

Entertainment

Big bad blues band

by Randal Smathers

If you were at the Blues Bash in the Convention Centre this summer, you know who Little Ed and the Blues Imperials are. If you missed them, you have a second chance to see them this week at the Yardbird Suite. Little Ed is little, not much off of five feet even. Onstage his energy and that of his band make him seem about six foot seven. Offstage is always smiling and laughing, obviously a man enjoying himself.

Little Ed and the band apprenticed in Chicago. He learned his music from his uncle, J.B. Huttie. Asked to name his influences, he said, "I used to play on the west side with guys like Big Mojo, Boss Blackie, oldtimers comin' up, never did get to where they wanted." When asked about the roots of his music, he said, "I go back as far as John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, I go that far back. To me that's blues music at its best." He added that *Slide Slinger*, by his uncle, is the one album that every blues fan should own, besides Little Ed's.

That album, his first, is called *Roughhouse*. It is on Alligator Records and it is the reason behind the current tour. Little Ed prefers studio work to live. "Studio work is great! I love it! Sound systems there are so busy, they just let you bust loose." After a moment, he added, "Live is more better if the sound system is good, with the people out there."

"My motto is 'See, I like to see people jump so we can go wild.' This place was jumping pretty good last night," he said.

He would like to be working more than he is right now. "The average blues person wants to travel, wants to be out. If I could, I would like to do 1000 shows a year. We are doing 40-50-60, just starting out, but we want to do more."



Little Ed and the Blues Imperials are ready to shake, rattle, and roll at the Yardbird Suite.

He compared the reception to blues bands in Chicago and the reaction in a city like Edmonton. "Blues bands have to work a little harder in Chicago," he said.

Discussing the show he did this summer, Little Ed said, "We wanted to come back. We had a good time, just not long enough. I was kind of shaky too. With a big guy like Albert King (the headliner at the Blues Bash), you don't want to make any mistakes. I want to show him that I'm coming, I'm on my way." He also said, "I like Albert King's style of music."

Little Ed said the blues scene in Chicago is "about average." He went on, "The north side is big on blues, but the south and west are dead." In contrast, he defined the overall

blues scene, I would say great. From the places I've been. It just makes me feel good."

The band's name has an interesting history. It has nothing to do with Little Anthony and the Imperials. "I got that when I was just starting out. It was from the Imperial margarine commercial. I saw the commercial and named it that. I didn't know nothin' about another band with the same name. I was looking for something different and I couldn't call them the Hotcakes," he said with a chuckle. For those not in the know, Little Ed has been known to wear an enormous fez onstage, not unlike the crown that appears in the ads.

The band consists of Little Ed, vocals and lead guitar; his brother James Young on

bass; Lewis Henderson on drums; and Dave Will as the rhythm section. Will was unable to make this trip with the band because of family matters in Chicago, so local stalwart Lionel Rault will be standing in.

The band will be at the Yardbird Suite until Saturday. For those not familiar with the system there, they charge an annual membership fee. For students this is \$15, but reduced rates of \$10 are in effect now for memberships lasting until January. Cover charges are normally \$6 for members and \$9 for guests.

Any short description of the band's music, Little Ed? "Jumping boogie. We like to boogie so the people can boogie. The more you boogie, the better you feel."

Steve Landesberg still yukking it up

by Glenn St-Germain and Roger Jorgenson

Steve Landesberg started out by making his friends laugh. As the dryly humorous Sgt. Dietrich on *Barney Miller* and as a successful stand-up comedian, he has brought laughter to millions.

Yet, comedy wasn't what Landesberg initially wanted to do.

"I set out to be an actor," he said. "The comedy kind of came after the fact."

Landesberg said he always liked doing comedy, and started by doing comedy for his friends in New York City.

"It was something that I did with my friends, and I just started doing it in Greenwich Village, and then got up to a club called *The Improvisation* in New York."

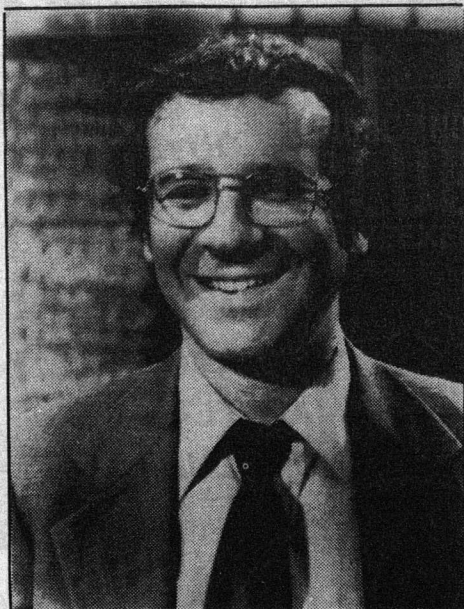
The "Improv", as it is sometimes known, is a club where many young comedians perform. Many notable names, such as David Brenner, Richard Pryor, and Rodney Dangerfield have performed there early in their careers. Brenner was a contemporary of Landesberg.

"It was a good place to work, grinding it out until I was ready to audition for the *Tonight Show*."

That was in December of 1971, before which he worked for more than a year with an improvisational comedy group, the New York Stickball Team.

It was not long after appearing on Carson that Landesberg landed a television role. His first was in the summer of 1972 on the Bobby Darrin Summer Show, in which he played "a crazy German Psychiatrist".

His first series was *Friends and Lovers*, (the Paul Sand Show), in 1974. Landesberg played



Steve Landesberg in fine smiling form.

a Viennese violinist in the short-lived series. It was through that show that he wound up on *Barney Miller*.

"Danny Arnold, who created *Barney Miller*, saw me on the show and said 'this guy's funny, too bad he's German.'" He found out I wasn't, and hired me as a crook."

Landesberg's first *Barney Miller* appearance was a guest spot as a crook. He later

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I set out to be an actor. The comedy kind of came after the fact.

Danny Arnold, who created Barney Miller, saw me on the show and said 'this guy's funny, too bad he's German.'

returned part-time as Detective Sergeant Arthur Dietrich, and finally spent the last five years of the series as a cast regular.

Since *Barney*, Landesberg has been keeping busy. He has had two television specials, appeared in a series of commercials for Pacific Northwest Bell, and has criss-crossed the continent doing stand-up comedy. He is about to film his first movie.

In the four years since *Barney Miller* ended production, Landesberg has had other television and film offers, but he turned them down.

"I haven't had a good script," he said.

Landesberg's comedy is frequently improvisational, and ideas come from almost anywhere.

"I don't plan," he said. "It's whatever hits me. I might be watching the news and see something. I might be talking to a friend and say something. There is no one area I go into."

"I do a lot of characters, but I don't plan anything. I take a little tape recorder on stage with me in case I come up with something. Sometimes the audience turns you on, you come up with something."

Looking to the future, Steve Landesberg will begin filming his first motion picture next month in Atlanta. Entitled *Leader of the Band*, Landesberg will play a high-school bandleader. It should be released next spring.

In the meantime, Landesberg does comedy, waiting for more acting possibilities. "There's something being written for me. I don't know if I'll like it. I've turned down TV series the last couple of years. If something came along that was as good as *Barney Miller* I'd certainly do it."

Landesberg feels he can afford to be selective.

"Why not?" he said. "I'm working. Why should I do something I don't like? That doesn't make any sense to me at all."

Steve Landesberg will be appearing Monday night in the Jubilee Auditorium, at 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 25, 1986