

Tolsch: Comedy her way

By Bob Sadler
special writer

It could be said that Adrienne Tolsch woke up one day to discover she had talent.

She didn't really have a choice. "When I was a kid, my parents would wake me up in the middle of the night to entertain their friends," Tolsch explained. "That was my introduction to performing. I would stand there in my nightgowns and mouth the words to a Jerry Lewis record. They thought this was great fun."

Now, this Brooklyn native entertains on her own terms, and she's doing just fine, thank you.

A 15-year veteran of the stand-up circuit, Tolsch was originally a graphic artist and painter. She claims to have graduated from Brooklyn College with "the most useless degree in the world" — in art history.

"I'll match it against any sociology or political science degree," Tolsch said. "The phone never stops ringing for jobs. That's why I'm doing this now."

Tolsch's credits over the years include a number of television appearances, including VH-1's "Stand-Up Spotlight," "Caroline's Comedy Hour," and a Lifetime feature. She was named Outstanding Female Comedian for 1990 by the Manhattan Association of Cabaret Artists and has toured with many comedy and musical acts, including fellow Brooklyn native Andrew "Dice" Clay.

DESPITE ALL the negative press Clay received, Tolsch had good things to say about the Dilemma.

"I adore Andrew," she said. "I don't judge his act. I don't judge anybody's act. He was wonderful to work with."

On stage, Tolsch likes to interact with her audience. It allows her to be creative in the development of material.

"A lot of what I do is written on stage," Tolsch said. "My background is self-improvisational theater and half big mouth. I've always had a big mouth."

She also does a number of characters in her act, mostly members of her family, and wondered aloud if they would go over well with the Detroit audience.

"They're Brooklyn people, so I hope I don't scare them."

Tolsch has reached the point in her comedic career where she can be picky about the places she plays. She predominately performs in the New York metropolitan area, at clubs like The Improvisation and Dangerfields, or in large casino showrooms in Atlantic City, Las Vegas and Reno.

"I love casino towns because I just love sequins," Tolsch said. "I'm a freak for glitter."



Adrienne Tolsch's comedic background is half improvisational theater and half big mouth. "I've always had a big mouth," she said.

THE BEST (but by no means only) testimonial about her humor comes from another funny person — a comedian (and Detroit favorite) named Bill Scheft. Tolsch met Scheft during her stint as creative director at the New York club, Catch a Rising Star. They are now husband and wife.

"There's no jealousy between us," Scheft said of their comedian marriage. "Because she's funnier." "He's the best guy," Tolsch responded humbly. "I pay him heavily, but he really is the best. We really love the fact that we're both comics."

Adrienne Tolsch appears Tuesday through Saturday, March 12-16, at Mark Radley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-8900.

Laughs linger over years

By Bob Sadler
special writer

What has made America laugh over the years?

A few answers to that question were provided recently at Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, through its special set of programs, "Giggles, Gags and Guffaws." Two centuries of American humor were surveyed in a variety of performances, exhibits, audio/video presentations and audience interaction programs.

"We wanted to recognize that humor is a very important part of American culture," said Jim VanBochore, the program's developer. "This program shows how we've used humor as an escape when times are tough, and just enjoyed ourselves when the good times rolled."

Many of the places where we find humor today had their origins in a bygone era, a connection that was apparent during many of the programs presented. Television sitcoms can be traced back to the "Golden Age of Radio," and many had the opportunity to listen to excerpts from some of that medium's biggest stars — comedy teams like Bob and Ray and Lum and Abner.

THE SLAPSTICK techniques heightened by the advent of motion pictures were displayed, featuring the silent movie clowns like Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd and later stars like W.C. Fields, Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers and Abbott and Costello.

"This program shows how we've used humor as an escape when times are tough..."

—JIM VANBOCHORE

Lloyd and later stars like W.C. Fields, Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers and Abbott and Costello. One of the most popular programs in the two-day event gave one and all the chance to learn the Charlie Chaplin "walk." Particularly popular with the kids, this program featured Joe Vitale as "the Little Tramp."

The comedy club circuit that has sprung up in the last decade has been often referred to as "the new vaudeville." A glimpse of the old vaudeville, which reached its pinnacle in the first two decades of this century, was provided in another of the event's two offerings, an interactive program where anyone had the chance to get on stage and learn a classic song-and-dance bit.

Poking fun at the activities in the nation's capital has always been popular, and the forerunner of today's political humorists like Pat Paulsen, Mark Russell, Will Durt and Dennis Miller had to be Will Rogers. Actor Sam Jungermann brought Rogers to life for the weekend and proved that things haven't changed much in Washington in the 60 years or so.

"THE SENATE" it starts with prayer and ends with an investigation," Jungermann said in one of Rogers' more timeless one-liners.

Among the other programs and activities available during the weekend for the 1,000 who went through the tentacles were the opportunity to make your own clown hat and learn about the history of clowning, the chance to hear a tall tale or two, and view a discussion and display on political and other forms of cartooning.

"We chose things that were historical but also reflected our audience," VanBochore concluded. "Rather than doing a full-blown exhibit, we took some small aspects of humor and gave the audience a chance to be involved."

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are listings of some 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**
Ed Fila will appear Tuesday-Saturday, March 12-16, at Chaplin's East, 34244 Grosbeck, Fraser. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 792-1902.

● **MAINSTREET**
Tim Cavanaugh will perform Wednesday-Saturday, March 13-16, at MainStreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and 7, 9 and 11 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 996-9080.

● **COMEDY CASTLE**
Adrienne Tolsch will perform Tuesday-Saturday, March 12-16, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show times are 8:30 Monday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-8900.

● **BEA'S COMEDY CLUB**
Skeeter Marry, Downtown Tony Brown and Tim Lilly will perform Friday-Saturday, March 15-16, at Bea's Comedy Club, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

● **HOLLY HOTEL**
Norm Stutz will appear along with Lisa Goleb and Keith Ruff Thursday-Saturday, March 14-16, at Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. For reservations, call 634-1891.

● **LAUGHTER HOURS**
Tim Costello and Mark Tripp will perform Wednesday, March 13, at Harley's in Northfield Hill, 5600

Crooks Road, at I-75, Troy. For information, call 879-2100.

● **JOEY'S LIVONIA**
Doctor Goz will perform along with Tom Huffbauer and Jim McClain Wednesday-Saturday, March 13-16, at Joey's Comedy Club, Plymouth Road between Wayne and Levan roads, Livonia. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 261-0555.

● **JOEY'S ALLEN PARK**
Mark Eubank will perform Wednesday-Saturday, March 13-16, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 13246 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.

● **JOEY'S AT THE ROXY**
Brent Cushman will perform Wednesday-Saturday, March 13-16, at The Roxy, Haggerty Road, near I-94, Belleville. For information, call 699-1829.

● **MISS KITTY'S**
Joe Dunckel will perform with Tommy Chona Thursday-Saturday, March 14-16, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 505 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. For information, call 628-6560.

● **LOONEY BIN**
Allen Enlow will perform Friday-Saturday, March 15-16, at the Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Glenview, Walled Lake. For information, call 669-9374.

● **DUFFY'S**
Bob Pusch Comedy Show will perform at 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays at Duffy's, 8535 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake. Admission is \$7. For information, call 363-9465.



One of the most popular programs at "Giggles, Gags and Guffaws" was learning the Charlie Chaplin "walk" from Joe Vitale as "the Little Tramp."

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