

ARTS



STRA

York alumni Yuk Yuks his way to success

by Kim Yu

Lou Eisen's appearance at Stong College on Jan. 8 belied his stature. Dressed casually in jeans and a sweatshirt, with a "Chia pet" shoulder-length mane of dark brown hair, he could have passed for one of the throng of students, eagerly awaiting the Yuk Yuk's show.

Eisen, a former York student returned to his alma mater to perform his insightful brand of humor. Also on the bill that evening were Ronnie Edwards (emcee), Billy Cowan (opener), and Ron Vaudry (headliner).

Eisen believes his years at York served him well. "I liked it. It showed me a lot of different ideas and different cultures which was good. It's got a great creative arts program," he said.

However his start in stand-up comedy did not exactly originate at the university. It was more of a fluke.

"When I was here 3rd year, I was sitting — in I think it was the Psychology of Politics class — when I realized I don't think I like this. I thought I ought to be doing what I

want to do. Then I went from here to Second City to Yuk's."

Eisen's comedy routine draws on current issues affecting Canadians. His act at Stong College touched upon the situation in the Gulf, the GST ("A bum walks up to a guy — 'Hey, buddy, can you spare a buck, seven?' ") and differences between men and women. His bit about how men and women argue drew knowing laughter from the mixed crowd.

Eisen also tries to raise people's awareness of problems with the environment, racism and censorship.

"Many people have closed minds — it's unfortunate. That's where censorship comes in, when people say 'We don't like what you're saying' It's always encroaching upon us. Unless you fight it, it'll be too late."

He sees his role as that of social commentator. "I think my job is to make people see what's going on and reflect to remind them from time to time. It's important to make them laugh... but also to make them think," Eisen said.

Emcee Ronnie Edwards' energetic

style kept the show moving as each performer received an enthusiastic response from the near full house. Billy Cowan scored well with his impression of employees at Yonge

Street's *Sam the Record Man* winning fans with his laid-back delivery. The evening ended with headliner Ron Vaudry, who has been featured across Canada and the U.S. and has

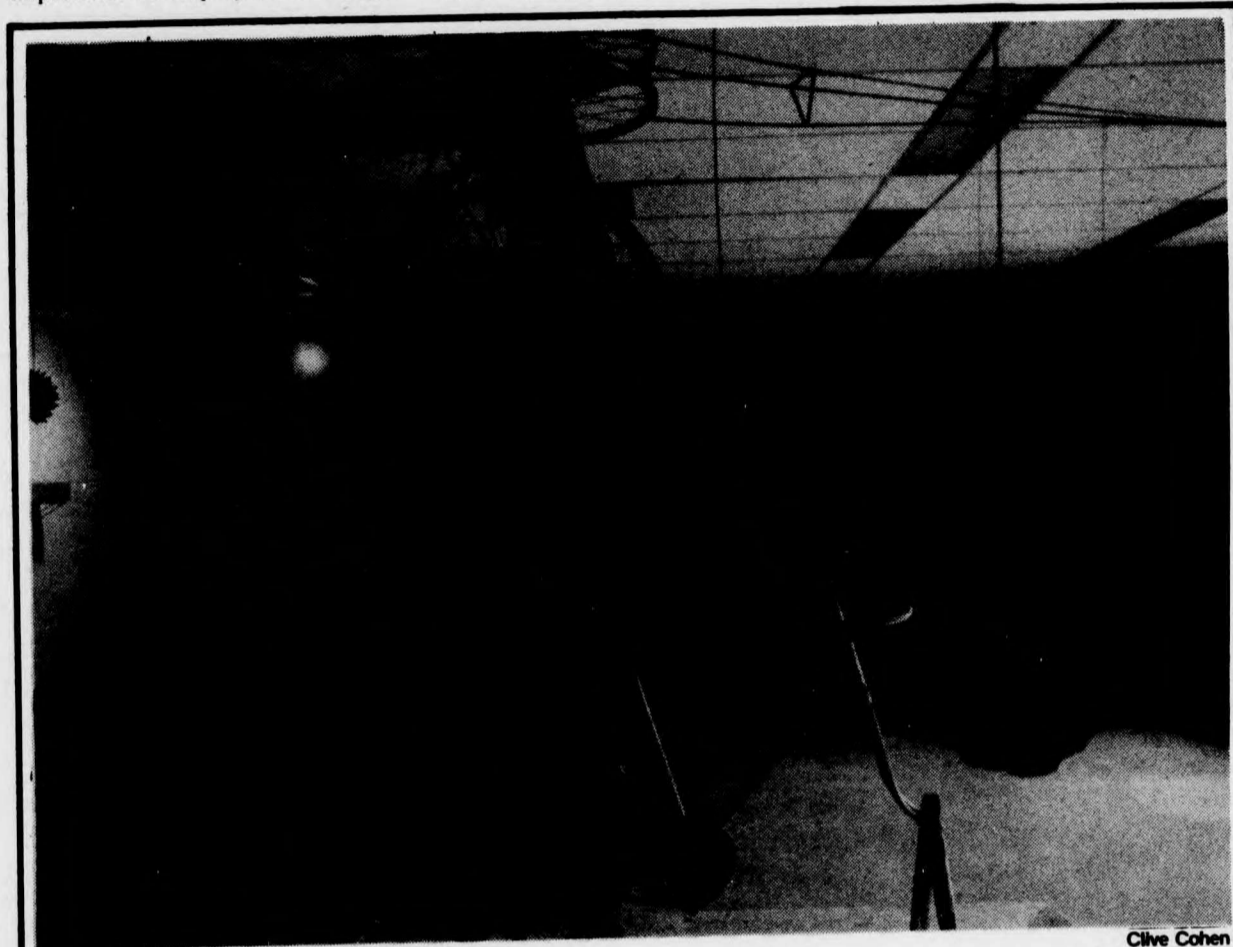
been on *The Late Show*, where his direct, hard-hitting style of humor drew some of the biggest laughs and surprised, if not shocked, some members of the audience.

UPDATE ON OTHER ALUMNAE

It seems York grads have filtered into various aspects of the entertainment industry. Mark Breslin continues to expand his comedy empire with expectations for a new club to open in Markham this year as well as one in the U.S. (Florida) and one in London, England.

Michael Rechtshaffen, under the

stage name of Mike Elliot, advanced from his starting as one of the country's foremost emcees. He recently headlined in Winnipeg. In addition, he can be seen in his other profession as a broadcast journalist on CTV's nationally-aired *Dini Petty Show*, where he has interviewed the likes of Bruce Willis, Tom Hanks and Melanie Griffith.



Clive Cohen

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