

A laughing matter

Improv humor group Freudian Slip shares behind-the-scenes experiences

By Heather Campbell
THE BATTALION

As public relations officer for Freudian Slip, Brian Smith discovered he could do his job too well when advertising for the group's performances.

"We have to be careful that our fliers aren't too funny," said Smith, a senior political science major. "One of our fliers this semester turned into a type of collector's item and students were pulling them down to keep and hang in their dorms. While that is flattering, it's hard to get the word out to the student body when people swipe our fliers."

Freudian Slip, which originated in 1992, is an improvisation humor group which performs throughout the school year.

Nathaniel Strawn, a junior math major, said he found out about Freudian Slip's auditions when he performed in high school plays. Since then, Strawn joined the troupe and currently serves as director.

"My basic duty is to make the troupe challenge itself and learn the techniques that have been passed down from the generations of improvisers that have come before us," Strawn said. "My real job is to figure out the best way to direct any given person."

The group puts on several shows throughout the year and performs to all different audiences.

Will Steed, a member of Freudian Slip and a junior management information systems major, said the group usually performs five or six shows a semester. In addition to performing at First Yell, Aggieland Weekend and a series of A&M camps, Steed said the group has enjoyed a variety of venues.

"Last August we performed at the 'Out of Bounds' improv festival in Austin," Steed said. "This Christmas, we are all taking a trip to Chicago to perform at the nationally famous 'Second City,' home to 'Saturday Night Live' cast members."

To prepare for such performances, Steed said the group holds three-hour practice sessions three times a week.

Smith said the long practices help the group's mindset when it comes to performances.

"We practice forms for any upcoming shows, experiment with new improv ideas, and just try to sharpen our 'group mind' mentality and work toward becoming a cohesive group," he said. "Improv requires that members of our group sense and know how someone else is going to react almost as quickly as that person. Since there is no script, reading your scene partner is paramount to a good scene."

Smith said marketing to students is an integral component for ensuring the success of Freudian Slip's campus shows.

"As PR officer, I am the contact for bookings by student organizations and other events in the (Bryan-College Station) area," Smith said. "PR is really done by everyone on the troupe. We all hang fliers, pass them out before games and on campus, and write on chalkboards. I just try to coordinate it all."

Smith said advertising has increased Freudian Slip's audience sizes and directly affects overall attendance.

Smith's involvement with the troupe has allowed him to experience many comic situations.

"In any given night at a show or practice, I can be thrust into a scene as a sock hop participant, mad scientist or an oppressed lemer," he said. "The sky is the limit."

Yet some limits must be set for public performances, Smith said.

"Sometimes our scenes at practice get a little out of control - something way too shady to do on a main stage - but it's fun to go through the discovery process with my fellow troupe members," Smith said. "That's what improv is all about, discovery and using strong characters to find agreement and moving the scene forward."

Smith said he had first-hand experience with improvising during the Aggieland



BRIAN RUFF • THE BATTALION

From left: Rashaun "Bob" Fontenot, a junior English major, Nathaniel Strawn, a junior math major, and Brian "Smitty" Smith, a senior political science major practice the art of improv on Sunday night.

Saturday Show.

"We (Freudian Slip members) were the emcees of the event and introduced the upcoming groups and did intermissions to allow bands to set up," Smith said. "At one point some dance group is having trouble getting their music to play, so I jump up and start into this long presentation about Reveille and how she became our mascot. About eight minutes into it, I look at the sound booth and the guy is still shaking his head, so I keep going on."

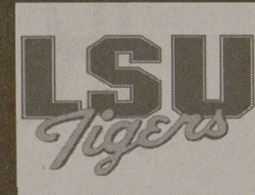
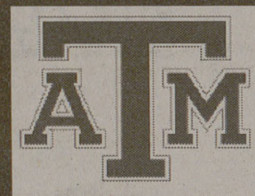
Soon, I'm talking about who knows what kind of traditions at the University."

Smith, however, had no problem continuing his impromptu presentation.

"After about 10 minutes of me just rambling away, they get the sound going and I exit," he said. "I come back down offstage and the whole troupe is just rolling laughing at me. Evidently, I spoke for 10 minutes about all sorts of Aggie stuff. My improv skills helped out there."

GIG the TIGERS

Calling all Aggie fans in or near Houston over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend! Your men's college basketball team leads off a basketball triple-header Saturday, November 30 at the spectacular new Reliant Stadium. Support your Aggies against the Tigers of LSU at 1:30 pm. Then stick around for two more top college matchups:



Texas

@4:00pm vs

Seton Hall

Baylor

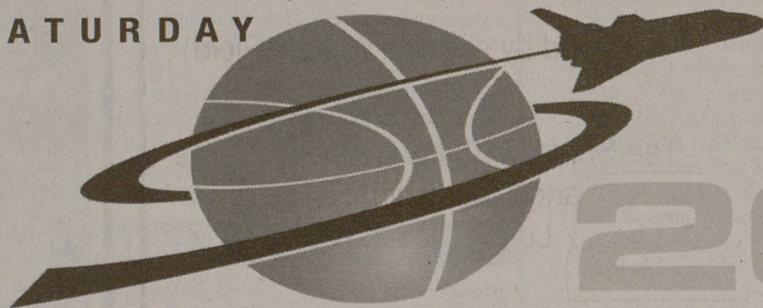
@7:00pm vs

U of Houston

Tickets start at only \$12 for admission to all three games.

SATURDAY

NOVEMBER 30



2002

SPACE CITY HOOPS

C L A S S I C

www.spacecityhoops.com