

A Handy Man's Guide to Living With Multiple Sclerosis

A *Handy Man's Guide to Living with Multiple Sclerosis* will be the second time Steve and John Lush have taken their brother act to the stage. *Zen and the Art of Living with Multiple Sclerosis* was the brother's debut and met with huge success a few years ago at the St. John's Fringe Festival. Meanwhile the theme of multiple sclerosis is one that has certainly hit home for the Lushes. John was diagnosed with the disease nine years ago. Two years ago Steve moved home from Ontario to live with him.

Steve, a seasoned writer and performer, says that while his strong theatre background sets up the framework for the shows, John's powerful experience and strong story telling skills are what make them remarkable.

"Apart from the fact that his story is fascinating, he's a skilled orator, and always has been," says Steve. "He has the ability to take a horrible set of circumstances and make it into a great yarn, and I think this reflects his attitude with everything."

A *Handy Man's Guide* will be an improv piece much like *Zen and the Art of Living*, featuring the musical scores of Lee Tizzard. But Steve says *A Handy Man's Guide* will feature live improvised music, an even more dynamic set and material that is "more upbeat, aggressive, punchy and irreverent...all in the spirit of good raucous fun." And whereas *Zen and the Art of Living* told the story of John's diagnosis and how he first learned to cope with it, *A Handy Man's Guide* will focus on the spirit of living with it.

"He has a fierce determination that almost appears insane from the outside," says Steve of his brother. "He gives up his physical freedoms very, very stingily."

Steve says John's determination and attitude have given him the edge he needs. And, as Steve points out-- John is truly a handyman. Before being diagnosed he was employed as a film carpenter. John has outfitted his home today for his condition.

"There's a makeshift ramp in and out of the shower, arm rails around the toilet, all stuff just made with pieces of two by four," says Steve. "John doesn't go for the hospital high-tech stuff. He jigs it all himself."

And while John may just have the basic motor skills to get himself around, Steve says his brother's mind has never been sharper.

"It's really clear that he's truly building a world. He has a very fertile mind," says Steve. "That's what people will walk away thinking."

Steve says he expects that *A Handyman's Guide* will reflect John's determination and charm and the richness and diversity of the brothers' lives.



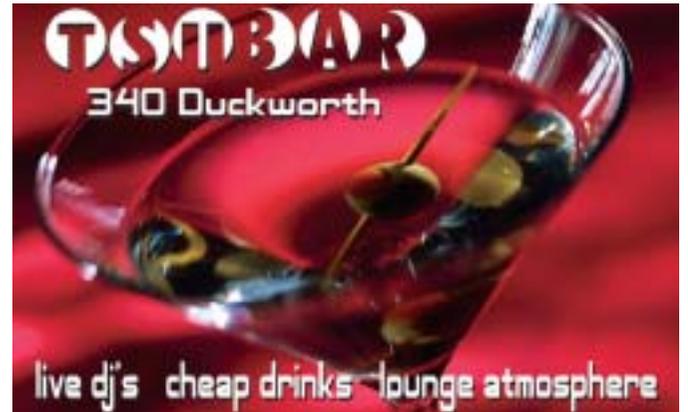
"When in doubt, renovate"—that's been John's catch phrase of the past few years," says Steve. And while Steve says some people may find John's speech to be a bit slow at times, John recommends that people "slow down their listening."

Meanwhile, the brothers already have another project in the works, and this one will be going to the big screen. Steve and John will be shooting *A Handy Man's*

Guide on digital and pairing it up with footage of their day-to-day lives in Upper Gullies over the coming months.

A Handy Man's Guide will be performed Friday and Saturday nights on the weekends of the 15th and 22nd. Tickets for the show can be bought in advance at the LSPU Hall box office.

By Robin Grant



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