



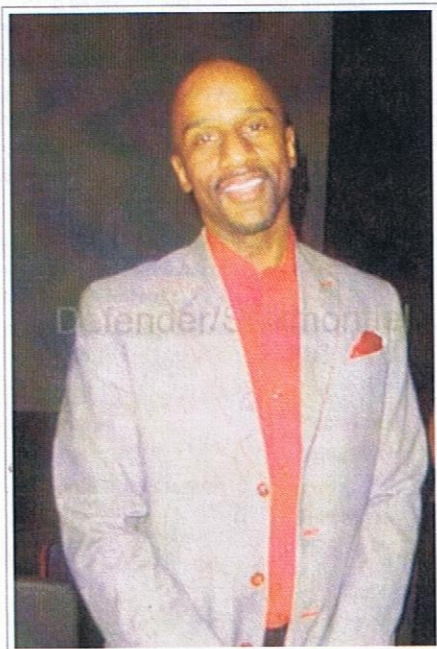
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Wednesday, June 17, 2009

## Comedian Damon Williams brings the 'funny' every first Saturday

by Shamontiel L. Vaughn



Chicago comedian Damon Williams went from selling healthy meals at his Subway location to hearty comedy onstage.

Williams, a former Subway sandwich shop owner, started his career at All Jokes Aside Comedy Club on 1000 S. Wabash Ave.

"I sold my Subway already and closed it, so I had plenty of time on my hands and a couple of dollars," he told the *Defender*. "I went (to All Jokes Aside) for open mic. People dared me to try it, and I went in there. It went pretty well, so I kept going back."

And doing stand-up for the first time in 1992 made him catch the comedy bug.

"To get a room full of people to simultaneously laugh at your thoughts is a rewarding feeling...with times being as tight as they are for some, laughter is good exercise," he said. "Laughing is almost like aerobics for them."

When asked about Williams' inspiration for comedy, the 44-year-old comedian

pointed out comedic legends like Eddie Murphy and Johnny Carson.

While doing stand-up comedy, Williams' father told him about his nephew, comedian George Willborn, who Williams met as an adult for the first time. After the cousins were acquainted, Willborn then introduced Williams to Mark Adkins, who was comedian Sinbad's brother and manager.

Adkins needed a clean act for a conference and three months later, Williams was booked for a television show called "*Comic Justice*" in 1993.

In response to why he chose clean comedy as opposed to the raw comedy he was around with HBO's "*Def Comedy Jam*" comedians being the most visible and Eddie Murphy's previous graphic material, Williams credits his mother.

"My first performance, I taped it," he said. "I was going around showing people the tape, and my mother is very 'sanctified.' Even if she wasn't, I realized I was cursing so I had to stop the tape. That's not to say I don't get edgy myself...but by me going a different route, I got more opportunities, like the National Association of Black Journalists. Warner Saunders saw me in Chicago, and I was clean."

"You can actually do the same jokes and remove the cursing, and it'd still be funny," he continued.

And the joking can get physical, too. Williams' favorite joke is one about narcolepsy, but he stopped performing it, "because I hurt my knee after falling in the same spot trying to break my fall."

Seventeen years into his comedic career, Williams has told jokes at countless locations—the crowd warmer

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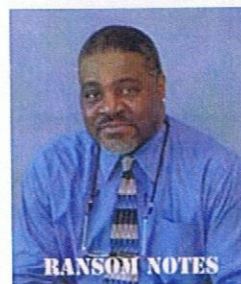
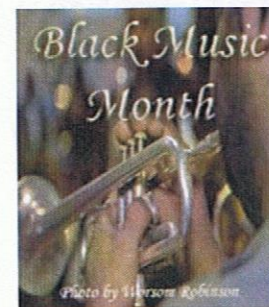
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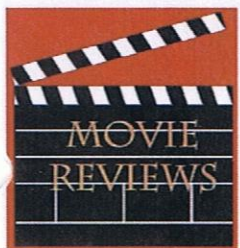
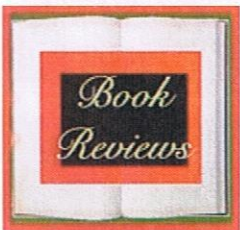
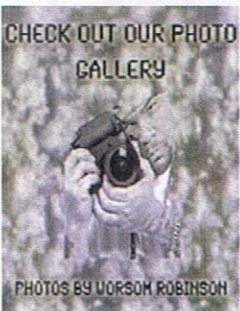
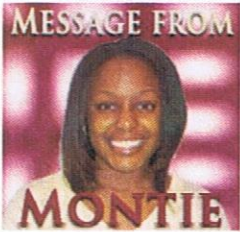
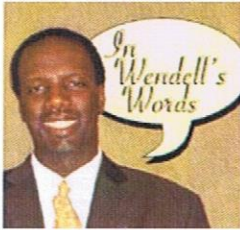
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for the "Kings of Comedy," "BET Live," Comedy Central's "Premium Blend," TV One's "The Tom Joyner Skyshow," BET's "Teen Summit," HBO's "P. Diddy's Bad Boys of Comedy," "Showtime at the Apollo," The Bud Light Cedric the Entertainer's Comedy Revue, the US Comedy Arts festival, and is currently one of the five comedians in Chi-town's Laugh Fest, along with Chicago comedians Uncle Rail, DeRay Davis, Michael Colyar and George Willborn.

Williams has also worked with stars like Aretha Franklin, Patti LaBelle, Luther Vandross, Ray Charles, Harry Belafonte, James Brown, Jamie Foxx and Little Richard.

And with all these all-star acts, his favorite performance was with the "Kings of Comedy" at the United Center in Chicago a decade ago.

"Even though people around the country recognize me from BET, to come home on that large scale and be able to do well was a great feeling," Williams said. He also enjoyed performing with the Kings in Madison Square Garden.

For upcoming comedians, Williams gave the following advice: "Work on your funny because you want to be original and memorable. Secondly, learn the business and be prepared to hustle for yourself."

Williams has never had an agent, promotes his own shows and calculates his own money.

Check Williams out every first Saturday at the Chicago Hilton at 720 S. Michigan Ave., for [Funny First Saturdays](#) and during his tour with the Chi-town Laugh Fest. Tickets can be purchased from [Hustleman Enterprises](#), at all [Ticketmaster locations](#) and by visiting [www.starplaza.com](http://www.starplaza.com).

In photo: Damon Williams was a guest host at the pre-screening for "Imagine That" on June 11, 2009. Check out the Message from Montie blog, "African-American fathers: Underrated and fighting the myths" for Williams' thoughts on fatherhood.

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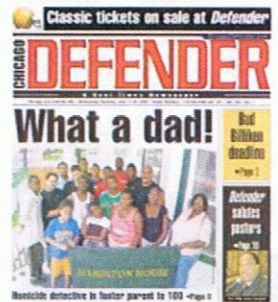
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