

STREET CRACKS

A brush with unemployment leads to life of laughs

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Funny, B.B. Chang, Skip Pendleton and Sid Fishman only show their faces when Karl Anthony's around. Let it be said Anthony keeps some strange company.

Start off with B.B. Chang. He's an Oriental blues singer whose legacy was passed down by his father, Mild Mellow Egg Roll, who came over during the Gold Rush.

APPARENTLY, Mr. Egg Roll served as Hop Sing's assistant on "Bonanza." He wasn't able to cook for the Cartwrights, and instead was left with the unsavory task of washing Hoss' underwear.

This, it is said, gave Egg Roll the blues.

Sid Fishman used to own a bagel and lox store in Southfield. But Fishman gave it up to become a private eye.

Then there's Skip Pendleton. What a sad tale.

"He's a manic chemical tester for Dupont," said Anthony, shaking his head. "He's been testing chemicals too long. He's too far gone."

Anthony knows this better than anyone. He created Skip along with B.B. and Fishman.

But unlike the child who has an imaginary friend, Anthony parades his characters out to the delight of audiences at area comedy clubs.

ANTHONY'S THREE PALS and some others will appear along with a multitude of real-life comics "Tuesday, Jan. 15, at Chaplin's West in Detroit. The yuk-yuk extravaganza, "Comics for Kids," is a benefit for Children's Hospital of Michigan.

Scheduled to appear are national acts Tommy Sledge, John Rathbone, Fred Klett, Louis Ramey and Don Reuz, along with Detroiters Norm Stutz and Anthony.

Anthony, 24, organized the event out of gratitude. He was born at Children's Hospital 2 1/2 months prematurely, suffering from collapsed lungs.

"I always wanted to do a benefit for Children's Hospital," said Anthony, who grew up in Oak Park. "I never knew how to go about it. Comedy seemed to be the obvious choice."

FOR THE benefit and the obvious career choice for Anthony. The likes

of Sid Fishman first surfaced when Anthony did voice characterizations on WRIF-FM.

He worked on the "Pat & Wags" morning show and with Greg "The Cutting Edge" St. James during the evenings. When the station changed management, outbarks were made and Anthony was without a job.

A search for employment ensued for six months. Stand-up comedy was a viable alternative. Anthony tried his luck at an open mike night at the Comedy Castle.

"It was very liberating. I enjoyed working in radio. I wanted to experience more of the limelight."

"On radio, when you're on the air, you don't know if people are laughing. In stand-up comedy... the response is immediate."

AS HIS stage act developed, Anthony found he could flesh out the characters by using costumes and facial expressions.

Some bits have become full-blown productions, like his pro wrestling turned Broadway piece "That's Wrestling-tainment."

He is following a path set forth by Red Skelton and Billy Crystal, both considered the masters of character-

izations. Anthony draws his stage friends from everyday life.

"To flesh out a character, they have to become three-dimensional. You have to have a background. I usually sit down beforehand and make up a history of this character." Like B.B. Chang, for instance, Anthony saw a pair of Oriental guys singing and the idea of a Chinese blues singer came about.

ANTHONY ALWAYS had an imagination, describing himself as a "closet comedian in his youth."

"I wrote for the class clown," While Dan Quayle jokes have become standard fare on the comedy trail, Anthony and Co. is carving its own niche.

"It's something different to look at. There's only so many topics to talk about. It seems to me comedians are overlapping."

"Comics for Kids" will take place 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 15 at Chaplin's West Comedy Club, 16890 Telegraph, one block south of Six Mile, Detroit. Admission is \$5. Proceeds benefit Children's Hospital of Michigan. For information, call 533-8866.



It could be said that Karl Anthony has an overactive imagination with a passel of friends he's created. But he keeps audiences laughing with the antics of his imaginary buddies.

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are listings of some comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is appearing at your club, send the information to: Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric, Newspapers, 36251 Schoenhardt, Livonia 48150.

● **CHAPLIN'S EAST**
Tommy Sledge will appear along with Garie Lewis and Ray Effler

Tuesday-Saturday, Jan. 15-19, at Chaplin's East, 3421 Groveside, Fraser. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1902.

● **CHAPLIN'S PLYMOUTH**
Brad Nelson will appear along with Mark England Wednesday-Saturday, Jan. 16-19, at Chaplin's Plymouth, 14707 Northville. Show times are 8:30 Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 454-4680.

● **CHAPLIN'S WEST**
Fred Klett will appear with Luis Ramey and Karl Anthony Wednesday through Saturday, Jan. 16-19, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph, one block south of Six Mile Road. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 533-8866.

● **MAINSTREET**
Ron Darian will perform Friday-Saturday, Jan. 18-19, at MainStreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and 7, 9 and 11 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 996-9080.

● **COMEDY CASTLE**
Tim Allen will perform with Stunt Johnson Theater Tuesday-Saturday, Jan. 15-19, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show times are 7 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9900.

● **JOEY'S ALLEN PARK**
Downtown Tony Brown will perform Wednesday-Saturday, Jan. 16-19, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 15246 Southfield Road, Allen Park. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 382-7041.

● **JOEY'S LIVONIA**
Klaus Meyers will perform with Marty Miccol and Sean Hooter Wednesday-Saturday, Jan. 16-19, at Joey's Comedy Club, Plymouth Road between Wayne and Levan roads. Livonia Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 261-0555.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact
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