

Just a guy

Bill Engvall at the Schuster Center

BY JENNIFER HANAUER LUMPKIN



Bill Engvall will perform on March 24 in the Mead Theatre at the Schuster Center

Bill Engvall has been

trying to convince us he's "just a guy" since he began his professional career in comedy some 30-odd years ago. He has that easy quality, the warmth that radiates from genuine people. He loves his wife. He's proud of his daughter and son. He could be your next door neighbor, if you were to happen to live in picturesque Park City, Utah, with elk roaming through your backyard.

For all his normalcy, the Galveston native doesn't have me totally fooled. The *Blue Collar Comedy* alum known for calling out fatuous actions with his trademark "Here's your sign," has a Grammy nomination, multi-platinum selling albums and multiple film and television credits to his name, including *The Bill Engvall Show* and season 17 of *Dancing with the Stars*. This guy is anything but "just a!" Busy as he keeps himself, he found the time to talk to *Dayton City Paper* about bringing up his kids, his next film role and life after showbiz.

How would you say your children's upbringing is different than your own?

Bill Engvall: Obviously there was the showbiz part of it, but really there wasn't much because my dad was a doctor, but that was back when doctors made house calls, so he was gone a lot. And you know, when my kids were young I was gone a lot because I was having to do the club circuit and you were gone for a week at a time and sometimes there were a couple of runs back-to-back. My kids have a lot better life than I did, but you know, there are certain elements of this business you can't keep out of your life. It was like, if we had to go somewhere we flew Southwest. We didn't rent limos all the time and all that. So they had a fairly normal childhood I think. As normal as it can be in the business.

As normal as it can be having Bill Engvall for your father!

BE: Yeah, my daughter has been the only one who said I cannot do any more good jokes. But later in life I kind of understood. She was a sophomore in high school and apparently some kid said to her, "Hey, I heard your dad talking about your underwear on the radio." As a sophomore girl, that probably didn't sit real well.

That can be a tough time if everything is just normal. You talk about your wife a good bit on stage. How would your wife describe you?

BE: I think she'd describe me as a good guy. A good provider, but a goof. I'm kind of silly sometimes.

In your book "Just a Guy" you define a "guy" as one who doesn't think before he speaks.

BE: Yes, I think that's very accurate.

I'm only three years into my marriage, but I totally believe that. But surely there's some difference between being a "guy" and being a "guy comedian."

BE: You know what's funny is, if you were my neighbor and you didn't know what I did for a living, I could be anybody. And I'm glad of that because I don't like being—probably one of my biggest faults in this is—I don't want to be known as a celebrity. I just like being a guy with a cool job. At some point it all

ends, the business point of this. And at that point you're just back to being a guy. And if you have never been just a guy you don't know what to do. I don't handle compliments real well. Like when people say, "Oh my god, you're like the funniest!" I'm like, "Shut up!" You know, I don't know how to handle that. But you don't want to go, "Yes, I am." I say thank you, but I'm like, "Eww."

With your great success how have you managed to stay so relatable?

BE: You know, I wish I had a great answer for you on that one. I think it's the way I was brought up and the way I want to be perceived by people. Like I said earlier, at some point this whole showbiz thing is going to be over, and I still want people to like me for who I am and not who I was. I think it helps my standup, too, in the sense of people know the guy they're seeing on stage there at the Schuster is just a regular old guy. I just happen to be blessed with this talent for making people laugh. And that's what I

try to tell people at my shows. I don't want people to think, "Oh, we're going to see a standup comedian." I want them to think we're sitting around the living room, and I'm the funny guy doing the talking.

Bill Engvall will perform at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 24 in the Mead Theatre at the Schuster Center, 1 W. Second St. in downtown Dayton. Tickets range from \$41.50 to \$61.50 and may be purchased at ticketcenterstage.com or by phone at 937.228.3630. For more about Bill Engvall, visit billengvall.com.

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