

The humor:  
Martin Lawrence's CD  
isn't for the  
faint of heart.



## Comedy CDs lack laughs

BY BOB SADLER  
SPECIAL WRITER

The comedy album has become a sort of lost art, in this age of 24-hour comedy cable TV channels and an abundance of clubs providing the live stuff to willing audiences. Gone are the days of the scratchy (from overplaying) Bill Cosby, Robert Klein and Bob Newhart long-play vinyl records. Despite the fact that compact discs and cassettes have replaced vinyl (and provided a higher quality, longer lasting format for listening to comedy), you don't find many stand-up performers releasing their material for the masses to just take a listen.

That's why it's intriguing to see three different comedies releasing albums during this gift buying time of year. Would you want something from Adam Sandler, Martin Lawrence or Andrew Dice Clay in your stocking this year? Read on.

they're all gonna laugh at you! — Adam Sandler (Warner Bros.)

Given the wacky talents of this young performer, seen weekly on "Saturday Night Live," my expectations were highest for this album. In Sandler's debut album, the man responsible for hilarious characters like Cajun Man and Opera Man should have the chance to spread his wings beyond the bounds of network television and entertain listeners with a whole new set of characters and soon-to-be classic bits.

At least, one would think so.

Despite guest spots throughout from SNL buddies Rob Schneider, David Spade and Tim Meadows and a cameo from new "Late Night" host Conan O'Brien, "they're all gonna laugh at you!" falls short on both the laughter and creativity.

See COMEDY, 6C

## At The Mike

Here's your guide to the best of what's going on — laughter wise — on New Year's Eve:

■ Boys will be boys, men will be pigs... The most wanted ticket in town to usher in 1994 is Tim Allen, who's doing two sold-out shows at the Fox Theater at 6:30 and 9:30 p.m. Lowell Sanders will also appear with Detroit's own Master of Masculinity, who (according to the Hollywood buzz) is working on a motion picture project in addition to his gig on television's number one show.

■ "Toasting" in the New Year... At Ann Arbor's MainStreet Comedy Showcase, local favorite Heywood Banks will appear for two shows. His live act is hilarious — too bad his locally-produced television show (seen on WJBK-TV2) is so unfunny. Call 996-9080 for reservations.

■ Two heads are better than one... Especially when talking about the dynamic rock'n'roll comedy duo of Malone & Nootchee, who will jam at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle for two shows. Call 542-9900 for reservations.

■ Get the whole story... Chaplin's West presents "Michigan's Premiere Storyteller," Norm Stulz for two fun-filled shows. Call 531-8866 for reservations.

And if Bowl Games are not your thing on New Year's Day:

■ One of the baddest of them all... The Fox Theatre continues its comedy shows on Jan. 1 when Sinbad headlines a show at 8 p.m. (about the same time Florida State and Nebraska kick off at the Orange Bowl. Tickets are available at TicketMasters, the Fox box office, or charge at 644-6666. —Bob Sadler

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Street Scene next week:

■ Christina Fuoco looks at what will be happening New Year's Eve.  
■ John Monaghan's look at the latest in alternative movies.

## Skanking to a Midwestern beat

■ In the shadow of ska scene founders from the East and West coasts, Midwestern bands are often overlooked. With the release of "American Ska-Thic," its organizers and contributors hope that will change.

BY KYLE GREEN  
SPECIAL WRITER



If the Detroit-based ska band The Exceptions had their way, the ska spotlight would shine upon the Midwest.

Many of the first U.S. ska bands like Fishbone and Bim Skala Bim came out of the East or West coasts. By natural selection, therefore, the Midwestern scene has been largely ignored.

"It's just the way things are," The Exceptions guitarist Ryan Reeves said matter-of-factly. "The first (ska) bands came from Boston (such as) Bim Skala Bim. The Toasters are from New York, and these guys started it in 1986 — Fishbone from California. With bands like these paving the way, many people think it's only the East and West coasts."

### STREET BEATS

Things may change now that Jump Up Records in Chicago has released "American Ska-Thic: A Portrait of Midwest Ska Past and Present" with distribution help from Moon and Cargo records. The Exceptions, who contributed the single "I Hate Mornings," will host and headline a record release party for the compilation on Monday, Dec. 27, at St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit. The party will also include performances from Livonia-based The Skolars ("Rude Girl") and Grand Rapids' Mustard Plug ("Grow Up").

The CD contains singles from 18 other Midwest bands including several from the Detroit area such as the Parka Kings ("Jacked") and the soulful Jack Kevorkian & The Suicide Machines ("Hey"). Detroit Music Award winners and long-time Detroit ska favorites Gangster Fun contributed their cover of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long" with help from the horn section of Steady Earnest, an offshoot of Bim Skala Bim.

The cover of the CD, by veteran ska cartoonist and Marvel Comic contributor Evan Dorkin, is a parody of the painting "American Gothic," hence the name.



BOB BROWN GRAPHS

The bands on the CD and scheduled to perform at the show share an element often missing in a lot of current music, according to compilation organizer Chuck Wren.

"It is real live music," said Wren who hosts a ska radio show on WNRN at Northwestern University in Chicago. "We went through a trend that went through a very pressed-out musical (style), but ska is live. There are so many bands in the Midwest that keep getting overlooked and I'm sick of it."

According to Gangster Fun's drummer Brian Bowie, compared to its predecessors, Midwestern ska is in its infant stages. It will be recognized more as it matures.

"The Midwestern ska scene is very young when you compare it with New York and San Francisco Bay area. A lot of ska bands are young and really don't have it together," he said. "I don't think Mid-

western ska is that good due to the freshness of it."

Ska in general, however, is an often overlooked musical style making it unfamiliar to many people. Ska is Jamaica's first independent musical export, according to Wren. Upon its creation in the 1960s, it absorbed elements of West Indies calypso and American jazz. During the 1980s, English bands such as Madness and The Stranglers added more energy to the beat and popularized the style.

Today's ska sounds incorporate a variety of influences from Fishbone's funk beats to the rock sound of the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Wren said.

What separates ska from reggae is "It's faster and more energetic. Reggae is more of a ska on hallucinogens," explained The Exceptions' trombonist Jim Hofer.

Celebrating release: The Exceptions — Todd Bolton (from left), Chuck Bartels, Johnny Williams, Gene Corwin, Ryan Reeves, Tony Barragan, and Jim Hofer — headline the record release party for "American Ska-Thic: A Portrait of Midwest Ska Past to Present."

The typical ska band looks like a musical army which uses as its weapons strong percussion, two or more vocalists, a horn section, and guitars and basses which are plucked more than played.

"That is the extra punch," said The Skolars' Mark Penza. "Horns are so unique because it is so against the norm (of modern music)."

The energy generated by the musicians bombards its listeners who hop, jump and run in place to the beat — commonly referred to as "skanking." Most of those who skank are called Rude Boys or Rude Girls ("Rudies") and are generally clad in baggy jeans or black suits, skinny ties, pork-rimmed hats and Doc Marten shoes or loafers.

See SKANKING, 6C

## When Wally sings, people listen

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO  
STAFF WRITER

Commanding the attention of noisy patrons in a college bar isn't an easy task — especially by a fresh-faced man strapped with an acoustic guitar.

But when Wally Pleasant starts singing his "humorous songs with a message" it's almost like E.F. Hutton is talking — everybody listens.

He piques a chuckle out of fraternity guys and sorority girls when he sings "I Was a Teenage Republican."

Most women aren't offended when he tells one of his tales of woe "She's Addicted to Clothes."

The soft-spoken Pleasant even carries over his shy sense of humor into his off-stage life. When the waiters-son at an area restaurant walk through the restaurant singing "Happy

Birthdays," he looks up and says shyly, "I told them it was your birthday."

Not really, but that's the playful spirit of Wally Pleasant.

Sometimes people take his character too seriously. For example, a woman who was interviewing Pleasant once asked him to answer questions in a "Spinal Tap" fashion. She wanted him to act clueless and push records that didn't even exist, he said rolling his eyes and smiling.

Pleasant, a graduate of Birmingham Groves High School and Michigan State University, isn't all about humor, however. Some of his "radio friendly" songs — as he calls them — like "I Hate Cops" may have his trademark schtick, but the words are biting, so much so that it's almost

funny.

"It's good to have a certain amount (of humor); I use humor to get people's attention," said Pleasant who now lives in St. Johns, north of Lansing.

Pleasant, who's often compared to Jonathan Richman, said he likes people to "go away with a smile" although many of his songs have messages.

"I don't try to give speeches, or divulge my deepest psychological feelings," Pleasant said.

"I try to be entertaining and I want to do records and live shows that people are entertained by. If that's a novelty, so be it."

See WALLY, 6C



Wally Pleasant: Performs Dec. 21 during Lili's Christmas Party at Lili's in Hamtramck.

## IN CONCERT

Monday, Dec. 20

THE JARVIS SHAMROCK QUARTET  
Aldo's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (jazz)  
832-2355

A TRIBE CALLED QUEST  
With De La Soul at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw,  
Pontiac. (hip-hop)  
(810) 334-1999

Tuesday, Dec. 21

CHISEL BRO'S  
Aldo's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (rhythm & blues)  
832-2355

BROTHERS GRIM  
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.  
(alternative rock)  
996-8555

LILI'S CHRISTMAS PARTY  
With Chris Moore of Crossed Wire, Wally Pleasant, Alex Lumsley, Scott Fab, Sal D'Angelo, or Bermuda Mebow, Priscilla Ederia (formerly of CyndiLahead), and Adam Duckman at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (acoustic)  
875-6555

Wednesday, Dec. 22

TENSION SPLASH  
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.  
(alternative rock)  
996-8555

ROBERT NOLL  
Metro MusicCo., 2919 Biddle, Wyandotte.  
(blues)  
282-8900

CANDLELIGHT JAM  
The Ollies, Crossed Wire, SisterSeed, Brecht, Walt on Water, Big Block, Scott Fab, Moosha, The Mutes and Brotherhood Recipe play acoustic sets of Christmas and all-season music at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (acoustic rock)  
(810) 334-1999

FERNDALE TONIGHT  
With host John D. Lamb at the Magic Day, Woodwind at Nine Mile, Farmdale.  
(810) 544-3030

Thursday, Dec. 23

FRANK ALLISON  
Gotham City Cafe, 22848 Woodward, north  
of Nine Mile, Farmdale. (acoustic)  
(810) 338-7430

CHISEL BRO'S  
Aldo's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (rhythm & blues)  
832-2355

DREAMSCAPE  
With Threshold at Grill's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (alternative rock)  
(810) 334-9292

JIM TATE  
With Al Hill at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)  
996-8555

FRANK ALLISON AND THE ODD BOX  
Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (alternative rock)  
(810) 545-6555

ANGHELL  
With Damsel and Jerry's Kids at Entourage, 140 Maple (between First and Second), Wyandotte.  
283-5222

Saturday, Dec. 25

FRANK ALLISON  
"Escape from Christmas" party at Shadowbox Cafe, 2917 Trowbridge, Hamtramck. (acoustic)  
873-2233

Sunday, Dec. 26

MAJESTY CRUSH  
Headlines Three Floors of Love Club at St. Andrew's Hall/The Shelter, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. (ethereal alternative rock)  
961-MELT

REESTROOM POETS  
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.  
(alternative rock)  
996-8555

WINTER JAZZ JAM SESSION  
Metropolitan Lounge, 50 Manchester, Highland Park.  
(jazz)  
868-7829 or 345-5532