

Underachiever? Intelligent guy who acts stupid?

Jeff Simms: Working his magic with humor and slight of hand

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

What does the guy want? Some quarters so he can play some video games and buy a Big Gulp? Decked out in torn blue jeans and one those black T-shirts to set strobe lights on fire, his strawberry blond mane askew, Jeff Simms looks like the quintessential suburban underachiever. Well, don't choke on your frozen Coke.

This guy who looks suited for a life of after-school detention is an actor, magician and quite the comedian. The 1981 graduate of Plymouth Canton maintains a 4.0 grade point average at Henry Ford Community College and says such eloquent things as: "The theatre has taught me to love the art in myself instead of myself in the art."

How gnarly. "I'm an intelligent kind of a guy," said Simms, 28, who is formerly of Plymouth. "I just act stupid."

In the course of a few minutes, Jeff Simms reveals many personalities. He can take the raving tone of the political activist held over from the 1970s.

"I love America, but the government is a joke. They're the greatest comedians of all. George Bush as the environmentalist? The only thing he can save is the Quale."

Simms, 28, can also be quite the curious observationalist.

"If ATLAS is holding up the world, what is he standing on?"

"If Atlas is holding up the world, what is he standing on?"

— Jeff Simms

Simms can also dazzle the eye with some unbelievable card tricks as Simbo the Magic Dude. He is a graduate of the Chaves College of Manual Dexterity and Prestidigitation. In other words, he went to magic school.

In fact, Simms spent 20 weeks in Colon, Mich., attending class with eight other hopeful magicians. He camped outside the entire time, catching catfish and trading it in for wood.

After graduating, Simms worked the comedy circuit for a while. He returned to school and became involved in theater.

At Henry Ford College's Adray Auditorium, Simms has performed the role of Corin in "As You Like It," the dentist, Orin, in "Little Shop of Horrors" and as the teacher, James Leeds, in "Children of a Lesser God." Simms spent seven months learning sign language in preparation for the role in "Children of a Lesser God."

During the day, Simms uses his sleight of hand skills to "unlock the magic in Oreos" as part of a Nabisco promotional campaign. He appears with the Oreo Cookie Man ("He's a trip") at area stores.

Using sign language, though, Simms was able to perform for a group of people who are deaf at a Meijer's outlet in Flint.

This summer, Simms decided to re-enter the comedy club circuit. He simply went to an open-mike night at Joe's.

HE'S APPEARED at Joe's of Livonia and will perform Friday and Saturday, June 15-16, at Joe's in Belleville and Wednesday through Saturday, Aug. 7-10, at Joe's in Allen Park.

"I got tired of being a starving artist," he said. "I need money now. It's a great look. I get to stand up there and talk to people."

In the process, Simms likes to make them think a little bit. He discusses such topical things as \$600 toilet seats purchased by the government and lending \$500 million in grain to Saddam Hussein's country right before the Gulf War — "Do you think he's going to pay it back?"

His act can also include several characterizations from Simbo the Magic Dude to Bob the Bum. Simbo, in fact, was a name a friend at Plymouth Canton High School hung on him.

And sometimes things can get "suggestive" if need be, but Simms' humor certainly comes from his perspective.

"Every now and then you have to close your eyes and listen. Get up on your desk and look around at all the angles."



Jeff Simms describes himself as an intelligent kind of guy who just acts stupid, but that doesn't quite describe his comedic sense of humor.

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.

COMEDY CASTLE

Peter Berman will appear with Brent Cushman Tuesday-Saturday, June 11-15, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show time

is 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 942-9900.

JOEY'S ALLEN PARK

Darwin Hines will perform Wednesday-Saturday, June 12-15, at Joe's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 15248 Southfield Road, Allen Park. Show times are 9 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 and 10:45 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 382-7041.

JOEY'S LIVONIA

Mike Orenstein will perform Wednesday-Saturday, June 12-15, at Joe's Comedy Club, Stoyan's Seafood & Steakhouse, 36071 Plymouth Road, Livonia. For information or reservations, call 281-0555.

JOEY'S AT THE ROXY

Janine Gardner will perform Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, at The Roxy, Haggerty Road, near I-94, Belleville. For information, call 699-1829.

HOLLY HOTEL

Lowell Sanders will perform with Don Borra and Tom Franch Thursday-Saturday, June 13-15, at the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Thursday, 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 634-1891.

MISS KITTY'S

Loa Warren will perform with Pe-

ter Schwabs Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. For information, call 628-6500.

MAINSTREET

Taylor Mason will appear Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, 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.

BEA'S COMEDY CLUB

Skeeter Murry and Downtown Tony Brown will perform Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, at Bea's Comedy Club, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

LOONEY BIN

Norm Stult will appear with Keith Ruff and Harry Artan Friday-

Saturday, June 14-15, at The Wolverine Restaurant and Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Gengary, Walled Lake. For reservations and show times, call 669-9374.

DUFFY'S

The Bob Poch Comedy Show will perform 9 and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays during June at Duffy's Waterfront Inn, 8635 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake. For reservations, call 363-9469.

PINE KNOB

The New Pine Knob Music Theatre Series No. 1 will feature Red Skelton, June 30; Don Rickles with Tom Tammille, July 9; and Alan King with Paula Poundstone, Aug. 7. Series No. 14 features Budd Friedman's "Night at the Improv" with Louie Anderson, Joe Nipote, Mike Binder, Bobby Collins and Ron Pearson, July 1; Jay Leno, July 24; and George Carlin with America, July 25. For information, call 377-8200.



Taylor Mason will be cracking jokes and taking pokes at things June 14-15 at MainStreet Comedy Showcase in Ann Arbor.

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ENTRY FORM:

Name _____
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*Send your response to: Showcase Film Quiz, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150. Responses to The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Showcase Cinemas are not eligible. Entry is void where prohibited. Prizes are the sole property of the publisher. Void where prohibited.

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