

Comedy's quadruple centurion Lewis Schaffer is still not famous



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American comic has now notched more than 400 free stand-up shows in Soho

June 11, 2013, 10:59 am -- /[EPR NETWORK](#)/ -- The first comedian to tour a "Free Admission" show in venues across the United Kingdom has now clocked up his 400th show in London. Lewis Schaffer is Free Until Famous has run twice weekly at the Source Below basement bar in Soho since its inception in October 2008 and is now thought to be the longest running solo stand-up show in Britain.

Described as "bold" and "unpredictable" (by himself), Schaffer arrived in London in 2000 in the name of love after many years as MC in some of his beloved New York's top comedy clubs. 13 years, two children, heartbreak and a divorce later, the homesick American finds himself trapped in a multi-occupancy council flat in Nunhead, a suburb of Peckham, trying to make the very best of a very bad situation.

Running at 8pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays every week, Schaffer's Free Until Famous shows have become something of a legend on the London comedy scene - with each ad-libbed performance taking a different direction, prompting anything from belly laughs to tumbleweed (and sometimes even hostile

aggression). Some shows are so shambolic that guests leave during the interval to avoid the prospect of another hour in Schaffer's company - not to mention the ignominy of having to walk past the donation pot without dropping in a few coins. As The Scotsman says, "An hour with Lewis Schaffer is a hilarious, cathartic, exhilaratingly appalling experience".

Lewis Schaffer is Free Until Famous is one of many of the capital's best comedy shows featured in LondonTown.com's [London events](#) pages. Gig goers enjoying Schaffer's show - which takes place a stone's throw away from Piccadilly Circus in bustling Soho - can make a night of it with a meal in one of the many superb [London Restaurants](#) in the area.

"I didn't think I'd make it to 395 shows - let alone 400," the controversial Schaffer told LondonTown.com. "In retrospect, I have been in that basement longer than Elisabeth Fritzl. I cannot see myself doing 400 more shows - but I don't think Agatha Christie envisioned The Mouse Trap going that long. I am trying to transition myself into something more lucrative - such as unemployment. I would probably do better just staying home."

It needn't have been this way, however. The star of Resonance FM's Nunhead American Radio could have found fame soon after arriving on these shores: Schaffer claims he was forced to turn down a place on the first ever series of Big Brother because his wife at the time did not want the publicity. "She forgot that she married an attention seeker," he says.

While "deeply depressed" at the idea of having notched 400 free shows, Schaffer can at least take consolation with the fact that his notoriety has earned him a weekly paid gig this year at the Leicester Square Theatre. Following a two-month run in spring, Lewis Schaffer's American Guide to England returns to the West End venue for eight Sunday evening performances from 9th June and showcases Schaffer's total indifference to all things British. Tickets cost £10 - that's a whole tenner more than Schaffer's usual fee.

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