

STREET CRACKS

Gunter: TV time pays off

By Bob Sadler
special writer

What hath Carson wrought? A common thread woven through the lives of many of today's young up-and-coming comedians is that time they spent watching "The Tonight Show" as children.

In one Ferndale home, Van Gunter remembers sitting in front of the television, watching the comics of the day perform — including the king of the monologue himself.

"I always watched Carson when I was a little kid," Gunter said. "I was always able to stay up on Friday nights. I remember watching Robert Klein and Richard Pryor."

Of course, comedy was a small industry in 1977, when Gunter graduated from Ferndale High School. He went on to Western Michigan University, but did not forget those funny television moments. And then, a few comedy clubs started opening up across the country — not just in the comedic meccas of Los Angeles and New York.

"I got started when the boom started," said Gunter, now 30. "The new clubs opening up gave me an opportunity. Before that, I was always thinking about doing stand-up. It was something I never told people."

AN OPEN mike night during one summer vacation led to part-time work on alternative weekends. After a couple years, however, Gunter was able to support himself. Remaining single and open to frequent travel was a major contributor to that result.

"You can make good money doing stand-up, but it depends on how much you want to be away from home," Gunter said.

Four years ago Gunter took the travel factor a step further moving himself to Van Nuys, Calif. — an effort to get closer to the action.



Van Gunter may have sat in front of the television, watching the comics of the day perform, when he was a child. But it's a different story now. He's the one being watched.

"I'm out in L.A. because it's the place you have to be, if you want to do anything," Gunter said. "You either love it or hate it. Now, I like being there, but it really is almost anything goes."

For that reason, Gunter makes it a point to come home during the holiday season. He visits his parents, his three sisters and their families. "I always come home for Christmas," he said.

In the last year, Gunter's comedy career has taken some big strides forward. He has appeared on Fox Broadcasting's "Comic Strip Live" and Showtime's Comedy Network, and audiences have been particularly warm to him.

"I mentioned celebrating my 30th birthday on stage one night, and one

lady started singing Happy Birthday. She didn't stop until the whole audience was singing. I was so embarrassed. All I could say was 'thank you.'"

GUNTER SEES himself getting into acting in the future, but he needs an agent to do that.

"I've gotten calls to read for a few parts, my name is starting to get tossed around," he said.

Van Gunter will appear at Chaplin's Plymouth, inside the Plymouth Radisson Hotel, Wednesday through Saturday. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 454-4680.

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 KITCHEN**
Skeeter Murray, Alturo Shelton and Downtown Tony Brown will perform Friday and Saturday, Dec. 22-23, at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

● **CHAPLAIN'S EAST**
Tom Anzalone will perform along with John DeCosse and Tony Manton Wednesday through Saturday, Dec. 19-23, at Chaplain's East, 34244 Groesbeck, Fraser. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1500.

● **CHAPLAIN'S WEST**
Ken Severa will perform with Peter Berman and Mario Selortino Tuesday through Saturday, Dec. 19-23, at Chaplain's West, 16800 Telegraph, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8866.

● **CHAPLAIN'S PLYMOUTH**
Van Gunter will perform Wednesday through Saturday, Dec. 20-23, at Chaplain's Plymouth in the Plymouth Radisson, 14707 Northville Road, Plymouth. For information, call 454-4680.

● **MAIN STREET**
Kirkland Teeple will perform Wednesday through Friday, Dec. 20-22, at Mainstreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and 7, 9 and 11 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 966-9080.

● **JOEY'S LIVONIA**
Leo DeFor along with Gary Tyson and Carl Anthony will perform Wednesday through Saturday, Dec. 20-23, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth, east of Van Livonia. Show times are 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For reservations, call 261-0555.

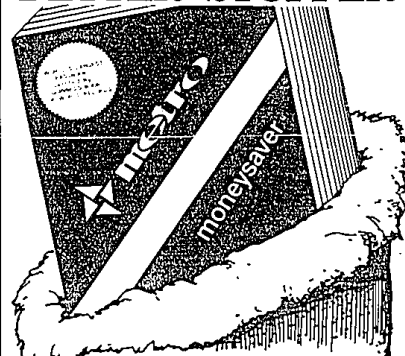
● **JOEY'S ALLEN PARK**
Downtown Tony Brown will perform along with Mark Hamilton and

Lisa Gutch Wednesday through Saturday, Dec. 20-23, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, Southfield Road, Allen Park. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 382-7041.

Show times are 8:30 p.m. Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 634-1891.

● **MISS KITTY'S**
Norm Siuz and Paul Digoal will perform Thursday-Saturday, Dec. 21-23, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch Restaurant, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. Show times are 8 p.m. Thursday; 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 628-6500.

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