



# Laughter Makes A Comeback At On Broadway

BY DAN NAUMOVICH



**Members of the Offensive Line comedy troop perform at On Broadway regularly.**

In the early 1990s, On Broadway was the local hotbed of a comedy boom that was taking place all across the country. Spending an evening at a comedy club was the 'in' thing to do and one of the most popular forms of entertainment. Though the boom has passed, live comedy is making a comeback around the country, and On Broadway is bringing it here to Springfield once again.

General manager Mark Claycomb believes that the club's comedy is better than ever. "This definitely isn't amateur night here," says Claycomb of the talent that takes the stage each weekend. While the novelty of stand-up comedy has worn off, the quality of the performers has greatly improved. "They've been on Leno and Comedy Central. They tour all over the country." Gone are the hacks who tried to catch a free ride during the comedy boom. Since only a fraction of the comedy clubs that operated 10 years ago are still in business, only the most professional, most dedicated, and funniest comedians can still make it. These comedians are found at On Broadway each weekend.

Jay Wendell Walker of Spokane has been a stand-up comic for over 40 years. He remembers coming to On Broadway for the Comic Relief Tour in the early '90s and is glad that they are back on his schedule. "Mark [Claycomb] is a real easy guy to work with, and I'm happy they're getting things going there again," Walker says.

On Broadway is bringing in a mix of veteran performers such as Walker, and comedians from the Offensive Line along with some cutting-edge acts. Hypnotist Jesse J. Conner, also known as The Sandman, recently performed his "Magic of the Mind" show to a full house. Those who like spontaneity and audience participation will want to check out Full Contact Comedy. Billed as the hottest act in comedy, they use impressions and improvisation to create a show that plays off of the audience's reaction. Both acts are scheduled to appear this year.

"I don't think you can ask for a better club to see comedy," Claycomb says of On Broadway. Although the club seats 200 for comedy, the two-tiered floor allows a good view of the stage even in the seats towards the back. "We make it an intimate setting with candles on the table and the lights turned down. We like to keep the focus on the comedians." His staff, however, will be focused on the customers: They're well practiced at keeping glasses filled without interfering with the show. With two comedians each evening and live music afterwards, the \$8 cover charge

buys a lot of entertainment.

On Broadway has always had a reputation for being a good place to go for live entertainment. The new management that took over earlier this year wants to make it the premiere spot for comedy in Springfield. In addition to the comedy, On Broadway offers live music each weekend featuring local bands, as well as regionally and nationally touring acts. On Sundays On Broadway brings jazz to the stage with some occasional big band and swing thrown in.

Forget the television and movie screens this weekend and let some real live people entertain you at On Broadway—just like it used to be. ☐