

Comedian true to himself Pride Fest offers encore performance by Ryder

BY CARYS MILLS, THE WINDSOR STAR AUGUST 5, 2010

STORY PHOTOS (1)



Toronto-based comedian Richard Ryder headlines Friday at Pride Fest.
Photograph by: Photo courtesy of Richard Ryder, The Windsor Star

Watching a recording of the first time he let go onstage, using material made up on the spot, comedian Richard Ryder wasn't sure what to think.

"All I saw was a fat, homosexual man flapping his arms up and down like a banshee for five minutes," he said.

The next time he tried doing something else. He put a tie on and kept his hands in his pockets. He said it was the longest five minutes of his life.

Ryder, who will be headlining Friday at Windsor Pride's Comedy Night Out, realized something shortly after.

"The trick to doing standup is to be the best you that you are when you're being fabulous at a party," he said.

"You have to be you."

Genuine stage presence is what made Windsor Pride bring Ryder back for a second year to perform at Pride Week, which runs until Sunday.

"He was just really down to earth, people found him more relatable," said David Lenz, festival chairperson.

The comedy night is part of Pride Week, offering a wide range of entertainment for people who might not be interested in the typical offerings of Pride. Among the events, there's an Essex County wine tour, dance party and games for kids.

"(It's) different aspects for all different types of people," Lenz said.

"It's inclusion. The lesbian and gay community diversifies in age, from teenagers to eighty-something-year-olds."

But the comedy night Friday at the Riverfront Festival Plaza from 8 p.m. until 1 a.m., has a special role.

"Everyone likes a good laugh, it's healing," Lenz said.

Hearing people laugh never gets old for Ryder, who co-hosts 103.9 PROUD FM's morning show in Toronto.

"It's such a treat for me to be onstage and see people honestly laughing with reckless abandon," he said.

Ryder, who describes himself as a "loose comic," said he uses an approach that includes a lot of interaction with his audience to see what types of reactions he'll get.

For those quivering in the front row in fear of becoming a punchline, Ryder said he'll only go as far as people are comfortable.

"I don't want them to have to be the butt of the joke for the rest of the weekend," he said.

Ryder, a Yuk Yuk's comedian, said performing for a "gay savvy" audience can be difficult because it's like they may have heard it all before.

His material is about everything, he said, ranging from his dog to camping.

"There's nothing I don't talk about," he said.

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