

Comic Stuart's proudly gay

By Tabari McCoy

June 12, 2009

Jason Stuart is a lot of things. He's a prolific character actor who's had guest roles on shows such as "House," "Charmed" and "My Wife & Kids" and in films such as "Kindergarten Cop" and "Gia." He's a veteran stand-up comedian whose one-hour special, "Jason Stuart: Making it to the Middle" - which he filmed at the Columbus Funny Bone - is available on his Web site, www.jasonstuart.com. And he's also best friends with former "Baywatch" star Alexandra Paul. "She's like Grace (to my Will)," he says.

He's also an openly gay entertainer who is performing Saturday at Pride 2009, the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Cincinnati's annual festival. Stuart, scheduled to take the stage at Northside's Jacob Hoffner Park at 7 p.m., talked about coming out, acting and the need for pride.

Question: What does performing at Pride Fest mean to you?

Answer: I still think coming out is really important because when you're out, you're not just out for yourself; you're out for me and I'm out for you.

Q: Can you tell us a little about your act?

A: The thing that's on my mind now is gay marriage. There's a joke that I've been doing that seems to be getting in all the papers - 'C'mon straight people ... It's the year 2009, if you let us marry each other, we'll stop marrying you.' I also talk about my crazy family; I talk about pop culture. I talk about a little bit of politics ... I talk a lot about dating and relationships, and I talk about traveling, being Jewish, getting older.

Q: What made you get into stand-up comedy in the first place?

A: I had a manager who told me to get into comedy because it would help me get acting work. I never thought I'd be able to make a living at it and be successful. I was always a funny person, but the idea of repeating it, that seemed like a difficult thing to do.

Q: What was it like when you came out to your family?

A: I came out to my mom in (1993), in my early 20s. She definitely had an inkling, but she said she didn't think I was as gay as I was, like there's a different degree of being gay - you know, "gay light, gay heavy," sort of like Seinfeld, "Jewish light, Jewish heavy." My father was fine about it until I started being famous for being gay: "Why can't you be like Jim and Bob at the end of the block? Why can't you just shut up about it?"

Q: Have other people in the entertainment business who are gay or lesbian sought any advice from you about coming out to their family?

A: Yes. Everybody always says all the time "Oh, it's going to kill them. I can't come out - it's going to kill my family." My answer to that is "It's killing you, and what kind of a human being can you be if you lie all the time, if you lie about who you are? What does that do."

Q: Have you felt any prejudice within the comedy community?

A: Yes. On all the talk shows, all the comedians are a certain type of comedian, a certain type of monologist. ... They're all straight white guys. There's no black people, there's no women, there's no Hispanics ... If you're outrageous or different or have a different sensibility, you probably won't get on those shows.