

IMPROV:

# Go for the laughs, stay for the ham

by Dan Carrothers

Comic Rob Mitchelson gave a piece of advice to the audience at last Saturday's Impromania Comedy Cabaret at the Uptown:

"If you've never seen an improv show before, here's a good rule of thumb: Lower your expectations."

Maybe it was his suggestion that allowed the impressionable crowd to enjoy the night's acts, but it probably had more to do with the five comics on stage possessing the creative talent and quick wit to keep the crowd entertained with fits of laughter.

The group, is comprised of Mitchelson, Laura Hildebrandt, and improv veterans Rick Hilton, Dave Duncan, and Shawn Kinley bring a high-energy, hilarious performance to the Uptown's Kaboom Room.

The lack of script in improv means decisions must be made on the spot, based on audience ideas. The comics at the Uptown seemed confident with this method, rarely struggling to find humour in any situation. Hilton, Duncan and Kinley, with more than 60 years experience between them, demonstrated their creativity in fast-

paced routines like 'Word at a Time', and in a game challenging each player to speak without using the letter 'S'.

Scenes like 'Blind Date' had Mitchelson and Kinley struggling to speak synchronously, a task that resulted sometimes in incoherent mumbling, which was funny in itself.

Other games, like 'Horn and Bell,' depend on audience participation, to which the comics offer canned ham as a reward for the help.

Hildebrandt, a sassy young performer, joined the group after she recently appeared on stage with them as part of an audience contribution. She brings a youthful enthusiasm to the show, and already seems comfortable with improv; it was only her second performance with the group.

The small crowd in attendance also got a chance to see the animated Kinley as Flamboyant Man, a superhero with a mission to rid the world of drabness and polyester.

The show runs Saturdays at the Uptown until Nov. 22, at which point the group will take a break with tentative plans to return in January. It is definitely worth attending, if not for the hilarious comedy, then at least for the canned ham.