

Entertainment/Travel

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GALLAGHER STRIKES TWICE

Sledge-o-Matic comic's brother on the loose as mirror act.

By Steven M. Nesbit
Special to the Sunday News

He looks like Gallagher, talks like Gallagher, laughs like Gallagher, dresses like Gallagher and even does Gallagher's outrageous comedy routines.

But he's not Gallagher. Read the ads for his Sunday, March 20, concert carefully. The sight comic playing the Days Inn Conference Center at 6 and 8:30 p.m. is Ron Gallagher, alias "Gallagher II, The Living Sequel."

Confused? You're not alone. Ron is the younger brother of Leo Anthony Gallagher Jr., otherwise known as the Gallagher, the 25-year veteran of comedy that broke into show business with his wild and crazy hats, the inventor of the "Sledge-O-Matic," a large wooden mallet that smashes assorted foods, fruits and vegetables, and the only comedian to boast 13 Showtime TV comedy specials.

It's not as though Ron is trying to put one over on his more famous brother's fans. To eliminate possible cries of false advertising and ripping off the public, Gallagher II begins his show by openly declaring, "Gallagher is not here, but his brother is!" But, even after the show, people come up to Ron and show how much they liked his Showtime specials and still do not believe that he isn't the Gallagher.

Still confused? Perhaps this conversation with Ron Gallagher will help you to better understand who's who and the way this bizarre brand of brotherly comedy originated.

Q: Who thought of the Living Sequel concept?

A: It all started, I think, back in 1982. My brother did a fair in West Palm Beach and somebody brought a mannequin with a shaved head and a hat on it that looked just like Gal-

COMEDY CONCERT

Gallagher II
6 & 8:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 20
Days Inn; \$16.50
(800) 887-1959

lagher. They painted a little moustache on it, and he didn't want to take it. So I took it.

I was collecting all kind of Gallagher memorabilia because, you know, he's my brother and I idolized him. I had this mannequin lying around for the longest time and after a while I just couldn't store it anymore, so I was just going to throw it away, but I figured the hair looked so much like him. I cut the hair off of it and I noticed that it fit on the back of my head. I put a hat over it and I shocked myself that I looked so much like him.

As a joke, I went to his next performance with the wig and a hat on and wearing a shirt like he usually wore. Everybody started coming up and talking to me like I was Gallagher. These were people that he had been working with for quite a long time — all the production and sound people were handing me the mike and telling me stuff.

I was having the best time with it, then my brother showed up and he thought it was the funniest thing he had ever seen. Being the genius of comedy that he is, he decided to use me as a prop. He said, "You go out onstage first and as soon as the audience accepts you as being

me, I'll enter from a different part of the stage, and we'll just flip them out." So we did just that! The audience didn't know what was going on. We really got them. Gallagher liked what happened, so we started doing that quite a bit and it was a lot of fun.

Q: How did the idea of you as a solo act happen?

A: I would come to his shows and I knew all of his routines by heart. I knew all of his tapes better than he did. He would forget a lot of the tag lines so when he came off stage I said, "You missed this line and this one and this." And he said, "If you're so good at it, why don't you get out there and do it?" I said, "I don't have any material," and he said, "You know Sledge-O-Matic by heart. Look, I've got so much material that I don't use anymore that you could go out in some of the smaller night clubs, take all of my old routines, finish up with Sledge-O-Matic and make some money."

I said, "Nope; I'm not a performer. I'm not going on stage in front of everybody." You know, I was the kind of guy in school that wouldn't even get up in front of the class for Show and Tell. I wasn't going to try to entertain people. At the time, I was selling heavy equipment and was a very good salesman, but the economy in Miami took a down trend; so I decided to do it (stand-up comedy) to earn some extra money. It just took off! I got immediate acceptance from the crowd, and I loved it. It got to be more successful than my job.

Well, what happened was I was doing the act locally in Miami. My brother knew that I was good and that I needed to get on the road



No, you're not seeing double. There really are two Gallaghers. The one on top is the real McCoy, er, Gallagher. The guy getting ready to do Gallagher's famous Sledge-o-Matic bit, below, is his brother Ron, alias Gallagher II.

More GALLAGHERS on H-10

Gallaghers: A Sledge-o-Matic act built for two

Continued from H-1

where the money was, so he called a friend of his in the business and said you owe me a favor. I have a brother. Get him some work. So this guy called me and said, 'I'm doing this for your brother. Send me a tape,' and I did. He called me back and said that I was actually better than he thought I could ever be. He started me off as a headliner — something that is unheard of.

I was with that person for eight or nine months doing one-nighters in very small clubs. Then I met Tom Sobel, president of TSM Artists Inc. He handles entertainers early in their careers — Sinbad and Roseanne and people like that. Since I've been working with him, I've been doing 900-seat dinner theaters.

Q: What advice would you give to the people who are seeing your show for the very first time?

A: Bring plenty of plastic.

Q: You have to be working on some new gimmicks. How about a sneak preview?

A: Hopefully by the time this article comes out, I'll have a cannon that will shoot lettuce and salad out into the audience about 100 feet over their heads.

Q: Have you had any formal training?

A: Nothing, absolutely nothing. All I can really do is act like my brother and deliver routines like him. That's all I'm really doing is mimicking him. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be doing it.

Q: Were you a natural or did Big Brother give you tips?

A: Whenever we talk, it's by phone, and we do talk once or twice a month. I jot down ideas

that I think are funny, tell the premise and something that would take a comic 10 to 20 times on stage to perfect. He'll make a joke out of it (snaps fingers) just like that. He's been doing that for 25 years. His mind's so quick and he's so good at it. All I got to do is tell Gallagher and boom! He'll give it to me right off the bat, and all I have to do is write it down. Maybe he'll use it; maybe he won't.

Q: So now, Gallagher borrows your jokes and your ideas?

A: Not borrows, I pay him back. I took a lot of his stuff and that's the way he looks at it, too. I owe him a lot of material. Any time I come up with (something) he wants, he is more than welcome to it. I'm very proud if he even comes

anywhere close to using one of my jokes in his act, but I'll still listen to his routine and, if I hear something that I like, I'll add it to mine. (He laughs hard.)

Q: Gallagher's latest Showtime special was taped at the Strand Theatre in York, and you did the Sledge-O-Matic routine. Why?

A: He wanted to let everybody know that it was OK that I was doing his material and his routines. He thought the best way to do it was to have me on his special with him; because if there was any dissension between us, he wouldn't have me on his special, would he?

Q: How was it growing up as a younger brother to the Comic Genius of Today? I understand that he used to put things in your food? What kind of things?

A: He's use anything he could find. He used to make us kids lunch all the time. If you bit into a sandwich and he started laughing, you knew to spit it out. He used to do crazy things like make us va-

nilla pudding and then take a dark brown crayon and use it to put sprinkles on the top, or he'd make us a bologna sandwich and cut the center out of it, put something like cat food in it and then close it up. You'd take the first bite and everything was OK, and you'd take a second bit and he'd bust out laughing.

We used to do fun things like that. There were four children and we had so much fun growing up. I mean to get a laugh in my family was really, really tough. Now the audience is a piece of cake, they'll laugh at anything, but to get my brothers and sister to laugh, you really had to be good!

Q: Did he ever get in trouble at school?

A: It's really scary to read his third- or fourth-grade report cards. On the back where teachers write the comments, a teacher once wrote to my parents, 'Your son has the ability to take the class away from me anytime he wants to.' Even back then, we

knew that he was destined to be something special.

Q: What does he think of your success?

A: He's very happy for me.

Q: Do you see each other often?

A: No, because we're both working all the time, and we have to stay away from each other regionally or else our advertising is going to confuse everybody.

Q: You're Gallagher II, The Living Sequel. Any identity crisis to deal with?

A: Not at all — I'm having so much fun just doing exactly what I'm doing right now, I don't care if it never leads to anything else. If my career just stayed right where it is right now, I wouldn't mind a bit. I have no grand expectations of myself. I'll never be disappointed. I've already done this for three years and have had the time of my life. If I had to stop tomorrow and go get another job, I would just thank the good Lord for letting me do it as long as I have because I've had a great time.