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December 13, 2007

Interview: Jim McCue, Comedian

Jim McCue Book Launch Party

Comedy Connection

Faneuil Hall (T: Government Center)

Sunday, December 16, 8:00 pm, \$15

Free for veterans and military personnel

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The troops could use a lot from us right now, whether it be body armor or sunblock. But one local performer is using his specific talents to make the lives of the troops a little bit better. Comedian Jim McCue, who is also co-founder of the Boston Comedy Festival, has been traveling overseas to entertain soldiers for years.

McCue's just published a book about his experiences, and he'll be celebrating the debut of *Embedded Comedian* this weekend at the Comedy Connection. He took the time to answer some of Bostonist's questions and suggest how you can help the troops for the holiday.

Where have you traveled with the troops?

Let's see... I have been to Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq.

In your videos, you are performing in what appears to be a tent. What is your typical setup when you perform?

There is no typical set up on these trips. I could be in a tent [outside] one of Saddam's palaces, a theater, or standing outside somewhere just performing for ten to twenty people.

More interview after the jump!

Are they typically tents with large audiences?

That show you saw on Myspace was about 700 people, but as I said, there is no typical over there.

What kind of sense of humor do the troops have? Have any of them told you some good jokes that you can share?

They have the best sense of humor. They are very ready to laugh. When I performed at Abu Ghraib prison, one soldier referred to the place as a gated community.

You performed after touring Abu Gharib prison. How do you keep your own humor up after such intense moments?

In times of stress, laughter is what gets you through. Laughter is the cure for stress so if you are stressed go to a comedy club and laugh!

Did you become close with any of the troops?

Well there was a guy, Lt. Col. Saunders, who was our escort the first time I went to Iraq. He came up north and we had a cookout at my parents house. It was great. I sent him a copy of the book and we touch base now and again. I met Sgt. Gibbons in Bosnia and then again on another tour in Afghanistan. The same thing happened with an airman named Carmin who I first met in Kyrgyzstan the again a year later in Kuwait. It's always great when I do a show stateside and someone who saw me overseas comes.



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Tell us about some of the people that you met.

On a luxury cruise ship, I met a guy who had seen me in Iraq. I was working on the ship a week after getting back and he had just returned from Iraq. We found ourselves in this tropical paradise and could not get over how strange the change of scenery was.

Did you ever once feel that you couldn't be funny for your audience?

I usually feel like I can pull it off. Some situations are pretty tough though. We did a show at a hospital tent and I got a little choked up. I managed to get through it but I did go a little short on my set.

If it gets hard to be funny in the midst of guns and bombs, what is the inspiration that gets you through?

Our men and woman who serve in the military are very inspirational. I can deal with it for a couple weeks or a month because I know they are doing it for much longer under much more dangerous situations. It's the least I can do.

Did you have any close brushes with a bomb or a bullet?

We had mortars come into a couple of the bases where we were staying. Thank God they landed pretty far from where we were standing. I remember the first time it happened. I was there with Joey Carroll, another comic. I turned to him and said "Crap, they've seen our acts."

What did you have to wear to keep yourself safe?

Helmet and Flack Jacket.

How does it feel wearing the protective gear?

The gear weighs about 45 pounds. Thank God we did not have to lug it around in the summer. I would have passed out in the 120-degree heat.

What have you learned from the experience of entertaining the troops?

That we have it easy here because of our military and the sacrifices they make every day.

Boston is a city full of comics. If someone wants to go out and perform for the troops, where would he or she start?

Joey Carroll and I were picked out in LA at the Improv by a talent agency. They liked us because we were able to work clean.

A lot of people try to turn supporting the troops into a political thing--but you've been there. What is the number-one thing that an ordinary person can do to

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support the troops?

Be appreciative! Go online - there are plenty of ways you can show support, by even just sending a letter. I have a link on my site to a great organization called [anysoldier.com](#). Soldiers go online and request things they need and you can find something and send it out. But pick your own way to support the troops.

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