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Gazette, Piotr Andrews

Jango Edwards (right); CFCF weatherman Al Dubois test the waters in Looney Tour.

Peals on wheels as Looney Tour cruises the streets of Montreal

By JAMES MENNIE
of The Gazette

REVIEW

The \$19.50 ticket is worth it, if only for the looks you get from people on the street as you drive by.

There is, however, more to the Looney Tour than startled glances from pedestrians, more than professional madman Jango Edwards sticking golf balls in his mouth.

Edwards is the frenetic Netherlands-based clown who closed last year's Just for Laughs festival by diving from a chair into a Dixie cup full of water. He is billed as Looney Tour guide, and he and fellow comic Rick Parets charted the course for this journey into the twilight zone.

Edwards's active role, though, is that of a cog — a large, sparkle-dust-spraying, dangerously lunatic cog — in a laugh-making machine.

Sometimes the machine works, as it did with a wrestling match/baguette fight in Cabot Square on the tour's maiden voyage that had even

Popei's Looney Tours, starring Jango Edwards and Co. Part of the Just for Laughs Comedy Festival daily through July 22 except Monday. Bus leaves the Delta Hotel at 5:30 p.m. and arrives at Place Jacques Cartier about an hour and 40 minutes later.

the derelicts smiling.

Sometimes it doesn't, as when the sound kept futzing up during an otherwise cheerfully sacrilegious sketch in front of the Cartier monument on Park Ave. (Devout Catholics or anyone who might have problems with the idea of Jesus filling in for Johnny Carson may want to stay aboard the bus for this number.)

Whatever happens on the Looney Tours, there is no denying these are daring, comedic experiments on a city-wide scale.

The 100-minute tour is an artistic undertaking that combines two buses, street theatre, stand-up comedy and behind-the-scenes organization as intricate and slickly timed as a commando raid.

Promoters say while the tour follows a particular theme, no two nights will be the same.

The only thing you can count on is that 100 unsuspecting passengers will be pulled over just long enough to watch skits that appear as if by magic along a route that winds from the downtown core to Mount Royal to Park Ave. to Old Montreal.

The travelogue provided by Edwards and fellow comics Johnny Melville, Justin Case and Parets is linked to various "sights" along that route — costumed actors appearing out of nowhere to stand in front of the appropriate monument as your bus rolls by.

These actors, 16 members of the 2-year-old Just for Laughs comedy school, are the workhorses if not the stars of the show: playing leap-frog with the buses as they set up and strike "sets" for the sketches, acting, singing, dancing and generally making the looniness happen.

The unpredictable Edwards enjoys a reputation storied enough to draw dozens of would-be thrill-seek-

COMEDY FESTIVAL TODAY

Jango Edwards conducts a bus tour of Montreal at 5:30 p.m. Meet at 5 p.m. at the Delta Hotel. Tickets \$19.50. 288-1888.

El Tricicle at 6:30 p.m. at Théâtre Outremont, 1248 Bernard St. Tickets \$19.50 to \$17.50. 273-2525.

Film **Glen or Glenda** at 7 p.m. at the Rialto Cinema, 5723 Park Ave. Tickets \$5. 274-3550.

Max Maven and **Tom DeLuca** in Just for Laughs Goes Mental at 7:15 p.m. at Club Soda, 5240 Park Ave. Tickets \$13.50. 270-7848.

Martine Boeri at 7:30 p.m. at Théâtre Elysée, 35 Milton St. Tickets \$12.50. 849-4056.

Gala with **Didier Gustin**, **Popeck**, **Sol**, **Pepo Rubianes**, **Eric Martin**, **Michel Courtemanche**, **Clémence Desrochers**, **Michel Lauzière**, **Gagnants du concours de sketches interurbain**, **Daniel Thibault**, **Claire Jacques** and hosts **Jean-Guy Moreau** and **Patrick Sébastien** at 7:30 p.m. at Théâtre St. Denis, 1594 St. Denis St. Tickets \$13.50 to \$24.50. 849-4211.

Don Harron in Olde Charlie Farquharson's Testament and Magic Lantern Show at 8 p.m. at Théâtre Port Royal, Place des Arts. Tickets \$18.50. 842-2112.

The Brass Band in Tour de Farce at 8:30 p.m. at Centaur Theatre, 453 St. François Xavier St. Tickets \$14.50. 288-3161.

Glenn Foster at 8:30 p.m. at Le Bijou, Complexe Pointe Claire. Tickets \$9. 694-0308.

Frankie Cramer, **Corki and the Juice Pigs** and **David O'Laughlin** at 8:30 and 11 p.m. at the Comedy Nest, upstairs at Woody's Pub, 1234 Bishop St. Tickets \$9. 395-8118.

Culture Shock, a comedy by Chris Lorne Elliott at 8:30 p.m. at Centaur Theatre, 453 St. François Xavier St. Tickets \$10 and \$12.50. 288-3161.

Michel Courtemanche at 8 p.m. at Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts. Tickets \$14.50 to \$18.50. 842-2112.

Popeck at 9 p.m. at Théâtre Outremont, 1248 Bernard St. Tickets \$15.50 and \$17.50. 273-2525.

Bullwinkle and Buddies at 9:30 p.m. at the Rialto Cinema, 5723 Park Ave. Special appearance by June Foray. Tickets \$5. 274-3550.

Tournée juste pour rire at 10 p.m. at Elysée Theatre, 35 Milton St. Tickets \$12.50. 849-4056.

Francofun at 10 p.m. at Club Soda, 5240 Park Ave. Tickets \$12.50. 270-4878.

Surf Nazis Must Die at 11:30 p.m. at the Rialto Cinema, 5723 Park Ave. Tickets \$5. 274-3550.

There are also free comedy performances on five outdoor stages daily from 5 to 10:30 p.m. on St. Denis St. between Sherbrooke and St. Catherine Sts.

draw dozens of would-be thrill-seekers to the tour. For dozens more, however, Jango is an acquired taste.

His humor is like your first shot of whiskey — difficult to swallow no matter how ready you think you are, the aftertaste leaving you either disappointed or licking your lips for a second glass.

There's no denying the Looney Tour is strange. But is it too strange to be funny?

Alain Cordeau, a bus driver for four years, pilots one of the two buses used in the tour. He offered this opinion as he stood at the back of the crowd on Mount Royal, watching a man-eating chicken break out of its cardboard box.

"I've driven around all kinds of people. People are supposed to be in charge of their lives, but so many times you see that they let life control them."

At that moment the crowd shrieked, then burst into laughter as the chicken was revealed.

"That's what I like about all this," Cordeau said. "It lets people laugh. Reminds them what life's about."