

He earns his name the hard way

By Bob Sadler
special writer

A case could be made that "Downtown" Tony Brown is the hardest working comic in Detroit today. There's no doubt that he's logged a lot of miles since 1983 to get where he is today.

That's how he got his nickname. "When I started at Bea's Comedy Kitchen (where he is the house emcee and opening act), there was a lot of bad talk about the place among comedians," Brown said. "The place was pretty empty, so I welcomed the challenge of making it a viable comedy club."

"I did a lot of leg work. I used to walk the streets with flyers."

Brown would walk all over downtown Detroit, starting at 4 p.m. His route would start at Bea's and take in Hart Plaza, Woodward Avenue all the way to the Fox Theater and Greektown.

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Detroit comedy luminary Mike Binder, now living in Los Angeles, noticed how much "leg work" Brown was doing and dubbed him "Downtown" Tony Brown.

Now, all the work has paid off for Brown — and for Bea's Comedy Kitchen. Bea Evans and her nephew

Steve own and run the place. But Brown's combination of salesmanship, comedic talent and outright stamina has helped put the downtown club on the map.

"When I first started there, we only seated 125 at the most, and it was only \$3 to get in," Brown said. "I used to guarantee Steve that some day the show would be so good they could charge \$10. Now, it costs \$10."

Brown also prophetic about seat-

ing. He told Steve they would probably have to knock a wall down to accommodate the crowd.

"Steve thought I was hilarious," Brown said. "We seat 300 and we knocked the wall down."

Brown doesn't pull punches. He's proud of what he's accomplished and wants Detroit to know it.

"I think I've done more work than Steve and Bea put together," he said. "They know it's true. To tell you the truth, I should own the club. I've paid my dues." (Brown doesn't own the club but does have a small share of it.)

Brown, a native of Highland Park, still makes his home there. He raises his two sons, ages 14 and 12, and says he's able to feed them everyday and clothe them properly with the money he makes from comedy.

A 1973 Highland Park High School graduate, Brown went on to get a degree in accounting at Oakland University — but didn't use it.

"I never had an accounting job," he said. "Comedy is my calling."

Brown turned to comedy in 1983 and credits Mark Ridley with giving him his first opportunity to get up on stage. It wasn't long after that he began his long relationship with Bea's.

He also was a frequent opening act at the now defunct Premiere Center in Sterling Heights, warming up crowds for the likes of Lou Rawls and Paul Anka.

IN THE next month, Brown will take his act on the road, playing a few clubs in Florida. Some exposure in other markets is just another step toward Brown's ultimate goal — super stardom.

"I feel in my heart that one day I'm going to be a superstar comedian," Brown said. "It may not happen tomorrow, it may take 100 years. But if the Lord keeps me living and breathing, I'm going to see that day come."



Hard work is nothing new to "Downtown" Tony Brown, who earned his moniker promoting Bea's Comedy Kitchen.

"I'm going to work and work and work to get it."

At least it's a lifestyle he's familiar with.

"Downtown" Tony Brown ap-

pears weekly at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541-E. Larned, one block north of the Renaissance Center, Detroit. For information, call 961-2581.



COMEDY CLUBS

Here are some listings of 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 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

● BEA'S COMEDY

Lowell Sanders, Joyce Nadar and Downtown Tony Brown will perform Friday-Saturday, May 12-13, at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541 Larned, Detroit. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. There also is a new comedy show at 9:30 p.m. Thursdays. For information, call 961-2581.

● CHAPLIN'S EAST

John Ferrellino will appear Wednesday-Saturday, May 10-13, at Chaplin's East, 34244 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

Bert Challa, with Bill Laff and Mark Moffett, will appear Tuesday-Saturday, May 9-13, at Chaplin's West, 16990 Telegraph Road, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8866.

● 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

995-8888.

● HOLLY HOTEL

Peter Berman, with Steve Blumstein and Michael Blackman, will perform Thursday-Saturday, May 11-13, in the 1891 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.

● JOEY'S

Michael Rapport will perform Wednesday-Saturday, May 10-13, 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 261-0555.

● LOONEY BIN

Tim Lilly will perform Friday-Saturday, May 12-13, at The Looney, The Wolverine Lounge, 1655 Glenary, Walled Lake. For information, call 669-9374.

● MAINSTREET

Eva Savara will perform at 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 12-13, and at 8 p.m. Sunday, May 14, at Mainstreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, between Division and Fifth, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$10. Tuesday, May 9, will be open mike night, with a Comedy Jam at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday, May 10-11. Tickets are \$3 and \$5 respectively. For information, call 996-9080.

● MISS KITTY'S

Randy Mantgomery will perform Thursday-Saturday, May 11-13, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch Restaurant, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 628-6500.

● RIDLEY'S COMEDY CASTLE

Kevin Pollack will appear Tuesday-Saturday, May 9-13, 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 542-9900.

Mother's Day Brunch

Sunday, May 14
11:00 am - 3:00 pm

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Baked Scrod with Shrimp Sauce and Julienne Vegetables
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