



STORY BY IAN KIRBY



MICHAEL DUBOIS GOES SOLO

Live Novelty is a unique breed in the entertainment industry. While the umbrella term can cover a wide variety of artists, we traditionally think of them as either magicians, jugglers, ventriloquists, mimes, fire-eaters, hypnotists or others.

What if you could take multiple varieties of these artists and merge them into one exciting, entertaining and always fresh presentation that always keeps the audience amazed and guessing?

Solo Circus might just fit that bill. Michael DuBois is the star and driving force behind this show, which has been performed as a duo as Adult Circus for the past couple of years with Michael's long time friend Chris Chelko, who now only performs occasionally because of a great career opportunity with NBC.

Now Michael strikes out on his own with his one-man Vaudeville experience. From championship-winning juggling displays to magic, acrobatic stunts and even an exclusive slack rope routine – something extremely rare which has to be seen to be truly appreciated.

Michael has been performing professionally since 2004 when he graduated from Penn State, but it was actually his college days and exposure to campus activities boards and clubs that brought him inside our world. Performing local campus dates even before graduation, Michael was primed to be an excellent college entertainer with this prior experience in the marketplace.

"I consider myself a one-man variety show. The concept is that I act

as the ringmaster for the circus, as well as playing the part of all the acts within it. I am in a transition from a straightforward trick/variety show into something that is much more theatrical."

Michael even had a wonderfully tailored ringmaster's coat made especially for him. Besides setting the ambience for the performance, Michael takes the role a step further and uses it as a means to tell the audience some of the history and background behind what they'll see throughout the night's performance. "The range of my show includes anything one would expect to see in a visual circus performance and perhaps a bit more. There is juggling, magic, unicycle tricks, the slack wire and of course, a lot of comedy."

Perhaps the crux of any performance like this is the ability to connect with an audience and make them laugh. It takes a special breed to become a truly great novelty entertainer. The world is wrought with performers who possess amazing technical skills, yet their impact and resulting success are severely hindered by their inability to entertain. Michael has made this notion a pillar of his performing mentality. "I think the laughs I get and connection with the audience are the strongest part of my performances, though the tricks you see here will blow you away as well. I have some new stuff I am working into my routine, like a cannon that I'm very excited about. Knife throwing will be there, as well as a new mini-teeter board." This is a small board set at an angle with an object on one end, when Michael stomps on the other, things become airborne.

Michael is growing into the new concept of his show, and letting his acting chops develop with the rest of his repertoire. "I am slowly working my way into the new idea. I had this really cool ringmaster jacket made," he says, with a touch of a little boy on Christmas morning in his voice. "The whole idea was that this other character can introduce the acts. Before the idea, I would find it hard to transition from say, a juggling routine into a mind reading piece while transitioning the mood from the whimsical to the more cerebral. Now, the ringmaster takes care of it. All of it is still me; I am not some completely different character throughout each piece of the show, but it does give me some space to use different aspects of my personality that better fit the particular situation. I can be mysterious when mind reading, or be a goofball when juggling."

It gives Michael the unique opportunity as well to play characters off of each other or make saves. The ringmaster can complement the mind reader and crack on the juggler. "I can make fun or congratulate myself in a humorous way."

Michael isn't single-minded in his objectives. Many great novelty artists fall into the trap of being so enamored with the incredible skill they've built, they miss the forest for the trees. No one really appreciates dry technical skill, but using

those skills as a framework for a theatrical entertainment experience while keeping an eye on the bigger picture has been Michael's aim. "I am trying to create a show that has legs and is much different from anything else out there. There are a ton of comedy juggling or comedy magic performers, but I think I am setting myself apart by creating a slant that is way different and something I can eventually put on Broadway."

If successful, people will probably try to carbon copy Michael's format eventually hoping for the same success, but they'd have to build a heck of an arsenal of tricks to do it. Even if one had in mind to use the "ringmaster" format, good luck learning to juggle, mesmerize, unicycle, slack rope, eat fire, etc.

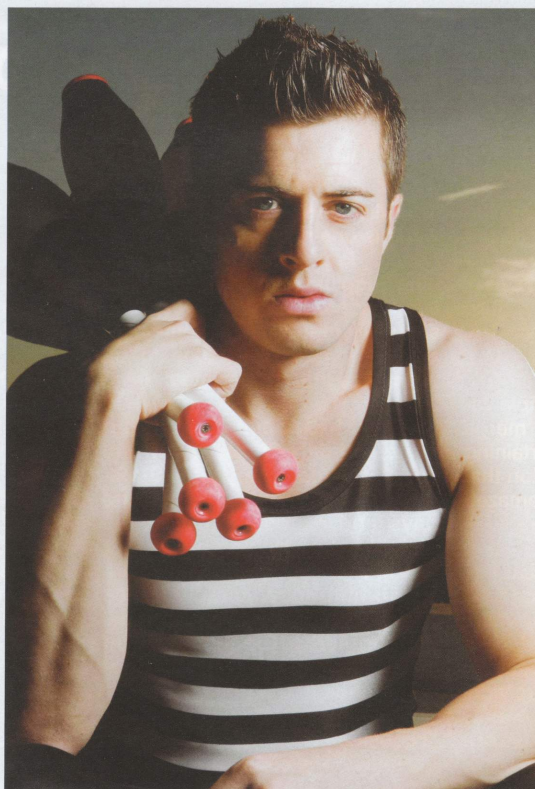
One thing that creates great and spanning careers for entertainers is foresight and vision. One must not get so caught up in the moment and their comfort zone that they don't look forward. Michael is doing just that and has some very unique notions for where he'd like to see his show end up. "I almost think of it like it will be the

'anti-Cirque du Soleil.' I don't mean that with any negative connotation whatsoever, I just mean that the formula and structure of my show will be the complete opposite. With Cirque du Soleil, you have a huge budget, many people on the cast, amazing costuming and face paint and crazy sets. You have performers that literally dedicate years to perfecting one routine they do over and over for very long periods. I want my show to be one person doing everything with a raw feel."

Michael feels (and he's right) that the multitalented facet of what he's able to do renders his show the most amazing. Really, how often do you see a single performer able to execute so many random and varied feats? "To me, the idea is the audience sees it as 'Wow, that guy's a great juggler... oh dude, now he's going to do the slack line... and this, what now!?' That creates more excitement in my mind because people believe there's no way one person could do that many things. When you watch another circus like Cirque du Soleil or Ringling Bros. (which I love) you'll see an act come out and do eight minutes. They have worked their entire lives for that eight minutes, so it better be perfect. In a show like mine, where one person carries so much, many more things seem to have the possibility of going wrong and in the audience's perception, the performance is much more taxing on a single entertainer than a grand team of specialists."

One guarantee that this show will be easily bookable, low maintenance and a pleasure to bring to campus is Michael's clear intention on making it so. "I think with my business background, I have put an emphasis on creating a show I know I can make a good living doing. For one thing, I know that taking a one man show to programmers and planners is much easier. I can say 'I can do it all for you and I'm the only one you have to pay. I can make it affordable for them and, because all the accountability comes back to me, I am completely invested in making it a great experience for them.'"

Michael isn't just doing tricks to get attention; he loves the world of performing, Vaudeville and all of it's history, some of which he





shares in his show. This doesn't leave him with blinders on however, taking his play book page by page from the greats of yesteryear. Sure, their influence is there, but Michael's show is all his own. "I haven't studied one ringmaster in particular per se, but I have been in love with circus since I was a kid, so I have seen what's out there. Having said that, I really want the show to be true to me. When I come out on stage, it is going to be Michael. Of course, there are different elements of me, but you won't see me hamming it up trying to copy some especially boisterous ringmaster stereotype."

Michael's history in performing goes way back, his fascination started with a pretty typical story. "My grandparents took me to see the 'Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Greatest Show on Earth' when I was four years old. After that, I was in love with circus. As a kid, I was always very hands-on and if I saw something that interested me, I wanted to play with it and learn how to do it myself. I went to a Montessori School which was itself a very hands-on and interactive experience and that trained me to use my hands and dynamic thinking in life."

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Michael built his repertoire of skills over his youth and by the time he got to college, he was ready to network and take things to the next level. "I was really fortunate because when I got to Penn State, they had a magic club and a juggling club, both of which gave me a chance to meet other people doing what I did. It helped me out a lot."

Michael ruminates about the coming generation of novelty performers, who have unparalleled access to training and information for the performing arts that less than 10 years ago weren't available to him. "I can't imagine now what it's like. With YouTube and the Internet, the progress that happened in the last few years is amazing. With juggling, it's unbelievable. When I was growing up, there weren't many resources. I learned to juggle in a middle school gym class, I never had books or videos or circus camp or whatever. Now, juggling and magic and circus are so accessible. You can search for tutorials on just about anything you want to. That doesn't mean it will be easy, but at least it's there. If only I had that as a kid, who knows how much further I might have gotten with those tools. Imagine in five or ten years the talent that will be coming up."

So, he was already 18 when he got access to the other people that could help him take his game to the next level. "I had a normal childhood in athletics and school and wasn't prepping myself for this lifestyle. Once I got to college, there was a paradigm shift in my mentality. I got very lucky and once I realized I wanted to perform, I was able to."

Michael has had some significant boosts in the past several years, including a prior cover of this publication (2006) and a handful of "Tonight Show" appearances.

Michael began his professional career (at least making money) in college. The president of Penn State University, as magic enthusiast himself, first hired him for a tailgate party to perform roving magic. "That showed Chris and I that we could really get paid to do this. We started passing out business cards to all of these big time people that were donating money to the school and word of mouth started to spread."

Increasingly, local events proceeded, then moving to New York allowed Michael to enter the high-end social event market. "It started small and grew from there. We started booking magic conventions and met Jim Karol, who broke us into the college market."

Michael tips his hat to a couple of veteran performers who he credits as being catalysts for his professional career in the campus activities market. "About a year before Chris and I joined Jim Karol Productions, The Evasons and Dale K were at Penn State and we sat down with Dale for a talk. He really was amazing to us and told us what was out there, opening our eyes to all the real possibilities in performing for a living. It's funny, because he probably thought of us as two dreaming little college kids with stars in our eyes, but now I'm doing exactly what he is, performing in the same market right alongside him and the other top guys. It's sort of cool how it ended up."

Now with GP Entertainment and ready for a big school year in the coming months, Michael is the perfect act to consider for a completely unique and head-turning event. He'll do stunts that will wow your audience and have the entire campus buzzing. It'll be perfect for a packed house when you want to rebook him.

BOOK IT! For more information on bringing Michael DuBois to your campus, contact GP Entertainment at (866) 812-8248 or for virtual links log on to our interactive website at www.campusactivitiesmagazine.com