

Matt Weinhold: High Energy With Lower Hair

By DENNIS McLELLAN

Ever wonder what Mozart's first opera, written at age 7, must have sounded like?

Matt Weinhold has.

"What kind of opera can a 7-year-old kid write?" Weinhold asks, singing in operatic tones:

"I've got cooties, I've got cooties, nyah nyah nyah-nyah-nyah. . ."

Weinhold, who's performing at the Brea Improv through Sunday, has toned down his trademark pompadour, making him, as he says, "more of a cross between Elvis and William Shatner" than a walking advertisement for Bob's Big Boy.

But the San Francisco-based comic's high-energy, off-the-wall brand of humor remains intact.

On stage, Weinhold does everything from a gospel version of the Beach Boy's "California Girls" ("I wish they all could be Pentecostal girls") to describing what it would be like if Top-40 AM radio music were piped into hospital delivery rooms:

"Hi, how ya doin'?" he says as a newborn baby who sounds suspiciously like Kasey Casem. "I started off as a gleam in my mom and dad's eye, rocketed my way up the birth canal, makin' my way to my No. 1 day. It's me! Your baby! Direct from W-O-M-B!"

Weinhold, who has appeared on "Comic Strip Live" and "An Evening at the Improv," has begun to make the move from middle act to headliner in clubs around the country. Describing his winning performance in the 1989 Stand-Up Comedy Competition, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer called him "an immediate hit." And the San Francisco Weekly has described him as "cute, crazy and downright hilarious."

So how does Weinhold describe his comedy style?

"It's called insanity," he said by phone from San Diego, where he was appearing last week. "The best



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MATT WEINHOLD

way to describe it would be *intelligently offbeat*, yet there's a lot of energy involved as well. If anything, I want to portray the things I tend to think in a more bizarre frame of mind. Even if I'm talking about something 'normal,' I want to kind of do it more in an original way."

Weinhold said he does a bit about the supernatural "and how skeptical I am about all of it. For example, most people these days believe in things like ghosts and stuff, but every time I hear a ghost story, it's always they saw the ghost late at night in a dark spooky place. Nobody ever sees a ghost

like at noon in the park playing with a Frisbee."

Weinhold, however, is not totally averse to believing in things he can't see:

"I *do* believe there might be life on other planets, although why would they visit *us*? We're annoying. We're doing everything we can to contact these people, but we're so obvious shooting off rockets and satellites to get their attention. It's like we're the Jehovah's Witnesses of the universe."

He's also noticed how "everybody's celebrating Christmas these days. There are *Jewish* people I know who have Christmas trees. . . . I bet there are a couple of Satan worshipers that get in the spirit of the thing—a couple of guys huddled around a pentagram: 'Even though Christ is our enemy and Christians must be destroyed, I got you this beef stick from Hickory Farms.'"

As a comedian, Weinhold said, his goal is to mix his monologue with "a sense of theater: Instead of just telling a joke, I try to bring it to life by using characters, different voices."

Weinhold, who studied acting in the Bay Area, got into stand-up five years ago at 22, the result of "basically going to open mikes and looking at other people and going, 'God, I can't suck nearly as bad as they do.'"

At the time, he was acting in and making his own short films and he realized that doing stand-up comedy "was kind of a cheaper way to get out some of the ideas I had to get out in film: Whereas it cost 800 bucks apiece for each film, a pencil and paper doesn't cost too much."

Like his extensive collection of comic books, movie posters, car-

toon figurines and science fiction memorabilia at home, Weinhold's act is a hodgepodge of fun stuff.

"I like my act," he said. "I feel I've done a good job with it if I'm dripping with sweat. I like to jump around, I like to get into a frenzy with it because I'm excited about it. I'm having fun and I want the audience to feel the same."

Dennis McLellan is a Times staff writer who covers comedy regularly for O.C. Live!

Who: Matt Weinhold.

When: Thursday, Feb. 13, and Sunday, Feb. 16, at 8:30 p.m.; Friday, Feb. 14, at 8:30 and 10:30 p.m.; Saturday, Feb. 15, at 8 and 10:30 p.m. With Rocky LaPorte and Dave Goodman.

Where: The Improv, 945 E. Birch St., Brea.

Whereabouts: Take the Lambert Road exit off the Orange (57) Freeway and go west. Turn left on State College Boulevard and right on Birch Street. The Improv is in the Brea Marketplace, across from the Brea Mall.

Wherewithal: \$7 to \$10.

Where to Call: (714) 529-7878.

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