

## 'Cesario's new comedy special a gem'

### 'Assembly' delivers whimsical goods

By Steven Alan McGaw

People like to laugh. Maybe more importantly, people need to laugh. It's not unwarranted to speculate that perhaps the state of the world today places us more in need of laughter than ever.

We seek laughter in many different places. Storytelling is increasingly a lost art, but written humor continues. Radio offers few chuckles anymore, save for bad pop songs and worse talk shows, but movies and television bombard us with earnest attempts to make us giggle, chortle, howl and guffaw.

Maybe that's the problem, and why so few films and so little on television seem genuinely funny. Stand-up comedy, in particular, while enjoying greater popularity than ever before, often comes on really strong. That's undoubtedly why Showtime's latest comedy special, "Jeff Cesario: Some Assembly Required," debuting Friday, Aug. 9, is a welcome breath of fresh air.

Cesario is the antithesis of those stand-up performers who seem to lunge and shout at the viewer. It would be a grim burden to label the handsome Cesario a "thinking man's comic" and inaccurate, too. There's nothing especially intellectual about his material (all self-penned), but the combination of his simple, dead-on observations about daily absurdities and his gentle, guy-next-door delivery make for a pleasant excursion.

The look of the show is terrific, partly because it's on film and also because they basically remodeled the Comedy Works Club in Denver for the making of the program. The lighting and camera work enhance the show immensely, adding to the intimate feel. That quality was important to Cesario. "My first special for Showtime, we did at the World Theatre in St. Paul, Minn.," said the comedian in a recent interview. "I just wanted to do jokes in a club." Cesario said he felt the new materi-

al demanded that kind of intimacy, and he's right. The special's opening segment, a bewildered musing about society's increasing need for things to go as fast as possible ("A Ford Festiva ... with Turbo?") is funny stuff, but it's made funnier by the friendly, casual feel of the presentation. Asked if performing his stand-up act for the camera required special preparation, Cesario thought for a moment. "I combed my hair."

Behind the easy, nice-guy style of his delivery, Cesario has some points to make within the jokes. Speaking of gun control, Cesario says, "I live in Los Angeles, where the only obstacle to buying a gun is correct change. I think 'kinda funny eyes' oughtta keep a guy from get-

tin' a gun."

Amid film and television's constant barrage of alleged comedy, where car-chases replace real wit and cheap shots pass for keen insights, it's refreshing to find a performer who's funny mostly because he's smart. Jeff Cesario is that kind of performer, even asking the audience to think a little, too. He knows there's nothing wrong with telling an audience "Some Assembly Required."

Resident Showtime comedian Jeff Cesario makes audiences chuckle with his low-key brand of humor. "Jeff Cesario: Some Assembly Required," premiering on Showtime Friday, is the performer's second comedy special on the network.



Whoopi Goldberg and Robert Urich are ringmasters for *The Fifteenth Annual Circus of the Stars*, an encore presentation Wednesday on CBS.

—TV Listing Inc.