

Mike Weatherford



Marriage lasts for couple that jokes together

Married stand-up comedians were rare enough for this young lad to do a story about them way back in 1993.

And that part of it hasn't changed much — certainly less than the normal things that happen in 18 years of life — judging from The Orleans billing "Mr. and Mrs. Comedy" in Big Al's club this month.

Brian McKim and Traci Skene not only made their marriage last, but moved here early this year. That presented the odd chance to sit down with a couple I had talked to only once, on the phone (they remembered it wasn't in person; I didn't), but with whom I had stayed somewhat familiar, via their Sheckymagazine.com website concerning all-things stand-up.

The name is an homage to Shecky Greene, and they saw Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme at his show here. "I used to look at them and say, 'I want what they have,'" Skene says. "They were in the same business and they seemed like they were getting along and they were always laughing. And essentially I got that — without all the fame and the money."

Marrying another stand-up is a rare solution to the loneliness and/or temptations of constant road travel. However, the couple felt the "double-edged sword," as McKim put it, of having both income sources in one basket when the comedy club boom went bust later in the '90s.

But they still don't have a lot of company among married comedians. "There's a few out there," he says, "but they seem curiously reluctant to ..."

"Say they're married," she adds, finishing a sentence in the way long-married couples do. "(Promoters) tend to devalue the female half of the couple."

Our talk digs up another truth: "Mr. and Mrs. Comedy" (meant to be "partially ironic" and "very Vegas-y") makes a cute marquee. But onstage, the battle of the sexes is better fought against invisible archetypes, not real people you will soon meet.

The two used to keep their coupledness secret until the end of the set. They can't do that with their Orleans billing.

"I have to say I'm a little more careful," Skene says. "There are certain things I would maybe joke about, but since they know it's you I won't do that. ... I would never, and I never have, talked about sex onstage."

Small sacrifice for a long marriage; there are other topics. Even if it's not quite a two-way street. "You say such outlandish things about me," Skene says to her spouse, "that nobody thinks it's true."

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