

# Mary Miller: Making the most of her role as an emcee

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Mary Miller had one of those other evening. It's a night when comedians, if given the choice between break dancing on a floor with a slithering pile of cobras or taking the stage, rubbing elbows with snakeskins doesn't seem so bad.

"It was," says Miller, "a horrible hell gig."

The term is common among comedians. Her comedic equivalent of purgatory came recently heading for a one-night engagement in a small bar with an audience of men, 99.9 percent of whom were drunk.

Now, Mary, what was that line about PMS and its male alternative of DGA (Didn't Get Any)? Or how about the one about your ex-husband and the stripper?

Well, needless to say, that sort of female stuff doesn't play in a sea of stale beer and Old Spice.

"You learn not to take it personally," says Miller, 33, a former Farmington Hills resident. "After you do it so many times, you say to yourself, 'Hey, I know this worked last night.' A lot of comedy is sticking with it."

Such Miller has learned after two years of toiling on the comedy club circuit. The experience embosses one with a thick coat of rejection repellent, the kind of stuff that comes only after performing more than a handful of shows.

AND THESE things cannot be taught in school. Not that Miller didn't try, though.

She is one of several graduates of the Jonathon Round Laugh Academy, an intensive 10-week course for aspiring comedians.

Students were assigned to write up to 20 jokes a week and perform the material in front of classmates. Miller found the course enriching, launching her into comedy.

Miller has since been busy performing at area clubs, such as Chaplin's, Joey's and the Comedy Castle. Mostly, it's come in the role of an emcee. Lately, she has been appearing as a feature act.

"The thing about being an emcee is that you have to go up there and you have a cold audience. And, if you can't break the ice, it's more difficult for the headliner."

But in Miller's case, the 15-20 minute spots allow her to showcase some vibrant material that ranges from spiked girl talk to self-effacing humor. Miller pokes fun at her marriage of six years ("One year he got me a stripper for my birthday. Ya, she was really nice.")

The bit draws laughs, but one night Miller was leery using it. Her ex-husband turned up at the comedy club to see her perform.

"He thought it was funny," she said.

Miller's also good at interacting with an audience, trading a repartee or two when need to be.

SOMETIMES, SHE has to stretch her act a bit. One night, the headliner was late and the feature act didn't go beyond 25 minutes. So Miller was left to fill the gap. She ended up singing "Rocky Top."

Which wasn't as difficult as it sounds. Miller spent time in her hometown of Alexandria, Ohio, in Licking County, performing as a country singer.

Comedy came as a natural outgrowth, going back to childhood. She used humor to cope with growing up overweight.

"When you're a little fat kid, you're not the most popular girl in school. A lot of it (humor) was to make friends. If you're fun to be around, you're more likely to make friends."

Her 5-foot-10 frame carried 210 pounds at one time. She has since shed 50 pounds through dieting and aerobics.

Miller will shed more than that in March 1992. Then she'll leave her daytime job as a secretary to pursue comedy on a full-time basis.

"It's a little scary . . . You have this cushion of a daytime job. If you're depending on it to pay your bills, you'll work a lot harder."

Mary Miller appears along with Keith Ruff and Danny Ballard Thursday through Saturday, June 20-22, at the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly, Ohio. For information, call 634-5210.



A graduate of the Jonathon Round Laugh Academy, Mary Miller has been polishing up her routine at Chaplin's, Joey's and the Comedy Castle, mostly in the role of emcee.

## 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**  
Tim Lilly will appear with Eric Toney Tuesday-Saturday, June 18-22, at the Comedy Castle, 260 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 542-9900.

**JOEY'S ALLEN PARK**

Steve Gates will perform Wednesday-Saturday, June 19-22, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 15246 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 382-7011.

**JOEY'S LIVONIA**  
Jeff Hobson will perform with Kevin James and Elliott Brauch Wednesday-Saturday, June 19-22, at Joey's Comedy Club, Stoyan's Seafood & Steakhouse, 36071 Plymouth, Livonia. For information or reservations, call 261-0555.

**JOEY'S AT THE ROXY**  
Mark Knope will perform Friday-Saturday, June 21-22, at The Roxy, Hagerty Road, near I-94, Belleville. For information, call 699-1829.

**HOLLY HOTEL**  
Dan Ballard will perform with Keith Ruff and Mary Miller Thursday-Saturday, June 20-22, 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**  
David Harry will perform with

Donnell Friday-Saturday, June 21-22, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. For information, call 628-6500.

**MAINSTREET**  
Jon Ross will appear Friday-Saturday, June 21-22, 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**  
Mark Sull, Skeeter Marry and Downtown Tony Brown will perform

Friday-Saturday, June 21-22, at Bea's Comedy Club, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

**LOONEY BIN**  
Kirk Noland will appear with Steve Bills and Derek Turner Friday-Saturday, June 21-22, at the Wolverine Restaurant and Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Glenngary, Walled Lake. For reservations and show times, call 669-9374.

**DUFFY'S**  
The Bob Pusch 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 Toni Tennille, 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 Bleder, Bobby Collins and Ron Pearson, July 1; Jay Leno, July 24; and George Carlin with America, July 25. For information, call 377-8200.

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**RESULTS:** Computer scored by RCS, will be posted and printed in The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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Saturday, July 20, 1991

- 5:30 p.m.—Junior 1 Mile Run
- 6:00 p.m.—1 Mile Walk/Run
- 6:30 p.m.—8 km Race

Registration and Award Ceremony at Livonia Family YMCA, Stark Road (just west of Farmington Road) at Schoolcraft. Limited parking at the "Y." Additional parking at Frost Junior High.

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### REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Please fill in the form below. Print clearly or type. Make checks payable to **Roadford Road Runners** and mail to:

**ROADRUNNER CLASSIC RUNNING FIT**  
43259 Crescent Blvd. Novi, MI 48375

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