



STAND-UP THAT STANDS OUT

Comedian George Carlin is still up to his old tricks

By SHEILA CARMODY
Staff writer

IN HIS upcoming Saturday night performances at the Strand-Capitol Performing Arts Center, George Carlin will touch on the usual Carlinesque subjects: "rape, cancer, feminism, male domination, euphemisms, the American inability to handle reality and face the truth."

"And then there's a lot of funny stuff, too," Carlin said matter-of-factly in a recent telephone interview. "No, I mean it's all funny," he added, making sure not to confuse the issue, or the interviewer. "Obviously, I hope to make it funny," he said.

Few people are confused when Carlin takes to the stage. His audience usually knows right where he stands on a plethora of issues. Since day one, Carlin's humor has been consistently anti-establishment and anti-government. And even though his topics are often controversial, he says, his audiences continue to ingest that humor in good cheer.

"I think because I don't really threaten them," he said. "The ideas are couched in humor and in a kind of adolescent anger. I think they find that non-threatening."

George Carlin will be performing in York Saturday at the Strand-Capitol Performing Arts Center. Tickets are still available for shows at 6:30 and 9:30 p.m.

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After 30 years in the business one might expect Carlin to be slowing down. But nothing could be further from the truth.

"I keep collecting my ideas and thoughts like most writers. What happens is, as an individual, I get older and I grow. I assume I grow in positive ways. I collect more data looking around the world at things. And, so you sort of just keep moving on, just keep growing into the new experience for yourself and my material comes with me."

Although it hasn't happened yet, Carlin is eager to do a television series. He had one in development when the CBS television network changed management. The new management threw out all the projects in development, he said. Carlin is talking to the Fox network now.

"That could turn into something. They're an interesting group because they're on the outside looking in. The way I have always felt," he said.

Carlin began developing his comedy routines on radio in the late '50s and early '60s. He quit radio to take his show on the road with a partner, Jack Burns. They broke up in 1962, and Carlin branched out into folk clubs and coffee houses where the audiences were more progressive. The success of his FM & AM album, as well as his by-now-infamous "seven words you can't say on television," broadened his appeal.

Outrage seems to be the basis for most of his humor. Breaking down his history in a press biography, he wrote: "Religion: Born Catholic; abandoned it as soon as possible."

As one who was born into an Irish Catholic family, he said, "The Catholic experience taught me that even people who claim to have God in their corner, exclusively, can be cruel and unforgiving, and mean, and anti-life, and anti-human. So, I was grateful to the Catholics for pointing out early in life to me the hypocrisy of most religion."

Carlin believes most comedians make audiences think. It's the nature of the medium.

"Comedy has a way of disarming people," he said. "When a person is laughing, he or she is never more himself. It is the most natural state of being, one of them anyway. And your consciousness in not on guard. When a person is laughing, it's very easy for good and new ideas to slip in. And I think all comedians benefit from that, and people, too."

Carlin chooses his words and phrases very carefully, both in life and on stage. In fact, he demands that his interviews be taped so that he won't be paraphrased.

"I know this can sound like a broad insult. It's not meant that way. But, I'm not that impressed with the kind of thinking that goes into the mainstream press. And, so I didn't want to be characterized on their terms. I wanted it to be in my terms."

Part of the reason why Carlin would like to do a television series is because, he said, "I'd like to have a little more balance in my life." At the same time, "it's not something I'm attached to. It would be a nice way of increasing my acting exposure. That's my main idea for doing it."

He has no intention of abandoning stand-up comedy if series work does come his way. "I shall always do this, because this is how I define myself, and this is basically what I am. The other things come and go. This is it for me."

Carlin's shows are at 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Saturday at the Strand-Capitol Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$16.50 and are available by calling the Strand box office at 846-1111.