

Antoni - 4-282 EVENTS

Zippies, Yippies And Silent Laughs

Santa Cruz Comedy Festival Tonight

YOU MAY have a hard time telling the politicians from the clowns at the Nelson Center this weekend, when several of both turn out to take part in Santa Cruz' first April Fools Comedy Festival.

The Screaming Memes — formerly Santa Cruz' premiere comedy group before they moved to San Francisco and went big time — are in charge of things, putting together three nights of comedy, tonight through Sunday at 8, which they promise will offer "incredibly varied" assembly of yuk-it-uppers.

Santa Cruz Mayor Michael Rotkin and supervisors Gary Patton and Robley Levy will be taking their turns at the mike, along with San Francisco Area pros including Jim Turner, Paul Krassner, the High Wire Radio Choir, Jane Dornaker, Paula Poundstone and Santa Cruz' own Brother A. West. And of course the Memes — who didn't win the San Francisco award for the best cabaret act for the second year in a row — will be on hand each night, doing their self-described "fabulous comedy" and improvising the rest.

Meme member Jackson along with the good Brother A. West — also known as the cartoonist/creator of the syndicated Duck Brothers comic strip — stopped by earlier this week to talk about the whole thing.

The Comedy Festival — which Jackson hopes will become an annual local April Fool's celebration — reflects "a huge gamut of talent and styles," he said, adding "we wanted to introduce San Francisco comedy to Santa Cruz our own way."

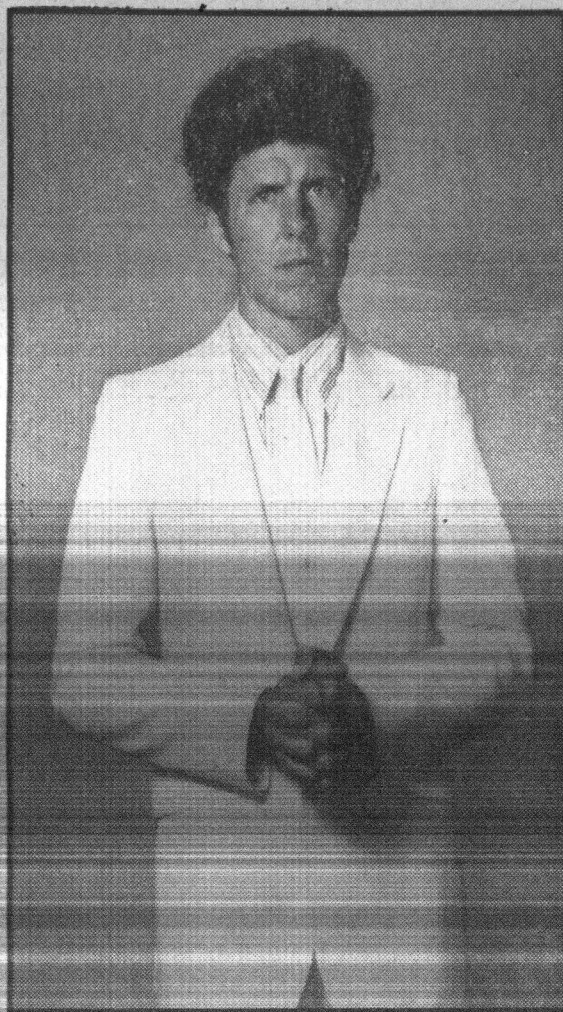
The pompadoured preacher-like Brother A. West — claiming that he had just returned from a fact-finding mission to the Latin American republic of El Labrador — was somewhat less reverential on the subject of the Comedy Festival.

Pointing out that comics like Richard Pryor and Robin Williams definitely will not be appearing, he said "bad parking" had kept some of the best talent away.

He is taking time out of a busy schedule of selling small plaster Brother A. Wests for your dashboard and spreading his message of salivation to share the bill Saturday night.

Jackson on the other hand, is more enthusiastic, becoming a veritable Howard Cosell of the joke world as he gave the pre-game, telling it like it is, lowdown on each night's line-up of talent.

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A.WEST, SUPERSTAR
Back from fact-finding
mission to El Labrador



The Screaming Memes headline the SC Comedy Festival this weekend.

SANTA CRUZ COMEDY FESTIVAL

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Tonight for example is "zippy and yippie night," beginning with monologist Paul Krassner, a Mort Sahl-style comic who has lots of "ex's" in his past — ex-yippie, ex-editor of The Realist and Hustler magazine.

The zippy part of the program will be provided by Jim Turner, a former member of the Duck's Breath Mystery Theater, known for his appearances on the TV series "Fridays" and for his portrayals of such luminaries as Randy of the Redwoods. His act will include a brief tribute to '60s rock person Gary Lewis.

Jackson describes Patton as a "sit down comedian. I always tell him, stand up, Gary, stand up — and he says, I am standing up."

The High Wire Radio Choir comes to town Saturday to present the local premiere of their hit show "Marvin." One critic went so far as to describe the show as "a three man comic tour de force" — but you know how those critics are.

Saturday is billed as "Group To Group Nite," with the Memes being the other group in question. It also could be described as "A. West Sandwich Nite," since Brother West will be sandwiched in between the other acts. He plans to speak on his Latin American trip, showing artist's renderings of the gorillas he encountered and his meeting with the junta.

Mayor Rotkin also will appear Saturday, and Jackson hinted that the distinguished civic leader might be persuaded to sing as part of his contribution to the whole thing.

Sunday is "Women Comics Night." Levy seems to be the only contender for that title left on the board of

supervisors, so she'll be there. So will Jane Dornaker, San Francisco's "queen of comedy" who stars on KFRC radio. "She's different," says Jackson.

She will be followed by Paula Poundstone — the closest thing on the bill to a "straight stand-up" performer — before the Memes show up, showcasing their newest addition, Wendy Bowers.

"She was not nominated for an Academy Award, but she is very talented," ventured A. West.

The Screaming Memes are producing the whole thing along with the Nelson Community Center, and there is hope that this will be just the event to put Santa Cruz on the map, comedy-wise.

"Yes, we would like this to be an annual event," said Jackson. "Even if we're not here to produce it, we would hope there would be enough ongoingness to keep it going."

— RICK CHATENEVER