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8-6-2021

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LaReeca Rucker

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Recommended Citation

Rucker, LaReeca, "Former 'SNL' Writer Brings 'The Heartbreak Henry' to Oxford" (2021). *University of Mississippi News*. 1926.

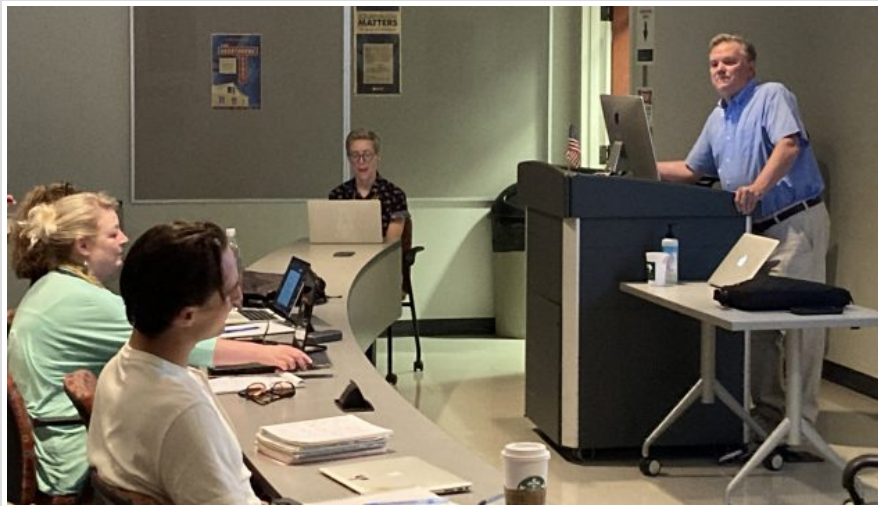
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Former ‘SNL’ Writer Brings ‘The Heartbreak Henry’ to Oxford

UM alumnus David Sheffield's comic recollection comes to the Ford Center

AUGUST 6, 2021 BY LAREECA RUCKER



David Sheffield (right), former head comedy writer for ‘Saturday Night Live,’ leads a comedy workshop at the School of Journalism and New Media. Sheffield is in Oxford directing his play ‘The Heartbreak Henry,’ which is based on his experiences managing the Oxford hotel as a 19-year-old Ole Miss freshman in 1967. The play runs Aug. 11-15 at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – David Sheffield, a University of Mississippi alumnus who went on to write for “Saturday Night Live” and several Eddie Murphy movies, has taken to the stage with “The Heartbreak Henry,” a comedy based on his experiences as manager of an Oxford flophouse hotel in 1967.

The Theatre Oxford production runs Aug. 12-15, with a preview Aug. 11 in the Mary Ann Mobley/Gary E. Collins Studio Theatre at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets can be purchased through the Ford Center Box Office at 662-915-7411.

The production is co-sponsored by the UM School of Journalism and New Media.

“The School of Journalism and New Media agreed to co-sponsor the production to provide opportunities for students to hone their professional skills,” journalism professor Kathleen Wickham said. “Assistant professor Michael Fagans joined the project to produce a documentary, with students Margaret Bushway, Alexander Norris, Tucker Robbins and Billy Schuerman.

“It was also an opportunity for me to refresh my professional skills in a new venue, having worked in public relations at one point in my professional career.”

Wickham said she was drawn to “The Heartbreak Henry” after seeing it in Biloxi in 2018 at the Center Theatre because of its treatment of the people who resided in the hotel in all their quirky, contentious and confused character.

“David Sheffield was an innocent freshman, just 19 years old, who was so cash-strapped he hitchhiked to campus from southern Mississippi,” she said. “He landed a job at the Henry Hotel as a theater major and had compassion for his tenants.

“It was that humanity that attracted me to this project and why I worked to bring it to Oxford.”

The Henry Hotel was built in 1920. It had 30 guest rooms, but none had in-room telephones, just a pay phone in the lobby. In 1967, rooms cost \$4.50 a night, \$5.50 with a bath in the

room.

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Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to



The Henry became a residential hotel in the 1970s, with rooms renting for \$45 a month. Later, the building was turned into the Abbey Apartments. Since 2015, the concrete building, with its gable-and-hip roof, box cornice, molded frieze and closed gable ends, has been home to Rafters bar.

The play features some of the cranky characters who frequented the run-down hotel during Sheffield's tenure as manager. To Sheffield's horror, he had to evict two waitresses with illegal

social side gigs on a snowy Christmas Eve.

"This story happened about 50 years ago," said Sheffield, who lives near Laurel. "I met a bunch of characters I couldn't get out of my mind. At the Henry, the unexpected was the norm."

The show is also supported through grants from the Mississippi Arts Commission, the Ford Center and the Clancy Collins fund, as well as community donors.

"I went to Ole Miss for an education, but the real education took place at the Henry Hotel," Sheffield said. "I saw things at the Henry I never saw at home."

Sheffield was co-screenwriter of the "Coming To/2 America" movies, "The Nutty Professor," "Boomerang" and other Eddie Murphy movies, but he never forgot his stint at the Henry Hotel. With "The Heartbreak Henry," Sheffield is returning full circle to Oxford, where his career as a comedy writer began.

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