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Comic stands up for troops

By David Burke

'Wild' Bill Bauer organizes comedy campaign

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GO! Editor

"Wild" Bill Bauer wants to send out a message to troops in Iraq.

That message, the Minneapolis comedian says, is that there are people in the entertainment industry who do support them.

"You'd think everyone in the entertainment business was a communist by the way we're acting," Bauer said in a telephone interview. "The media only seems interested in covering the Dixie Chicks or Ed Asner or (he said in a groan) Martin Sheen. There's a lot of us who may not be pro-war, but we're relatively supportive of people over in Iraq."

Bauer is one of two organizers of "Stand Up for the Troops," a conglomeration of 45 comics and 14 comedy clubs nationwide, all of whom will combine for shows on Monday night. Penguins Comedy Club in Bettendorf — where Bauer is performing five shows this weekend — is not participating, Bauer said, because of the difficulty of scheduling a number of comedians for the one performance.

He and comic Craig Allen, who has a brother and sister stationed in Iraq, put together the benefit shows as fund-raisers for the USO and Veterans of Foreign Wars' Operation Uplink.

A Vietnam War veteran, Bauer said he wants to send out a message letting soldiers in Iraq know they're getting support.

"There is nothing more disheartening than reading about a bunch of knuckleheads protesting your presence," he said. "It just brings you down."

Much of the money to support the project is being paid by Bauer and Allen, including starting the Web site at www.standup4troops.com.

"When it's a national project like this, you very quickly realize how incapable you are. It's a lot of responsibility," he said.

Talking about the war is a small part of the 52-year-old Bauer's act. He riffs on travel agencies offering package tours to Vietnam.

"Why would I want to vacation there when I go there every night?" he said, followed by a faux scream.

A former paramedic, Bauer is a 20-year veteran of standup comedy. Among his credits are a writing job on the Tom Arnold movie "Carpool" in 1996, and two guest-star spots on "Roseanne." The second time came as Arnold and wife Roseanne had separated.



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"She went through all the episodes of 'Roseanne' and cut out all of Tom's friends," he said. "Not a very pleasant person."

Bauer is one of a number of comedians who collaborated on the concept album "Idiot Box," which, like his act, is very adult without using four-letter words.

"The payoff is so much sweeter," he said of working relatively clean. "I learned to work clean when I worked for television. I only cursed a couple of times anyway."

"I have a brother who's a priest and a sister who's a nun. People ask if it's difficult to be a comedian in the same town where my brother's a priest. I say yes, I'm in constant fear he's going to do something to embarrass me."

Bauer said he sometimes tires of the two decades of airplanes (though he's driving here from the Twin Cities), fast food and hotel rooms.

"Once I step on stage, that's forgotten," he said.

Wild" Bill Bauer, with Stan Stanko

When: 7:30 p.m. today through Saturday, April 19; 9:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, April 18-19

Where: Penguins Comedy Club, Isle of Capri Convention Center, Bettendorf

How much: \$5 today; \$13 at door, \$11 advance Friday-Saturday

Information: (563) 324-5233

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