

Bill Scheft aims for a home run as a stand-up comic

By Rebecca Haynes
staff writer

He still dabbles in writing but Bill Scheft now makes his living on the comedy stage.

The former sports reporter first experimented with stand-up 10 years ago while working at a newspaper in Albany, N.Y.

"I was starting to get a little bored at the paper and was trying to get another job," Scheft said. "About a month before I left they opened a comedy club there, so I'd work there on my nights off or sneak out of the office if I had to."

I left Albany before I had another job and went to New York," he said. "There was a big rumor that I left the paper to go and do comedy, but I really wasn't thinking about it yet."

After a year in New York trying to do sports-related free-lance writing, Scheft said he got tired of eating hot sandwiches, so he decided to try making a living telling jokes.

"I had an idea of how to perform them and I don't think it was as hard to break in 10 years ago because the only people who were doing it were the people who loved it, not like today where people think it's a fast way to get rich," he said. "There were probably less than 1,000 guys

in the whole country doing comedy. Now there are probably 10,000."

HIS PARENTS took a while to understand his career choice.

"They didn't get it," Scheft said. "My parents sent me to Harvard and there I was telling jokes at some place that was a disco two months ago."

"I think my mother thought I would come to my senses and get a job teaching Latin at Deerfield Academy," he said. "But I never asked them for money, and once things got better for me and started to pick up, they've been very supportive."

Scheft was recently featured on a PBS documentary, "The World of Jewish Humor."

"That meant more to my parents than anything else I'd done," he said. "Their kid was on this Jewish thing and that made them happy."

Being Jewish is a big part of Scheft's act, as is sports and the weather.

"I grew up, Jewish, living in New York," he said. "It's just a very natural thing to talk about. A lot of my act is about being overly sensitive about yourself, your body and your mortality."

Scheft said he likes coming to De-

troit because it's such a sports-oriented city.

"I can talk about sports there and people understand me," he said, admitting that baseball and hockey are his two favorites.

HE ALSO likes going on WRIF's morning show.

"Most comics have getting up that early," he said. "Usually they just do it one day but I had such a good time the last time I was there I asked them if I could come in and do it again."

"I like playing casino towns and I like playing big cities," he said. "I'm very urban and I feel more comfortable when I'm in an urban setting."

Scheft said he's a conventional stand-up comedian, but added that unlike some, he puts on no act.

"I'm just like Oscar Madison," he said. "I'm the same guy on stage as they would talk to off stage."

"I do like to play around with the audience, and I think I'm pretty good at it because I worked as an emcee for such a long time at clubs like Catch a Rising Star in New York," he said. "And I guess my act is geared to an older crowd. I don't like to talk about things that happened when I was 11 or when I was in high school."

Although he may throw in an old-

scenically now and then, Scheft said his act is not dirty. And even though he used to think there were certain subjects that should be taboo for comics, he's since heard most of them in routines and said they worked quite well.

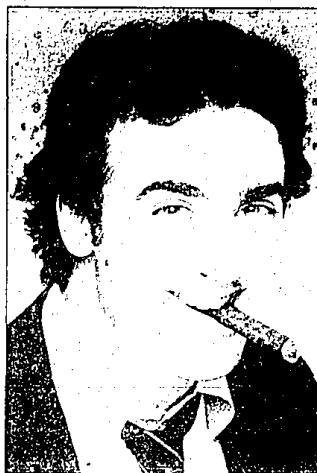
A NEWLYWED, Scheft, 33, married fellow comic Adrian Tolsch seven months ago.

"If nothing else, I'm glad I went into show business because if I hadn't I would have never met Adrian," he said. "Actually, it's been a great comfort or support being in the same business. When one walks in at two a.m. the other knows where you've been."

Scheft has been on numerous television shows, including Saturday Night Live.

"I think I've done every TV show except the ones that count," he said, laughing. "I really haven't made my big splash yet. Maybe it'll happen tomorrow."

Scheft can be seen locally at the Comedy Castle in Royal Oak Feb. 5-9. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$6 week nights and \$10 Friday and Saturday. Call 542-9009 for reservations.



Bill Scheft was a sports reporter at an Albany, N.Y., newspaper, when he first experimented with stand-up comedy 10 years ago.

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are listings of some comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is opening a new club, send the information to Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric, News papers, 36251 Woodward, Livonia 48150.

CHAPLIN'S EAST

Larry Carrett will appear along with Bill Hutson and Elliott Branch Tuesday-Saturday, Feb. 5-9, at Chaplin's East, 31211 Groesbeck, Fraser. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 9:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1202.

CHAPLIN'S PLYMOUTH

Randy O'Brien will appear along with Greg Hosfeld Wednesday-Sat-

urday, Feb. 6-9, at Chaplin's Plymouth, 14707 Northville. Show times are 8:30 Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 454-4680.

CHAPLIN'S WEST

Ron Criel will appear with George McClure and Murio Wednesday through Saturday, Feb. 6-9, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph, one block south of Six Mile Road. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 533-8866.

MAINSTREET

Will Miller will perform Friday-Saturday, Feb. 6-9, 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 996-9050.

COMEDY CASTLE

Bill Scheft will perform with Scott Wyler Tuesday-Saturday, Feb. 5-9, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show times are 8:30 Monday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9009.

BEA'S COMEDY CLUB

Tim Lilly and Downtown Tony Brown will perform Friday and Saturday, Feb. 8-9, at Bea's Comedy Club, 541 E. Larned, Detroit. Show

times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

LAUGHTER HOURS

Mary Miller will perform Wednesday, Feb. 6, at Hurley's in Northfield. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 875-2100.

JOEY'S LIVONIA

SHO will perform along with Jill Washburn and Ray Effer Wednesday-Saturday, Feb. 6-9, at Joey's Comedy Club, Plymouth Road between Wayne and Levan roads, Livonia. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 261-0555.

JOEY'S ALLEN PARK

Joe Dunkell will perform Wednesday-Saturday, Feb. 6-9, at Joey's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 12416 Southfield Road, Allen Park. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 342-7041.

JOEY'S AT THE ROXY

Leo Dufour will perform with guests Bill Bower and Lisa Garib Wednesday through Saturday, Feb. 6-9, at The Roxy, Hogarty Road near I-94, Belleville. For information, call 669-1629.

MISS KITT'S

Ken Sawyer will perform Thurs-

day, Feb. 7, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 595 N. Lapeer Hwy., Oxford. For information, call 628-6506.

LOONEY BIN

Jeff Brannon will perform with guests Steve Hillmiller and Rich Huggenbottom Friday and Saturday, Feb. 8-9, at the Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Gengary, Walled Lake. For information, call 669-9374.

DUFFY'S

Bob Pasch Comedy Show will perform at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays at Duffy's, 8635 Coopers Lake Road, Union Lake. Admission \$5. For information, call 363-4747.

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