

He finds humor in music

By Bob Badler
special writer

A man, a guitar and a decade. Hand Gerry Grossman his Ovation acoustic guitar and he looks '60s. Once he begins to play, he feels '60s and beckons his audience to do the same.

And he loves it. Just ask him. "The only difference between the audience's part of the show and my part is that I get paid for it," he said. Grossman, 38, is a rock'n'roll comedian. His recipe for laughs is simple — a man, a guitar and the music of the decade he loves. He claims that he can play any A-side of any rock'n'roll 45 released before 1970, so he's never at a loss for material. The final ingredient is the audience, which is expected to get involved.

"The show starts off with me getting the audience comfortable with the idea of singing," Grossman said. "This is not like listening to a record or watching a video. With my show, the audience is part of the action." "The humor does not come from the music itself. The way I look at it, other than a hot dog and beer at Wrigley Field (Grossman is a native of Chicago), there's nothing more enjoyable than listening to music and laughing."

With Grossman, just about anything can be analogous to the '60s rock'n'roll, even his improvisational style of humor. "I've never liked comics who just go up there and recite their lines," Grossman said. "It's just like going to see a band to hear them play a certain record. On one hand, you want it to sound as good as it sounds on the record, but on the other hand, you want something more."

GROSSMAN grew up in Chicago during the '60s. He had a guitar and played in a band for awhile. In 1968, he decided to go solo. He took his trusty Ovation with him, and in the next 20 years, the rock'n'roll/comedy combo took him all over the country. "I've played in every possible circumstance," Grossman said. "Arenas, bars, clubs, even tents. Anywhere."

He opened for the likes of Albert



Gerry Grossman, with his Ovation acoustic guitar, looks like a product of the '60s. By chance, he is, and his style of rock'n'roll/comedy is a reflection of that era.

Brooks, John Denver, REO Speedwagon and Cheap Trick. He is close friends with John Frine, with whom he's done some recording.

"I've got tons of my own material, straight ahead rock'n'roll," he said. "The only recordings I care to mention are one album and four singles though."

Grossman refers to rock'n'roll and comedy as "the twin sons of different mothers." But when he gets up on stage, sometimes he has some walls to break down because of his appearance.

"The bulk of middle America may look at me and think 'hippie burnout old rock'n'roller,'" he said. "To those people, I say, Listen for a few moments and then make a judgment."

"The way I look is not a calculated thing. It's just the way I look, and I've looked that way for 20 years."

Once the barriers are broken down, Grossman and his audience

can get down to just having fun. "I can see humor in all kinds of things, but mostly things having to do with our culture — and rock'n'roll is a part of that culture."

"IT'S ABSOLUTELY wonderful knowing that after 20 years of playing 'Johnny B. Goode' you're still playing 'Johnny B. Goode.' What it comes down to is this: If it's good, it stays good."

For that reason, Grossman doesn't look at the upsurge in '60s nostalgia, fueled in part by the whole "Big Chill" generation, as a prime component in the continued popularity of that decade's music.

"I don't look at it as nostalgia," Grossman said. "As long as people want to hear it, I'll play it."

Gerry Grossman will appear Wednesday through Saturday, April 19-22, at Chaplin's East, 3424 Groesbeck Hwy., Fraser. For reservations, call 792-1902.

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are some listings of comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is appearing at your club, send us the information: Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric, 38251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

● **BEA'S COMEDY**
Garry Pollock, Lisa Becker and Downtown Tony Brown will perform Friday-Saturday, April 21-22, at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541 Larned, Detroit. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

● **CHAPLIN'S EAST**
Garry Grossman will appear with Mario Scrima and Downtown Tony Brown Wednesday-Saturday, April 19-22, at Chaplin's East, 3424 Groesbeck, Fraser. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1902.

● **CHAPLIN'S WEST**
Scott Novotny will appear with John Novotny and Joyce Nadar Tuesday-Saturday, April 18-22, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph Road, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8966.

● **COMEDY SPORTZ**
Comedy Sports at the Heidelberg will have improvisational comedy at 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The club is at 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. For reservations, call 995-8588.

● **JOEY'S**
Todd Jordan from the "Improv" in Las Vegas will perform Wednesday-Saturday, April 19-22, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, west of Wayne Road, Livonia. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Thursday is no smoking night. For information, call 261-6555.

● **LOONEY BIN**
Gary Hardwick will perform Friday-Saturday, April 21-22, at The Looney, The Wolverine Lounge, 1655 Glenway, Walled Lake. For information, call 669-9374.

● **MAINSTREET**
John Riggi will perform Friday-Saturday, April 21-22, at Mainstreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, between Division and Fifth, Ann Arbor. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Tickets are \$12. For information, call 995-9080.

● **COMEDY CASTLE**
Billy Elmer will appear Tuesday-Saturday, April 18-22, at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 2593 Woodward, Berkley. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9200.

● **STEVEN WRIGHT**
Steven Wright will perform at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 20, at the Power Center in Ann Arbor. For information, call 423-6666.

● **SANDRA BERNHARD**
Sandra Bernhard will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 6, at the Power Center in Ann Arbor. For information, call 423-6666.

● **HOLLY HOTEL**
Nick Paradis, Tim Slagle and Tim Butterfield will perform Thursday through Saturday, April 20-22, in the Holly Room Comedy Club of the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 634-5208.

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