

Seinfeld's Opening Act: 'Jerry Loves Israel'

In an episode from Jerry Seinfeld's latest creation, a Web series called "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee," Mel Brooks is eating pastrami in Carl Reiner's living room and retelling old jokes: "Guy gets hit by a car, little Jewish man, his friend says: 'Get a pillow! Do something! Put it under his head! All right. Are you comfortable?' And the guy says, 'I make a living...'"

Laugh out loud—because that is what you do whenever 61-year-old Seinfeld opens his witty mouth. Later this month, Israelis will have a chance to experience the legendary comedian and television personality firsthand in four Tel Aviv shows, running from 5 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 19, to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 20. Though Seinfeld has visited Israel in the past and even volunteered in Kibbutz Sa'ar when he was 15 years old, he has never before performed in Israel.

Seinfeld is coming to the Jewish state with his friend of 37 years, fellow comedian Mark Schiff—in a private jet that will land just minutes before Shabbat on Friday night, according to Schiff.

Schiff, who has been a stand-up comedian and playwright for more than three decades (he and Seinfeld both got their starts at New York City comedy club Comic Strip Live), will open for Seinfeld at all four performances.

It won't be Schiff's first time before a rowdy Israeli audience. He had all three of his children's bar mitzvahs at the Western Wall and calls his wife, Nancy, "very Zionist." He has headlined Israeli comedic events such as The Koby Mandell Foundation's "Comedy for Koby."

"Israel is the best," Schiff tells , saying of Seinfeld,

“Jerry loves Israel, too—that is for sure.” (In fact, in October, Seinfeld performed at the Los Angeles Red Star Ball of American Friends of Magen David Adom—the support arm of Israel’s national ambulance, blood-services and disaster-relief organization.)

Though Seinfeld hit it bigger than Schiff with his *Seinfeld* sitcom, which ran for nine seasons until 1998, the comedian friends have much in common, including a propensity for “working clean.”

On keeping his act sex- and swear-free, Seinfeld said in 2014 that it is part of an athletic challenge, since it denies him the easiest laughs.

“A person who can defend themselves with a gun is just not very interesting. But a person who defends themselves through aikido or tai chi? Very interesting,” Seinfeld told *The Guardian*.

Schiff says he, too, never curses.

“I am in a business where I can do and say whatever I want,” Schiff tells . “But you know, you talk about a fence around the Torah—I learned to put a fence around my work. I don’t let anything in, because once you let it in, the whole thing can become infected.”

Schiff admits he may have lost some work as a result of his clean comedy, but “the types of jobs I could get, I don’t want. When you work clean, you can work anywhere—a business club, hotels, night clubs.” He recalls how, in the 1960s, everyone was clean and bemoans how today, “the whole world works dirty.”

Can we expect a “Jewified” version of the Seinfeld international show in Tel Aviv? Not likely, says Kevin Dochtermann, Seinfeld’s tour promoter and producer for more than 25 years. Dochtermann tells that Seinfeld may change his

show up slightly for the Israeli audience, but likely not too much.

"The show continues to evolve. As opposed to most artists that will perform for three or four months on a tour, turn that into an *HBO* special, retire the material and move on, Seinfeld's shows continue to evolve as he tours," says Dochtermann. "Seinfeld is an incredible artist. He is committed to his art form like none other."

Schiff and Dochtermann both describe Seinfeld as "funny all the time—even in real life; there is no off switch," but also as a great family man, a straight shooter and a terrific father and husband.

"He is a totally honest guy," says Schiff.

Dochtermann recalls a time when he and Seinfeld were traveling in Europe and had a couple of extra days to kill. Seinfeld decided they should spend those days in Majorca, Spain.

"We rented jet skis," Dochtermann says. "And there we were, off the coastline, the powder blue sky. At one point, we turned off the jet skis and Jerry turns to me and says, 'And we're working.' The point here, the whole idea—you cannot beat this as a life. Look what we are doing, and we're working."

Dochtermann continues, "Everything we do is about fun. We want you to laugh, have a good time. Understand: it is all comedy."

Schiff says he and Seinfeld are proud to be coming and supporting Israel during this time of heightened terror. Dochtermann says Seinfeld is not nervous, as his security is "well under control and we hope everything goes according to plan."

"Trust me, many people are nagging Jerry and me about going there now. I think it is important when high priority people, people like Jerry Seinfeld, go to Israel. It shows the world

that it is the right thing to do. It's incredible!" says Schiff. "My love for Israel and the Jewish people is second to none. If you don't hear from us every day, just know we love you guys!"

For the original article, visit .