

Hong Kong humor

Stand-up comedy nights every Saturday at Kowloon's have become increasingly popular over the years

BY RYAN MURPHEY
PULSE REPORTER

Since 1987, comics not well-known enough to pack the Hult Center or the McDonald Theatre have performed at a little nightclub on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard called Tsunami's. The club, which is part of Kowloon Restaurant, presents live stand-up comedy every Saturday at 9 p.m.

In the past, the club has hosted comics like Margaret Cho, who was featured at Tsunami's long before she was too famous to perform anywhere but the largest venues in town. Another Tsunami's performer who went on to bigger and better things is Carlos Alazraqui, better known for his role as Dep. James Garcia on Comedy Central's "Reno 911," or as the voice of the Taco Bell Chihuahua.

Kowloon was founded by Kit Wha

Chan, who emigrated from Hong Kong to the United States with his family when he was 17 and moved to Oregon three years later in 1972. In 1975, Chan opened his first restaurant, Canton, in Roseburg. Chan explains with a painful smirk that he "learned a lot from that experience."

In 1978, Chan bought the piece of land that would be the first Kowloon Restaurant, which opened a year later in Roseburg. Chan became interested in operating a night club after observing the success of a place in Roseburg called P.P. Clayton's, and in 1981 added a tiki lounge to Kowloon. He got in touch with a talent agent from Portland who had booked appearances by Bobcat Goldthwait, The Smothers Brothers, Victoria Jackson and even Ralph Nader in nightclubs and on college campuses. The next year, Kowloon's

stand-up comedy night began, and when Chan opened a second location in Eugene in 1987, he began booking acts there as well.

The stand-up nights attracted small crowds of 15 to 20 people at first, creating a very awkward and disappointing environment for the comics. Sometimes the comics had to travel to Eugene on a Greyhound bus and get picked up by Chan at the station. But the word got out, and now anywhere from 120 to 200 people show up every Saturday night for the performances, according to assistant bar manager Sarah Bauman.

All performances are on Saturdays at 9 p.m. The cover is \$6. Upcoming performances include Brandon Sass and Doug Coover on Nov. 27, Jimmy Turner and Auggie Smith on Dec. 11 and Sadiki Fuller on Dec. 18. Kowloon/Tsunami's is at 2222 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

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DIVA downtown

Organization aims to connect with artists, make art a 'legitimate goal'

BY AMY LICHTY
PULSE REPORTER

Big cities such as Paris, Chicago and New York hold fine arts in high regard, but smaller places such as Eugene are proving they've got what it takes to have a small city atmosphere with a big city appreciation for the arts through organizations such as DIVA - the Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts.

Only a year old, DIVA, which is located in the heart of downtown on Broadway and Olive, has worked to improve both the regional art community and the downtown district as well.

"It was started by a small group of people who took a look at the downtown area and said, 'we really need to revitalize the downtown around a theme of the visual arts.' To that end, they came up with DIVA," executive director Mary Unruh said. "The energy of that group of people was the impetus for DIVA to take a foothold in downtown Eugene. If you look at Taos, N.M., or Newport, Ore., you can see where they've actually been able to revitalize the inner core of the city around a theme. There's so much that can be done."

Setting its sights on the revival of the downtown area, DIVA strives to connect with downtown businesses, locals and visitors to Eugene. According to its Web site, DIVA is taking the initiative to bring together civic leaders, business leaders, arts organizations, artists and community members in a dialogue to spur focused action toward a vital and profitable downtown Eugene.

"DIVA wants to be a lot bigger, sort of a visual arts center, a tourist attraction and a destination for people in the downtown," DIVA board member Toby Ensign said. "There are all of these musicians and bands going on (downtown) but, in terms of the visual arts,



NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER
The Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts is at 110 West Broadway.

DIVA can offer that kind of outlet."

"We provide the community with a lot of art classes and events to bring them downtown to enjoy the visual arts — not just in our gallery — but to come and have a hands-on experience in workshops on a variety of art topics and innovative films," Unruh said. "Every second Friday we have a film forum in which we show innovative films. Right now we have films by local high school students in competition. It's a part of DIVA that's growing."

But it's not the only project that DIVA is moving to the forefront.

"One of the things we've done in the course of a year is put together a wonderful Web site, www.divanow.org, where artists can show their own work," Unruh said. "They don't have to know any kind of programming to put up their work. They can sell their artwork directly from the site and show their portfolios to anyone."

The site was designed to aid technologically impaired artists in

becoming successful small businesses by exposing and selling their work all over the world.

"Our first sale from the Web site was to Lancaster, England, and our second was to Tempe, Ariz. What (the site) does is put Eugene artists out there in the world. The perception of Eugene will change from out as well as from within," Unruh said. "The creation of that dynamic and the whole idea behind DIVA is to be a catalyst for change to happen here. I think we've been successful in doing that in the last year."

DIVA also has plans to cultivate a stronger relationship with the University and to help involve students who don't often stray far from the insulated environment of the University, Unruh said.

"By having better communication with the University on the things that are available downtown, like the First Friday ArtWalk or the innovative films, maybe it will help people think of coming down here," she said.

"We're interested in educating people about the arts, connecting with artists and making art a legitimate goal for young people. It gives young people an expansion of the world and what is possible. If we could get some of the energy and innovativeness of the youth in the community to focus on, we could really be a part in changing something. Young people could really make this happen, and we welcome that kind of energy," Unruh said.

DIVA encourages anyone interested in volunteering to stop in. The program offers opportunities to learn how an art gallery works and gain exposure to various artists using diverse mediums to express themselves — a great opportunity for art students and art lovers alike.

"There's a lot of energy with DIVA," Ensign said, who began his volunteer work with DIVA last March. "I'm really proud to be a part of this."

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