

## LANCE BURTON ON MICHAEL GOUDEAU

I first met Michael Goudeau in the early '80s when we were both appearing at the Tropicana Hotel in the *Folies Bergère*. Goudeau and his juggling partner, Frank, were doing a two-person comedy/juggling act that was very funny and amazing. The three of us became good friends and remained so, even after they left the show a couple of years later.

At that time, juggler Kris Kremko held the record for the longest running variety act in Las Vegas. He had been in the *Lido* at the Stardust Hotel for about a decade. When I opened my show at the Hacienda Hotel I brought Goudeau on board as my special guest star. He stayed with me throughout the run at the Hacienda and then went with me to the Monte Carlo Hotel. For those keeping track, that is a total of nineteen years – a new record! Congratulations Michael Goudeau!

Back in the '80s Goudeau and I went to the movies to see *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray, a wonderful film about a man who gets stuck living the same day over and over again. Michael immediately began using *Groundhog Day* as a metaphor for show business. He pointed out that performing a variety act was exactly like the movie. We do the same act over and over again. We relive the same day over and over and we find out everything that can go wrong, and we try to figure out what to do to correct the situation. Goudeau has an inventive mind and always notices things like this. That is why he has been so successful.

Here's to many more years of comedy and creativity from my good friend Michael Goudeau!



Lance (as Goudeau), Goudeau (as Lance), and Frank Miles (as himself)

*Hitz* at the Hacienda before Lance opened there. A friend of mine who was a burlesque-style comic had worked in the show previous to *Hitz*, and they really liked him. So they decided to keep him even though they were switching to a modern, hip-hop show. It wasn't a good fit. He was extremely unhappy with the show. During one of my breaks from the cruise ship I stopped in to see the show; afterwards I sat at the bar with him. He said, "I really hate this show; tomorrow morning I'm going to call in and quit." So I asked him, "What time are you going to call?" He called at 11:30; I called at 11:45 and asked if they needed a variety act in the show. They said, "Oddly enough, we do." (Laughter) They basically hired me sight unseen and put me in that show.

It was a big cut in pay from what I made on the cruise ship, but the Hacienda show gave me more flight time: I had more time on stage to work on my act. I hadn't been doing a solo act that long and I knew from the street that I needed to do as many shows in as short a time as possible. So I went from the ship, where I might do two shows a week, to the Hacienda, where I worked six days a week doing two shows a night for half the money.

Melinda's brother David Saxe saw me in *Hitz* and asked me to be in her show, which I did for about a year. I did a short stint at the Lady Luck downtown and then I moved into Lance's show at the Hacienda.

C: Did you have much input on the structure of the Hacienda show? Did Lance ask you for advice?

G: I worked on jokes, mostly. Lance had all the tricks in place. All the stuff he wanted to do he'd been working on for a long time. He'd spent the last couple of years at the *Folies* putting new things in at the end of the bird act. He worked out illusions there; the *Folies* were pretty lenient about those things. So by the time he got to the Hacienda, about two-thirds of the illusions had been worked out. I helped write jokes or sat in the audience and watched for sight lines while he rehearsed; the type of things that good magicians ask other people to do for them.

C: Were you the first to do beanbag chair juggling?

G: Absolutely. I was the first to do that trick by a long shot. I was walking through Walmart and saw the beanbag chairs and thought, "Hey, I bet I can juggle those." I picked them up and juggled them right there in Walmart. I was in Melinda's show at the time, and I put them in the act that night. Melinda's mom Bonnie said, "What a horrible, stupid, amateurish trick." So it was in and immediately out. I invented it and then didn't do it for a year. When Lance opened at the Hacienda I put the trick back in.

C: Here's something I've always wondered about: How do you travel with those things?

G: I will tell you a trade secret. Normally when I traveled what I did was to purchase Styrofoam peanuts in whatever town I was in. I traveled with the valve that those giant peanut loaders use. But then I found some eight-foot diameter beach balls. I put the beach balls inside the beanbag chair skins and blew them up about a third of the way. It took some experimentation to figure this out. With the partially inflated beach ball inside, the beanbag chair handles and looks like the genuine article.

C: So you were with Lance at the Hacienda and a deal was