

Comics yuk it up on Mason Street

S.F. club gives fledgling stand-ups a leg up

BY ADRIAN D. VARNEDOE

WHEN it comes to being a stand-up comic you either kill the crowd or bomb.

John Hunt, 31, owns the San Francisco Comedy Club and he hopes his little joint at 50 Mason St., between Eddy and Turk, will kill 'em. 50 Mason's previous incarnation as Moler Barber College could be good for a few laughs.

Hunt, a San Francisco native, told The Extra he opened the club because he loves stand-up comedy and believes San Francisco needs another club. For the record, San Francisco has two comedy clubs, the Punchline at 444 Battery St. and Cobb's Comedy Club at 915 Columbus Ave.

"(50 Mason is) not Cobb's or Punchline," Hunt said. "Yet it's not your normal open-mike either."

Hunt wanted his club to be different. His

way is by using comics in training (San Francisco Comedy College students) and others who haven't made a name in comedy yet (Leah Eva, Sherry Sirof, for two) and give them a place to hone their skills with a real crowd for 20 minutes.

Mike Spiegelman (Wednesday), Eric Peterson (Friday) and Susan Alexander (Saturday) are the only comics you are likely to see at the San Francisco Comedy Club on a regular basis because they are the MCs on those nights.

"We give comics a good 20-minute set; when it's hard to get 20 minutes anywhere in San Francisco," Hunt explained.

San Francisco has at least a dozen open-mike clubs for comedy, but the comics The Extra talked to said they get five minutes, seven if they're lucky.

Hunt likes his club's Tenderloin location. It's close to big hotels, bars and the Powell Street BART Station, where party hunters can easily stop by for Friday and Saturday night shows and catch a chuckle before getting serious for the night.

"The good thing about this place is that it's just \$7 and we have no drink minimum," Hunt noted. He hopes to serve alcohol one day, but right now it's 7-up, Coke, and bottled water for \$2.

The club is open on Wednesday (open mike), Friday and Saturday night (showcase at 8 p.m.). Hunt says he'll try poetry, spoken word nights, but he's waiting to see how the comedy works out.

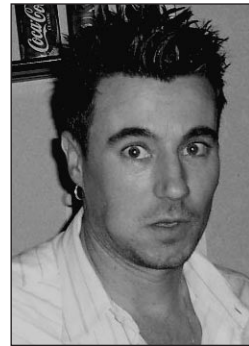


PHOTOS BY ADRIAN D. VARNEDOE

A comic works on his act on a Wednesday night at the San Francisco Comedy Club.

Shaun Briggs of San Francisco came to the club on a recent Friday night on a double date. He said he'd heard about the club from friends who saw it on Craigslist. He was there for the first time.

"It was fun," Briggs said after the show. "It was better than going to a bar." He said he'd be back because it's not expensive and he liked seeing local comedians try their best. ■



Owner John Hunt wants stand-up comics to hone their skills and break in new bits at his Comedy Club.



Susan Alexander is the MC every Saturday.

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