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SPADE SHOWS HIS CARDS

Comedian's career keeps him busy as he returns to Vegas

BY ALEZA FREEMAN
Vegas.com

The interview begins 15 minutes late.

Comedian David Spade has just finished rehearsing for the CBS sitcom, “Rules of Engagement,” and is heading home when he calls from his car. The voice and the laugh are recognizably his, though tinged with an audible air of exhaustion.

Spade explains that he arrived in California only one day earlier, directly following three months of shooting the movie “Grown Ups” in Boston. Just switching from movie mode to television mode is an adjustment, but now the “Saturday Night Live” alumnus will have to switch gears once again to prepare for his stand-up act at the Venetian in Las Vegas.

“These fall under the category of fake problems,” says Spade. “No one really wants to hear about it. I mean, you can’t really complain about this stuff, it’s more like – it’s nothing – I can’t even talk about it. It’s like when a girl complains that she’s too pretty. I’m just a little tired ... going from one thing to another. It’s all good, I’m just tired.”

For someone who has built a successful career out of portraying sarcastic, smart aleck characters such as the Emmy-nominated wise-cracking Dennis Finch on NBC’s “Just Shoot Me” (1997-2003) or the sharp tongued host of Comedy Central’s “The Showbiz Show” (2005), Spade comes across as honest and sincere.

He sounds a bit like a kid in a candy store as he describes his experience shooting “Grown Ups.”

“We shot at a lake, then one day we went off kayaking, then we went to a water park and I went down the slide, then we played a five-on-five big basketball game,” says Spade. “It was like a fake summer vacation, but I



was doing all the things that you really do, so I accidentally had a really good time.”

The comedy, set to debut in the summer of 2010, is about five best friends from high school who reunite in their hometown 30 years later. The star-studded cast includes funny men Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Chris Rock, Rob Schneider and Spade. Throw in Colin Quinn and Norm MacDonald, and even Spade admits he had to work hard to keep up in the conversation.

“The only good thing about the movie shoot ending,” jokes Spade, “is that now I can try and go into small groups where I can be the funniest one.”

It has been four months since Spade’s last stand-up gig in Las Vegas and he worries that he’s a bit out of practice. He says, however, that he will be fine once he gets a little rest and practice. Besides, he adds, he spent most of his hiatus from stand-up on the movie set, hanging out with his close friend, Rock.

“In one respect I was sitting in class with a good teacher, getting tutored,” he says.

Spade, who has worked as a busboy, a valet parker and a skateboard shop employee, began doing stand-up while attending Arizona State University in the mid 1980s.

He believes his career in comedy is a byproduct of a semi-dysfunctional child-



Photos by Sony Pictures Television / Sonja Flemming

David Spade stars in the ensemble cast of “Rules of Engagement” as Russell, a single guy on the prowl.

hood.

“I moved a lot and didn’t have any hard core friends for awhile,” says Spade, whose nickname growing up was Shrimp Cocktail. “[I was] just trying to deal with crazy home life and adjusting to new schools.”

His first Vegas stand-up gig was in the late 1980s in the old Improv room at the Riviera. He made \$500 for the week, ate in the cafeteria with the hotel employees and struggled to pay his rent.

“I thought if I can just break even so I don’t have to borrow money from people, I’ll be happy,” recalls Spade. “During my first five years doing stand up, I thought I can always switch and go back to valeting cars.”

Spade’s career took off when he joined the cast of SNL in 1990 as a writer/performer. From there he moved onto a films including “Tommy Boy,” “Joe Dirt,” “Black Sheep” and “Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star” as well as roles on sitcoms including “Just Shoot Me” and “8 Simple Rules.”

He enjoys working on both movies and television, particularly when it’s with friends like the late Chris Farley (“SNL,” “Tommy Boy” and “Black Sheep”) or most of the cast of “Grown Ups.”

Even so, Spade says his stand-up act is where he is known for being most relaxed.

That’s not to say that he relaxes too much when he comes to Las Vegas. Actually, Spade

says, he can barely keep up.

“It’s hard to have like a super fun night before a show, because you know people are paying good money. I have to feel good, I can’t get sick and I have to keep talking for an hour,” he explains. “I like to pretend that I’m super happening, but it’s really tough to keep the hours of the people there [in Vegas]. I can’t stay up till 12 or 1. It looks desperate for me to wait until 11 to go out. So I just go, ‘Eh, I’m out, can’t do it.’”

And this, confesses the consummate bachelor, is why he loses all the gals – a funny statement, considering that over the years he has been romantically linked to bombshells including actress Heather Locklear and Playboy Playmate Jillian Grace (with whom he fathered a child in 2008).

Spade, who plays a single guy on the prowl on “Rules of Engagement,” says his reputation with the ladies is greatly exaggerated.

“I do alright,” says Spade. “But I think what happens is if I go on two dates a month and someone takes a picture then that’s all people see, so they figure that’s every day. These guys take pictures around L.A., and if I’m alone they don’t take it. They figure they can’t sell it unless I’m with a girl. I’ve painted myself into that corner.”

It’s not a bad corner, he adds, laughing. “It’s just kind of a dumb one.”