

## Venues

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Tricky Falls is still able to bring in a diverse group of performers, and actively seeks out performers while having agents contacting them on a regular basis.

"It varies," she said, "lots of agents email us regularly, but if an artist that we are interested in is putting out new music, that generally means that a tour is in the offing so we usually reach out in advance. The upside is that you get into the mix early for a tour – the downside is that the agent knows you are interested which might mean paying more for a guarantee."

Audience response is always the biggest draw for any touring act.

"I think that most artists that are successful in El Paso return because El Paso audiences are some of the most dedicated in the world, which artists frequently make note of," Welch said.

Welch said having more venues of different sizes has helped the market.

"Artists can start their careers in a smaller venue, and then grow up to the largest venues in the market as their careers take off," she said, adding catching an act earlier in their career is also beneficial. "It is much more difficult to entice an artist to play here when they are already hot if they have no history in the market."

She said festivals like Neon Desert, Sun City Music Festival, and TrapFest also bring in multiple artists and expose them to the market, which often leads to return plays when the artists are scheduling their individual tours.

Although Tricky Falls has hosted every-

one from up-and-coming performers to established veteran acts, there are always those dream acts Welch would love to see at the venue.

"I'd like a club date for Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Father John Misty, PJ Harvey, Grimes, the Residents, M.I.A... this could be a really long list," Welch said, "or any El Paso play for Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Florence + the Machine, or Björk, please!"

Welch said to assure area residents have a desirable choice of music, Tricky Falls also works with outside promoters to bring quite a few shows, including AEG, C3, Splendid Sun, SMG, TooZany, J & K Present, Pony Productions, and many other local and national promoters.

## LOWBROW PALACE

Splendid Sun Productions, the force behind Neon Desert, opened Lowbrow Palace on Robinson, near Kern Place's busy Cincinnati Street in 2011.

Splendid Sun co-founder Brian Chavez agreed with other venue managers that budget, capacity and scheduling dates are the keys to booking any performer.

"Budget, to make sure you can afford to bring the artist you are bringing into the market," Chavez said. "Some artists don't always work for every market."

Placing an artist in the right size room, one not too big or too small is next, and finally what is the best time of year for an artist to play. "Are there other events or holidays happening at that time?" are typical questions to deal with, he said.

Chavez said when Lowbrow first started booking acts, it was him reaching out to

artist and agents, but now it is primarily them reaching out to him when tours are being booked. In addition, artists who come to El Paso often look forward to a return engagement.

Some artist know they have a huge following in El Paso and want to make it a priority to have a show there," Chavez said. "Most artists that play in El Paso usually want to return due to how amazing the crowds are. The energy at shows in El Paso may be the best anywhere. Artists constantly make that comment."

Chavez said the increase in artists coming through the area, both for the first time and for return shows, comes down to "consistency," something he makes sure to maintain at Lowbrow.

"It is a combination of artists knowing there is a good venue where they can perform every time, knowing there going to be a good audience for them to perform to, and being able to be consistent about it," he said. "We have tried to build that over the years, and the more consistent we can be, the more artists we can get who want to come to El Paso."

Chavez said there are still tons of artists he would love to see perform at Lowbrow, but is also very happy with the many artists who could easily fill larger venues, but still choose Lowbrow for a show.

"It is amazing when there are artists who have gotten so big that they have no business performing at a venue the size of Lowbrow," he said, "but they still do."

## THE COMIC STRIP

Bart Reed, owner and founder of El Paso Comic Strip Night Club, said in his 32

years of booking acts, they have brought in more than 1,800 touring performers, with at least 52 a year for regular weekly shows, plus special one-or two night engagements from better known names.

"Arguably, over the years we've brought in more nationally touring acts than any other venue in El Paso," Reed said.

Reed gets continual contacts from agencies looking for venues for their acts, as well as recommendations and referrals from other comedians.

"Comics from all over know about us," he said. "We aren't the oldest club in the country, but we've been at it for 32 years, and that's almost unheard of in this business."

One of the keys to success is knowing what plays well in El Paso, and what makes local audiences laugh.

"It's a mix of things, but generally audiences here like the acts with high energy," Reed said. "They also like to see names with an established brand."

Many well-known comics have performed on the Comic Strip's stage and Reed said he is always looking to bring in new acts to the area. He is hoping book T.J. Miller soon, as well as bring back Craig Robinson, who performed at the Comic Strip before he became a major player on the comedy scene. Reed said he would love to see Margaret Cho play at the club as well.

Like the audiences for musical acts, Reed said he has almost never had a bad experience regarding a comedian, and many want to return once they perform in El Paso.

"Paul Rodriguez told me he will never not return to El Paso," Reed said. "He loves performing here so much."



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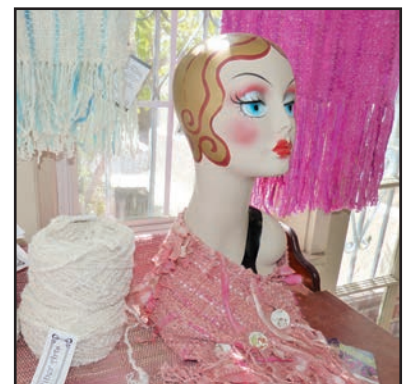
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