

# COMEDY FOR DUMMIES

Jeff Dunham's humor is where his voice throws it

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**HYANNIS** – Jeff Dunham leaves the dirty work to the dummies.

The stand-up comedian/ventriloquist plays the part of the nice guy while the puppets on his hands make the offensive jokes. He's not the one talking about sending immigrants "back where they came from" or mocking Grandpa's hearing aid; it's those darn dummies!

Dunham brought his act and five of his friends – Achmed the Dead Terrorist; Little Jeff, a miniature version of Dunham; Peanut, a purple "woozle" creature; Jose Jalapeno on a Stick; and the grumpy old man Walter –

## Concert REVIEW

to his Saturday night Melody Tent performance. Though loved by many, his characters aren't even likable. Achmed is out to "keel" us all. Little Jeff is a sarcastic jerk. Peanut is racist. Walter hates his wife and most everything else. Jose is probably least objectionable, but he's a stereotype and is just a secondary character. He's not a full puppet, just, well, a jalapeno on a stick.

After warming up the crowd puppet-free, Dunham introduced "the most beloved terrorist throughout the world," Achmed, the turban-wearing skeleton. Achmed started off ranting about the weather and mispronouncing Hyannis. "Hi-anus?" Next up was Little Jeff, straight out of the box Dunham

offers for sale to aspiring ventriloquists. The puppet looks and dresses like Dunham, and as he made the sales pitch, he showed the crowd how dum-

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low in the back, with a head attached to a long stick controlling the face.

Another interesting piece of ventriloquist trivia learned during the night: Dunham can't get his characters' voices right without having the puppets.

After the head was reinserted, Little Jeff ruthlessly mocked Dunham and his sales pitch.

"What else is in the box?" he repeatedly asked in a creepy high-pitched voice.

To answer, "What Else is in the Box" is a how-to ventriloquism book including a routine Dunham wrote that he and Little Jeff performed.

"What's your dog's name?" "I forgot."

"How could you forget?"

"What? No, it's I forgot." "I just asked you, you forgot?"

This went on and on, while a cat named You're Nuts and hamster named Do You Speak English were thrown into the mix.

More cheesy comedy juxtaposed with impressive ventriloquist talent continued for the rest of the two-hour show.

After the 30-minute intermission, Peanut came out wearing a cape and muscle-chest

suit, insisting on being called Bat-Nut and with Jose Jalapeno as his sidekick. Peanut kept calling him Ruben and made Mexican joke after joke. Nearly every old Latino stereotype was thrown Jose's way, eliciting responses that were mostly lame "your mother" jokes.

One of the many one-liners throughout their bit: "He is not Bat-Nut, he's Captain A-Hole," Jose retaliated.

Last was Walter, a crowd favorite who's been with Dunham for 26 years.

Most of Walter's spiel was how much he hates his wife and marriage.

He even offered an original song mocking his aging wife, "Do Your Boobs Hang Low?"

Cringe. "My wife's not overweight. She's undertall."

Eye roll. By no means was Dunham's show a flop. The crowd loved him. His fans are loyal and there are a lot of them. The 8 p.m. show at the Melody Tent was the second of the day by popular demand.

There's no denying Dunham has incredible skill, though his comedy is debatable. He makes crazy voices, sings, makes sounds, yells, screams, echoes, speaks with accents and even burps tight-lipped. It's quite a feat to witness. And watching Dunham argue with his puppets is even more impressive.

Maybe that's why people love him so much. Perhaps they're not here for the comedy; they're here for the ventriloquism. Who knew there were so many ventriloquism aficionados?

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