

PRAISE FOR BAUS & TROCHÉ



"So the writing team of Baus and Troché are still pushing the envelope... reminiscent of the brilliant Firesign Theater comedy of the early 70s."



"From the opening number of their brilliant new show... Ted Baus and Debbie Troché hold the audience... in the palms of their incisively funny hands... limitless comic range."

VARIETY

THE INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

"Banned in Bayshead!"

the village **VOICE**

"wry comics... unnerving alacrity"

N E W · Y O R K

NATIVE

"Their irreverencies touch on socio/sexual/politico issues with... riotous skillful presentation... Their work bears comparison with some of the great comic pairs of our time (Caesar and Coca, Nichols and May, Morteith and Rand)."



"The closest I can come to a description is Nichols and May when they started out."

Newsday

ENTERTAINMENT & TV

A COMEDY DUO'S POINTED IMPROVISATIONS

Taking a Stand Is a Laughing Matter

By Blake Green

STAFF WRITER

THEIR FACES, hanging upside down over the grand piano, are the first glimpse the audience at Don't Tell Mama gets of Ted Baus and Debbie Troché. The comedians look like bearded pinheads, chins pointing toward the ceiling, hair hanging toward the floor.

The idea, established by the voices coming out of the sound holes in the middle of where their foreheads should be, is that they are twins in the womb, about to be born and very, very apprehensive. "We wanted to establish right away the kind of relationship we have," Troché explained, as the two sipped lemonades down West 46th Street from the Manhattan club where their show, "Candid Tandems," is running on Wednesday nights.

"We've known each other so long and we're such good friends," Baus said in the interchangeable conversation they share. "That siblings, twins, seemed the natural thing. And the next thing we often do when we have an idea is: We invert it."

This sketch, like the other six they perform (the rest, right side up, has a point, "kind of a recurring theme: That nobody knows what's going to happen out there in the world," Baus said. "Wherever you are.")

Baus and Troché have ideas about what *could* happen. Each of the pieces "comes out of dissatisfaction, fear of the state of the world," said Baus, who is the faster talker and wears glasses that are small round circles. Continued Troché, who has redder lips — than anyone, not just her partner — "you have to take a stand on the mess out there."



Ted Baus and Debbie Troché have been hosting their comedy act for more than four years. Their "Candid Tandems" is at Don't Tell Mama, 343 W. 46th St., on Wednesdays.

So they do — in the best laughter-is-the-best-elixir manner, tooking the things that bother them: the homeless, trendsetting "celebrities," yuppies who want it all at any price, the environment, safe sex, politically correct fourth graders, racism in Bensonhurst, and, in a sketch that guarantees their never being invited back to perform on alumni day at their old Catholic high schools, the nefarious "father/son" relationship of a drunken priest, played by Baus, and a teenage Puerto Rican boy, played by Troché.

Happily, "the things that seem absurd to us, seem to strike a chord with a lot of other people," Baus said.

The pair, who both turn 30 this fall, met in the 10th grade when they were members of their high school debating teams, he for an all-boys school in Brooklyn, she for an all-girls school in Queens. They soon developed a rapport based on what Baus terms their "skewed, slightly bent" sense of humor. They remained friends through college and ended up working as proofreaders for Richard Nixon's old law firm on Wall Street.

Somewhere along the way, they began doing improvisations, much of their material based on personal observations about life. Four years ago, they worked up a number of set pieces, "took the plunge" and went public, learning some lessons in the time since: "Originally we were doing things for the sake of doing them," said Troché. "Now we've found our real voice."

"In the old days," said Baus, "we were so in love with getting the words down and making our points that we didn't understand that brevity is as powerful an ally as language itself." As they've become more successful (they've been held over at Don't Tell Mama three times), they've added a director, a musical director, a manager and, perhaps most important, have begun to have a following.

Earlier in the day, Baus and Troché, who share a house in Queens with Troché's mother — "the little, white-haired Puerto Rican woman you sometimes see in the audience, turned around to see who's laughing" — had been over on Broadway, at the outdoor performance for the Democratic, passing out flyers for their show. Several people recognized them and one was "just like the woman in the 'Grand Hotel' commercial" gushing about how much she liked their show. "We're not used to this," Troché said. "But we like it." ■



NEW YORK POST

Twice as much fun as you'd get from one

By DIANE STEFANI

COMEDY *review*

FROM the opening number of their brilliant new show "Candid Tandems," Ted Baus and Debbie Troche hold the audience at Don't Tell Mama in the palms of their incisively funny hands.

Swathed in what look like black straitjackets to make them appear suspended upside-down — as in the womb — the comic actors delve into a routine about twins who've just discovered they're about to be born into this world.

The next sketch (as with many of the routines), about two former society types turned homeless persons, should appeal to a yuppie clientele. To prove they can still live up to the appearance of wealth, "Gabrielle" wears a dress made out of a shower curtain Diane Sawyer threw out and "Martin" turns Harry Helmsley's under-

wear into a sophisticated cravat.

Two of their strongest numbers are holdovers from two years ago: "The Working Woman's Workout" (she wears a T-shirt that reads BMW-MBA-CEO2B) and my personal favorite: two grammar-school kids teaching a lesson on the importance of safe sex.

While credit goes to both for the sharp-witted material, clearly "Candid Tandems" is buoyed by the limitless comic range and talent of Troche, whose characters include a corporate executive/supermom, a horny Latin boy confused about his sexuality, and an oversexed Bensonhurst babe.

Don't Tell Mama, 343 W. 46th St., Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. through July. Cover, \$10; two-drink minimum; (212) 757-0786.

VARIETY

THE INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

BANNED IN BAYSHEAD

By JIM ROBBINS

NEW YORK Pete Giovine and Martha McGraw, operators of a community theater on the Jersey shore, have been locked in a fiscal struggle to stay in business. The last thing they needed was a racy act that offended the townspeople.

Last month, comedy team Baus & Troché was booked into Pete and Martha's Place in Bayshead, N.J., for a three-night stand. They opened on a Thursday night. By Friday night, they had their walking papers.

"The general consensus was that it didn't go over," said Ted Baus, who performs issue-oriented improvisations with Debby Troché. "First [Giovine and McGraw] said come back tomorrow and give it another shot, but we get there the next day and [McGraw] said too many people from the town called and complained."

At one point in their act, which they are bringing to Gotham's Duplex this month, Baus and Troché limn two fifth graders presenting a class report on safe sex. As a visual

aid, Baus rolls a condom onto a cucumber.

Giovine, who opened the venue with McGraw May 17, said the cucumber tactic "was one of the many things people found offensive. The sexual undertones in the act were just not what we anticipated."

'Highly recommended'

Admitting "we probably should have interviewed them more thoroughly," Giovine said Baus and Troché "came very highly recommended."

Pete and Martha's Place, a nonprofit theater that doesn't even have a liquor license, depends on citizen donations for its survival.

Last week, Giovine issued "a plea of desperation to the local community, businesses and residents" saying the theater needed \$10,000. (The theater has received \$300,000 in donations over the past five months, per Giovine.)

"The club owes me \$1,200," Baus said, "added to the insult of dragging our butts out there to do the show and then being told, 'We don't like it.'"

the village VOICE

LA DOLCE MUSTO Michael Musto

Those already loco about Coco can also catch the diva Fridays at Eighty-Eights, where she's breaking in some new material in "A Legend in Progress." And Wednesdays at Don't Tell Mama (all right, tell her), they can catch up with an act Leupp once performed with—wry comics **Baus and Troché**, whose show *Candid Tandems* is centered on a skit about young students demonstrating safe sex. The inventive kids act out their imagined techniques by using a cucumber and three condoms, later answering questions from the audience ("Do you smoke afterwards?" "Only if you're really hot") with unnerving alacrity. The act was banned in Bayshead, New Jersey, which should be recommendation enough. ■

N E W · Y O R K
NATIVE

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Contempo Comedy, Musical Magic

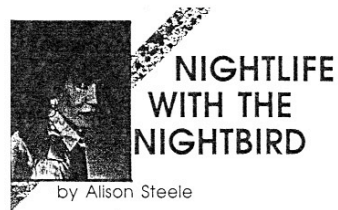
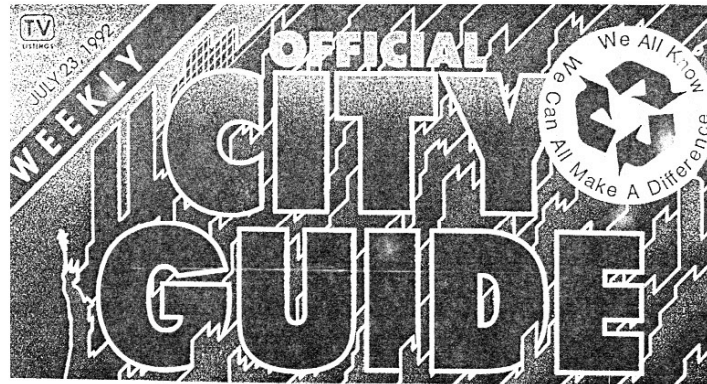
by John Høglund

The comedy duo of Ted Baus and Deborah Troché has been making waves over the past few years locally. Their irreverencies touch on socio/sexual/politico issues with such a riotous, skillful presentation that they may soon become household words. Their work bears comparison with some of the great comic pairs of our time (Caesar and Coca, Nichols and May, Monteith and Rand, and so forth). Blasting contemporary stereotypes and making more than a few cultural digs, their lengthy set is unflaggingly, hysterically funny. The skits require no set-up as they plunge right into it all, and keep the audience holding onto its sides throughout.

Their comic jaunts take the crowd on bizarre and recognizable romps. For example, an urban high-energy yuppie aerobics duo sends out a strong social message while the audience guffaws to tears, as they poke fun at everyday excesses: caffeine, vapid jargon, and obsessive possessiveness. Troché's rapid-fire delivery and movement are convulsively funny. Other bits include a metaphysical transchanneling that has Baus totally out to lunch, a *Star Search* audition setup complete with role reversals, and a not-to-be believed "I Am Woman."

At times, the skits run longer than necessary and hyperbole is stretched to the max in spots. However, this pair of loonies offers uproarious unadulterated comedy that really works. While some of the esoteric material might be above more than a few heads, most of the stereotypical characters are redolent with truthfulness. And, while some editing may be called for, Baus & Troché are mighty contempo comics with a mission: to make us laugh at the world around us.

Baus & Troché are currently running on alternate days at The Duplex, 61 Christopher. For information and to reserve: (212) 254-3954.



If you're in the Theater District, drop in-
to **Don't Tell Mama** (343 W. 46th St.,
757-0788), a sophisticated little place that
features a steady parade of talented young
performers in cabaret. There are several
shows during the evening and a different
lineup every night. On Wednesday this
month, the 7:30pm show stars a wonderful
comedy team, Baus and Troché. The clos-
est I can come to a description is Nichols
and May when they started out.

OMNI

CONTINUUM

EVERYBODY'S A COMEDIAN:

These days, everybody needs to be. Plus a hearing aid only your dentist knows about, and why night workers should avoid donuts

Being a comedian in the 1990s is a daunting prospect. Crumbling economies, spiraling unemployment, rampant homelessness, crime and disease, unabated starvation and warfare, and an environment that's careening into toxic overload. Take my planet . . . please.

Life seems a lot less funny than it used to, yet there are many more comedians working now than ten years ago. The mid 1980s cable TV boom proved that comedy—especially stand-up—is not only very cheap to produce, it satisfies that basic human need: to laugh at the shit hitting the fan rather than cry at the shit hitting your face. As writers and performers, we happen to believe that there's more comedy out there now because there's just more crap to duck.

So who are all these funny people and what are they doing for us? The majority of stand-ups today practice "Did-you-ever-notice" observational humor: Men don't want to commit, women always go to the bathroom together. Where do my socks go when I put them in the dryer? There's a huge appeal in this because everyone can relate to the idiotic things that happen to us at the mercy of bank machines, express checkouts, and our mothers.

Hatred turns up a lot in comedy, too. Sometimes it's satire, sometimes it's just plain old animosity: for your thighs, for your spouse, for your spouse's mother, for anyone who is different from you. This stuff sells because there's a lot of hatred out there these days. People have made substantial careers out of, "You're not like me, so you suck!"

It's been said that each generation gets the art that it deserves. Does that mean that all we're left with is chuckles that evaporate after the punch line or routines that encourage us to hit someone else with a baseball bat? We don't think so. There's a growing number of comedians who craft their humor around complicated issues, problems that we all must think about and act upon in order to survive. They are—



"Safe Sex" sketch banned in Bay Head.

guy!—socially responsible comics. Lily Tomlin has been a champion of compassion and hope for years. Bob Goldthwait uses stand-up to tell us that it's time to get our acts together and do it fast, and Whoopi Goldberg's character monologues always deliver a healthy dose of raw reality with the laughs.

We are a duo. We write and perform character sketches about things that people don't always laugh at: homelessness, racism, our messed-up planet. A while back, we performed our "Safe Sex" sketch in a nightclub in Bay Head, New Jersey. In it, we play fifth-graders presenting a show-and-tell project, complete with a large (and we mean large) cucumber and enough condoms to keep the cast of *Beverly Hills 90210* out of trouble for a month. Despite the fact that we were trying to say, "Look at the world in which our kids are growing up," the Bay Head townfolks flipped, and quicker than you can say "Lenny Bruce," we were closed down and deemed obscene. Which only told us that there are a lot more people out there who need to see what we do. Because, why just make people laugh when you can make them laugh and think? Comedy can change consciousness and consciousness can change the world.

Our civilized life is falling apart. Comedy with a conscience can be a part of making everyone realize that we have to put it back together. The fact is, jokes have staying power—humans like to remember them. If we didn't, we'd go around reciting tenth-grade geometry to each other. That's why we hope laughter can be used to better this world. Plus, it's a hell of a lot more fun than the Pythagorean theorem.

Ted Baus and Debora Troché perform at theaters and nightclubs on the east coast. When in New York, they can be found at the clubs *Eighty Eight's* and *Don't Tell Mama*, or at their homes having a donut and a nap.