

Comic 'looking for Mr. Right' to try his luck here

By Nick Crews

Five days before he returns to Crackers Comedy Club Downtown Jason Stuart wants to give heartfelt thanks where he thinks it's due. "I want to say 'thank you' to Indianapolis for proving everybody wrong, and showing that an openly gay man can be a big success in a mainstream comedy club in your city."

Stuart's reference is to his last Indianapolis gig that brought big crowds and bigger laughs – to Crackers last year. His appearance this week is the comic's third engagement at the club. It's a gig, Stuart says, that took him years to get.

"They didn't think I was going to do well there at all," said Stuart from his home in Los Angeles. "It took maybe 10 years of asking this woman to hire me (in Indianapolis), and when she did, we did so well. It's been wonderful."

Stuart began doing stand up comedy in 1983. In 1993 he "came out" on Gerald Rivera's talk show. Since then, in addition to his stand up, Stuart has performed many acting roles; recently, he guest-starred on "House" and Showtime's improv-style comedy "Fat Actress" starring Kirstie Alley.

He's also appeared on "Will & Grace," "Charmed" and "Strong Medicine," among other television shows. Stuart is perhaps best known as Dr. Thomas, the gay shrink on the ABC sitcom "My Wife & Kids."

Stuart's film roles have included "Easier, Softer Way" with Mekhi Phifer, and "Coffee Date" with Wilson Cruz and Sally Kirkland. In "Gone Postal," Stuart plays a fussy postal assistant manager alongside star Lee Meriwether. Veteran comic though he is, Stuart admits that recent world events have sometimes make it hard to laugh. "But (comedy) is my job, so I have to be able to do it no matter what," said Stuart. "Sometimes when you don't feel like it, you go onstage and people give me so much love and laughter that it turns me around. I've had that happen a hundred times."

Stuart says his latest foray into stand-up – "The Looking For Mr. Right Comedy Tour" – brings to Crackers an act associated with finding a worthwhile man: something that's been on his mind a lot lately. "I talk about dating. There's a lot of new stuff about my family, politics, the war," said Stuart.