

# Comics provide yuks

**By Barbara Huck**

In the early morning light of mid-afternoon, the boys from Yuk-Yuk's are still on the day's first cup of coffee.

In the Hotel Fort Garry coffee shop, still recovering from a flight from Toronto and an all-night strategy session, they look slightly dishevelled and disarmingly young . . . hardly the "zany, crazy collection of comic talent" they are billed to be, and even less the self-professed harbingers of Canada's awakening social conscience.

But by midnight, following two of their three nightly sessions (through Saturday) at the Fort Garry Hotel's trendy night spot, Yuk-Yuk's touring show has scored on both those points.

It is funny. And relevant.

The brainchild of Jewish-Canadian whiz kid Mark Breslin, Yuk-Yuk's six-year-old Toronto club is almost establishment. The tours, in their fourth year, he sees as simply an extension.

"This is an outreach program," he says. "We grow the comics in Toronto and export them."

Beyond the whiplash answers he has for just about everything, Breslin

is serious about the business of being funny. In addition to Yuk-Yuk's, Breslin operates a booking agency, Funny Business, manages 35 of Canada's comics and tours with the best of them, all the while espousing his theories of man's social condition.

He's convinced, that although the climate for comedy in Canada isn't what it is south of the border — "the U.S. is great for war and show business" — it can be cultivated.

"SCTV proved that, and you're going to see more of it."

Like Breslin, his comedians are staunchly Canadian. Perhaps the best-known, Larry Horowitz, is just back from three months in San Francisco.

## Clean country

"I'll go south for the work," he says. "Face it, any of us will go anywhere for the money . . . but I'm always glad to come home. This country is clean and friendly. And the climate keeps you humble."

Evan Carter, son of a Toronto judge, opted for comedy when he wasn't accepted in law school. He'd like to make it here, but he's black and he wonders whether there's room for a Canadian Bill Cosby. "I'd like to make it here, but it's hard. I just got

back from New York. There's a difference."

"You need to be WASP, to satisfy the ethnic factor," adds Breslin wryly.

Glen Foster is the troupe's concession in that area. At 22, Foster's ambition to be a millionaire by the age of 18 has been put on hold "due to a lack of funds". But he figures there have to be some concessions made to become a nationally recognized stand-up comic.

The fifth member of the travelling show is Montreal-born Ron Vaudry.

Though Vaudry also says his main ambition is "to be rich", he agrees with the rest of the group that comedy in Canada probably isn't the most direct route to that end.

"Hey, it's enough that we can actually make a living doing what we do," says Horowitz. "It's really amazing when you think about it. I bought this sweater with two fat jokes."

When he's not behind the scenes in his Toronto club, or on the phones at his agency, Breslin writes book reviews for the *Globe and Mail*. Carter has done stints as the Pink Panther in shopping malls, while Foster writes radio commercials.

Each has his own style and writes his own material. Vaudry says he is "slightly rock oriented", Horowitz sees himself as a social toothache, "trying to get people to see the misrepresentations of life, to help them avoid being cattle", while Foster is the troupe's morality squad. "I'm the cleanest of the bunch," he says.

## Eye-opener

This western tour, which takes them to Edmonton, Calgary, the B.C. interior and Vancouver before returning to play both universities in Winnipeg Nov. 25 to 27, is an eye-opener.

"Basically, we're filthy, grotesque . . . but relevant," Breslin says, adding he figures the response to that is a little tentative in Western Canada.

"Back in Yuk-Yuk's there's a spirit of absolutely no censorship, but out here, there's a prairie fundamentalism. Nobody's going to run us out of town, but . . ."

Horowitz has other ideas.

"I think the difference is the more obvious basic feminism here. Every time I come back, I expect this province to be renamed . . . Personitoba."

Yuk, yuk, yuk.