

# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE JULY 22, 2019

## PUNCH LINE SAN FRANCISCO

*Application No.:* LBR-2018-19-058  
*Business Name:* Punch Line San Francisco  
*Business Address:* 444 Battery Street  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Live Nation Worldwide, Inc., Owner/Operator  
*Nomination Date:* May 16, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Punch Line San Francisco is the longest-running comedy club in the city, established in 1978. The Punch Line was originally founded by Jonathan and Anne Fox along with Jeffrey and Patricia Pollack. The Foxes are the founders of the San Francisco International Comedy Competition. The venue was sold to Bill Graham in 1980. Bill Graham was a German-American impresario and rock concert promoter who made famous The Fillmore and Winterland Arena and had a profound influence around the world. In 1997, SFX Entertainment purchased Bill Graham Presents, and then in 2000 Clear Channel Entertainment bought SFX. Clear Channel operated the venue until 2005 when it spun off into a new company name: Live Nation Worldwide, Inc. The venue has operated under the "Clubs & Theaters" division of Live Nation since then, called House of Blues Entertainment.

The Punch Line quickly established itself as a premier comedy club for performers and audiences alike. The citywide comedy festival SF Sketchfest operates in partnership with the Punch Line for 3 weeks out of each year. The Punch Line's weekly Sunday showcase is the longest-running comedy showcase in the entire city of San Francisco. The Punch Line has had comedy shows at least six nights a week for the past 40 years.

Stars like Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Ellen Degeneres, Wanda Sykes, Drew Carey, Dave Chappelle and Chris Rock all took the first steps of their show biz journeys on the Punch Line's stage. Then there are Zach Galifianakis, Ali Wong, Amy Schumer, Nick Swardson, Hannibal Buress, Bill Burr, Mike Birbiglia, Marc Maron, John Mulaney, Margaret Cho and so many more who regularly played the Punch Line. Many still make guest appearances and perform surprise shows.

The business is located on the east side of Battery Street between Washington and Clay streets in the Financial District neighborhood.

**CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?**





SAN FRANCISCO

## OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

Yes, Punch Line San Francisco has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

444 Battery Street from 1978 to Present (41 years)

### **CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, Punch Line San Francisco has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with the art of stand-up comedy.
- As a comedy performance venue, the business is associated with many famous comedians as well as Bill Graham, an early owner.
- The property has Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "B" (Historic Resource Present) because of the building's age (constructed 1967).
- The Punch Line has been featured in tons of Bay Area publications such as The Chronicle, The Examiner, SF Weekly, SF Bay Guardian and San Jose Mercury News. The Punch Line was listed as #3 in Vulture Magazine's "top 15 comedy clubs." The Punch Line can be seen in the "3 Still Standing" documentary, as well as "Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind," the official HBO Documentary. Dozens of comedy albums have been recorded at the Punch Line, as well as a few comedy specials.

### **CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes Punch Line San Francisco is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Punch Line San Francisco qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Stand-up comedy performance 6 nights per week.
- The mural on the stage backdrop.
- The neon sign of the comedy and tragedy masks.
- Dan Dion's photographs of comedians.
- Brick interior walls.
- Intimate scale of the space.

### **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Comedy club.





CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Punch Line San Francisco currently located at 444 Battery Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager  
Legacy Business Program



# Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE JULY 22, 2019

PUNCH LINE SAN FRANCISCO

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

*Application No.:* LBR-2018-19-058  
*Business Name:* Punch Line San Francisco  
*Business Address:* 444 Battery Street  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Live Nation Worldwide, Inc., Owner/Operator  
*Nomination Date:* May 16, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

## ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR PUNCH LINE SAN FRANCISCO, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 444 BATTERY STREET.

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 22, 2019, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Punch Line San Francisco in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Punch Line San Francisco:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Stand-up comedy performance 6 nights per week.
The mural on the stage backdrop.
The neon sign of the comedy and tragedy masks.
Dan Dion's photographs of comedians.
Brick interior walls.
Intimate scale of the space.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Punch Line San Francisco on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Comedy club.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on July 22, 2019.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

- Ayes -
Nays -
Abstained -
Absent -





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**Legacy  
Business  
Registry**

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2018-19-058  
*Business Name:* Punch Line San Francisco  
*Business Address:* 444 Battery Street  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Live Nation Worldwide, Inc., Owner/Operator  
*Nomination Date:* May 16, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin

**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?  Yes  No

444 Battery Street from 1978 to Present (41 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?  Yes  No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?  Yes  No

**NOTES:** N/A

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** June 20, 2019

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**  
佩斯金 市參事

May 16, 2019

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Director Dick-Endrizzi:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate Punch Line San Francisco for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Since its founding in 1978 by Anne and Jonathan Fox and Patricia and Jeffrey Pollack, Punch Line San Francisco has come to serve as a vital local training ground and entertainment hub for the national comedy community. The comedy club is San Francisco's oldest and occupies part of the historic Old Waldorf music venue. Punch Line has helped launch the careers of many of the most well know comedians of the past half century, including Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Ellen DeGeneres, Dave Chapelle, Wanda Sykes, Amy Schumer, and Margaret Cho. The venue's diverse programming (everything from festivals like SF Sketchfest to live comedy podcasts) has ensured that San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco Chronicle readers alike continue to vote it Best Comedy Club in San Francisco. It is often the only business activating the public mezzanine pathways in and around the Embarcadero Center after dark.

It is not lost on me that Punch Line is currently under threat of displacement when its lease expires in August of this year. I hope that expedited consideration of Punch Line's legacy business status will provide an additional basis for its ongoing success at its current, original location, as well as peace of mind for the longtime employees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin



## Section One:

**Business / Applicant Information.** Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>		
Punch Line Comedy Club		
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S)</b> (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
Live Nation Entertainment, Inc.		
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE:</b>	
444 Battery St. San Francisco, CA 94111	((415))397-4337	
	<b>EMAIL:</b>	
<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	<b>YELP PAGE</b>
www.punchlinecomedyclub.com	www.facebook.com/punchlinesf	https://www.yelp.com/biz/punch-line-san-francisco

<b>APPLICANT'S NAME</b>		
Live Nation Worldwide, Inc.		Same as Business
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE</b>		
Owner/Operator		
<b>APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE:</b>	
7060 Hollywood Blvd. (Attn: Legal) Los Angeles, CA 90028	( )	
	<b>EMAIL:</b>	
	permits@livenation.com	

<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):</b>
1010655	C3633110

<b>OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff</b>	
<b>NAME OF NOMINATOR:</b>	<b>DATE OF NOMINATION:</b>



## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

<b>ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>START DATE OF BUSINESS</b>
444 Battery St, San Francisco	94111	10/9/1978
<b>IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	10/1978 to present	

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

<b>OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):</b>	<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION</b>
		Start:
		End:

## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Ron Bension

5/20/2019



Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

## PUNCH LINE SAN FRANCISCO

### Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

#### CRITERION 1

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

Punch Line San Francisco (“Punch Line Comedy Club” or the “Punch Line”), located at 444 Battery Street, was established in 1978 when the business opened in what was originally a dressing room for The Old Waldorf, an adjacent rock club that was hosting the likes of U2 and Metallica (before that was even their name.)

The Punch Line was originally founded by Jonathan and Anne Fox along with Jeffrey and Patricia Pollack in 1978. Jeffrey is a native San Franciscan who worked in his father’s restaurants (Tommy Joynt and Lefty O’Doul’s) at the same time he was growing up in the Richmond district. At his peak, Jeffrey owned four clubs in San Francisco: the Old Waldorf; Punch Line; X’s, which was a dance club; and X’s Annex, which featured a local gamut of new wave bands. After four years of non-stop work and play, Jeffrey decided to relinquish his crown.

Jon and Anne Fox are the founders of the San Francisco International Comedy Competition. Jon had this to say about how he helped Jeffrey to birth the Punch Line and became its booker: “I convinced the owner of the Waldorf after doing the comedy competition finals. He told me, ‘Hey, Jon, this is a great event. Too bad it only happens once a year.’ That was 1977. I said, ‘Hey, Jeffrey, there’s this brand new thing called a comedy club, and this dressing room would be perfect for it.’ He was like a real guy who would just do things, and 6 weeks later we opened the Punch Line. It was the first full-time comedy club in SF.”

The venue was sold to Bill Graham in 1980. Bill Graham was a German-American impresario and rock concert promoter who made famous The Fillmore and Winterland Arena and had a profound influence around the world<sup>1</sup>. With the help of House MC Bobby Slayton, the Punch Line quickly established itself as a premier comedy club for performers and audiences alike. The club operated under the nightclub division of Bill Graham Presents which was called AKG, named after Bill's son, Alex K. Graham.

The Punch Line passed through a few more hands after that. In 1997, SFX Entertainment purchased Bill Graham Presents and then in 2000, Clear Channel Entertainment bought SFX. Clear Channel operated the venue until 2005 when it spun off into a new company name: Live Nation Worldwide, Inc. The venue has operated under the "Clubs & Theaters" division of Live Nation since then, called House of Blues Entertainment.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill\\_Graham\\_\(promoter\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Graham_(promoter))

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

The Punch Line has had comedy shows at least six nights a week for the past 40 years; operations have not ceased.

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

The Punch Line is not a family-owned business; however, the relationship between staff and comedians, along with the fact that some employees have worked there for 20+ years and the club still books some comedians who have been playing there for all 40 years, makes it feel as intimate as a family-owned business.

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

The ownership history of the Punch Line (as approximated) is as follows:

1978 to 1980	Jonathan Fox, Anne Fox, Jeffrey Pollack and Patricia Pollack
1980 to 1997:	Bill Graham Presents
1997 to 2000:	SFX Entertainment
2000 to 2005:	Clear Channel Entertainment
2005 to Present:	Live Nation Worldwide, Inc.

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application. See attached ad from 1978 showing the box office hours at Old Waldorf; the Old Waldorf was only in operation from 1976-1983.

**f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The historic resource status of the building at 444 Battery Street is classified by the Planning Department as Category B, Unknown / Age Eligible, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **CRITERION 2**

**a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.**

Jokes can be told anywhere, but it's the Punch Line's dedication to the art of comedy and nurturing of the craft that sets it apart in the comedy community. It's impossible to list all of the comedic greats who have performed here: Stars like Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Ellen Degeneres, Wanda Sykes, Drew Carey, Dave Chappelle and Chris Rock all took the first steps of their show biz journeys on the Punch Line's stage. Then there are Zach Galifianakis, Ali Wong, Amy Schumer, Nick Swardson, Hannibal Buress, Bill Burr, Mike Birbiglia, Marc Maron, John Mulaney, Margaret Cho and so many more who regularly played the Punch Line before selling-out arenas and appearing in movies and TV. Many still make guest appearances and perform surprise shows here to this day.

**b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

The Punch Line has been a big part of many significant events in the city of San Francisco. The citywide comedy festival SF Sketchfest operates in partnership with the Punch Line for 3 weeks out of each year. The Punch Line's weekly Sunday showcase is the longest-running comedy showcase in the entire city of San Francisco. Comedy giant Dave Chappelle has done runs here 1-2 times a year for the past 15 years, making the normally-vacated financial district a hotspot for nightlife.

In the past, the winner of the San Francisco International Comedy Competition would get the honor of playing the Punch Line for a week as part of their prize, and the finals for the competition were held here. This took place well into the mid 1990s. And the wildly popular Alex Bennett Morning Show on Live 105 – which was part of why comedy got big in San Francisco — would broadcast the show from the club for many years, well into the mid '90s.

Finally, industry comedy showcases have been held at the Punch Line. Such companies as HBO, Just For Laughs, Comedy Central, NBC and Last Comic Standing have hosted their showcases and shows here many times over the years.

**c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

The Punch Line's dedication to the craft of comedy and the intimate setting it creates for performers and audiences helped the club become the San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco Chronicle's readers' choices for Best Comedy Club many times. The Punch Line has been featured in tons of Bay Area publications such as The Chronicle, The Examiner, SF Weekly, SF Bay Guardian and San Jose Mercury News. The Punch Line was listed as #3 in Vulture Magazine's "top 15 comedy clubs": <https://www.vulture.com/2016/04/the-15-best-comedy-clubs-in-north-america.html>.

The Punch Line can be seen in the "3 Still Standing" documentary, as well as "Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind," the official HBO Documentary. Dozens of comedy albums have been recorded at the Punch Line, as well as a few comedy specials.

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

San Francisco's own legendary Bill Graham owned the Punch Line. Bill Graham, who died in 1991 in a helicopter crash, was one of the most celebrated impresarios in American rock. He revolutionized the San Francisco music scene, making Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin and the Grateful Dead household names while operating both Fillmore East and Fillmore West, as well as the Winterland Ballroom. He promoted and booked shows by the biggest acts in rock and was an extremely polarizing persona in the industry.

In addition, there are so many influential comedians and performers who have graced the Punch Line's stage, including: Jamie Foxx, Damon Wayans, Chelsea Handler, Paula Poundstone, Tommy Davidson, Garry Shandling, David Alan Grier, Wanda Sykes, Will Durst, Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Bill Hicks, Gabriel Iglesias, John Mulaney, Michael Che, Amy Poehler, David Cross, Bob Odenkirk, Chris Rock, Kevin Hart, Amy Schumer, Ellen DeGeneres, Dave Chappelle, Ali Wong, Kathy Griffin, Jon Stewart, Rosie O'Donnell and countless other performers.

Besides the stage, audience members have included: most members of Metallica, members of Jefferson Airplane, Tom Waits, Gwen Stefani, Sharon Stone, Erykah Badu, The Roots, members of Yes, Craig Ferguson, Eddie Izzard, members of David Letterman's 'World's Most Fabulous Band,' Mos Def, Nick Nolte, Al Gore, Willie Brown and innumerable others.

**e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

The Punch Line was San Francisco's first certified Green Business and recently did away with plastic straws for the good our environment.

The club's weekly Sunday Showcase has been supporting and nurturing up-and-coming local talent for 40 years.

The Punch Line has donated to, hosted and been a part of numerous charities that support our community. The club donates a portion of every ticket sold to the Bill Graham Foundation. They donate tickets to Vet Tix and have given away tickets to be auctioned at fundraisers to countless nonprofits and charities. And they have even held charity fundraiser shows at the club many times, including fundraisers for: NAACP, Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, Give Me Shelter Cat Rescue and No Paws Left Behind. The Punch Line has also held annual events for the Richmond district YMCA. During the holiday seasons, or after the Sonoma Fires for example, the Punch Line has housed Toys for Tots donation stations and foods drives for the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank.

In addition, Punch Line San Francisco takes pride on booking shows that represent all different communities, such as shows featuring exclusively LGBT comics to an entire month of only female comedians, in an effort to provide an inclusive environment for these communities.

Finally, the club has housed one wedding and several memorial services for local comics or staff members who couldn't afford a venue.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

The community the business serves IS San Francisco! The people of San Francisco and the greater Bay Area are welcome, and all types of people are welcome. The shows are completely diverse to promote a diverse crowd of all ethnicities, sexual orientations and genders, and audience members range from ages 18 up to 65+ on a regular basis. While there are always lots of visitors from outside the city who make the pilgrimage to this mecca of the comedy world, the Punch Line's crowds are always full of San Francisco's personal community.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?**

The mural on the backdrop is iconic and can be seen in many comedy videos. It also has provided comedians with copious fodder for jokes, as its part of the Punch Line tradition to make fun of the cartoonish and non-accurate depiction of the skyline.

Another feature inside the club is the neon sign featuring the comedy and tragedy masks that welcomes visitors inside once doors are open, which has been hanging in the same spot since the very beginning.

Finally, Dan Dion's photographs of the comedians pepper the interior, and excited gasps of recognition can be heard as the audience members mill about before the show once they stumble upon a photograph of the late greats Greg Giraldo, Robert Schimmel, Patrice O'Neal and Mitch Hedberg, for example.

**h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

If Punch Line San Francisco were to close, the community would lose a place for laughter, healing and unity. Following national tragedies such as 9/11, people turn to comedy for solace. In the days after the most recent presidential election, when so many people were feeling scared and confused, they filled the club all weekend long with sold out crowds, seeking to find some comfort in the words of the politically minded comedian on stage, Mr. Dana Gould. After the shows, patrons (and the Punch Line's staff themselves,) felt lighter, more optimistic and bonded with their fellow citizens, and more ready to take on the challenges of the coming times.

When tragedy has struck the community of local comedians, the club has been an automatic meeting point for the scene to grieve together over a fallen comrade and friend. The same has also been true for the general public; after Robin Williams died, people brought flowers to the Punch Line in lieu of knowing where else to pay tribute to the beloved hometown talent, and they shed tears with staff members who were equally heartbroken.

The community also would lose its chance to create the next Robin Williams, or Ali Wong, W. Kamau Bell, Patton Oswalt, Margaret Cho, Aisha Tyler, Hasan Minhaj —all of whom got their comedy starts here on Sunday Showcase. The community would lose a yet another form of art



and culture in a city that's already lost so much. See attached posts on social media from a handful of comedians upon learning of the club's imminent closure, as well as a letter from a life-time patron.

### **CRITERION 3**

**a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

Punch Line San Francisco is the longest-running comedy club in San Francisco. The club provides the community with the best internationally-touring comedians, as well as up-and-coming local comics. The Punch Line has provided the best in standup comedy for 40+ years.

**b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

The Punch Line has been doing stand-up comedy 6 nights a week for 40 years — nothing has changed in that time, and, should we have the choice, that will never change.

**c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

The Punch Line has maintained the same mural on the backdrop, the neon lobby sign and the photographs, as well as provided a perfect atmosphere for comedy: low ceilings, intimate feel, and historical/original brick walls.

**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

The mural on the backdrop has been maintained and recently redone in January 2019. Included in this Legacy Business Registry application is a photograph from the 1970s that show the same features still exist. The club also had classic red velvet curtains, which we were part of the club until 2018 when they had to be removed because of smoke damage from a fire.

## **PUNCH LINE SAN FRANCISCO**

### **Supplemental Narrative**

The City and County of San Francisco, Punch Line San Francisco and Live Nation Worldwide, Inc. collectively acknowledge existing press about Live Nation, the owner of the Punch Line. The press is regarding various issues and originates from various sources.

With respect to various articles published in 2018 and earlier regarding Live Nation's business, the issues should not affect the Legacy Business Registry application for Punch Line San Francisco. Per San Francisco Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b) the Punch Line is a business that has been nominated by a member of the Board of Supervisors and meets each of the following criteria:

- (1) The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and
- (2) The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community; and
- (3) The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms.

In particular, the Punch Line has contributed significantly to San Francisco history and identity. It is the longest-running comedy club in the city and provides a venue for the best internationally-touring comedians as well as up-and-coming local comics. The Punch Line has provided San Francisco with superb standup comedy for over 40 years. The shows are varied to promote and invite a diverse crowd of all ethnicities, sexual orientations and genders, and audience members range from ages 18 up to 65+ on a regular basis. The Punch Line was also San Francisco's first certified Green Business. The Punch Line is truly a San Francisco business.

Live Nation considers the Punch Line Comedy Club to be a landmark comedy club for the company and the City and County of San Francisco. As mentioned above, the Punch Line has been in existence for over 40 years, and the company wants nothing more than to keep its legacy by continuing the club's success, having its long-employed staff continue their career paths and bringing in the best comedy acts that San Francisco has seen.







PUNCH LINE  
RESTAURANT • BARS

PUNCH LINE  
SAN FRANCISCO  
COPPOLY CLUB • RESTAURANT • BARS

PUNCH LINE  
WEDNESDAY 11 PM  
THURSDAY 12 PM  
SAT 4 PM TO 9 PM  
SUN 4 PM TO 9 PM  
SF SKETCHES  
EROTIC  
FAN FICTION  
AVAILABLE FOR CORPORATE  
AND PRIVATE EVENTS  
CALL 415.398.2323







# PUNCH LINE

COMEDY CLUB RESTAURANT & BAR

PUNCH LINE  
SUN THURS 5 PM  
FRI & SAT 8 & 10 PM  
SUN 7:30 & 9:30 PM  
SF  
COMEDY  
SHOWCASE  
AVAILABLE FOR CORPORATE  
AND PRIVATE EVENTS  
FOR INFO CALL 415 397 7273





























Punch Line Comedy Club  
San Francisco Legacy Business Registration  
Information





# Hours of Operation

- **Hours of Operation – open to the public**
  - Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday – 3 PM to 10 PM (closed on Monday's)
  - Friday and Saturday – 3 PM to 1 AM
- **Hours of operation after dark, per week**
  - The majority of hours of operations are after dark (between 35-40 hours week)

# Employees

- **The Punch Line Comedy Club provides jobs to various employees, including concessionaires, security personnel, hosts, talent bookers, cleaning, waitstaff, etc.**
  - Total employees: 39, which does not include all the comedian(s)/talent the club pays
  - On average, Punch Line pays 364 comedians/talent per year

# Security

- **Number of Security, in addition to the bouncer and the ID checker at the front**
  - 3-4 security guards in the building (depending on how busy the show/event may be)
- **Security patrolling the neighboring townhouse community**
  - One Maritime has security guards that patrol the plaza and surrounding areas. There are at least two guards on site, 24 hours a day.

# Entrances

- **Entrance points to the club from street level**
  - 1 from Battery St.
  - 2 from Clay St.
  - 2 from Washington St..
  - Elevator in One Maritime Building (for ADA purposes)

# Location

- **Other nighttime activations including entertainment, restaurants or bars within a one block radius of the Punch Line Comedy Club:**
  - The Embarcadero Theater
  - Fish and Farm restaurant
  - The Hidden Vine

# Size

- **Current square footage of the Punch Line:**
  - 3,252
- **Occupancy:**
  - 182



# PUNCH LINE

COMEDY CLUB, RESTAURANT & BAR

SAN FRANCISCO  
**MAY**  
1 9 9 2

444 BATTERY STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111  
(between Washington & Clay)  
(415) 397-PLSF

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26 S.F. COMEDY SHOWCASE Host: Rob Nash 9:00	27	28	29	30	1	2
		<b>DR. GONZO</b> ..... <b>RODNEY JOHNSON</b> ..... <b>SEAN MURPHY</b>				
		9:00	9:00	9:00	9 & 11	7, 9 & 11:30
3 S.F. COMEDY SHOWCASE Host: Sean Murphy 9:00	4	5	6	7	8	9
		<b>DANA GOULD</b> ..... <b>TOM SHIEKMAN</b> ..... <b>MARGARET CHO</b>				
		9:00	9:00	9:00	9 & 11	7, 9 & 11
10 S.F. COMEDY SHOWCASE Host: Margaret Cho 9:00	11 HELPING THE HOMELESS BENEFIT FOR COMIC RELIEF with WILL DURST, DOM IRRERA and friends 9:00	12	13	14	15	16
		<b>PAUL MOONEY</b> ..... <b>STEPHEN B.</b> ..... <b>EUGENE BROADNAX</b>				
		9:00	9:00	9:00	9 & 11	7, 9 & 11
17 S.F. COMEDY SHOWCASE Host: Eugene Broadnax 9:00	18 This Week with <b>WILL DURST</b> 9:00	19	20	21	22	23
		<b>WARREN THOMAS</b> ..... <b>RANDY KAGEN</b> ..... <b>CLINTON JACKSON</b>				
		9:00	9:00	9:00	9 & 11	7, 9 & 11
24 <b>WARREN THOMAS</b> 9:00 RANDY KAGEN CLINTON JACKSON	25 MEMORIAL DAY BENEFIT Opening Night of Auditions 17TH ANNUAL S.F. INTERNATIONAL COMEDY COMPETITION Host: WARREN THOMAS 11:00	26	27	28	29	30
		<b>MARK SCHIFF</b> ..... <b>MITCH MULLANY</b> ..... <b>HARRY DOUPE</b>				
		9:00	9:00	9:00	9 & 11	7, 9 & 11
31 S.F. COMEDY SHOWCASE Host: Harry Doupe 9:00	JUNE 1 17TH ANNUAL S.F. INTERNATIONAL COMEDY COMPETITION AUDITIONS 9:00	2	3	4	5	6
		<b>SUE MURPHY</b> ..... <b>ALEX REID</b> ..... <b>LAURA MILLIGAN</b>				
		9:00	9:00	9:00	9 & 11	7, 9 & 11

BEGINNING SAT., MAY 9, NEW SHOWTIME: SATURDAY LATE SHOW 11PM





# PUNCH LINE

SAN FRANCISCO



MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI


SAT



SUN

JANUARY

8	9 <b>KEVIN CAMIA</b> CHRIS STORIN KRISTEE ONO 8:00	10  8:00	11  <b>KARINDA DOBBINS</b> 8:00	<b>SF SKETCHFEST</b> THE SAN FRANCISCO COMEDY FESTIVAL 		
			12 <b>SKETCHFEST DOZEN:</b> JOSH FADEM RAMON RIVAS 8:00/10:15	13 <b>SKETCHFEST DOZEN:</b> GINA BRILLON DULCÉ SLOAN 7:00/9:15	14 <b>MOVIE CRUSH</b> W/ CHARLES W. "CHUCK" BRYANT 1:00 <b>SF COMEDY SHOWCASE</b> 8:00	

15	<b>SF SKETCHFEST</b> THE SAN FRANCISCO COMEDY FESTIVAL 					
	16 <b>SARA SCHAEFER:</b> LITTLE WHITE BOX 8:00	17 <b>THE MISSION POSITION</b> 8:00	18 <b>BARON VAUGHN</b> 8:00	19 <b>SKETCHFEST DOZEN:</b> MARCELLA ARGUELLO NAOMI EKPERIGIN 8:00/10:15	20 <b>SKETCHFEST DOZEN:</b> JAK KNIGHT GIULIA ROZZI 7:00/9:15	21 <b>WEIRD ADULTS</b> WITH LITTLE ESTHER 1:00 <b>SF COMEDY SHOWCASE</b> 8:00

22	<b>SF SKETCHFEST</b> THE SAN FRANCISCO COMEDY FESTIVAL 					
	23 <b>BAWDY STORY-TELLING</b> 8:00	24 <b>THE CHARM OFFENSIVE</b> 8:00	25 <b>SEAN DONNELLY</b> 8:00	26 <b>SKETCHFEST DOZEN:</b> RYAN O'FLANAGAN SHANE TORRES 8:00/10:15	27 <b>SKETCHFEST DOZEN:</b> JO FIRESTONE JOSH JOHNSON 7:00/9:15	28 <b>SF COMEDY SHOW CASE</b> 8:00

29	30  <b>W. KAMAU BELL</b> <b>SOLD OUT!</b>	31  <b>SAM MORRIL</b> MARY RADZINSKI, CHRISTOPHER JOHN 8:00	1 8:00	2 8:00/10:15	3 7:30/9:45	4 <b>CLOSED</b>
----	---	---	-----------	-----------------	----------------	--------------------

5	6 <b>EQUIPTO'S COMEDY CYPHER</b> 8:00	7  8:00	8 8:00	9 8:00/10:15	10 7:30/9:45	11 <b>SF COMEDY SHOW CASE</b> 8:00
---	---	---	-----------	-----------------	-----------------	--

FEBRUARY

UPSTAIRS AT 444 BATTERY STREET | ALL SHOWS 18 & OVER | 2 DRINK MINIMUM PER PERSON  
ALL TICKETS ON SALE AT [WWW.PUNCHLINECOMEDYCLUB.COM](http://WWW.PUNCHLINECOMEDYCLUB.COM)



*San Francisco's Exclusive*

**The  
III**

*Comedy Nightclub*

**MINUTE  
PUNCH LINE**



*444-A Battery Street, S.F.* ★  
*(415) 397-4334*

*Appearing in January*

**Franklyn Ajaye ★ Rick & Ruby**  
**Marty Cohen ★ Dana Carvey**  
**Mike Davis ★ Bobby Slayton**  
**★ Kevin Pollak ★**

Tickets \$3 Wed. & Thurs. \$4.50 Fri. & Sat. \$1 Sun.  
Show 9 p.m. (also 11 p.m. Fri. & Sat.) 2 drink min.

—SPECIAL DISCOUNT OFFER—

**YOUR GUEST IS OUR GUEST WITH THIS AD  
AT ANY WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY SHOW**

Tickets at Old Waldorf & all BASS outlets + serv. chg.



*New Year's Eve*

**MARK  
McCOLLUM**

**DANA  
CARVEY**

8 P.M. Show \$6.50 advance  
\$7.50 day of show

10:30 Show with Champagne  
& Party Favors at Midnight  
\$12.50 advance  
\$15.00 day of show

# 1993 PUNCH LINE ALL ★ STARS



Carlos Alazraqui • John Alston • Diane Amos • Kathleen Madigan • Dexter Madison • Steve  
 Karen Anderson • Dave Anthony • Stephen Marmel • Marc Maron • Ed Marques •  
 B. • Ngaio Bealum • Greg Behrendt • Doug Sabrina Matthews • Michael McAlister • Suli  
 Benson • Suzy Berger • Gary Brightwell • Larry McCullough • Jim McDonald • Don McMillan •  
 "Bubbles" Brown • Tony Camin • Blaine Christine McNamara • Angela Means • Michael  
 Capatch • Scott Capurro • Drew Carey • Meehan • Felicia Michaels • Laura Milligan • The  
 Steve Carey • Vince Champ • Vernon Mommies • Paul Mooney • Kenny Moore • Tony  
 Chatman • Bruce Cherry • Morewood • Mitch Mullany • Sean Murphy  
 Henry Cho • Sue Murphy • Steve Nielsen •  
 Margaret Cho Patton Oswalt • Bill Pittman • Dave  
 Dan Chopin • Rick Pokorny • Brian Posehn • Greg  
 Clay • Jack Coen • Proops • Johnny Ray • Alex Reid •  
 Marty Cohen • Brian Tom Rhodes • Dave Richards •  
 Copeland • Sean Corvelle • Matt Riedy • Mark Roberts • Wiley  
 Andre Covington • Mark Curry • Roberts • Dan Rosen • Steve  
 Vince D. • Ron Dancy • Mark Davis • Rosenfield • Bob Rubin • Tom Ryan •  
 Deb & Mike • Nick DiPaolo • Daniel Bill Scott • Rondell Sheridan • Ron  
 Dugar • Will Durst • Ray Easter • Ray Shock • Jimmy Shubert • Shyama • Scott  
 Engan • Maria Falzone • Jim Farrell • David Silverman • Jose Simon • Tim Slagle •  
 Feldman • Doug Ferrari • Mike Ferrucci • Shang Bobby Slayton • Carrie Snow • Ken Sonkin  
 Forbes • Dave Foster • John Fox • Dave Fulton • Cathy Sorbo • Warren Spottswood •  
 Jack Gallagher • Dr. Gonzo • Nick Griffin • Johnny Steele • Jovanka Steele • Allan  
 Rich Hall • Jim Harris • Jeff Hatz • Mitch Stephan • James Stephens III • Jimmy  
 Headburg • 1993 Giants - 103 Wins! • Jeff Sweigert • Debra Swisher • Beecher  
 Hendrick • John Henton • Bill Hicks • Renee Hicks • Sykes • Bobby Tessel • Warren  
 John Hindman • Chris Hobbs • Andy Huggins • D.L. Thomas • Tree • Steve Trilling •  
 Hughley • Clinton Jackson • James Wesley Jackson • Mike Uryga • Del Van Dyke •  
 Rob Jacobsen • Ray James • Mike "Boats" Johnson Phil Van Tee • T. Mami Vos •  
 Denny Johnston • Diana Jordan • Mickey Joey Waldon • Arthur Wayne  
 Joseph • Kennedy Kabasares • Kevin • Matt Weinhold • Barry  
 Kataoka • Steve Kelley • Rick Kerns Weintraub • Kurt  
 Laurie Kilmartin • Andy Weitzmann • Suzanne  
 Kindler • Paul Koslowski Westenhoefer  
 Jeremy Kramer • Steve Steve White •  
 Kravitz • Andrea Leigh  
 Darryl Lenox • Brian  
 Leonard • LeAnn  
 Lewis • Wendy Liebman • George Robert Wieder • Tim Wiggins • Jeff  
 Lopez • Ron Lynch • Marty Maceda • Williams • Greg Wingo • Byron Yee

THANKS FOR A GREAT YEAR! SEE YOU IN 1994.



# BOBBY SLAYTON AND FRIENDS

WITH:

LARRY "BUBBLES" BROWN

ROBERT DUCHAINE

NGAIO BEALUM

KEVIN AVERY

KEVIN CAMIA

ALEX KOLL

JOHN HOOGASIAN

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS!

OCTOBER 11-13

NOT ALL COMEDIANS LISTED WILL BE ON ALL SHOW TIMES.

ALSO, THIS SHOW WILL NOT BE POLITICALLY CORRECT, SO ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK!

CELEBRATING  40 YEARS!

  
PUNCH LINE  
SAN FRANCISCO

## RECENT PRESS

VULTURE\_The 15 Best Comedy Clubs in North America\_20160420

<https://www.vulture.com/2016/04/the-15-best-comedy-clubs-in-north-america.html>

CURBED\_Legendary San Francisco comedy club to close\_20190508

<https://sf.curbed.com/2019/5/8/18536591/punch-line-comedy-club-closing-battery-san-francisco>

CHRONICLE\_SF's Punch Line Comedy Club to relocate\_20190508

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/SF-s-Punch-Line-Comedy-Club-to-relocate-to-new-13828531.php>

KCBS RADIO\_Punch Line Comedy Club To Close And Relocate\_20190508

<https://kcbsradio.radio.com/blogs/bradford-hornsby/punch-line-comedy-club-close-and-relocate>

KRON4\_San Francisco's Punch Line Comedy Club to close after 41 years, looking for new location\_20190509

<https://www.kron4.com/news/bay-area/san-francisco-s-punch-line-comedy-club-to-close-after-41-years-looking-for-new-location/1993248770>

NBC BAY AREA\_SF's Punch Line Comedy Club is Closing\_20190509

<https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/SFs-Punchline-Comedy-Club-Looks-For-New-Home-As-it-Announces-Closure-509718411.html>

ALT105.3\_Punch Line Comedy Club To Close And Relocate\_20190508

<https://alt1053.radio.com/blogs/bradford-hornsby/punch-line-comedy-club-close-and-relocate>

CHRONICLE\_Dave Chappelle books Punch Line shows following news of venue's move\_20190508

<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/comedy/dave-chappelle-books-3-punch-line-shows-following-news-of-venues-move>

CHRONICLE\_The Punch Line is moving, and no one in the comedy world is laughing\_20190508

<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/comedy/the-punch-line-is-moving-and-no-one-in-the-comedy-world-is-laughing>

THE COMIC'S COMIC\_The San Francisco Punch Line forced out of its home of 41 years as of August\_20190508

<http://thecomicscomic.com/2019/05/08/the-san-francisco-punch-line-forced-out-of-its-home-of-41-years-as-of-august-2019/>

KCBS\_Legendary Comedy Club Loses Lease In Downtown San Francisco\_20190509

<https://kcbsradio.radio.com/blogs/holly-quan/punch-line-comedy-club-loses-lease-downtown-san-francisco>

BROKE-ASS STUART\_The Legendary Punch Line Comedy Club is CLOSING\_20190507

<https://brokeasstuart.com/2019/05/07/the-legendary-punch-line-comedy-club-is-closing/>

# VULTURE

APR. 20, 2016

## The 15 Best Comedy Clubs in North America

By John Wenzel



*In partnership with Humber College's Comedy Writing and Performance program.*

For the last four decades, live standup has defined itself in relation to comedy clubs, those altars of joke-telling that began building their congregations during the 1980s comedy boom.

Alternative comedy got its name by rebelling against these two-drink-minimum venues, which continue to provide the mainstream home for everyday standup – neither as lofty as a theater show nor as potentially intimidating (and random) as an open-mic in the back of a bar.

Comics rank in them descending alphabetical importance, with A Rooms acting a market's best stage, B Rooms its second-best, etc. Despite the sharp uptick in DIY venues, comedy festivals, and online humor in recent years, the club remains ground zero for most people's live experience with comedy, even if the stereotype of disruptive bachelorette parties and drunken hecklers is as justified as ever.

For the purposes of this list a comedy club is defined as a mid-sized (roughly 200 to 500-seat) venue focused primarily on standup – as opposed to improv or sketch – that hosts touring performers on a weekly basis.

### 15. Stand Up Live, Phoenix

Arizona's biggest city gets a bad rap for its lack of culture (sometimes rightfully so), but sun-scorched comedy nerds know well the pleasures of Stand Up Live. The 600-person-capacity club, the size of which strikes fear in the hearts of all but the biggest names, can be made cozier with a simple curtain pull, and its reputation for appreciative audiences keeps touring acts coming back year after year.

### 14. Yuk Yuk's, Toronto

Like The Improv in the United States, the 41-year-old Yuk Yuk's chain more or less owns Canada's syndicated standup scene with a dozen-plus locations spread across the Great White North. Its Toronto homebase, run by co-founder Joel Axler and business partner Jeff Silverman, features both touring and local comics in a downtown club that doubles as a warehouse for Yuk Yuk's contract talent.

### 13. Comedy Club on State, Madison, Wisconsin

It would be bizarre if one of America's quintessential college towns and the birthplace of *The Onion* didn't have a solid hometown club. Fortunately, the Capitol-adjacent Comedy Club on State has developed a reputation for friendly, lounge-like atmosphere and consistently solid booking, which includes headliners and rising names, while co-booking bigger shows with the nearby Orpheum Theater.

### 12. Helium Comedy Club, Portland, Oregon

Portland's thriving standup scene and festival culture requires a club of commensurate scope and quality, and 2010 newcomer Helium (a Philadelphia-based mini-chain with locations in Philly, St. Louis, and elsewhere) has stepped into that role. Its open mics and comedy classes offer baseline programming for locals alongside headlining shows from beloved natives who decamped to L.A., like Ron Funches and Ian Karmel. Another bonus: the 275-capacity space features remarkably good sightlines for each seat.

### 11. The Comedy Nest, Montreal

In this cosmopolitan bilingual city, world-renowned for its Just For Laughs festival, there's a bevy of year-round, English-language standup options, including this decades-old JFL venue. The Comedy Nest's intimate layout, situated on the third floor of downtown's Forum, features 160 seats in a cabaret-style theater and an 18-and-up admission policy. Plenty of standup nerds (including this one) have had some of the most bracingly intimate experiences of their life there.

### 10. The Punchline, Atlanta

As Atlanta's oldest comedy brand (no relation to the San Francisco Punch Line), the Punchline's past boasts Southern luminaries who got their start on its stage, like Jeff Foxworthy and Reno Collier, and Georgia natives such as David Cross. Despite a recent move that downsized capacity a bit, comics still speak highly of its role in the region's standup ecosystem, which supports the Laughing Skull Lounge (and its attendant festival) and several others.

#### **9. Cap City, Austin, Texas**

Austin's muscular comedy scene relies on Cap City (formerly the Laff Stop) as its beating heart, with a history of regionally touring patron saints like Bill Hicks, Sam Kinison, and Ron White, who frequently dropped in from Houston. Co-owner Colleen McGarr, a former Just for Laughs booker and manager/girlfriend to Hicks, prides herself on the club's careful curation and cooperation with other biggie events in town, such as the Austin's five-year-old, nonprofit Moontower Comedy Festival (which McGarr also books).

#### **8. Acme Comedy Company, Minneapolis**

A relative newcomer that quickly caught up to the country's more established players, this 25-year-old Warehouse District favorite is a frequent recording stop for the (also Minneapolis-based) Stand Up! Records label. The city's punk/indie past is often reflected in Acme's cultivation of grassroots talent, to the benefit of both the club and its loyal audience, making it the Twin Cities' undisputed standup champ and a favorite of regional heroes Maria Bamford and Jackie Kashian.

#### **7. Zanies, Nashville**

With outposts in Chicago and elsewhere, the main location of this Nashville institution recalls the madcap, giddy days of the '80s boom – which makes sense since the club was founded in 1983, the sweet spot of the national club explosion. Comics who typically pack theaters schedule discrete residencies and weekend runs there, while the agnostic booking ignores categories for general quality and appeal, giving the club as strong a reputation among touring acts (and Nashville natives like Nate Bargatze) as civic boosters.

#### **6. Caroline's on Broadway, New York**

Times Square can be a scary place for all but the most clueless tourists, but Caroline's on Broadway has improbably bucked that trend since it moved to the area in 1992 – which might be due to its founding in Chelsea during the opening salvo of the first standup boom. Sitcom, film, and TV legends have climbed onto its stage, which also hosted the last runs of Bill Hicks, Mitch Hedberg, and Patrice O'Neal. Its familiar multi-colored, diamond-patterned background is nearly as iconic as the Improv's brick wall, and like the Improv, it's the definition of a crowd-pleaser.

#### **5. The Comedy Store, Los Angeles**

No respectable comic from the 1970s and on has skipped a spot on Mitzi Shore's iconic stage, which provides a current homebase for Marc Maron, Jerrod Carmichael, Ari Shaffir, Pauly Shore, and others. That's partially due to a rich history of instantly recognizable names who came up there, including Kinison, Dice, Letterman, Leno, Roseanne, and Arsenio. Its historical reputation has also been burnished lately with shows like Roast Battle, Kill Tony, and Stand Up on the Spot (weeknight shows in the Original Room) and famous pop-ins.

#### **4. Comedy Works, Denver**

Wende Curtis worked her way up from cocktail waitress to owner at this downtown Denver spot, becoming one of the most respected names in the club world along the way. Dozens of modern-classic albums from Dave Attell, Greg Giraldo, Nick Thune, Natasha Leggero, and others were recorded here, and touring comics prize a headlining set on its tiny subterranean stage as much as newcomers do on its New Talent night. The ascendant Mile High City comedy scene can trace much of its professionalism to Curtis' ethos, and biggies like Dave Chappelle have lately made it a home away from home.

#### **3. Punch Line, San Francisco**

Dozens of headliners cut their teeth in the Bay Area's oldest comedy club, including native and adopted San Franciscans Robin Williams, Paula Poundstone, Margaret Cho, and wide swath of influential alt-comics. Along with promoter Bill Graham's other clubs (including Cobb's) the 18-and-up venue is now owned by mega-promoter Live Nation but continues to program with an eye toward political humor and up-and-comers. Canny booker Molly Schminke, in particular, has recently tested ideas such as a solid month of all-female headliners.

#### **2. The Comedy Cellar, New York**

Before it was immortalized in the intro to Louis C.K.'s FX series, this unassuming, 34-year-old Greenwich Village club had already hosted some of the most intimidatingly skilled, freewheeling sets in the history of standup, including a rotating cast of tough-guy regulars who still

reflect the grit and urgency of the city's (somewhat) bygone culture. *Saturday Night Live* cast members, *Seinfeld*, and a constellation of film stars have grabbed a pre-set bite at the upstairs Olive Tree Cafe. Its exclusive Comic's Table is the stuff of standup legend, and the physical layout at its original location (as opposed to its newer, larger Village Underground room) offers a perfect mix of elements for enjoying live standup – think low ceilings and elbow-to-elbow seating that encourages contagious, boozy, unadulterated laughter.

### 1. The Hollywood Improv, Los Angeles

As arguably the best-known comedy club in the world, the West Coast flagship of this New York-bred chain benefits from its strategic perch on Melrose Avenue. An average week's programming features celebrity drop-ins, house comics, touring names, podcast recordings, greenhorns eager to network and learn, and a healthy mix of industry, comedy geeks, and regular folks absorbing it all. Along with its next-door Lab space, which features workshops and experimental shows, The Improv continues to provide a focal point for the world's best standup scene. But instead of resting on its historic laurels, it's looking forward with shrewd booking from Jamie Flam and a smart remodel that freshens up the familiar showroom.

*Comedy Writing and Performance* is a two-year diploma program taught in Toronto, Canada, by *Saturday Night Live*, *SCTV* and *Yuk Yuk's* veterans. Find out how funny people become funnier: [humbercomedy.ca](http://humbercomedy.ca).

TAGS: [SPLITSIDER](#) [COMEDY](#) [ACME](#) [CAP CITY](#) [MORE](#)

LEAVE A COMMENT

## THE LATEST

18 MINS AGO

**Former Weinstein Company HR Director Files Suit**



9:03 P.M.

**Netflix's *Chambers* Will Not Return for a Second Season**



5:11 P.M.

**Wyclef Jean Shows Off His Handstand Skills for Tig Notaro**



4:51 P.M.

**Debra Messing Wants Grace to Go Through Menopause on *Will & Grace***



4:45 P.M.

**14.5 Million People Watched James Holzhauer Lose *Jeopardy!***



4:39 P.M.

**The *Black Monday* Cast Talks Fake Cocaine and Plays a Game of Password**



3:51 P.M.

**Terry Crews Is the Mother Hen on *America's Got Talent***







FINANCIAL DISTRICT NEWS SAN FRANCISCO GENTRIFICATION

# Legendary San Francisco comedy club to close

5

*Punch Line reaches the end of the line*

By **Adam Brinklow** | May 8, 2019, 9:37am PDT



Photo by **Blackguard SF**

Nothing is sacred these days.

The latest casualty in 2019's war on longtime San Francisco institutions is the Punch Line Comedy Club, which opened at its Battery Street locale in 1978.

The club posted an announcement to its site Wednesday telling fans that the charge had finally gone out of the Battery venue and that the club was “unable to renew its lease with the current property owners.”

Molly Schminke, a booker for the club, [said in a public statement](#) that Punch Line will look for a new SF venue:

We’re currently in search of a new home to preserve our decades-long tradition of entertaining comedy fans in San Francisco and the Bay Area. It’s a sad moment for us, but we’re excited at the future’s potential. While we search for our new home, the club will continue to support local comedy, bring in the hottest up-and-coming comedians and book some of the biggest national headliners.

Originally opened by promoter Bill Graham, Punch Line is San Francisco’s oldest still-operating comedy club. In the past, names like Dave Chapelle, Ellen DeGeneres, Chris Rock, and the late Robin Williams performed sets at the comedic institution.

At present, the club advertises acts [through July 2](#).

According to the Planning Department, the building at 444 Battery Street that has served as the club’s longtime home dates to 1967. The building’s current owners purchased it in 2007.

Nearby Cobb’s Comedy Club, also owned by Live Nation, will remain open for the time being.

Longtime favorites and historic SF establishments seem to be constantly falling by the wayside in 2019, although not always for reasons related to the price of renting in the city; [Beach Blanket Babylon](#) will hold its last show December 31; [Lucca Ravioli](#) cashed out its dough in April; [Aardvark Books](#) shuts its covers in January.

The Elbo Room, constantly in danger of closure, will finally check out later this year, but [Eater SF reports](#) that it will almost immediately return under a new name.

## Curbed SF Newsletter

Email (required)

SUBSCRIBE

By signing up, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and European users agree to the data transfer policy.





Sign In

COMEDY

# Dave Chappelle books Punch Line shows following news of venue's move



Mariecar Mendoza | May 8, 2019 | Updated: May 10, 2019, 9:13 am



**Dave Chappelle** doesn't want the Punch Line to move, and he's ready to tell San Francisco why, according to an announcement posted by the legendary Bay Area comedy club on Wednesday, May 8.


Just one day after news broke that **the Punch Line will be forced to move** from its 444 Battery St. location by August — “after being unable to renew its lease with the current property owners,” Punch Line talent buyer Molly Schminke said in a statement — tickets to Chappelle's three 8 p.m. shows set for May 20-22 went up for sale. Of course, they quickly sold out.


---

So on Thursday, May 9, the Punch Line added yet another show for 10:30 p.m. May 23.


Will other Chappelle shows be added? Keep an eye on the Punch Line because Chappelle's surprise booking will likely not be the last of the big-name shows for the comedy space as the countdown to its closure nears.

---

 **punchlinesf**  
Punch Line San Francisco



[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)

---

620 likes

**punchlinesf**

Dave Chappelle doesn't want the Punch Line to move and he's coming back May 20-22 to tell us why! Tickets go onsale at 1:30 PM TODAY! Grab tix via bio link.

[view all 103 comments](#)

---

Add a comment...

Sign In









**W. Kamau Bell**  
@wkamaubell

San Francisco gentrifies another of my homes.

I hope the [@punchlinesf](#) finds a new spot. So many great comics have come out of there. I've been there on many legendary nights. Most of which involved Dave Chappelle. You would think SF would want to help keep this club open. [twitter.com/punchlinesf/st...](https://twitter.com/punchlinesf/st...)

**Punch Line SF**    @punchlinesf

After being unable to renew our lease, we will be moving from our longtime Battery Street home this August. Thank you to all the fans and extraordinary comedians that have helped make the Punch Line an entertainment landmark in this city! More info at [punchlinecomedyclub.com/venue-update](https://punchlinecomedyclub.com/venue-update)

219    12:30 AM - May 8, 2019

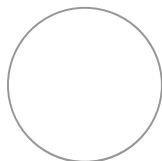
[82 people are talking about this](#)

[Sign In](#)

## Related article

**The Punch Line is moving, and no one in the comedy world is laughing**

**Dave Chappelle to receive Mark Twain Prize for humor**



**Mariecar Mendoza**

Follow:   

Mariecar Mendoza is Datebook's senior digital arts editor for the San Francisco Chronicle. Email: [mmendoza@sfchronicle.com](mailto:mmendoza@sfchronicle.com) Twitter: [@SFMarMendoza](#)



Sign In

COMEDY

# The Punch Line is moving, and no one in the comedy world is laughing



Peter Hartlaub | May 8, 2019 | Updated: May 9, 2019, 11:13 pm



Comedian Dan Piraro, creator of the newspaper comic “Bizarro,” performs at the Punch Line.  
Photo: John O

With the news that the Punch Line comedy club will lose its lease and move [Sign In](#) from its longtime 444 Battery St. home in August, there is still one very tiny silver lining: Now the rest of the world can know the greatness of the Punch Line.

Comedians and comedy fans have long cherished the club, the oldest in San Francisco, which opened in 1978 in what was the dressing room for the Old Waldorf music venue. The news broke Tuesday, May 7, sparking tributes and expressions of frustration on social media. When I talked to comedians the next day, no one was joking.

---

Will Durst has performed at the Punch Line since 1979. It's the second club he appeared in after moving to San Francisco from Milwaukee. Durst met his wife, Debi, there. He returns every year, including six shows over four nights planned for June 26-29.

"I'm devastated, man. That's my home club," Durst said. "I'll probably be wearing a bib on stage to catch all the tears."

---

#### THE BIG EVENT

### Will Durst interview

May 24, 2018



00:00

41:58

San Francisco comedians Will Durst and Debi Durst join host Peter Hartlaub and Chronicle columnist Heather Knight to talk comedy history, and why they still love San Francisco.

MORE PODCASTS EMBED

The club is owned by entertainment giant Live Nation, but it managed to maintain a strong local vibe, with longtime talent buyer Molly Schminke acting as a ringmaster/den mother for



fledgling San Francisco comics. The Sunday ~~Sh~~ Showcase, where young comics come to watch <sup>Sign In</sup> and learn and hopefully get onstage, is legendary.

(Live Nation also operates Cobb's Comedy Club in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood — which itself has moved in the past — along with the Masonic and the Fillmore, among other Bay Area venues.)

I've interviewed a half-dozen comedians for podcasts or profiles in the last two years — from **Greg Proops** to **Paula Poundstone** to **Jon Stewart** to **Kaseem Bentley** — and every one has volunteered a fantastic Punch Line story. **Stewart remembers** roaming the streets before his Oct. 21, 1989, gig, still not sure if the building would be open after the Loma Prieta earthquake.

The first Punch Line show listed in The San Francisco Chronicle was Oct. 11, 1978, when Jim Giovanni and Jack Marion performed. Since then, the Punch Line stage has featured the greatest comedy stars from every generation, from Dana Carvey and **Robin Williams**; to Marc Maron, Patton Oswalt, **Margaret Cho** and Ali Wong, to **Al Madrigal** and **Dave Chappelle**. (Chappelle quickly booked **shows at the Punch Line** for later this month in response to the venue's closure.)

## Related article

**Dave Chappelle books Punch Line shows following news of venue's move**



Al Franken broadcasts his Air America radio show, “The Al Franken Show,” live from the Punch Line in 2004.

Photo: Mark Costantini, The Chronicle 2004

“This is heartbreaking for so many reasons,” comedian **Moshe Kasher** wrote on **Twitter**. “The Bay Area has changed so much, but now it’s killing my past. This will always be my home club.”

Rising standup **Irene Tu** was already speaking of the Punch Line in the past tense, even with a few months left at the 444 Battery space.

“It was such a great mix of people. Older vets and then all the younger comics too,” Tu said. “It was a club where even if you weren’t performing you could hang out and feel welcome.”



**Punch Line SF**

@punchlinesf

After being unable to renew our lease, we will be moving from our longtime Battery Street home this August. Thank you to all the fans and extraordinary comedians that have helped make the Punch Line an entertainment landmark in this city! More info

Punch Line officials said in a statement that they plan to relocate. Much of the club's assets — comedy photographer Dan Dion's gallery of comic legends, the family-like bartenders and staff — can theoretically be moved.

"We're currently in search of a new home to preserve our decades-long tradition of entertaining comedy fans in San Francisco and the Bay Area. It's a sad moment for us, but we're excited at the future's potential," Schminke said in a statement.

But it will be hard to replicate the vibe of a club that seemed to be designed as a lab for comedy.



Photographer Dan Dion, who specializes in portraits of comedians, poses in front of a selection of his photos on display at the Punch Line comedy club in San Francisco in 2010.

Photo: Chad Ziemendorf, The Chronicle 2010



Proops, who is scheduled to return July 25-27, and has headlined the New Year's Eve show at the Punch Line for the past several years, has long championed the design of the club, with its real brick wall in the back and low ceilings that keep the laughter in the room. Sign In

"I did my first set there in 1982," Proops said in a Twitter message on Wednesday. "It is one of my favorite clubs because of how intimate it is. The back can't be 50 feet from the stage."

Bentley, who just released his **first comedy album "Lakeview,"** credits the Punch Line for his development as a stand-up.

"Any time people walk in, they know they're walking into a comedy club, and they act accordingly," Bentley said. "Whether they come every Sunday for the showcase or they're a bunch of yahoos drunk after the Giants game, people recognize that this is the life force and the gold standard of Bay Area comedy."

---

#### THE BIG EVENT

### Kaseem Bentley interview — San Francisco comedian and his new album "Lakeview"

April 30, 2019



00:00

50:00

Kaseem Bentley, the son of a Muni bus driver, moved to Los Angeles a couple years ago. But he came back to record his debut comedy album, "Lakeview," filled with crowd interactions, storytelling and seemingly endless Bay Area references, from the 5 Fulton bus to the Serramonte Mall.

MORE PODCASTS EMBED

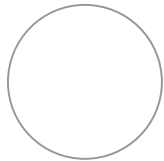
Durst said the size and shape of any new venue will be key.

"I hope they are able to find another spot, but it's going to be hard to replicate that," Durst said. "Just the way the laughs would funnel through that club and bounce off the wall. People always thought they were having a much better time than they actually were there."

Bentley expressed optimism, with hope that ~~Sch~~minke and Live Nation can pull off a miracle.

[Sign In](#)

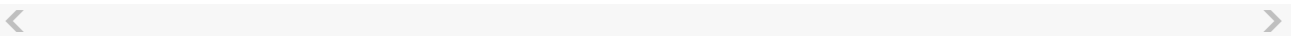
“I wouldn’t call it a private club. It’s our Justice League,” Bentley said. “I hear people talk about the great clubs in their town, but they never, ever match what we have at the Punch Line.”



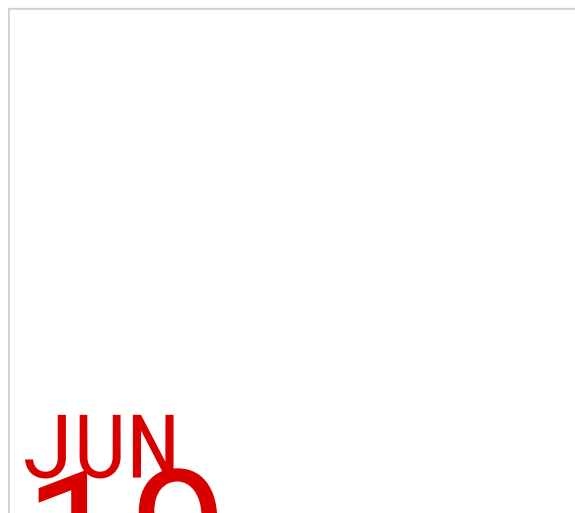
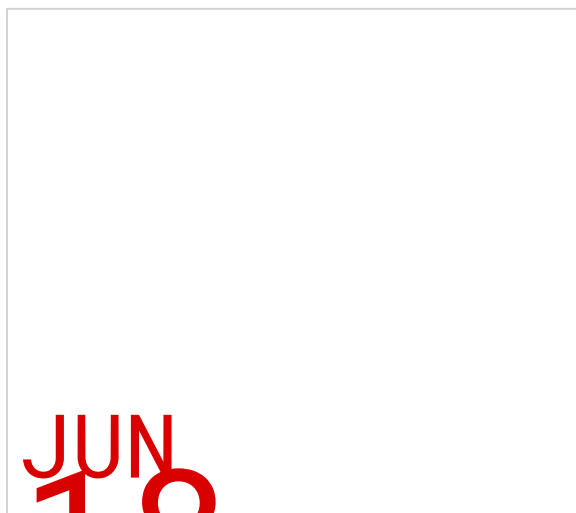
**Peter Hartlaub**

Peter Hartlaub is The San Francisco Chronicle's pop culture critic. Email: phartlaub@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @PeterHartlaub

### More In Comedy



### Related Events



<https://brokeasstuart.com/2019/05/07/the-legendary-punch-line-comedy-club-is-closing/>



# THE LEGENDARY PUNCH LINE COMEDY CLUB IS CLOSING

Alex Mak - Managing Editor 2019-05-07

*Article updated on 5/9/2019*



The [Legendary Punchline San Francisco](#) is closing this summer after over 40 years of hosting some of the biggest names in comedy. According to a source close to the Punchline, all staff was notified this week that the owners of the building have refused to renew the club's lease which ends on August 20th.

Punch Line is part of [Livenation](#) (along with Cobb's Comedy Club, The Fillmore & The Masonic), and they are actively searching for a new venue in order to continue Punch Line San Francisco.





Punch Line is truly a legendary place for comedy, Dave Chappelle has famously been working out his newest material there since the 1990s, I once saw him perform there for over 4 hours, just riffing and speaking to the audience as if he were in his own living room. SF comedy stars like Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Margaret Cho & Greg Proops frequented Punch Line, and everyone from John Mulaney to Amy Schumer have performed there. It's a pretty magical spot and a true piece of America's comedic history.





**Correction update 5/9/2019:** The Punch Line SF was founded in 1978 by SF promoter and restaurateur Jeffrey Pollack. Pollack recently told us that his wife Patricia actually came up with the name 'Punch Line'. In 1980 Pollack got out of the club game and sold both the Old Waldorf and Punch Line to Bill Graham. That same year Pollack bought the landmark restaurant Julius Castle on Telegraph Hill and ran that until 2006. The [Punch Line website](#) implies Graham started the club in 78, so thanks to Jeffrey for the correction!

Originators aside, over the years this venue has not only catered to the biggest stars, it also provides an excellent stage for young, local and up and coming comics to hone their craft. We hope they land on their feet somewhere else in the city soon.

Meanwhile, there is definitely going to be comedy performed there 6 nights a week at least until August 20th, so check out the [Punch Line SF Calendar here](#), and go see a show before this landmark venue of comedy is gone to the highest bidder.



FINANCIAL DISTRICT NEWS SAN FRANCISCO GENTRIFICATION

# SF changes law to save comedy club

6

*Supervisors redraw lines around Punch Line*

By **Adam Brinklow** | Jun 4, 2019, 9:18am PDT



Photo by **Blackguard SF**

San Francisco lawmakers upended the rules on the block around the Punch Line Comedy Club in an effort to keep the laughter going at the longtime institution this week.



The 40-plus-year-old [Punch Line venue is in danger of closing](#), as management announced in May that the club was “unable to renew its lease with the current property owners.” The current deal expires in August.

[Comedians](#) and politicians alike (natural enemies but united here by a common cause) [rallied on the steps of City Hall](#) to save the landmark, with Supervisor Aaron Peskin taking the extra step of proposing “an interim zoning moratorium for 45 days on changes of nighttime entertainment use in the One Maritime Plaza area” to help incentivize a new deal for the longtime tenant.

On Monday, the city’s [Land Use and Transportation Committee](#) (chaired by Peskin) speedily approved the measure, [which reads, in part](#):

Protecting existing uses that encourage and enhance street activity at night is imperative [in the neighborhood] particularly on the mezzanine and publicly-accessible upper levels, which were constructed as a part of the plaza build-out of the Alcoa Building in 1967.

The existing entertainment uses at One Maritime Plaza regularly activate the upper public mezzanine areas after dark (approximately four hours a week). In addition to enlivening the area at night, Nighttime Entertainment Uses in the area of One Maritime Plaza are an important source of employment for City residents, providing at least 40 service-industry jobs.

The legislation does not mention Punch Line by name, but it’s clear to which business the measure refers.

---

#### RELATED

[Mapping everything that’s closed or closing in SF this year](#)

---

If approved by the full Board of Supervisors, the moratorium would ward off any other uses for the space besides entertainment, thus presumably making a renewal of Punch Line's deal the path of least resistance.

The committee passed the plan 3-0 on Monday with almost no debate. Senior Planner Diego Sanchez noted that the SF Planning Commission had previously given its recommendation in favor of the proposal.

Since opening in 1978, names like Dave Chapelle, Wanda Sykes, Ellen DeGeneres, Marc Maron, and Chris Rock appeared on Punch Line's stage. The late Robin Williams also used to grace the stage at the noted comedic institution.

  
**Curbed SF Newsletter**

Email (required)

By signing up, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and European users agree to the data transfer policy.

## *Punch Line SF – letters of recommendation*

**Ali Wong:** The SF Punchline is a very near and dear place to me. It's where I started doing stand-up, spent many New Year's Eves and Sunday nights in my 20s, and became friends with all sorts of amazing people who changed my life. It's where I met Sheng Wang, who is now the godfather of my children. It's where I first got introduced to Patrice O'Neal, who is still the funniest person I've ever seen live. It's where I first got to know Kevin Camia, Chris Garcia, Nico Santos, Alex Koll, Louis Katz, Moshe Kasher, W. Kamau Bell...and I'm sorry for whoever else I forgot to name (I'm already dreading the angry/hurt texts I'm gonna get after this post). Few comics are lucky enough to have a "home club" and that's why I feel so emotional about it closing. I don't know who bought the building but I urge the new owners to please continue leasing that special space on the roof to the SF Punchline. For the past 10 years, San Francisco has become less and less like the quirky city of outcasts (and pushy elderly Chinese people in North Face jackets) that I grew up in, and it's really upsetting.

**Louis Katz:** The [Punch Line San Francisco](#), where my life as a comedian started, is being forced to close. There are very few physical places that hold such a special place in my heart. But the closing of this club is not just personally significant. It's also a symptom of the greater disease of unchecked development that is plaguing cities across the nation. If centers for the arts can no longer afford to operate in our great cities, then how great are they, really? The Punchline shutting down means we're one giant step closer to the end of San Francisco as one of the major cultural capitals of the United States.

**Steve Mazan:** HELP! Save the San Francisco Punch Line!

I'm not a religious man. I don't even go to Church's Fried Chicken. And you know how some people say "but I'm spiritual"? Well, I'm not even that. But I believe that The SF Punch Line Comedy Club is magical.

If you've been there you know I'm right. If you haven't I'll try to explain why. But it's difficult to understand...because that's how magic works.

It's a tiny one-story building on top of a parking garage. It's surrounded by looming corporate towers that have always seemed to want to bully it off their turf. It's one of these companies (possibly Google) that is squeezing the club out so they can move in.

The Punch Line is not one of the giant comedy club showrooms being designed today. It's a square room that could fit maybe 200 people if some were standing, and you turned around every stool from the bar at the back of the room. It's perfect. It's the old kinda club where strangers are sat shoulder to shoulder. You can't have airs about you when you are that jammed in like that, you have to submit to the mob of laughter. The ceiling is impossibly low. The comic onstage can literally reach up and touch it! The jokes have nowhere to hide. Magical. Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Ellen Degeneres, Jake Johannsen, Patton Oswalt and hundred of other legends didn't just grace the stage, they learned their craft there. San Francisco has long been a well respected comedy scene and this room is one of the reasons why.



I've heard comics upon hearing of The Punch Line's lease not being renewed say "it's just an inanimate building...it's the people that make it special, not the location." I couldn't disagree more. Is Wrigley Field not special? Would the Cubs be the same playing somewhere else with the same team and same fans? No. The friendly confines are like the SF Punch Line: Magical. San Francisco is a city of magical places: Giants Stadium, The Fillmore, The Warfield, The Great American Music Hall, Coit Tower, Alcatraz, City Lights Bookstore. These aren't just buildings. They're special. I'd like to argue that the people who visit these places are made special by going there, not the other way around. Does that sound crazy? Well, that's magic.

Of course all the great comics, bookers, staff and everyone involved with The Punch Line could find another place. But you'd be silly to think you'd be guaranteed the same magic. It's nice to aim high, and maybe you could find something equal or even better. But maybe you couldn't. Cause that's how magic works. San Francisco comedy already has the greatest example of this in Cobb's Comedy Club. When the old cozy room at The Cannery burned down it was reopened in a different part of the city. Much bigger. Much different. No one involved in the comedy scene would claim that new room has the same specialness of the old one just because the name, proprietors and artists are the same.

That's why the magic needs to be saved. It needs the city or the historical society to get involved to preserve some art, culture and magic in the city.

On a personal note, I got my start there as well. I consider it my home. I stood at the back learning from other comics for months before getting the chance to walk on its stage. I learned to respect the process and the craft. And the venue. I've had some of the greatest moments of my life in that room. Made life-long friends. Seen some of the greatest comedic talent come through its doors: visiting and homegrown. I've even seen my friend [Joe Bartnick](#) get married there!

If you're a friend or fan of mine, I am who I am because of this place.

It's easy to see four walls and some lights and think it's inanimate. But this space is more than the sum of its parts. It's helped make me and many others become who they are. Please help us do whatever we can to preserve this history. Help this special place. Save this magic.

Whether you've been there or not...Live in San Francisco or on the opposite coast....Please help save some magic.

**Jules Posner:** As a San Francisco native, I've gotten used to this. Another place I love and hold dearly soon will only occupy an emotional place in my heart.

It hurts. This is my home club in my home town.

I grew up pretty poor and became a pretty poor adult. The San Francisco I knew, was a collection of people just doing their best to get by. As time passed and the demographics of San Francisco changed, those types of people were hard to come by.

When I came into stand up, there they were. Like-minded people doing their best to get by. I found a home in the deformed funhouse mirror version of the city I grew up in.

The Punch Line was church. Every Sunday, (well as many Sundays as I could) I sat in the back and paid my dues just like everyone. Then opportunities came and I did my best to make the most of them.

There's a specific rush that comes when you take those three or four stairs up to the stage and look out on that crowd and then beyond them, all of your peers. You have to hold it down, and they were all rooting for you. Maybe not all of them, but most of them.

The scope of the artistic growth that has occurred in that physical space at 444 Battery is immeasurable. Everyone making noise in comedy right now has been through the Punch Line system or would kill to be a regular/feature/headliner there. Every comic knows how special that room is.

The adrenaline and the anxiety you feel walking up those piss-soaked stairs when you know you're getting up is the perfect embodiment of how hard it is to get by in San Francisco. You gotta walk through a lot of piss to get where you want to be. Then at the top of those steps is that little garden and all the Financial District skyscrapers, then there's the Punch. A comedy oasis in the midst of the city's financial center. And while the financial district goes to sleep, we were up there making noise.

I'll miss going into that green room and seeing pictures of all my friends plastered all over the walls. I'll miss that weird picture of Garry Shandling pointing at his shoes.

Finally, the staff. Oh my god, I'm so grateful for that Punch Line staff. They've seen me grow from a rookie comic too scared to grab a glass of water, to an emboldened vet pounding Bulleits, then a grateful elderstatesman slipping Johnny or Simon or Martin or that other guy I don't remember a couple bucks for a Diet Coke. They were always so patient, so gracious and so supportive. They are the best.

This situation reminds me of that scene from the Watchmen where Nite Owl is all like, "You haven't idealized mankind! You mutilated it!" Or some shit. Not sure if he says that in the book or the movie, but you get it. And yeah, I'm the dude quoting Watchmen. But that's what San Francisco has become. The Punch Line is just another casualty of the homogenization of San Francisco.

I'll miss 444 Battery. Long live the Punch Line.

**Mary Van Note:** The 444 Battery St location of Punch Line San Francisco is closing (and eventually relocating) after over 40 years as a renowned & revered comedy club- and no, it's not because the business wasn't doing well – it's because the property owners won't renew the lease. Reading my friends' posts on their memories of the Punch Line has brought up a lot of emotions for me, so please forgive me for writing a lengthy and rather sad post myself.

Losing the Punch Line is like losing a friend, someone who supported you and watched you grow, gave you a hard time when you needed a challenge, or a hug when you were broken, was a matchmaker of friends & co-conspirators, lovers & enemies, and fed you inspiration and drive for years. AND THE LAUGHS. So many laughs!

My heyday at the Punch Line was the mid-00's and spanned the length of my 20s after college. In a sense I'm in a state of mourning of that time as well, before comedy lost its luster for me, before I had PTSD from a relationship gone south, and while I'm at it – I miss that body too, and that green velvet 60s dress. I miss Mary Van Note, comedian. But mostly I miss the fun of hanging out in the back on Sundays with friends then going out to eat at Osha Thai or Grubstake. I miss seeing every comedian make fun of that goofy backdrop. I miss watching Jimmy Gunn read Dr. Seuss. I miss the thrill of being on that stage.

I'm sad my daughter will never get to see the stage her mom performed on, the very same one as so many comedy greats. The place where her mom got to open for comedians like Amy Schumer, Jon Dore, John Mulaney, Jen Kirkman, Emily Heller, Reggie Watts, and Harris Wittels. I'm sorry she won't be able to see the very place where her parents met. And I'm sad for the whole city of SF. I'm sad that the same people probably behind this loss are the ones who will buy up tickets for their "team" to see Dave Chappelle or Ali Wong with no idea that we need a club like Punch Line SF to support the next comedians like them. In this dire political time that we're in we need all the W. Kamau Bell's and Hasan Minhaj's we can get. We need all the silly songs and stupid jokes from DJ Real. And we need more powerful female comics like Marcella Arguello, Caitlin Gill, Lydia Popovich and Amy Miller. And lastly, I feel awful for the staff. My job working as the booking coordinator is safe, but I feel for those who are left not knowing if they'll get the shifts they need and for the stress of not knowing when we'll find a new location. No one cares more about the Punch than Molly Schminke and I know she's working hard to figure out the next steps. If you read this far and want to do something please email, call, and/or send a postcard to the Punch Line SF District Supervisor Aaron Peskin and tell him why you think the Punch Line should be designated a legacy business and should be preserved. [#savethepunchline](#)

**David Studebaker:** Over the past few days since the announcement that [Punch Line San Francisco](#) is closing (not due to lack of business, merely a greedy tech company/landlord stomping out yet another vestige of humanity/beauty in SF), I've tried to write this post many times and just couldn't find the words. So many comedian friends of mine have captured beautifully what that club means to them and all have been moving. It's a weird thing to write about on social media because any comedian who came up there knows intimately what it means and doesn't need to read a long post from me, but very few non-comedians (even those who have attended shows there) can comprehend how massive that place has been, not just in the development of the careers of many legendary comics, but in the lives of thousands of comedians who you've never heard of, who bust their ass for very little pay, just so they can bring a little joy and laughter to the world. That place gives a sense of community, a sense of belonging and a reminder of what stand up comedy can be at its very best.

Because, ladies and gentleman, that is the best comedy club in the world. I SAID IT. FIGHT ME. It's not the biggest. It's not the easiest. It's the best. And it would be wonderful if they find a new location, but it won't be that place. That courtyard, surrounded by towering financial buildings where my wife and I shared our first kiss. That backdrop mural that cartoonishly educated out of towers as to the various landmarks in the city. That front row that I sat in at my first live stand up show at age 14, chaperoned by my aunt and uncle as Bobby Slayton made fun of me for the majority of the evening. That perfectly placed sea of tables and chairs that forced people from different worlds to share each other's space for the sake of a good laugh. That back bar, filled on Sundays with the who's who and who's that of the Comedy Scene. That staff/management that has always made us comics feel welcome, encouraged and put comedy (and comedians) first. All of that is in that place. If it survives in a new location that's great, but it won't be that place.

Even after I moved to LA, The Punch Line remained a safe haven I could come back to anytime to tap into the purest source of comedy water and feel like I belonged (and by the amount of



comics living in LA who I would see there it was clear I wasn't alone!). But as I mourn the potential loss, I'm filled with gratitude for all the blessings that place has provided all of us and all the wonderful people I met and worked with over my 10+ years performing there. And who knows, maybe the great [Paco Romane](#) and [Nato Green](#) can succeed in their effort to turn it into a historical landmark or something, anything! Either way, love you Punch Line.

**Paco Romane:** I am writing because my beloved comedy club and the historic and iconic Punch Line Comedy Club is being forced to move from its current location at 444 Battery St, San Francisco. As some of you may know The Punch Line has been the launching pad and supportive environment for many great comedians including legends, national headliners and up-and-coming comedians. Legends like Robin Williams, Margaret Cho, Ali Wong, Ellen Degeneres, Dana Gould, W. Kamau Bell and many many others got their start at this club because they are dedicated in fostering the art form that is stand-up comedy. I would love to see this location deemed a historic landmark like so many other important locations in San Francisco. We need to work as hard as possible in San Francisco to preserve places that have deep meaning and a place in the heart of one of the greatest cities in the world. Let's work hard to ensure we don't lose the great institutions that have made San Francisco a location and destination for artists.

## Tweets:

**Kate Willett** @katewillett May 8

The [@punchlinesf](#) is one of the greatest clubs in the US and it means the world to me. I'm so glad I got to start there. The news it may be closing is devastating [#savethepunchline](#)

**Laurie Kilmartin**

The [@punchlinesf](#) is an institution and a treasure, Mayor [@LondonBreed](#) Can you help [#savethepunchline](#)? Great comics worked there and still work there all the time.

**Casey Ley** @caseywley May 8

Wherever I go in this comedy world I see Bay Area comedians at the top of it. The [@punchlinesf](#) is the reason for that. SF is getting rid of yet another cultural institution for I'm sure something that will last til the update comes out. [#savethepunchline](#) save yourselves

**Ronn Vigh** @RonnRonnVigh May 8

18 years performing here. 3+ years being even more involved working with local talent & often laughing so hard & loud that half the audience turns around startled by my feminine cackle. I like to believe that things happen for a reason but I'd also still love to [#SaveThePunchline](#)

**Urklegrü** @briana\_ariel May 8

Oh no! I saw Chapelle just rif for hours straight at [@punchlinesf](#) and the show started at midnight. It was totally worth it. I saw [@aliwong](#) there for the first time when all I knew about her was she was a UHS classmate of some friends and she killed it. Please [#SaveThePunchline](#)

**Keith Lowell Jensen**  @keithlowell May 9

SF Punch Line is a part of San Francisco's cultural identity, it's soul if you will. And beyond SF it's an important part of American stand up comedy history. [#savethepunchline](#)

**Jeanette Marin** @JeanetteMarinCo May 9

If laughter is the best medicine, the San Francisco Punch Line is one of our most notable hospitals. We should all want it to survive. [#savethepunchline](#)

**Jeff Dean** @m0stjeffinitely May 8

Every Sunday I get to hang out with my best friends at The Punchline. I love the SF comedy scene. My childhood sucked, until now I've never felt a sense of community like this and The Punch Line is to thank. Selfish reasons aside, this is one hell of a landmark. [#SaveThePunchLine](#)

**Clara** @clarabijl May 9

[#SaveThePunchline](#) I love [@punchlinesf](#) I love performing [@punchlinesf](#) I love watching shows [@punchlinesf](#) How often have you seen a tweet with so much love in it? [#SaveThePunchline](#)

**Melania's Ghost Cat**    @MelaniaGhost May 8

[#SaveThePunchline](#) [#PunchlineSF](#) is where so many amazing comedians cut their teeth. It has been a San Francisco institution for over 40 years & should be made a historical landmark. Every SF Comedy Competition ended there. Every comedian worth their salt has performed there.

**Vmedia** @Vmedia101 May 8

The **Punch Line** San Francisco loses its lease this summer - A staple of **SF** Comedy for 40 years I saw some amazing careers begin on that measly stage; Dana Carvey, Robin Williams, Ellen DeGeneres and so many others -...

**Mike Drucker** @MikeDrucker

This is such a bummer. [@punchlinesf](#) is the home to so many incredible comics and amazing staff, not to mention being one of the best places to perform. Ugh.

**Moshe Kasher** @moshekasher This is heartbreaking for so many reasons. The Bay Area has changed so much but now it's killing my past. This will always be my home club

**Bobby Slayton** @PitbullofComedy

So many close friends & family dying the last 3 yrs. & now the pain of hearing the legendary [@punchlinesf](#) lost their lease & is closing this summer. I was there when it started 40 years ago & where I really learned to do stand up. So many memories and great times. Sucks.

**Steve Byrne** @stevebyrnelive

Absolutely bummed to hear about [@punchlinesf](#) LOVED performing at that club. That stage is the first time I got to professionally share time w [@kenjeong](#) [@bobbyleelive](#) [@kevinsheacomedy](#) I also got to rip it up with "Sullivan & Son" boys [@ahmedcomedy](#) [@roywoodjr](#) OB. LOTS of LOVE to SF

## Email from a customer:

**Subject:** A note of thanks...

We didn't know who you were until recently, but have deeply appreciated your work.

We've been to Punch Line San Francisco (and Sacramento and, briefly, Walnut Creek) close to 150 times since we moved to Oakland in 1984. It is simply our most favorite club and we've been to comedy clubs all over the United States.

Everybody from the early days of Patton Oswalt, Ellen DeGeneres, Marc Maron, Jake Johannsen, Dave Chappelle, Mark Pitta, Johnny Steele, and Greg Proops to more recent Punch Line alumni like Moshe Kasher and Emily Heller. We've probably seen Jake Johannsen at the club 15+ times, alone.

And lots of women comics. When someone was lamenting the lack of women booked in other clubs, we were able to say that we had seen such diverse people as Laurie Kilmartin, Emily, Emmy Blotnick, Gina Yashere, Caitlin Gill, Zainab Johnson, etc.

And by keeping the club open to 18 year olds, we can say that all our kids have been there frequently, at times with the whole family like with Nate Bargatze.

We would love to see you bring back others like the recently announced Chappelle shows. (Although we've not successfully got tickets for those shows, we've seen him there 5 or 6 times before.) For old time's sake before you move, I love to see you bring back Patton, Marc, Jake, Laurie, Caitlin, and Moshe. I'm sure you already have your list. Just adding our votes. :-)

In any case, thanks so very much. You've been doing an outstanding job. And didn't even know who to thank.

All the best,

Ed & Barb Horst

Oakland, CA



*Filing Date:* June 20, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2019-013681LBR  
*Business Name:* Punch Line San Francisco  
*Business Address:* 444 Battery Street  
*Zoning:* C-3-O (Downtown Office) Zoning District  
200-S Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0204/019  
*Applicant:* Live Nation Worldwide, Owner  
7060 Hollywood Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90028  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
[shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org](mailto:shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org)  
*Reviewed By:* Jeff Joslin – (415) 575-9117  
[jeff.joslin@sfgov.org](mailto:jeff.joslin@sfgov.org)

## **BUSINESS DESCRIPTION**

Punch Line San Francisco is the longest-running a comedy club in the City, established in 1978. The Punch Line was originally founded by Jonathan and Anne Fox along with Jeffrey and Patricia Pollack. The Foxes are the founders of the San Francisco International Comedy Competition. The venue was sold to Bill Graham in 1980. Bill Graham was a German-American impresario and rock concert promoter who made famous The Fillmore and Winterland Arena and had a profound influence around the world. In 1997, SFX Entertainment purchased Bill Graham Presents and then in 2000, Clear Channel Entertainment bought SFX. Clear Channel operated the venue until 2005 when it spun off into a new company name: Live Nation Worldwide, Inc. The venue has operated under the "Clubs & Theaters" division of Live Nation since then, called House of Blues Entertainment.

The Punch Line quickly established itself as a premier comedy club for performers and audiences alike. The citywide comedy festival SF Sketchfest operates in partnership with the Punch Line for 3 weeks out of each year. The Punch Line's weekly Sunday showcase is the longest-running comedy showcase in the entire city of San Francisco. The Punch Line has had comedy shows at least six nights a week for the past 40 years. Stars like Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Ellen Degeneres, Wanda Sykes, Drew Carey, Dave Chappelle and Chris Rock all took the first steps of their show biz journeys on the Punch Line's stage. Then there are Zach Galifianakis, Ali Wong, Amy Schumer, Nick Swardson, Hannibal Buress, Bill Burr, Mike Birbiglia, Marc Maron, John Mulaney, Margaret Cho and so many more who regularly played the Punch Line. Many still make guest appearances and perform surprise shows.

The business is located on the east side of Battery Street between Washington and Clay streets in the Financial District neighborhood. It is located within a C-3-O (Downtown Office) Zoning District and a 200-S Height and Bulk District.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

### *Review Criteria*

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1978.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Punch Line San Francisco qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. Punch Line San Francisco has operated continuously in San Francisco for 41 years.
- ii. Punch Line San Francisco has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco.
- iii. Punch Line San Francisco is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the art of stand-up comedy.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. As a comedy performance venue, the business is associated with many famous comedians as well as Bill Graham, the original owner.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No. The property has Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "B" (Historic Resource Present) because of the building's age (constructed 1967).

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. The Punch Line has been featured in tons of Bay Area publications such as The Chronicle, The Examiner, SF Weekly, SF Bay Guardian and San Jose Mercury News. The Punch Line was listed as #3 in Vulture Magazine's "top 15 comedy clubs." The Punch Line can be seen in the "3 Still Standing" documentary, as well as "Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind," the official HBO Documentary. Dozens of comedy albums have been recorded at the Punch Line, as well as a few comedy specials.

### *Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

#### **Location(s) associated with the business:**

- 444 Battery Street

#### **Recommended by Applicant**

- Stand-up comedy performance 6 nights per week
- The mural on the stage backdrop
- The neon sign of the comedy and tragedy masks

- Dan Dion's photographs of comedians
- Brick interior walls
- Intimate scale of the space

**Additional Recommended by Staff**

- None



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

---

## Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No. ###

HEARING DATE: JULY 17, 2019

*Case No.:* 2019-013681LBR  
*Business Name:* Punch Line San Francisco  
*Business Address:* 444 Battery Street  
*Zoning:* C-3-O (Downtown Office) Zoning District  
200-S Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0204/019  
*Applicant:* Live Nation Worldwide, Owner  
7060 Hollywood Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90028  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
[shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org](mailto:shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org)  
*Reviewed By:* Jeff Joslin - (415) 575-9117  
[jeff.joslin@sfgov.org](mailto:jeff.joslin@sfgov.org)

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR PUNCH LINE SAN FRANCISCO CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 444 BATTERY STREET, BLOCK/LOT 0204/019.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 17, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.



**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Punch Line San Francisco qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Punch Line San Francisco.

**Location(s):**

- *444 Battery Street*

**Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:**

- *Stand-up comedy performance 6 nights per week*
- *The mural on the stage backdrop*
- *The neon sign of the comedy and tragedy masks*
- *Dan Dion's photographs of comedians*
- *Brick interior walls*
- *Intimate scale of the space*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2019-013681LBR to the Office of Small Business July 17, 2019.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: