

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



(O/S)

Ticklish business

What's new in comedy shows

By Kathleen Moran
staff writer

That comedy can be a tickle business hasn't discouraged two optimists from banking on laughs in the New Year.

Mark Ridley, a stalwart who is in his seventh year in the comedy biz, opened his "sixth and last" location a few months ago on the Woodward corridor. The Comedy Castle is now settled into the former site of the Spaghetti Company, on Woodward at Catalpa (1 1/4 mile).

And on Jan. 10, the Comedy Crossing will open downstairs in the Red Cedars restaurant, on the northwest corner of Telegraph and Nine Mile in Southfield.

While both are after customers who want a refreshing evening of humor, the Castle and Crossing are offering different ways to it. Billed as a "new and last" location, the Comedy Crossing will present two familiar funnymen — Bob Posch and Ron Coden — alternating throughout the year. The "comic of the month" will appear Fridays and Saturdays, with shows scheduled at 8 and 11 p.m.

The Comedy Castle, on the other hand, will continue bringing in a new major entertainer each week from Tuesday through Saturday, as well as retain its Monday amateur night.

RIDLEY, WHO has pioneered the comedy business in this area, thinks there's room for both types

of shows in this market. "Both Ron and Bob have a loyal following," he said. "They're going for a little different crowd, a more established crowd."

"I like to keep it fresh," Ridley said of his constantly changing schedule. "These are people that you see on TV — The Tonight Show, Late Night With David Letterman."

Ridley said he has entertainers booked through September. This week features Tom Sharp, who has appeared on TV's Bloopers and Practical Jokes, followed next week by Marty Pollo, then Paul Kelly, then Paula Toundstone who has been on Saturday Night Live and Marty Kohen who was a regular on Solid Gold.

Posch and Coden have worked the Detroit market since the early 1980s and have loyal fans who Jack Freed, owner of the Red Cedars, expects will follow them to the Cedars. Posch will open the show Jan. 10 and perform until Feb. 1. Then Coden will take the stage from Feb. 7 until March 1. Occasionally, the two may surprise the audience with a joint show.

Freed caught the comedy fever from Ridley, after working together one year while the Comedy Castle was located in the Cedars. "Mark runs a great show," he said. After Ridley bought his own restaurant, Freed decided he's like to try comedy too — but from a different standpoint.

HE BELIEVES his setting is ideal for a comedy show (seating for 175 in a half-circle) and the enter-

tainers are the best in the Detroit market. "They are the only two we considered," he said. "Only if they would come into it, and come into it wholeheartedly with their names on the marquee, would we have done it."

"I think Bob and Ron have been tested by time," he added. "They have been appearing in the area for a long time and have become more effective as time has gone by. And their material is always changing."

Posch likes the idea that only drinks will be served during the show, food is reserved for the upstairs restaurant.

Ridley has found that works best, too. He has a dining room which seats 92, apart from the showroom which seats 300 and a bar area which seats 140. The restaurant also is open for lunch.

After the Comedy Crossing format settles in, Freed said he may try an amateur night. For Ridley, that's a regular Monday night attraction, one he calls "the good, the bad and the ugly."

The talented amateurs are invited back as opening acts. "I like to think of this as a gymnasium for comics. If they don't work out, they don't get better."

For reservations at the Comedy Crossing and Red Cedars, call 353-3798.

For reservations at the Comedy Castle, call 342-9900.



The Bob Posch (top) and Ron Coden brand of music and madness will be combined for the first time at the new Comedy Crossing, a production of the Red Cedars restaurant in Southfield.

Series features pianist

The American Artists Series, noted for playing rarely-heard works by outstanding performers, opens Jan. 12 with concert pianist Joann Freeman and members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The 3 p.m. concert will be held in Kingswood Auditorium, 885 Cranbrook Road, Bloomfield Hills. Among the warm, romantic pieces are "Quintets for Piano and Strings" by Robert Schumann, Frank Martin and Arthur

Bliss and Benjamin Britten's "Fantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings." Orchestra members include Donald Baker, principal oboe; Ronald Fischer, violin; Linda Svedden Smith, violin; Hart Hollman, viola; and John Thurman, cello.

Tickets can be purchased at the door or at Bookpeople in Orchard Mall, Maximus & Company Booksellers in Birmingham or Harmony House in Royal Oak.

Photographs by Schurer open the new year

Photographs by Carl Schurer open the new year at the Detroit Council of the Arts' Front Room Gallery.

The exhibit begins Jan. 3 and continues through the month. The gallery is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday. It is at 47 E. Adams, Detroit. For details, call 224-3601.

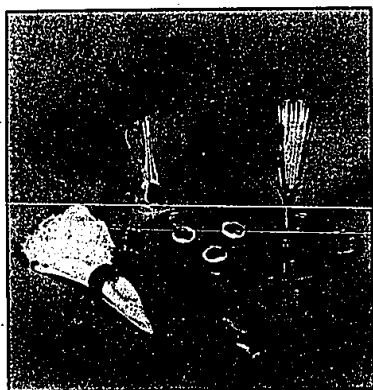
Schurer, who holds a degree from California School of Fine Arts, founded the Red Door Gallery in 1963. It was the first Cass Corridor gallery and one

which has provided many artists with their first exhibitions.

Schurer currently does photography and documentation for the LINES Series of readings at the Detroit Institute of Arts. He has photographed nationally known authors including William Burroughs, Jon Asberry, Clark Coolidge and Kathy Acker.

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