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Comedy that makes you think

Ulster County resident Doug Motel brings his one-man show to Unison

BY RICH THOMASELLI
Ulster County Press

Since when does comedy make you go 'Hmmm?'

When it's in the hands of actor, comedian, storyteller and award-winning playwright Doug Motel.

The Ulster County resident will expound on his views on life, and some of the humorous, touching and inspiring experiences of his time in show business and as an eyewitness to some of America's defining moments – such as the L.A. riots and the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11 – with a special local performance of his one-man show, "StarDUST, Adventures in Consciousness."

Motel will perform at the Unison Arts and Learning Center, 68 Mountain Rest Road, New Paltz, on Saturday, July 26, at 8 p.m. All profits go to the Lederman Children's Center, a community based learning center in Stone Ridge. Motel's two-year old daughter, Maitreya, is a student there.

Motel offers up a hilarious version of what is known as "conscious comedy." Yeah, he makes you laugh.

But he also makes you think.

"I never set out to write something that I think will be 'motivational,'" Motel said in an interview. "I just try to write the kind of stories that I would find exciting, and for me that is usually something that makes me leave the theater with a feeling of expansiveness. If I invest my evening with an artist, I want to leave them remembering my true values and being uplifted by that."

Motel has been a comedian since he started doing stand-up in Times Square at the age of 18. He said he became fascinated with the art of creating characters by listening to his father's Bill Cosby records when he was eight.

When he moved to New York City, he had the opportunity to see some live performances that, in his words, "completely rocked my world."

"I saw Whoopi at a special performance a few months before her debut when none of us had a clue as to who she was," Motel said. "I was so inspired by her that I ran home and started writing and didn't quit until 3 a.m. when I had the outline for my first one-person show ("The Doug Motel Show" at SoHo's Pineapple Studio)."

Motel said he was also inspired by Lily Tomlin's "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe," and it clearly shows in his performances – the *New York Post* said, "Doug Motel, like Lily Tomlin, is one of those rare comedians who creates and seemingly becomes totally original characters."

Motel was also mesermized by seeing Richard Pryor, Eric Bogosian and a comedic brethren and Ulster County neighbor – Stone Ridge resident Denny Dillon.

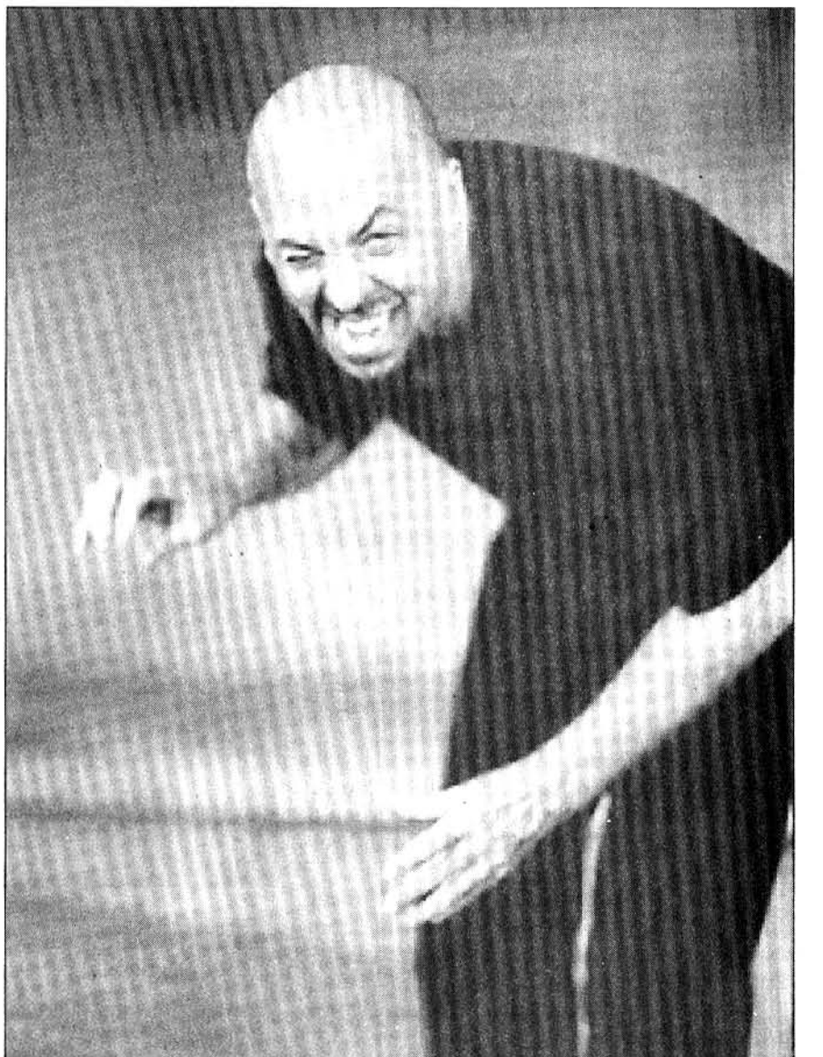
"I saw her one night on Saturday Night Live playing a poor little rich girl desperately trying to bully people into giving her love at her birthday party," Motel said. "It was heartbreaking and funny, and unlike anything I had seen on SNL before."

"StarDUST" is just Motel's latest hit. He is the author of several critically acclaimed solo plays including "Mick In America," "Shiva Arms" (winner of the L.A. Weekly award for Best Solo Performance and winner of Theatre LA Ovation award for Best Writing of a World Premier play, Best Actor and Best Production), and "Mind Salad."

He wrote "StarDUST" right here in Ulster County. In fact, he said he needed to retreat to Room 317 of the Holiday Inn in Kingston, with its peaceful view of a creek, to concentrate on completing the show because of the temptation of playing with his daughter.

"I have found so many supportive friends here and that actually makes me want to create something to present to them," he said. "Since my shows always have some themes of personal growth, it's very exciting to be living in a community where many people are already seekers of richer meaning. That is sadly not very common and, though it is easy to take for granted, I think it bears regular celebration. Also, the show I am working on now deals with my fairly recent entry into parenthood and the journey from the city to a much different life here."

Tickets to the show at Unison are $15. Performance time is 8 p.m. "StarDUST's" running time is approximately 80 minutes without an intermission. It is not suitable for children under 13 years of age. For tickets go to www.DougMotel.com or call (845) 363 4728.



COURTESY PHOTO

A FUNNY GUY. Ulster resident Doug Motel, an accomplished comedian, actor, storyteller and award-winning playwright, is bringing his one-man show to New Paltz.