

Stand-up to Stand Out

Eli Schroeder doesn't take himself too seriously, and that might be exactly what makes him stand out.

"I'm actually from Findlay, Ohio. My family's from Putnam County," Schroeder said. "So I grew up a little wild, little redneck, and I've been terrorizing this city ever since."

Despite the self-proclaimed redneck label, Schroeder doesn't quite fit the stereotype. Instead, the University of Findlay student is a finance and economics major who stumbled into his academic path just as casually as he approaches comedy.

"That was kind of accidental," he said. "I needed a degree, and they're like, you can get these two. And I was like, 'All right, I'll do that.'"

But outside the classroom, Schroeder has found something far less conventional.

"I do stand-up comedy on the side. I'm far from a professional," Schroeder said.

Schroeder's love for comedy started early.

"I fell in love with stand-up when I was in the third grade," he said, recalling the first time he watched Dave Chappelle. "I didn't understand any of the jokes, but for some reason, I was laughing. I was like, 'This is sick.'"

That early spark turned into something more serious after high school, when Schroeder began sneaking into bars to perform at open mic nights.

"They would be like, 'Aren't you underage?'" Schroeder said. "I was like, just sign me up. And they would let me go on stage and bomb for like five minutes."

Bombing, he says, is part of the process and one he knows well.

"I bombed so hard so many times, and it's nerve-racking," Schroeder said. "You get up there, and your heart starts racing, voice gets shaky, and then you completely forget what you were gonna say."

Still, those failures helped shape his style. Schroeder describes himself as a storytelling comedian, drawing from his upbringing and the people around him.

“I grew up with a ragtag group of rugrats,” he said. “The wilder, the funnier...that’s what I’ve noticed in comedy.”

Though Schroeder enjoys performing, he doesn’t necessarily see comedy as his long-term career.

“I’d like to do it as a hobby,” he said. “Comedy doesn’t pay, and I’ve been a broke college kid for too long now.”

Still, he admits he’d jump at the right opportunity.

“If I were given the opportunity to go on tour with somebody and open for them, I would take it ten times out of ten,” he said.

For now, Schroeder is preparing for a move to Columbus after graduating this spring, where he hopes to get on stage.

“They have open mics every night,” he said. “So my plan is to get back on those stages.”

Off stage, Schroeder’s humor carries into his daily life, whether working at a winery or navigating job interviews.

“Every interview I’ve done recently, I bring up stand-up comedy, and everyone’s mesmerized by it,” he said. “It’s good for interacting with people and connecting with people.”

Looking back, Schroeder credits his sense of humor to his family, especially his grandfather.

“He was the silly, goofy guy... and I learned not to take life too seriously,” Schroeder said.

That mindset continues to guide him, whether he’s on stage, in class or just telling stories with friends. Comedy to Schroeder is about connection, resilience and finding humor in the chaos, not just about the laughs.

He hopes people can learn from his own experiences in stand-up comedy and unserious mindset.

“When I went up there just having fun, that’s when I had my best time.”