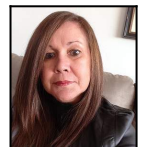


Portuguese Kids Reaching New Audiences



Portuguese kids, from left to right: Al Sardinha, Jay Casimiro, Brian Martins and Derrick DeMelo



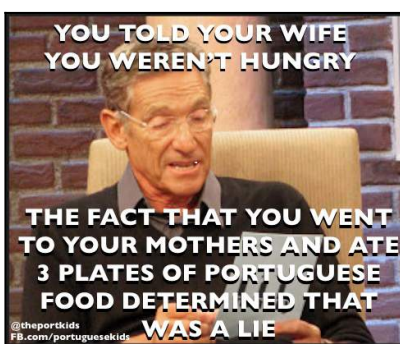
*by
Sheila
Martins
Pina*

They sit directly across from me in the U shaped table layout that you so often find at luncheons and presentations. Amidst the suits and Smartphones they seem slightly out of place and a lot younger than most in attendance. Their work in support of DrugFreeNB will be shown shortly, and they readily admit, this is not their normal audience, but then again, they're not your normal guys, they're the PORTUGUESE KIDS!

Friends since their days growing up in Fall River's Flint neighborhood, "we all went to the same church," they'll proudly tell you, the Portuguese Kids have melded their experiences growing up as children of Portuguese immigrants into music, humor, commercials and ultimately success.

So how do four young men go from dreams to reality? Al Sardina, Jay Casimiro, Brian Martins and Derrick DeMelo aka the Portuguese Kids readily admit it's been a lot of hard work and sacrifice.

"We always loved being funny," says Derrick DeMelo, "and at BCC we could learn television production for free! So we did." But the work was time consuming and the "Kids" grew frustrated. At the time they all had full time jobs and other responsibilities. Then Derrick found out about the Improv Asylum in Boston. Founded in 1997 the Asylum offered improv training. "We wanted to move beyond amateur hour in our performances, so we all took classes for a year and a half," adds Jay Casimiro and a performance career was born that now is a full time job for all four.



Humor with a Portuguese twist!

But they didn't start as the Portuguese Kids; initially they were known as "Out of the Gutter Comedy" but slowly began to realize that more and more of the sketches they would perform came from their personal experiences growing up in an

immigrant Portuguese family. So the Portuguese Kids were born.

"We were bit by the live performing bug," says Al Sardinha. "Performing for a live audience really puts you in a zone," echoes Brian Martins. Shows now typically play to full houses as the appeal of their humor continues to broaden. From New England to California to Canada the Portuguese Kids are booked nearly every weekend. This spring they'll be hosting a cruise to Bermuda.

I wondered if they were ever criticized for their humor which often pokes fun at the Portuguese experience in America, "Some people do," admitted Derrick, but most take it in the spirit it was meant to be. "A lot of people see Portuguese people one way, we're fishermen or laborers, we try and show all sides while staying true to the immigrant lifestyle," adds Brian Martins.

But it's not always smooth sailing, "One night we played the Eagle in Fall River, for three people," says Derrick, "and one guy was there just waiting for a ride home and got up and left mid-act." Another weekend the Kids played to a packed house as the now-closed Café Funchal in New Bedford, the next night they took the same act to Connecticut, and bombed!

The new efforts on behalf of DrugFreeNB came about after a member of the DrugFree Coalition saw an earlier commercial the Kids had made. "We're looking to reach the 18 – 25 year old demographic and deliver our message, Stop Prescription Addiction" (one of the fastest growing areas of drug abuse in the country), says Carl Alves, head of PAACA in New Bedford and instrumental in the DrugFreeNB coalition. "If you can add a little humor, while still getting your message across and emphasizing the seriousness of the issue, we believe we'll reach a wider audience."



*The Portuguese kids
pack 'em in and fill
the house!*

The Kids agree, "Adding a little humor is a fine line, but we want to show the answers can come from within, not by taking a little pill." They hope to produce, and yes, they write, act in and produce all their own material, a series of commercials for radio and television. They admit to being control freaks and are sticklers for retaining editorial control. The DrugFreeNB campaign currently plans to air the commercials on Comcast and on the internet beginning this January.

Ask them the best part of making people laugh as the Portuguese Kids and they, to a man will say the travel and adrenalin of a live performance, the ability to turn their dream into a full time job and living out a passion while showing they are Proud to be Portuguese! "We consider ourselves ambassadors of the Portuguese lifestyle," Derrick says, (with no small measure of pride.) "We know many people who are noted celebrities who don't celebrate their Portuguese heritage; we hope to set an example."

So what does their future hold? They see themselves conveying more of the immigrant experience in America, and adding characters to their sketches that reflect other ethnicities. "We hope to make our message even more universal," concluded Derrick. TV pilots and web-based series are also under consideration.

And as I got set to leave, having had my questions answered, the Kids surprised me with a request of their own. "Can you

mention how handsome we all are?" Always leave them laughing!

For more information on the Portuguese Kids to see their upcoming schedule and sample some of their humor, you can find them on FaceBook at: [Portuguese Kids](#)

For more information on DrugFreeNB, their Facebook site is: [DrugFreeNB](#) and their website is: drugfreenb.org

And you can follow them on Twitter at: twitter.com/DrugFreeNB
