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## Comedy night to highlight 1990 homecoming weekend

By Ming Rodrigues  
Emerald Reporter

An evening of laughs will open this year's homecoming/parent's weekend.

The University Student Alumni Association will present two of the Northwest's finest comedians in a Comedy Night to-night at 8 in the EMU Ballroom.

Sharing the limelight will be Jake Johannsen and Arnold Mukai, two comedians with very distinct styles.

"There's a crying need for comedy here on campus," Cliff Milbank, Alumni President said. "It has great potential at such a culturally diverse University community that's open to all sorts of entertainment. I feel that comedy, with its myriad of genres, would be a great idea as such, especially too when college students are always ready for a good time."

"I don't think they'll stop sodomy by sending guys to prison; that's pretty much headquarters."

That's the heart of his act - more of halting discourses than strings of jokes. And his ill-at-ease but resolved persona sells.

"Woody Allenesque, but he's very heartland and gentle," radio personality Alex Bennett said.

Comedy Competition producer Jon Fox said, "He has a sophisticated edge but his subject matter is universally appealing - waiting for the telephone repairman, cutting yourself shaving. He manages to be intellectual without losing the audience."

Meanwhile the *San Francisco Examiner* pinned Jake down as "a storyteller who follows one weird detail with another and puts it all across with his demented nerd-at-the-science-fair delivery."

*'(Comedy) can actually be quite a learning experience amidst all the fun.'*

— Cliff Milbank

Milbank hopes the concept takes off and plans to work on presenting a series of comedy nights for the University next year.

Comedy, Milbank believes, is more than a laugh a minute. "There's a worldliness and increasing ethnicity flavoring comedy. It can actually be quite a learning experience amidst all the fun, when you get all these comedians coming on stage with their different wit, style, and ethnic background."

With his bookworm glasses and kitchen haircut, Iowa native Jake Johannsen projects the classic, clean-cut, stammering, earnest reasonableness you'd get if young Henry Fonda or Jimmy Stewart had done stand-up. Watching him, you just want to encourage him, give him a pat on the back and root him on.

This isn't a stage character. "It's an honest impression of what I am - nervous with people," Johannsen said. "I think the only way you can be different is to be what you are; anybody can go up there and pretend to be a manic."

He doesn't so much deliver gag lines as he seems to stumble over them with a kind of owlish amiability.

Deciding against any career that involved bosses, Johannsen went to San Francisco in 1982 determined to become a comedian, although he admitted he wasn't sure why. "I was only kind of funny as a kid but then I began doing open mike and it seemed like a fun thing to do and it is," he said.

In 1986, Johannsen won the 11th annual San Francisco Stand Up Comedy Competition and he has appeared in the HBO Young Comedians Special and on public television's "Comedy Night".

A year later, Johannsen made his network television debut on "Late Night with David Letterman" which was followed by four more appearances on the show the following year. Just last year as well, he debuted on the "Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson".

This year, Johannsen performed for President Bush at the White House.

Watching Arnold Mukai, on the other hand, is like seeing Toshio Mifune playing the life of Harpo Marx as filmed by David Cronenberg - all the funny little gnomish details make up an eccentric and hilarious comic dreamscape.

The Japanese comedian who tells his

## New musician writes, produces own album

By Mia Bertelsen  
Emerald Contributor

Stephan Mendez, a young new artist in Eugene, has sharp criticism for local bands. He is "bored with the music scene because there is a lack of anything interesting."

"The music here is too complacent and not creative," he said.

So, he decided to change that. He hit the studio and, as of Oct. 15, this 19-year-old Lane Community College student had his own album.

He used his musical talent to produce an album entitled "Songs from Purgatory" for his band Fathom. The idea was to provide an alternative to the "garage band" sound that local bands are producing.

He describes his music as a "sinister version of Depeche Mode." It is experimental sound, often with a dark, harsh rhythm. It could be labeled as industrial music, which is known as being visual. Mendez, however, hesitates to categorize.

Mendez has played once at WOW Hall and would like to continue gaining experience and exposure playing live.

"It is more a me-oriented band," Mendez said, explaining the lack of a back-up band. "It's not overly important that I find a back-up band, but it would help me with my desire to play live more often."

It took him three months to write the music for the album. "The hardest part for me was writing the vocals," he said. "The writing of the actual music, though, came much more easily because I really enjoy it."



Stephan Mendez takes a break after writing and producing his own album.

The next step in the process was naming the album, which, for Mendez, became a personal experience.

Although he is not Catholic he felt that the term "purgatory" described the mental state he was in while composing the album.

"I wanted to develop my music skills and in the state I was in, I felt removed from reality," Mendez said.

The message in his music closely connects to the state he was in during the album-making process.

The songs and messages deal primarily with personal relationships. He discusses the games people play and concentrates on the "negative side of relationships because it is better to get it out

into the open to deal with it."

Reflecting back on pre-album times, Mendez remembers his first influential musical experiences, the ones he had while listening to Skinny Puppy.

"They were one of the first bands to influence my music," he said. "I was listening to pop music like Ah-Ha and then one day I discovered Skinny Puppy. At first it was really strange, but then it grew on me and I learned to like it."

Mendez, a Eugene native, studies music and art. He would like to pursue his music career by using the profits from this album to produce another.

His album is currently available at House of Records, 258 E. 13th.

audience their bones will turn to tofu if they don't drink milk, gives an unpredictable mishmash of material to chuckle at.

Stalking the comedy stage, Mukai challenges the audience to trivia contests, doing uncanny impressions, quick-quipping and sliding his face around like a rubber mask being mangled by five angry hands, all accompanied by a stream of surreal vocal sound effect.

"I've always done impressions and noises since I was a little kid," Mukai said. "I think all little kids are great mimics. Well, I guess I'm still a grown-up kid. I still want to make noises."

A sampling of his repertoire includes a

human blow dryer, Kermit the Frog singing a ballad and Kung Fu expert Bruce Lee.

Perhaps his almost childlike, endearing style may be accounted for by the fact that by day Mukai runs a day care center with his wife.

Mukai, who grew up in Seattle, got his itch for comedy more than a decade back. "I was at a comedy club, and I thought I could do as well or better than those guys. So I asked the emcee how I could get into comedy."

Soon he was in the Seattle Laugh Off, where he finished 12th out of 65 contestants. Since then he has been traveling up and down the West Coast.

Spreading his interests as well, Mukai made a movie, *Snowballs* in 1984 with Fred Williamson and he has done opening acts for Dionne Warwick and James Brown. He has also made numerous college appearances.

Of his appeal, Mukai said, "Being of Japanese descent is an advantage because people want to hear what I have to say."

Opening the show tonight will be local comedian Drew Marks.

Tickets, \$5 for general public and \$4 for students, are available at the EMU main desk and at the door. University Housing is also selling tickets to dorm residents for \$3.



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**Arachnophobia** PG-13  
12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30, 11:45

**I Come In Peace** R  
1:25, 3:25, 5:25, 7:25, 9:25, 11:25

**Good Fellas** R  
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00

**Taking Care of Business** R  
12:10, 2:30, 4:45, 7:05, 9:25, 11:45

**Mr. Destiny** PG-13  
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