



## Laughing at them, not with them

By Kaitlin Ballard  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN  
Wednesday, September 02, 2009

What started as a late-night radio show on the Swarthmore College campus in Pennsylvania is now a seven-year sketch comedy duo basically making a mockery of their lives. Now, Sam Dingman and Ben Masten live in New York City where they're starting to make a national name as Audience of Two. We caught up with them before their show Friday at the Out of Bounds Comedy Festival (their first at the fest) and talked about growing up with comedy and being unprepared for adulthood.

Was comedy something that had always kind of been in your lives, while growing up?

**Ben Masten:** For me, yes, definitely. I had all these weird influences. My mom listens to all kinds of stuff. She has the 2,000-year-old man record, there was lots of Monty Python and "Fawly Towers" around the house, and my dad, even though his side of the family is sort of very uptight and WASP-y, he actually had this older obscure British stuff.

**Sam Dingman:** And for me, my grandfather had all these original Pogo comics, and I just remember at a very early age we would go up and I would just sit there and read and read these incredibly brilliant comics, which at the time, I was of course completely missing the political and social commentaries that were going on.

But the thing I gravitated toward most is all the characters in this swamp sort of speak in this nonsense language, so that really clicked with me, and I watched a lot of "Fawly Towers" as well.

Describe your style, because you guys bounce off each other pretty quickly.

**Masten:** That's just because we've spent entirely too much time with each other. At this point, it's been eight years or so, so basically us (messing) around with each other onstage is not so very different from what we do onstage.

**Dingman:** Maybe the way to articulate our style is that what we try to do is start from a situation that's really rich in associations for one or both of us, and then use it as an opportunity. Generally, the way it shakes out is that for one person it's them kind of reliving the situation and it gives the other person the opportunity to play a bunch of different characters who were a part of that situation.

Is your new sketch 'We Are Not Adults' something you wrote specifically for Out of Bounds?

**Masten:** It was kind of something we had had in the works because we saw that a lot of our material was heading in that direction and we knew we wanted to get a new show up and the timing just wound up working out so that we basically had it ready by the time we had to come to Austin.

**Dingman:** But Austin will be the first time we're doing the full show in front of an audience.

And that is by design because we know that the audience there is going to be really smart and really excited and there to see great comedy and they're going to have high standards. ?

The show is basically about the two of us kind of confronting the fact that on a daily basis we have a pretty limited real-world skill set.

Audience of Two performs at 8 p.m. Friday at the Hideout Theatre (617 Congress Ave.) as part of the Out of Bounds Comedy Festival. \$10. Festival shows continue through Monday.