won't be back in the playoffs. On the bright side, he still could earn a spot in the Indians bullpen or compete for quarterback of the Browns.

Thirty hilarious years: Nick Kostis, a legend in the comedy scene and founder of Hilarities comedy club, has lots of fun planned for a May-long celebration of the 30th anniversary of Hilarities, which he first opened in Cuyahoga Falls. After that, Hilarities was in the Warehouse District before Kostis pioneered the revitalization of East Fourth Street by opening the **Pickwick & Frolic** entertainment complex, featuring a restaurant, comedy club and cabaret. **He's been called a visionary.**

Comedians across the country regard Hilarities as one of the classiest places to perform. And the free meal beats almost any "Chuckle Bungalow" or "Ha Ha Haven" on the road.

"It has been, more than anything, I really regard it -- not trying to be schmaltzy about it -- I regard it as a privilege," said Kostis, in his trademark philosophical waxation that defies a stopwatch and strains punctuation.

"These guys, they are not professors. They don't hold Ph.D.'s in economics or sociology or psychology or history or philosophy, but they encompass all of that because they reflect the culture. They comment on the pop culture and by doing so, I think, they contribute to the culture," he said.

"We inhabit this rock called Earth with all the species, all forms of life, but we're that singular human species that has yet another sense beyond those that other species have, and that is this thing we have that's called a sense of humor. We have intelligence, we have language, we articulate, we observe and we express. That's what comedy is. The comedy stage in some sense also is the last bastion of free speech."

Kostis isn't sure of the exact day Hilarities opened: "I wait for the mailman every day to find out who I am." But he's ready to celebrate, given the rough road his club has hauled during the recession. The future is bright, he said.

Bob Marley headlines with weekend shows, and the rest of the month features top-notch acts including Kevin Nealon, formerly of "Saturday Night Live" and Showtime's "Weeds." The Frolic Cabaret room will host the traditional "Vegas Burlesque Show" at the beginning and end of the month, and there will be several special performances in between of the "Fabulous Martini Show" featuring the original cast of the show that ran for five years in that space. And the Mother's Day brunch will feature music from a Cleveland Pops Orchestra ensemble.

This weekend at Hilarities: Catch Bob Marley at 8 p.m. Thursday (\$22), 7:30 and 10 p.m. Friday (\$25), and 7 and 9:30 p.m. Saturday (\$27) **at Hilarities**, inside Pickwick & Frolic restaurant, 2035 East Fourth St., Cleveland. Call 216-736-4242.

At the Improv: Little guy, big laughs. Brad Williams headlines at 7:30 p.m. Thursday (\$20), 7:30 and 10:15 p.m. Friday and Saturday (\$22), and 7 p.m. Sunday (\$22) **at the Improv**, 1148 Main Ave., next to Shooters on the west bank of Cleveland's Flats. Call 216-696-4677.

At the Comedy Zone: Frankie Paul headlines the **Comedy Zone at Club Velvet** in the Hard Rock Rocksino at 7:30 and 10 p.m. Friday, 9:30 p.m. Saturday and 7 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$15-\$20 plus tax. Call Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000.