

Comedian finds humor in everyday life



Steve Seagren's observations, coupled with his zany animated delivery have put him among the Top 10 comedians in Chicago two years running and earned him a slot on the Showtime Comedy Club Network.

By John Corliss
Special writer

Steve Seagren finds humor in everyday life, running the gamut from the sublime ("Did you realize that the phone number for Hooked on Phonics, the reading instruction service for illiterates, is 1-800-ABC-DEFC") to the ridiculous ("Doesn't Vanilla Ice's hair look like a gravy boat?").

Observations like these coupled with his zany animated delivery have placed Seagren among the Top 10 comedians in Chicago two years running, and earned him a slot on the Showtime Comedy Club Network as well as headlining at some of the best clubs in the nation.

The 36-year-old Chicago native is a heavy-set cross between David Crosby and Craig Stadler with a walrus mustache, big smile and infectious laugh that connects his furious on-stage laughter.

Most comedians become annoying fast by laughing at their own jokes, especially if no one else does. That's not the case with Seagren.

He gets away with his laughter because it's part of his routine, not a reaction to it. During a recent Detroit performance, Seagren teases out at his audience and says,

"Yippee! Who named that some guy who just at Seagren?" He follows the line with a bubbly laugh that draws some more laughter from the crowd.

HE OFTEN repeats lines that particularly amuse him, along with laughter and wild facial expressions. "Don't you get the impression I'm old and fat, whether or not you're all here?"

His delivery seems so naturally spontaneous, the answer is yes.

I want to make it look like it's all coming out of my head onstage," he

'I want to make it look like it's all coming into my head onstage, not like I've done this whole thing over and over again every night for the last three years.'

Seagren says, "I don't want to make it look like I've done this whole thing over and over again every night for the last three years."

said of the importance of spontaneity to his act, "I don't like to live like this whole thing over and over again every night for the last three years."

Seagren takes topics from everyday life, and develops them line-by-line, to the far-out extreme, peppering them with hilarious sound effects and cartoon imagery.

His laughter and warm vocal inflections, somewhere in the George Carlin John Candy area, quickly build a good rapport with an audience. Before the show is half over, he has the whole room doing impressions of Floyd the Barber from "The Andy Griffith Show" and "Gang Bangers."

Seagren first stepped into the spotlight eight years ago at open mike night in a Chicago club.

I was scared," he admitted. "But I figured everyone I knew so I would have to do it. I was so nervous that everyone thought it was a joke."

Seagren did well enough to come back but said that he wasn't really good at standup until he conquered his stage fright, a year or two later.

HIS FIRST big break was getting hired from his day job for a last After

receiving a bachelor of fine arts degree from the Art Institute of Chicago, he had gone to work in a factory, like art student work his salt. He was even on the bowling team.

But after a couple years of working a print shop and a stage, the factory decided to fire Seagren to pursue his dream.

"I wasn't showing up and wasn't too interested in my job," he said.

Becoming himself to comedy full time, Seagren got himself an agent and began headlining clubs five years ago, which helped to pay the bills. Then the Showtime gig came in 1988 and led to more exposure and good income. Today, in April, he'll be appearing on an ABC Network special, "Comedians on the Road with John Byer."

When asked what patrons can expect at his Ann Arbor show, Seagren powers his voice in FM 10 mode and deadpans, "Forty-five minutes of belly-lusting jokes, non-stop laughter from start to finish."

As usual, his comment is not far off the mark. From his stage perch, he tells the crowd how sick he's been lately, taking doses of Peridol. "It didn't get me high though," he said. "It just made my furniture real comfortable. I slept in the bookcase, curled up with a good book."

Seagren lets out a good belly guffaw and repeats, "Curled up with a good book. I wrote this stuff."

Steve Seagren will perform Friday, March 19, at 10 p.m. at the Main Street Comedy Show, 314 E. Liberty, 1st Floor. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 352-5150. For information, call 352-5150.

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**
Scott Novotne will appear Tuesday-Saturday, March 19-23, at Chaplin's East, 34244 Groesbeck, 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**
Steve Seagren will perform Friday-Saturday, March 22-23, at Main Street 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**
Heywood Banks will perform with Hyphen Amperand Tuesday-Saturday, March 19-23, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show time is 8:30 Monday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9900.

● **BEA'S COMEDY CLUB**
Marty Maculi, Downtown Tony Brown and Tommy Chunn will perform Friday-Saturday, March 22-23, at Bea's Comedy Club, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

● **LAUGHTER HOURS**
Mark Tripp and Reuben Reuben will perform Wednesday, March 20, at Hurley's in Northfield Hillton, 5600 Crooks Road, at I-75, Troy. For information, call 879-2100.

● **JOEY'S LIVONIA**
Todd Jordan will perform along with Mark England and Mary Miller Wednesday-Saturday, March 20-23, 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**
Joey Kola will perform Wednesday-Saturday, March 20-23, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 15246 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**
Ted Norkey will perform Wednesday-Saturday, March 20-23, at the Roxy, Haggerty Road, near I-94, Bellevue. For information, call 699-1829.

● **HOLLY HOTEL**
Craig McCart will perform along with Mike Low and Dan Logan Thursday-Saturday, March 21-23, at the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call (313) 634-1891.

● **MISS KITTY'S**
Rob Haney will perform with John Jex Thursday-Saturday, March 21-23, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. For information, call 628-6500.

● **LOONEY BIN**
Norm Stutz will perform Friday-Saturday, March 22-23, at the Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Glen-

gary, Walled Lake. For information, call 669-9374.

● **DUFFY'S**
Bob Pouch Comedy Show will per-

form at 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays at Duffy's 4435 Oakton Lane, Oakton Lake. For information, call 363-4435.

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