

Telling the story of music in the Texas Hill Country

T.J. and Friends



T.J. Smith wanted to put the “show” back into show business. So when Smith and his wife, Maria, opened the doors to TJ’s Dinner Show in Fredericksburg, the first thing they did was implement a dress code.



“We want people to dress up, to create a sense of elegance,” said the singer, guitar player, comic, and “man of 150 voices.” “When we played country clubs, the people were always dressed up, and it seems they enjoyed the evening better. We miss seeing people dress up to go out.”

Since venturing out with his own stage act after leaving the Rockbox Theater in 2014, Smith has developed his comedy and music to the point he can deliver a whole show. With his wife, Maria, filling in with her own impressions and cover songs, he presents a one-hour act that changes up at least every month. And as anyone who has watched him knows, his show moves quickly and includes three generations of the famous and the funny.

His list of 150 impersonations is growing constantly, but just some of his stable of “stars” include old-time radio personalities Burns & Allen and Red Skelton; movie stars John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, and Jack Nicholson; musicians Joe Cocker, Tom Jones, Ray Charles, Elvis, Garth Brooks, and every Beatle! Smith is an accomplished singer and guitarist, and adds sizzling licks to his tributes to Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, and Carlos Santana.

Some are just weird: who else does

Kermit The Frog, Scooby-doo, Popeye, and Dr. Phil?

He makes gentle jibes at politicians, with impressions of George Bush and Bill Clinton, and even current contenders.

“I can do Trump, but he’s difficult,” Smith admitted. “I don’t do New Yorkers well.”

The idea of running his own theater has long been a dream. When he found the venue on Highway Street, everything came together. Like many musicians, Smith is also handy with a hammer, so he built a stage and transformed the space into a nightclub style setting.

“I’d been looking for my own theater for 15 years,” he said. Even when he was working in other venues, he never stopped looking all over the Hill Country. There were always issues with space, location, or the ability to serve alcohol. “Within a couple of hours of seeing this building, we thought that it felt right.”



While he loves performing in large auditoriums and theaters, he wanted to create something more intimate.

“We always wanted to do something different,” he said. “We want people who come to Fredericksburg to have one more unique experience. We’re really not really competing with anyone else in town; we are offering something unique.”

Hence the dress code. It won’t be tux

and tails. Just no flip-flops or t-shirts.

“We’re saying, guys, you can do this! Put on a button-down shirt with a sport jacket. Ladies, do what you always do—out dress each other.”

It seems to be working. After its first month, TJ’s Dinner Show ranked the #1 Nightlife attraction; the #1 Dinner Theater; the #1 Comedy Club; and the #2 Concerts and Theater.

Smith is already looking ahead. He plans to change out the show at least once a month, and may bring back a few of his “old cronies” as guest artists.

“It will be a very unique dining experience in Fredericksburg,” he said. “You get to see a class show, some comedy, professional entertainment, and a wonderful meal. And...” he paused for emphasis. “You get to dress up.”

TJ’s Dinner Show has performances on Fridays and Saturdays. Dinner provided by Delicious Details. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., with serving at 7:00 p.m. and the show starting at 8:00 p.m. Dinner and entertainment by reservation only. For information:

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