

STREET CRACKS

Peter Berman: A bit of story-telling and real life

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

A sudden crash interrupts the conversation. Peter Berman sighs and yells to his roommate.

"You gotta be kidding me," he says, without covering the phone receiver. "You just broke another dish? Excuse me, everything is falling apart on my roommate."

Life's little nuisances have a way of creeping into Berman's discussion about comedy. Berman pauses again.

"I just got my Michigan driver's license while I'm talking to you," he says. "What a pathetic looking picture."

The comedy picture for Berman is hardly pathetic. If anything, the young comedian is on the rise.

After his appearance this week at Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia, Ber-

man will embark on a journey to the comedic land of Oz — Los Angeles. From there, he'll head to New York. All of which would seem to make a jokester sweat a bit. After all, The Improv? Dangerfield? Geez, isn't that where people like Robin Williams, David Letterman and Whoopi Goldberg earned their comedic stripes?

BERMAN, THOUGH, sounds as cool as a cucumber in the snow of Anchorage. In little more than two years, he's been a finalist in several comedy competitions. He recently was one of the four finalists in a nationwide MTV competition.

"Somebody asked me before I left, 'What will happen if you lose?'" Berman said. "I said, first of all, I don't consider being selected one of the top four young comedians in the country as a loser. If I perform to

the best of my ability and the other guy wins, that's all I can do."

Berman was runner-up in the competition. As Vonnegut said, so it goes.

Confidence is in plentiful supply when Berman takes the stage. His act is a mixture of storytelling and real-life anecdotes. One could call it observational comedy. Berman's not sure what to label it.

"What would you call my comedy?" he asks another person while on the phone. "I don't how to describe myself."

After consulting his girlfriend, he agrees it's observational. In this area, Berman has been observed opening up for the likes of Jay Leno, Judy Tenuta and Rita Rudner.

The task of preceding a headline act is not easy. People in the audience are there to see them, not you.

"Opening up for Rita Rudner, that was tough," Berman said. "She's very nice. The audience is much quieter. Judy Tenuta is on the edge. The audience for Judy Tenuta was ready to party."

"WHEN I go on stage, no matter what I'm doing, whether it's as emcee, opening or headlining, my goal is represent myself the best of my ability."

Berman is originally from Massachusetts but moved to Ann Arbor to study at the University of Michigan. He has a degree in communications from U-M. While in school, he got the notion to pursue comedy.

Soon, Berman was a regular at area comedy clubs. He was the winner of the Starbound talent competition and was selected No. 1 in Northeast Region of the U.S. College Comedy Competition. He was also a semifinalist in the 1988 Michigan Laugh-Off and a finalist in the Joey's Comedy Club competition.

Berman's been featured on "Live at Nick's Comedy Stop" on cable TV and "MTV's Spring Break '89" comedy special. He also has the somewhat dubious honor of finishing second as a contestant on the music network's "Remote Control" game show.

"I got beat by a guy named Puck," he said. "Isn't that humiliating? Why couldn't I have been beaten by a guy named Bill or something."

Peter Berman will perform along with Gary Thison on Wednesday through Saturday, June 14-17, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, Livonia. For information, call 261-0555.



After his appearance this week at Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia, Berman will head for Los Angeles and then New York to hon his comedy skills.

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.

● CHAPLIN'S EAST

Dave Radolph will appear Wednesday-Saturday, June 14-17, 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 PLYMOUTH

Mike Toomey will appear Thursday-Saturday, June 15-17, at Chaplin's Plymouth in the Plymouth Hilton, 14707 Northville Road, Plymouth. For information, call 454-4660.

● CHAPLIN'S WEST

Sheila Kay will appear Tuesday-Saturday, June 13-17, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8666. Shoemaker will be appearing.

ing in a special engagement Friday and Saturday. Tickets cost \$10 those nights.

● COMEDY SPORTZ

Comedy Sportz at the Heidelberg will have improvisational comedy at 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The club is at 815 N. Main, Ann Arbor. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. For reservations, call 995-8888.

● HOLLY HOTEL

Craig McArt will perform along with Jenny McNulty Thursday-Saturday, June 15-17, 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

Peter Berman and Gary Thison will perform Wednesday-Saturday, June 14-17, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, west of Wayne Road, Livonia. Showtimes are 9 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. Thursday is no-smoking night. For information, call 261-0555.

● LOONEY BIN II

Mark Sweetman will perform Friday-Saturday, June 16-17, at The Looney Bin at The Rixy, 1-94 and Haggerty. Showtimes are 9 p.m. Friday and 8 and 10 p.m. Saturday. There's a \$5 cover charge. For information, call 699-1829.

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