

Lebanon Valley Culture & Education

Business & Community Life

Misplaced, but right at home

Lebanon native-turned DJ-turned actor drawing laughs with improv comedy troupe

By AMY GULLI
Staff Writer

For Lebanon native Steve Grabo, all the world's truly a stage.

Well, OK. It's really more like all the country. But as long as it's a stage, Grabo's happy.

A lifelong comedian, musician and actor, Grabo has gone from the small stages of Lebanon Middle and High schools to stand-up comedy stages, big-screen movie sets and national radio sound studios. Since he graduated in the "very late '80s" from Lebanon High, Grabo — who uses the nickname he got from his real last name of Grabusky as his stage name — has used his training in music and the theater to tackle a variety of challenges.

During college, he took classes full-time at Millersville University, worked part-time at five area radio stations and was the front man for a rock band.

"I would sleep on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I lived on coffee and chocolate-covered coffee beans," he joked recently.

From 1993 to 1998, he worked full-time with his band, IRIS, which began in Lebanon and eventually signed a deal with Rockville Record label.

"I pulled a Bon Jovi," Grabo, now of Sarasota, Fla., said with a laugh. "I had the big hair and everything."

By 1999, the band was history, and Grabo moved on to South Carolina, where he took a job with Adventure Radio. Though he began as an on-air personality at one of the company's stations, within four months he was a fixture on all seven of its stations. He also began writing, producing and doing the voices for the majority of the company's commercials, and

he was quickly promoted to production director.

But during that year and a half, Grabo missed the stage. He had landed a role as a mental patient in the 1999 award-winning movie "Girl, Interrupted," but all his scenes were cut from the film.

"I wanted to get back on stage, and I wanted to do some film work," he said. "After being on the set of 'Girl, Interrupted,' being on a multimillion-dollar set, you want that again. It gets in your blood."

So Grabo entered a national talent competition. There, he placed second overall, which helped him land work with a well-known comedy troupe called the Pushcart Players.

And it was during this time that Grabo decided he'd like to form his own troupe. He first recorded a CD which he titled "Misplaced Comedy" because, Grabo said, "it wasn't necessarily a specific genre of comedy. ... We did political stuff to tongue-in-cheek humor. With that, there was no market."

Despite the lack of name for their comedy style, his radio skits began attracting fans.

"When I was production director, we had a venue — radio," he said. "And we started getting a following, and people started e-mailing us, asking when our live shows were. And we didn't know what to do because we didn't have a live show."

Grabo began noticing reruns of a British show called "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" on the Comedy Central television network, and he was intrigued.

"And I said, 'We could do that. That's cool,'" he said. "So we added maybe two or three songs, some skits from radio ... and filled up the whole rest of the



Members of The Misplaced Comedy Group took their name literally for this recent promotional photo. People dressed in formal evening wear in a hot tub? What can be more misplaced than that? Lebanon native and Lebanon High School grad Steve Grabo, formerly Steve Grabusky, is second from left in the top photo and is quickly submerging (top left) in the bottom photo.

show with improv."

Grabo and childhood friend Bob Schultz — also a Lebanon native whom Grabo had met in seventh grade — began The Misplaced Comedy Group, which does live performances as well as records comedic songs. Their biggest hit, "The Bin Laden Banana Boat Song," which was released shortly after

the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, was played on CNN and remains one of the top downloads from the Web site MP3.com.

The group, composed of nine members, also released two CDs in October: "Absurd Sensationalism" and "Misplaced Holiday."

They also are starting to film new skits and

plan to have a DVD out by this year's holiday season.

Grabo also landed himself a role — actually two roles — in an independent film titled "Yes, And," which will begin filming in June.

Though he's come a long way from Lebanon's school-district stages, Grabo said he'd love to come back home

during his troupe's upcoming tour.

"I would love to actually play back home and do a full show," he said. "I have always wanted to be on stage."

Check out the group Web site at:
www.misplacedcomedygroup.com