

Melonville Comedy Festival returns to Hermiston

By Tammy Malgesini

Go! Magazine

HERMISTON — Get ready for some laughs — a pair of funny men and a funny woman are ready to yuck it up during the Melonville Comedy Festival. The headliner is Dale Jones, the featured comedian is Monica Nevi and Taylor Clark will serve as emcee.

In its 28th year, the event is Friday, Jan. 28, at 8 p.m. at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, 1705 E. Airport Road. A no-host bar is available when the doors open at 7 p.m. Open to adults 21 and older, tickets are \$300 for a table for 10 or individual reserved seats are \$35 each — tickets purchased at the door are \$40.

With a rapid-fire delivery, Jones has honed his skills as a comedian for more than two



Dale Jones

dozen years. The headliner's high-energy performances include plenty of animated faces, physical comedy and improvisation.

In addition to training at Second City, Jones has earned his comedy chops on stages across the county and the seas — he's a favorite on Carnival Cruise Lines. He's also had numerous television and radio appearances, including Season 6 of NBC's "Last Comic Standing." And in 2017 after performing on two episodes of "The Comedy All Stars" for



Monica Nevi

Pure Flix, he was offered an acting role on the TV series, "Malibu Dan the Family Man."

A native of the Seattle area, Nevi said she grew up surrounded by a humorous family. After injuries ended her collegiate basketball career, she pursued her interest in stand-up comedy while obtaining her degree at Seattle University.

And since then, Nevi hasn't looked back — performing at comedy clubs, festivals and competitions. Also, she has appeared on FOX's TV show, "Laughs." In late 2020, she



Taylor Clark

debuted a pair of albums within a month of each other. The first, "Mostly Finger Guns," is a standup album and the other is "Chill, which she describes as a comedic guided meditation. Both topped the comedy charts.

A Seattle-based comic, Clark spent time grinding the rails in Brooklyn. After an ankle injury took a toll on his career as a sponsored skateboarder, he embarked on managing apartment rentals. With special access to the CastleBraid building, he started host-

ing and producing stand-up shows.

After becoming a dad, he packed up his family and moved to Seattle. However, after being invited to audition for the Seattle International Comedy Contest, he re-dedicated himself to a career in comedy.

The comedy festival began nearly three decades ago as a fundraiser for the Umatilla County Fair. After the fair board discontinued involvement, Warren Smith, who coordinated the event as a fair board member, continued to bring national comedy acts to Hermiston as a fundraiser for the local Special Olympics program.

When Smith stepped back several years ago, Stuart Rice, owner of Midway Bar & Grill, took the reins. His establishment had been involved for many years with bar service.

"Warren Smith and his family did a wonderful job for many years," Rice said. "I think this is an important event in raising money for our local Special Olympics athletes."

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.melonvillecomedyfestival.com. For questions, call 541-567-5180.

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