

STREET CRACKS

Lilly: Laughing at suburbia

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

The comedic boom of late has spawned several Johnny-Come-Latelys on the scene while the Tim Lillys of the world chuckle along.

For 10 years, Lilly has been a comedian. He's seen more clubs than Jack Nicklaus, more roadside restaurants than a trucker.

Lilly's resigned himself to the fact that might not change anytime soon. He believes a lack of television exposure is perhaps his biggest stumbling block to big time notoriety.

"I know what these guys (in television) want and I'm not it," said Lilly, who will perform Thursday through Sunday at Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia. "They want the Ken Doll look. It's not so much what you say, it's how you look. I'm 50 pounds overweight, balding and wear glasses. Those are strikes against you in television."

Yet, he can still swing for the big laugh. His humor is suburban, recalling times such as cruising down Woodward Avenue and growing up in Ferndale.

People in the audience can relate to such things as being a stepfather, having a child for the first time and trying to support a family of five on a comedian's wages.

The latter is becoming increasingly difficult. With comedy clubs

sprouting, several would-be comedians are taking a shot.

"THAT'S THE Catch-22," Lilly said. "There are more clubs, but there's 35 to 40 people in Detroit who fancy themselves as comedians. The clubs use that to their advantage. They say, 'OK, Tim Lilly doesn't want to work for \$50 a night, we'll get another comedian act.'"

"Fortunately, there are clubs like the Looney Bin in Walled Lake and Joey's in (Livonia) who will give a local guy a chance to headline."

Lilly has gone beyond the inner circle of Detroit area clubs, performing at the Comedy Store in Hollywood and The Improv in Los Angeles.

He prefers Great Lakes region, though. He feels people here can relate to the urban Midwestern humor. His start in the business certainly has Midwestern roots.

Lilly was a drama student in high school and had aspirations of going to Eastern Michigan University. Personal setbacks, including the death of his mother, stalled those plans.

While working at a "9 to 5 ham-and-egger," Lilly noticed the Delta Lady Club in Ferndale had an open mike night. He tried it. He liked it. Lilly's jokes used to be spiked with "pot-smoking" fare, but he's cleaned things up.

Instead, Lilly's more likely to dis-

cuss some of his encounters of constantly being on the road.

"I got stuck behind a driver's education car and I noticed the kid has his hands in the 10-and-2 position on the wheel," he said. "They're teaching these kids the wrong things."

"Instead, they should be learning how to get on the expressway without spilling their McDonald's Super Size. Or say, 'OK, put it in drive. Now open the Whooper box.'"

LILLY HAS joined the ranks of the reality married. His wife had three children of her own, daughter 12 and 10 and a son 6. They also have a seven-week old daughter.

The responsibilities have increased with fatherhood. And, with it, have come some harsh realities.

"I realized that I'm old; I'm square," he said. "My daughter mentioned her favorite band is Guy. I said, 'Guy who?' I imagine that's what it was like when I was young and my parents were asking, 'Who is this Led Zeppelin fellow?'"

"At that point, I put on my Bermuda shorts and black socks and said, 'Let's head to the beach.'"

Tim Lilly will perform Thursday through Sunday, Aug. 17-20, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, between Wayne and Levan roads, Livonia. For information, call 261-0555.



Tim Lilly's humor is suburban, and the audience can relate to such things as being a stepfather, having a child for the first time and trying to support a family of five on a comedian's wages.

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are some listings of 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.**

● BEA'S KITCHEN
Ruben Guarado will perform with Downtown Tony Brown and Arturo Shelton will perform Friday-Saturday, Aug. 18-19, at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541 Larned, Detroit. Showtimes are 9 p.m. and 11:15 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

● CHAPLIN'S EAST
FBSheila Kay will appear Wednesday-Saturday, Aug. 16-19, at Chaplin's East, 34244 Groesbeck, Fraser. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1902.

● CHAPLIN'S WEST
John Wlog Jr. will appear Tuesday-Saturday, Aug. 15-19, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8866.

● JOEY'S LIVONIA
Tim Lilly will perform Thursday-Saturday, Aug. 17-19, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, Livonia. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For reservations, call 261-0555.

● LOONEY BIN
Mark Sweetman will perform Friday-Saturday, Aug. 18-19, at the Wolverine Lounge and Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Gengary, Walled Lake. Showtimes are 9 p.m. Friday and 8 and 10:15 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 669-9374.

● LOONEY BIN TOO
Donnel will perform Friday-Saturday, Aug. 18-19, at The Looney Bin at The Roxy, I-94 and Haggerty. Showtimes are 9 p.m. Friday and 8 and 10 p.m. Saturday. There's a \$5 cover charge. For information, call 699-1829.

● CHAPLIN'S PLYMOUTH
Franko and Nick Griffio will appear Thursday, Aug. 17, at Chaplin's Plymouth in the Plymouth Hilton, 14707 Northville Road, Plymouth. For information, call 454-4680.

● HOLLY HOTEL
Heywood Banks will perform with Ken Brown and Mary Miller Thursday-Saturday, Aug. 17-19, at Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Show times are 8:30 p.m. with additional 10:30 p.m. shows on Friday and Saturday. For information, call 634-1891.

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