

3rd Rock From The Sun

~ aDeLiNe'Z Perspectives ~

Go with the blow



BUBBLE-BLOWING extraordinaire Tom Noddy shares five things about bubbles you probably never knew.

1. Bubbles burst not because they come into contact with a sharp object. It happens because they touch a dry surface. You can use a wet straw to gently pierce a bubble and you won't succeed in popping it.
2. Humidity is good for bubbles. If the weather or surrounding is too dry, the bubble solution vaporises more quickly, causing the bubble to burst.
3. A single soap bubble in the air is a nearly perfect sphere. Surface tension acts to minimise the form of the object, and the sphere is the most economical shape in nature - it uses the least amount of surface area to contain a given volume.
4. Bubbles are not weightless. In a room with no air circulation at all, bubbles will drop to the ground in a straight line. You see them floating and drifting about only because they are carried by moving air.
5. To catch hold of a bubble, don't place the blowing stick under the bubble. Part of the bubble, outside of the contact surface of the blowing stick, will inevitably come to rest on the dry wrist area causing it to pop. Always use a wet stick and hold it from the top. But you do need lots of practice.

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Buoy in the bubble

It's love among the suds for Tom Noddy, who blows his audience away every time he performs his bubble act at The Crystal Mirror

By Frankie Chee

THERE'S not much you can do with soap bubbles, except blow them, watch them float about and vanish - unless you are Tom Noddy.

The 57-year-old American has made a 30-year career out of blowing bubbles - and what he can do is likely to blow your mind.

He can string a few bubbles together to make a caterpillar. He can create a big bubble with smaller ones in it to form a mini-galaxy. He can even defy logic by crafting a cubic bubble.

It's little wonder that his 10-minute bubble-blowing act is one of the most popular in The Crystal Mirror, a dinner theatre show that's now on at The Padang until April 15.

Before joining the troupe on its tour to Singapore, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Taipei, the California resident was already well-known in the United States.

He had appeared in popular American TV shows like The Tonight Show and The Late Show With David Letterman, and mesmerised audiences at corporate events, universities and science centres worldwide.

He even taught physicists and mathematicians a thing or two about the science of bubble-making at international conventions.

Born in New Jersey, Noddy has always had a taste for the unconventional.

A hippie in the 1960s, he had majored in anti-war demonstrations and civil rights in college but gave it up mid-way to hitchhike around the country.

In 1971, he decided to head to Europe. So for several months, he worked as a mover in a factory and stayed home in his free time to save up for the trip.

'Except for Star Trek, television was boring,' recalls the affable bachelor. So he took up hobbies like playing yo-yo and paddle ball, both of which he mastered but soon got bored of.

Then came blowing soap bubbles.

'I never got bored with it. The whole day long, even at work, I was obsessed thinking of bubbles. When I see soap suds in the sink, I'd go crazy. I see endless possibilities as I watch the thousands of bubbles interact,' he says excitedly.

And it's not just child's play, too.

He read science books to learn about the forces of physics that make bubbles behave the way they do.

By observing their behaviour, and through countless trials, he devised ways to connect the bubbles so that they can form different shapes.

Now, his interest is in making geometrical shapes, and he displayed that by making a dodecahedron (12-sided) bubble when Life! interviewed him last week.

To make some of his bubbles more visible to the audience, he routinely fills them with smoke by puffing on cigarettes.

But anyone who's concerned about his health need not worry.

Noddy is a non-smoker outside his shows. And the cigarettes he lights up are Herbal Gold Lights - a non-nicotine herbal cigarette made with ginseng, marshmallow and jasmine - which he buys from an Indian reserve in New York.

As for the only other prop he uses - a bottle of soap solution - he buys it off the shelf at toy shops like Toys 'R' Us.

'Any five-year-old can do the tricks,' he says, before adding slyly, 'with 30 years' practice.'