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His good side

Butt sketch artist excels at bringing up the rear

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Krandel Lee Newton makes his career peeping behind the scenes. Yes, he's cheeky. Yes, he's a "crack" artist. He is these things and any other double-entendres you can smirk up because Newton is the creator of The Original Butt Sketch; the man who has put charcoal to paper and captured the images of more than 150,000 rear ends.

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The likes of Tony Curtis, Vanna White and Jamie Foxx have shown Newton their tush. He's taken his artistry to conventions and parties all over the world, and today he comes to Marquette University's Alumni Memorial Union, 1442 W. Wisconsin Ave. There, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., anyone can BYOB ("Bring Your Own Butts") and get a free keister caricature.

Newton split off from his original career as an engineer to pursue his artistic dream in 1987 and since then has honed his skills to the point where he can produce a sketch in just 2 1/2 minutes. We caught up with Newton at the tail end of one of his gigs in Orlando.

Q.Why butts? Why not, say, elbows?

A. I don't think there's a market for too many other parts of the body. Hair - some people have it, some don't. Butts everyone has. Plus, I could be like every other artist in America and draw faces, but you have to look high and low for a butt artist.

Q.But is there a downside?

A. Not really, except lingering in airports while traveling. People have warned me not to get downwind

of my subjects, but I pose them 4 to 5 feet in front of me, so I've never really encountered much of that problem.

Q.So, among all your subjects, who had the best butt?

A. Undoubtedly my wife. I met her while I was sketching 10 years ago and I thought: "This one I have to take home." Among celebrities - Joe Namath, Vanessa Williams. Alex Trebek of "Jeopardy!" was one of the coolest because he stood in line for 30 minutes and didn't demand to be hustled up to the front of the line.

Q.And the biggest?

A. John Goodman. He easily weighs 300 pounds.

Q.How do people react to this whole Butt Sketch concept?

A. People see the sign and they say, "Oh, no, not my butt. What is this crazy . . . ?!" But then someone else steps up, and the same people who pooh-pooed it tend to gravitate back, and then they have to wait an hour and a half. Overall, the reaction is very favorable.

Q.What features interest you artistically when doing a dupa depiction?

A. It varies. While I'm sketching, I'm always fascinated by the way people drape themselves in clothing, everything from tight fitting to loose fitting. It helps me position them.

Q.What about arses au naturel?

A. Yes, I do nudes. I find that women primarily 27 to 35 are really interested in preserving an image of themselves at that age. For nudes, I use a different technique, usually pen and ink.

Q.You must have to endure a constant barrage of puns. So Milwaukeeans know ahead of time, they need to come up with something more original than the one you hear most often, which is . . . ?

A. "You're getting behind in your work."

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