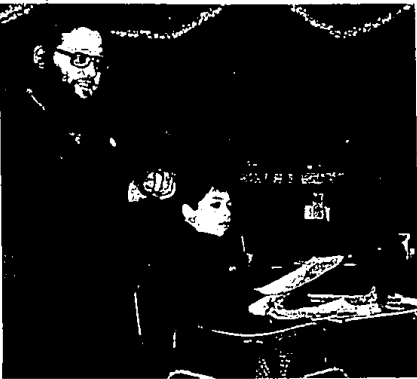


Student comics learn to punch up their lines



Patricia Vior

Watching a student hone an act are (left) Jonathon Round of the Laugh Academy and Gilda Houser of Southfield. The course concentrates on the basics of guffaw getting.



Working on a comic character she calls Lulu, Lisa Recker of Dearborn pauses before delivering a punchline.

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down and follow. That's what it is we want to give people here, a realist view about... sense of humor."

Since the school began in April, a vice president of Merrill Lynch, lawyers, doctors, teachers, toastmasters and even psychologists have gone through the course. Not everyone who takes the course is bent on being a comedian.

"I get some really intense young kids who really want to be comics, real bad. And a lot of them don't like what it is that I'm telling them... They object to the idea that it's going to be work. They insist that there's another way, they insist that there's a way to be discovered."

"They insist that they can have their parties... and do their mood elevating substances and still get on with what it is that's going on... so much logic, that's not going to happen. 'You've got to have your head together. You have to have a clear head to work it up and a clearer head to do it.'"

"They have to look at this as another job. They have to understand that it's going to take the same kind of attention that it's going to take to hold your regular job."

"We keep the class count down to 15 students per session, which allows (me) to give that degree of individual attention. I leave my telephone number open to students not only during the novice and intermediate sessions, but afterwards. I want to hear from them, I want to find out what they're doing."

The Laugh Academy has no placement service. However, in the novice session, students are already urged to vie for "open mike" time at the better clubs in the area, such as the Comedy Castle.

"Out of the 90 who've graduated, I've felt comfortable... referring 15 of them along to different sources."

The reason more weren't referred is that Round is trying to set a standard and gain a reputation. And he wants to give the Comedy Club and the Detroit area a reputation for developing good talent.

"We're looking to have people come and develop a way of doing their comedy that is going to be unique; that's going to move beyond that's not going to be something that's flash in the pan... We're looking to create some people that are going to think about their comedy and their humor."

Lower priced videos appeal to holiday market

Looking for a great Christmas gift for under \$30? Sick of giving those garish neckties?

Prerecorded videocassettes may be the answer. Never before has such a variety of reasonably priced videotapes been on the market. And this includes some recent first-run box office hits. The current issue of Video Magazine lists tapes in a wide range of categories, some as low as \$10, which would make perfect gifts for almost anyone on your shopping list.

"E.T.," the biggest blockbuster cheapie of the season, retails for \$24.95. And you can deduct even more on the little creature from outer space with a \$5 rebate from Pop-Si.

A very safe bet is "Cinderella" at \$29.95. And don't assume this Disney classic is exclusively for children. It will keep adults glued to their sets, too.

For the war buffs on your list, Oliver Stone's Vietnam parable "Platoon" has been reduced in price

to \$24.95. The Vietnam saga is also available through the eyes of Robin Williams in the hit "Good Morning, Vietnam" for \$29.95.

Know any Mel Brooks addicts? "Young Frankenstein," "Silent Movie," "To Be or Not to Be," "High Anxiety" and "History of the World Part I" can all be had for \$19.95 each. How about Jack Nicholson fans? "Five Easy Pieces," "The Last Detail" and "Easy Rider" are \$19.95 apiece.

The seven Clint Eastwood sagas, including "Dirty Harry," are available at \$19.95. Sylvester Stallone in the original "Rambo" can be had for \$19.95 or you can pick up "Rambo: First Blood Part II" for \$14.95.

For your spacey friends, try one or all four of the "Star Trek" movies for \$19.95.

How's about a tape you can't refuse? "The Godfather I and II" are each available for \$29.95, and if these aren't enough, you can get "Prizzi's Honor" for \$19.95.

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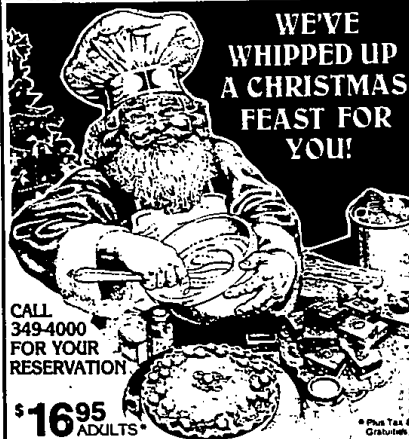
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