

HOW I...

## How I entertain clients one question at a time

DAVE RICKLIN PURSUES HIS PASSION BY PUTTING HIS OWN SPIN ON CLASSIC GAME SHOWS



Dave Ricklin, founder and host of Original Game Show Live, is preparing for a gig at the Aberdeen IronBirds stadium where he will perform all night, June 25. He hopes to do more of these large-scale events in the future.

PHOTOS BY KAITLIN NEWMAN

*Dave Ricklin has always loved entertaining people. Even at the age of 8, Ricklin was appearing on local radio commercials doing voiceovers. He has spent time as a radio DJ at the now-defunct 99.1 WHFS, and as a so-called “20-something” reporter at WJZ. “I’ve just always loved performing for an audience,” Ricklin says.*

*In his latest venture, Ricklin is taking his entertainment business directly to the customer. He owns The Original Game Show Live. As host “Whip Cheesy,” Ricklin puts on a number of game shows at corporate events and parties. The games are riffs on classic game shows. For example, “Meal or no Meal” is a food-based version of the game show “Deal or no Deal.”*

*Ricklin started the business in 2009, and has grown to performing at birthday parties, networking events, corporate awards programs and more. He's taking his show to the big stage on June 25, when he'll perform all night at the Aberdeen IronBirds stadium.*

*Ricklin talked about his future plans for Original Game Show Live and his game show heroes.*

**To do this kind of thing, I'm assuming it takes a pretty strong personality.**

**Where does your love for entertainment stem from?** At about 8 years old, I got into singing radio commercials. At the time my aunt was doing radio commercials, and one time they needed a kid's voice, so my aunt volunteered me. I kind of got hooked ever since. I was never really an actor, but I joined some school productions. But I never felt comfortable with real acting. I just wanted to make people laugh. And that has always carried through with me.

**I'd also assume you would need some thick skin. Do you have any problems with hecklers or people who just don't want to play along?**

Fortunately, because I'm booked for private events, the audience knows on some level what they're going to get. I've done bars before, and oftentimes the bar patrons are unaware that a game show is about to take place. So that can be rough sometimes.

**What specifically about game shows is interesting to you?** I've always loved game shows. I don't know what started it, but I've just always felt connected to them in a personal way. I developed this very strange knowledge and ability to play somewhat of a bar game: If you know a game show, I could tell you the host or hosts with 97 percent accuracy.

**How do you decide what games to play at a particular event?** I base most of my game shows on actual TV shows, but I put my own spin on them. I consider them parodies and tributes. I usually customize the event based upon what the event is. I'll cater some of the trivia questions to the audience or the company. And usually I collaborate with whoever is the event planner or coordinator as to what games I should do. But it never gets dry because I have about 30 to choose from.

**How do you plan to grow this business into something bigger?** I really feel like I've struck a nerve. I've been able to find a void in the marketplace that has really been untouched. I feel like I've found my niche. There's a market for this out there, people who don't just want the same standard DJ or band at their event. The more people who know about this, the more business I can get and the more I can grow. Ideally, I would love to have a gig or two every weekend. I'd love to find repeat business, regular business and do more large-scale events like the IronBirds. Ideally I'd just like to do more gigs.

**What's your favorite game show of all time?** I have a couple. This may show my age, but there was a show back on MTV back in the 80s called "Remote Control." It was a laid-back television trivia game. It was hosted by this guy Ken Ober who was a very loose, funny host who wasn't your typical game show host. The audience was typically college kids, the contestants were college kids. And they just did really goofy stuff. I've always been a fan of "Wheel of Fortune" and "The Price is Right." My favorite hosts,

because of their sense of humor, would be Pat Sajak and Marc Summers, who used to host “Double Dare” on Nickelodeon. Hosts like that I really try to emulate.

*Jonathan Munshaw is the digital editor of the Baltimore Business Journal.*



As the host of his own game show, Dave Ricklin goes by “Whip Cheesy”.