

STREET CRACKS

Clowns

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larger engagements. Just ask Comedy College graduate/electrical designer Nick Paredes.

"OUT OF THE whole class, I'm the only one who's gone on to headline status," said Paredes who isn't shy "about blowing my own horn."

"Round's classes knocked off two years of open mike-style roadwork for me," he said. "You have to be hungry though."

Hungry, in a sense, but not hungry due to the lack of money. Beginning comedians can make from \$250 to \$375 (roughly) for several nights work, depending on the nights.

Once established, a stand-up comic can make \$500 to \$600 for just a couple of nights work... and that's just top shelf local talent. Couple that with income from a daytime job and you're making some pretty good bucks.

Not bad a bad ticket... being funny for money.

For more information about the Roundhouse Comedy College, call Jonathan Round at 543-0002.



Humor with a byte

It used to be that comedians found their material in bathrooms and bars. But this is the 1990s. Now they can conjure up material via a computer.

Computerized comedy, yeah, that's the program.

The "Humor Processor" is a piece of software put out by Responsive Software of Berkeley, Calif. The program, written by Alan Macy, uses a cross-referencing technique that puts hundreds of thousands of word and phrase association possibilities at the comedian's fingertips.

Built around a collection of bits of data — i.e., people, movies, places — the "Humor Processor" program is, what they call in the business, "incomplete set-up lines."

The program appears on the computer screen in the form of two columns. The column on the left offers words and phrases associated with one topic, and is manually advanced by the user. The column on the right of the screen has another list of words and phrases associated with a different topic, and advances on its own every five seconds.

The trick is to pull out a phrase from each side and create a comparative joke — sort of. Here's an example:

LET'S TAKE cars as the topic and cross-reference it with... say... cows.

Under cars, you'll find things like bring 'em back alive, hula dancer in back window, going to traffic school, teaching husband to drive and fuel pump. Under cows, taking the bull by the horns, roll in the hay, grazing in the grass, meanwhile back at the farm and chocolate milk.

Now, using comedian math, you could come up with 15,525 joke possibilities with these 10 phrases. With 50 to 400 phrases in each of the 25 different categories, a good comedian could come up with a joke for every person on the Eastern Seaboard for the next 37.4 years.

IN REALITY, what the program does is aid in the thought process when writing material, not only for comedy, but for speeches, articles and memos.

"We don't have any really famous comedians using the program... yet," said Macy, who said the original idea for the program came from "America's foremost humor consultant," Malcolm Kushner. "We have sold programs to Toyota, Proctor & Gamble and the Disney Corp."

Locally, Jonathan Round of Roundhouse Comedy College has been using the program, which runs for \$49.95, for around three months.

The program, if used correctly, can raise the consciousness and add to the ability of the comedian to be effective," Round said. "It also works well as a lap-top program which would make it a useful road companion in a comedian's developmental stage."

If you think of it, the program is like a simplified thesaurus, lending itself as an electronic aid to those who put the word to paper or over a microphone. It was inevitable.

As long as comedians understand why and how a joke works, I'd say it's a very useful tool," Round said. "I doubt they'll declare another Easter holiday about it, though."

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