

Mandyland Entertainment

an interview with Martin "the Clown" Barry
photo courtesy of 33rd Degree Photography



If you take a look at the landscape of entertainment in Charlotte, you will find the things common to several cities. If you really dig in, you will find entertainers, recurring events, and the people that give the city a unique flavor and perspective. Events like Shiprocked at Snug Harbor, bands like Dr. Cirkustein, and even sporting events with Charlotte Roller Girls are more than worth the time and money to attend. Mandy Kimrey has put together another recurring event that you may wish to include in your calendar. The Mystics Ball is a very unique, themed, variety event held several times throughout the calendar year. This Clown caught up with Ms. Mandy to give you the 411.

Clown: You have long been a bit of a taste maker in the city participating in several endeavors to bring unique entertainment to the city. What was the first time and what motivated you to get involved?

Ms. Mandy: I caught the entertainment bug early. My first theme party was a school-sponsored "Flashback." I used a boom box to record a short song mix, wrote a fun ad, and used my best radio voice to tell everyone about it over the morning announcements. I thought I was SO cool! I had started playing in local rock bands by then, and had long been involved in theater, marching and concert band, church and community choirs, and leadership conferences for various clubs and organizations. My band, Rutkus, started playing the local venues here in the late 90's, and continued up until a few years ago. We never actually "broke up," but we haven't played lately. I had a brief stint with the Inner City Mass gospel choir in 1996. I sang on their album and appeared in John P. Kee's "Stand" video, shot in uptown Charlotte. When my best friend, Amber, came back from the army and started doing her fetish shows, I joined up to help as a photographer (Mandyland Photography), promoter, and stage hand, ended up writing and producing acts for myself and others, eventually helping manage the whole production. After that, I moved on work with a troupe called Gore-a-licious for a while. We specialized in gory burlesque shows, and toured with horror-themed punk and rock bands. I was one of the vocalists for Iron Cordoba, a parody band made up of members from at least ten different local groups. We threw themed events with live music, games, and costumes for several years. I've done a lot of booking/promo/emcee gigs with local bands, directed and produced a few music videos, helped organize community events, and helped with local film projects. Anyway, once I knew all of the groundwork, starting my own company was just the natural progression of things. Thanks to an unexpected groundswell of support, I decided to do the d*mn thang!

Clown: Tell the people how you spend your average day - from waking to organizing the next great thing.

Ms. Mandy: No day is typical! But I guess I start out by checking the social media pages, answering questions from patrons, and directing the crew, checking in on all fronts, to make sure we're on the same page and making progress. Then it's off to the day job. After work, there is usually a prop build, or costuming, and of course, the never-ending rearranging, altering, storing, and purging of our props and set pieces. Live music rehearsals are on Wednesdays, production meetings are on Sundays, and most other evenings are spent coordinating people, promoting events, and pitching ideas for upcoming events with our insanely talented crew.

Clown: When you DO have downtime, what do you try to do?

Ms. Mandy: I love to cook, watch creepy TV shows, and read.

Clown: Mandyland Entertainment is currently producing a series of shows called The Mystics' Ball, each with a theme. How do you decide what theme will play when?

Ms. Mandy: Costuming plays a big part. Our goal is to immerse people in a particular historical or literary culture, but we don't want them to freeze or sweat to death in the process. We held our Roman Ball in the late spring last year, because people were wearing togas and not much else. Our Steampunk Ball was in February this year and there are a lot of hats, petticoats, suits, and heavy costumes. Costume parties have been around since about the 14th century and have gone in and out of fashion every couple of decades ever since; probably the most famous era being the Venetian masquerade, which is what we modeled our first Mystic's Ball after, and is our only annual theme, Labor Day weekend.

Clown: What are the elements that make your shows something everyone should see?

Ms. Mandy: Bi-Polar Theatrics? We love our art dark with a splash of funny and often tread some murky waters. We don't necessarily want to scare you, but we certainly want to have an effect on you. I don't want our diverse event to fall into just one category. I cringe when people try to label us, but that's how people decide what they want to attend. Let's go with "variety entertainment for the grown-up crowd".

Clown: What do you hope patrons of your events will experience?

Ms. Mandy: Culture, and diversity in sensuality, rather than just vulgarity. Adult nightlife entertainment doesn't have to begin and end at the strip club. We want to throw a party where you want to bring your wife, or your boyfriend, or your wife and your boyfriend! We are very lifestyle inclusive - and by that, I mean LGBTQ+, as well as kink, swirl, and swing lifestyles without the stigma of calling it a fetish show or a swinger party. Mandyland is a place where you will find open minded people who aren't strictly defined by any of these labels. I want my patrons to see what they've been missing, even if they decide to only watch.

Clown: Do you think the city should have as many "costume required" events as possible?

Ms. Mandy: Cosplay is huge right now. People all over the world are excited about it and I absolutely love that, but, obviously, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. That being said, I wouldn't want every event to require costumes. Not everybody is into it, so if you don't have a costume, we always provide an "out" at the door. We have masks for the Masquerade, ivy crowns at the Roman Ball, scarves at our Harem event; these are an extra \$5 to get you in and that money goes to charity. Our unofficial motto is, "we're not gonna be a**holes about it, but at least try".

Clown: If you could change ONE thing about Charlotte what would you choose?

Ms. Mandy: I'm going to go with the rest of our local entertainment community and say that we need more independently owned venues. Corporate venues are *strangling us out* and we need another Chop Shop, another Tremont, and another Tommy's Pub. Amos' Southend was fairly friendly to local acts, as long as we sold some drinks and didn't make a mess of the place. We have so many talented locals, it kills me to think that we'll soon have nowhere to play. (*Editor's note: Amos' Southend has recently announced that they are closing.*)

Clown: Now, be honest ... do you have the best MC for your events, or what? (*Editor's note: the MC for Mandyland Entertainment's Mystics' Ball is Martin "the Clown" Barry.*)

Ms. Mandy: Now, Mister Clown, do I really need to answer that? You know that I've been blessed with the best.

FUN FACTS ABOUT MANDYLAND:

- It's not a "concert" but they incorporate live music into at least one act per event (sometimes more).
- It's not a "freak show", but you will see some freaky stuff, especially if it pertains to the theme. They've had bodypiercers, firebreathers, aerialists and so forth.
- It's not a "burlesque" show, but the crew loves to show a little skin, so you will likely see a striptease act at any of their shows.
- It's not a "fetish" show, but they often employ fetish themes (bondage, corporal punishment, role play, etc.).