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Faces at Georgia Tech: Peter Ludovice

Chemical Engineering professor, Comedian a.k.a 'Dr. Ludicrous'

By Emily Tate

Contributing Writer

Just take one look at Peter Ludovice's business cards with the infamous picture of Albert Einstein sticking his tongue out and his personality immediately becomes apparent. Ludovice is an associate professor of Chemical Engineering by day and a stand-up comedian by night.

Most recently, Dr. Ludovice—or "Dr. Ludicrous" as he is known on stage (a nickname his students reportedly gave him in reaction to his high expectations on grading in his classes) performed his most well-known act "Pocket Protectors and Other Fashion Statements" at Atlanta's Showcase Comedy Club for the MIT Club of Atlanta.

Ludovice performs most often at locations in Atlanta such as the Academy Theater and the Funny Farm Comedy Club in Alpharetta; however, he has also performed at many corporate functions and comedy clubs nationwide.

"The corporate audiences just rule. I think almost all comedians will agree with that," Ludovice said. Ludovice likes to pride himself on being a nerd at heart and often makes fun of chemical engineers in his act.

"These young engineers, they don't appreciate a good vinyl pocket protector, because not only does it keep you from getting that big-ass stain on your shirt, but in a pinch, it'll double as a condom...and I know it's kind of scratchy, so maybe that's why most of these people use the engineer's preferred mode of birth control: their personalities," Ludovice said in one of his stand-up performances in Sunnyvale, Ca.

Ludovice started performing stand-up comedy routines when he was 42, which he describes as part of his midlife crisis. He has a PhD. from MIT which he said actually means "Mutants In Training" and has done postdoctoral work for familiar organizations such as IBM and NASA. He describes his sense of humor as well as his teaching style as being most like that of famous comedian George Carlin.

"I had to negotiate with my wife a little bit about it, but she ended up being very supportive about it....At least I wasn't going out and getting a motorcycle or anything dangerous," Ludovice said.

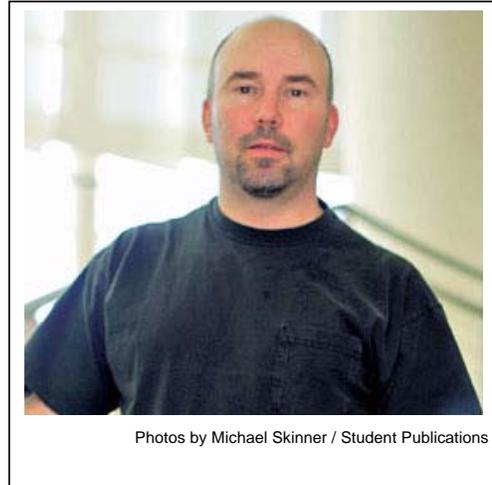
Some might wonder why it is that Ludovice decided to wait until his 40s to start a career in comedy.

"You know, all these 20-something year-old guys are pretty good, but they don't have as much life experience to draw from....I can draw inspiration from anything such as my wife, my kids, my students....Rodney Dangerfield didn't start doing comedy until his 40s," Ludovice said.

In his stand-up acts about nerds, Ludovice sometimes even references an old joke that almost every Tech female has heard at least once: "Ladies, the odds are good, but the goods are odd!"

Ludovice doesn't just restrict his performances to comedy clubs, however. He has performed at Tech for events such as FASET and plans to present lectures to incoming Presidential Scholars on dealing with professors, which is titled: "Your Professor: Human or Alien Spawn."

Ludovice also has taught a GT1000 course geared specifically towards Chemical Engineering majors. Many of his jokes stem from experiences with his students, especially from Tech students. He has also become familiar with freshmen specifically through the Department of Housing as a Freshman Partner (member of the faculty who works with Peer Leaders in the Freshman Experience dorms).



Photos by Michael Skinner / Student Publications

"I'll try and start an 8 a.m. class off with a few jokes in order to wake everyone up a little bit, but the minute I say anything, what do they do? They write it down...and then there's the inevitable student in the front row who asks if this is going to be on the test," Ludovice said.

For Women's Awareness Month, Ludovice is working with the Women's Resource Center by hosting the second annual Funny Girls Comedy Show on March 31 at 8 p.m.

"The truth is that there are more men in comedy than there are women... My theory is that women aren't into a job where you essentially make an ass out of yourself... I will definitely be wearing my 'Women Kick Ass' t-shirt," Ludovice said. He also said that his dialogue would contain complaints about the shirt making him look "fat."

Ludovice has also been part of the comedy acts scheduled at Under the Couch in previous years. Ludovice used this opportunity to bring a sense of humor back to campus in the midst of the stringent study habits of most students.

According to Ludovice, Bill Hunt a professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering has also taken up the second job of stand-up comedian. 1620 AM Radio Sandy Springs features Ludovice and Hunt together on a technical radio talk show airing on Sunday mornings.