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Stage hypnotist says he just wants to have fun

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Joe DeVito is a stage hypnotist, but he's not the star of the show; the audience is.

"There's a saying in this business that you have two choices: You can see the show or you can be the show," he said in an interview from his Boston home. "If you decide to be the show, I guarantee you'll have more fun."

Not everybody makes a good hypnosis subject, said DeVito, who performs tomorrow in the Hard Hat Cafe.

"I've had people on the stage as old as 80 and as young as 19. The best age is probably somewhere between 16 and 30. College students are always the best because they're ready to have a good time and they're ready to get high without drugs or alcohol."

In addition to the hypnosis tricks, DeVito does a fire-eating act and brings a live boa constrictor onstage. The hypnosis show usually starts slowly and builds to a frenzy, he said.

"I'm kind of the orchestra leader," he said. "I get a bunch of people from the audience doing a bunch of different things at the same time, all interacting with each other, while I orchestrate the chaos."

DeVito said he uses only the sound of his voice to hypnotize his subjects.

"The more willing the person is, the more fun it is. You have to be a willing subject."

He warns the audience to expect an "R-rated" show because he never knows exactly what the hypnosis subjects will say or do. "Every once in a while, a word might slip out, but it's not anything we haven't heard on HBO or Showtime," DeVito said.

Stage Hypnotist Joe DeVito will perform at 9 p.m. tomorrow in the Hard Hat Cafe, 4500 North Detroit Ave. Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 tomorrow. Information: 419-269-1700.