



Mama's Boy Makes Good

Ernie G is not your typical Latino comedian . . . not with a last name like Gritzewsky

By Abelardo de la Peña Jr. | Web Published 01.28.2000

When was the last time you heard a comedian talk about paradigms? (And no, we're not talking about 20 cents). Or who admits that the only thing he learned in Spanish-language school in Cuernavaca, Mexico was "No mames, guey"? And that not only lets on that he's a Mama's Boy, but takes pride in it?

Obviously, Ernesto Tomas Gritzewsky AKA Ernie G is not your typical Latino comedian, especially not with his Mexican-American-Puerto-Rican-Russian-French-Catholic-Jewish heritage, his Psychology degree from Loyola Marymount University, and a self-promotion machine that includes a self-titled newsletter, his own community organization and an Internet site at ErnieG.com.

In a recent visit to LatinoLA.com, Ernie G explained how in just over three years he has placed himself on a comedy fast track, with the recent recording of a comedy CD at the world-renowned Ice House in Pasadena a testament to his talent, tenacity and an intractable belief in himself.

"If it is to be, it is up to me!" he shouts, making sure I get his point. "I'm tired of asking permission to be who I am...a huge bundle of love who is dying to make a difference in the Latino community!"

Indeed, it was his initial goal to work in the community as the director of a nonprofit organization that eventually led him to decide on a career in show business. "After graduating from college, I went to grad school for a Masters in Social Work," he recalls. "Then I got to thinking...did I want to make a big difference with a small group, or make a huge difference with a large group of people?"

Calculating his chances for success, -- as well as taking into account his natural propensity for being the center of attention -- he took the plunge, finally succumbing to the siren of show business after a professor told him: "If you know in your heart you are a performer and you're not performing, you are robbing the world of who you really are." "That's the moment I knew!" he says.

Since then, he has built a resume that looks like a Latino comedian's Who's Who entry: Appearances on TV's "Funny is Funny," ¡Qué Locos!, and ROCA Live. Stand-up work at the Latino Laugh Festival, the All Star Brown & Proud Show, and at Latino comedy nights at the

Laugh Factory, the Improv, the Comedy Store, the Ice House and as part of Paul Rodriguez's Latino Comedy Showcase at the Conga Room. Theatre (Paquito's Christmas), film (Jerry Maguire, Broken), commercials and a slew of fundraiser for such groups as the LA Chicano Employees Association and his own "Ernie's Kids" community group round out Ernie G's hectic schedule.

He always has time, however, to get the word out about what is most important to him...the image of Latinos and how he can make a difference through his comedy. "I really want to get the world to truly know who we are, because the world's perception and views of Latinos is distorted. Who we are is more powerful, beautiful and impactful than people realize."

Indeed, in his act he is quick to point out that very theme: "I am here not to talk about surviving the Latino struggle, but about celebrating Latino success!" Not that he doesn't include a few jabs along the way, as when he describes his desire to hook up with one of today's educated Latina women...as long as she can cook. "These college educated Latinas, they'll tell you 'Tap Ramen is good for you, just put a hot dog in it! And have a rice cake for dessert!'"

He also points fun at himself, as when he told his grandmother he was studying Chicano Studies in college, she shot back "Why do you need to go to college to study Chicanos? You want to study Chicanos, go to the swap meet!"

A great deal of his act deals with his relationship with the women in his family, particularly his mother, Sonia. "I am calling my CD 'Mama's Boy' because I am the epitome of the term. She never married my father, so I am her husband, her best friend." Such is the love that he has for her that last Valentine's Day, he took his mom to the museum, the movies, and then to dinner..." and I didn't have to spend a cent!"

His recent CD recording sessions at the Ice House, before adoring, sell-out crowds, are proof that Ernie G's star is on the rise. And sooner, rather than later, he's going to be able to take his mom out again, and maybe actually pay for the date this time.