

STREET CRACKS

Roger Behr: Singing for his laughs

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

The man who holds the title "Rock Comic of the '90s" is coming to the Comedy Castle.

Maybe you already know him from the half dozen times he's played the Comedy Castle.

Maybe you've already heard him as the voice of Mac Tonight for McDonald's.

Maybe you've already seen him as Marty, the down-and-out comedian who performs in Judgement City's night club where the two stars of "Defending Your Life" meet one another.

The role had to be quite a challenge, critics say, as Marty contends with the most humiliating of circumstances to continue performing on stage, but Roger Behr has received only rave reviews.

He's a singer, actor, comedian, and one of a kind. Who else impersonates 200 voices? The gamut runs from the Fine Young Cannibals to Bobby McFerrin.

A native of Chicago, Behr has made Los Angeles his home since 1977 and has never suffered a dearth on the job market for his kind of entertainment.

"I think TV has universalized the country so we all laugh at the same things," he said. "We used to hear a lot of talk about how hip New York was and how you had to change your act when you went into the Bible Belt. If that's true, it never applied to me. My type show works for everybody."

BEHR DOES NOT do a lot of traveling these days. He's kept busy doing cartoon voices, commercials and acting. But he enjoys the club work and makes sure he's in front of a live audience at least once every six weeks.

"I try out new materials. I get a feel for what the audiences want, and I renew friendships," he said.

His show for Detroit audiences will be mostly his singing impressions intermixed with jokes and making fun of today's music.

When he does Chicago's tune "Look Away," his observation is "Of course, she's going to look away; that's why she dumped you in the first place."

Or the Frankie Valli song with the line "Walk like a man, talk like a man" (sung in falsetto) he says, "Who's his son, Pee Wee Herman?"

When he impersonates Daryl Hall's line "you never close your eyes when I kiss your lips," Behr asks "Who pecked first?"

Often, people will come up to him after a show and say that he should be a singer.

His reply is "I am a singer." He believes his audience has a hard time pegging him "because I am not a traditional stand-up comedian," he said. "I am a rock'n'roll comedian."

BEHR HAS BEEN singing professionally since the age of 16 when he worked in a Chicago night club.

While a student at the University of Tennessee with a music, speech pathology and theater major, he found a singing group who made a country hit called "Babe." He gave the group some comedy material for their act and his career as a writer began. He has since done the vast majority of writing for his own shows.

Most recently, he has performed on "Showtime at the Apollo" and in a recurring role in the award-winning children's series, "Zoobilee Zoo."

He is developing television projects with his partner Ken Reed. The team has created "Man's Best Friend's" for Orion TV and "Bulfoons" for a major network. He also is in preproduction for his new game show "Lasting Impressions."

"Every performer searches for their niche and I'm in it," he said.

Roger Behr will perform Tuesday-Saturday, July 30-Aug. 3, at Mark Rutley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Tickets are \$6 weeknights and \$10 weekends. For information, call 542-9900.



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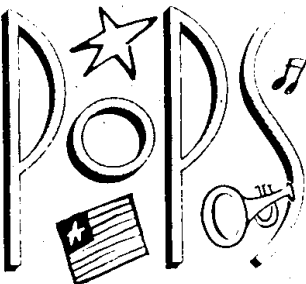
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