

## **AFTER KICKING BUTTS AND BOOZE, BILL HICKS IS STILL KICKING BUTT THE MONTREAL GAZETTE, JANUARY 15 1993**

*By Bill Brownstein*

"Excuse me, it's the Dark Lord now," says Bill Hicks. "Dark Prince was last year. Things have never been better, but I've never felt worse. Thank you very much."

This comes as welcome news to those of us who were concerned that Hicks might have lost his edge after kicking butts and booze, and moving to L.A.

"Gee, I guess that leaves killing Hare Krishnas as the only vice I've got left." Pause. "Funny, because no one's been on me to kick that habit."

Yup, Hicks is still the nastiest social satirist around - although he does cut the abrasiveness with an abundance of soul.

Hicks - the hit of the 1990 and 1991 Just for Laughs comedy fest - unspools tonight and Saturday at Club Soda. Finding fresh material for the shows won't be a problem; he just has to pick up a newspaper.

"I know Letterman has left NBC, but has Saddam already left the planet? I blinked for a moment, and fear I might have missed the news," he blurts, between slurps of his double cappuccino.

"Hey, that's just great. Now, I can recycle all my old Iraq stuff."

But he won't. Hicks doesn't recycle. That bores him. Hicks is, after all, cutting edge - with the accent on cutting.

Besides, there's so much more to make him bitter. He's 31 going on 61, because too often he feels he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

"Everybody is bullish about Bill Clinton, but he's just less overt than Bush. If you ask me we're just entering a new level of deceit. It's gilded. We're now entering the Animal Farm era of political correctness.

"And I'm just a battling white cell in the cancer of America."

Hicks catches himself - and his breath - for a moment.

"Whoa, am I getting too serious? My timing has always been off. When I'm feeling jocular, the whole world is serious. And when the whole world is jocular, I'm serious.

"But aren't we supposed to be serious? Isn't that where comedy comes from?" he shrugs.

"Maybe I do take life too seriously, but what else could I do? Put on a smarmy grin and become host of The Love Connection? I don't think so."

Hicks is on a rant:

"There's too much comedy. Twenty-four hour comedy channels on the tube. Hey, life ain't that funny."

But he is. "And they said moving to L.A. and quitting smoking would kill me," he smiles.

"L.A. is the ultimate whetstone - the Okie Oz - and quitting cigarettes has somehow kept my knife constantly sharpened.

"Anyway, it's easy to quit in L.A. Every time you get the urge, you just open the window."

Hicks is putting the finishing touches to a third comedy disc, Arizona Bay: "That's all that will be left after L.A. disappears during the big earthquake. Personally, I'm planning to move back to New York before that happens," says the Georgia-born, Texas-raised comedian.

Fresh from a month-long performing tour in England, Hicks says he was treated like comedy royalty overseas:

"They're real big on sarcasm and irony there. So, naturally, England cottoned to my act.

"But small wonder they hate America," he adds. "I turn on the TV there, and what do I catch?"

American Gladiators.

"They give us George Bernard Shaw, Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde and Shakespeare - and what do we send them? Unbelievable.

"There was some discussion in the papers there that the show was too violent. It's not violent enough. We should give these pituitary cases chainsaws - so they can't reproduce."

Hicks is also depressed about the state of comedy in America: "The Simpsons is all we've got - and that's a TV cartoon.

"Saturday Night Live is now like the old Carol Burnett Show. And Robin Williams?" Hicks winces. "He's just some self-created myth - like Ronald Reagan."

Don't get him started. But it's too late now.

"Williams is no genius. He does the same thing every time. That's not improv. Check the dictionary. Just because he talks fast, people get confused and think he's brilliant.

"He's created this religion of the inner-child in his stand-up routines and movies. I say: get in touch with the outer adult. Abort the inner child, or get him his own apartment."

Hicks has his own theories on humor: "The point of satire is to make fun of people in power - not to be one of those people. How can you be one of those people and still attack? That's why all they do is make jokes about the Betty Ford Clinic - which aren't funny anyway.

"What I'm talking about is the difference between art and show biz. In the case of art, you may not get paid until after you're dead." Pause. "But in show biz, you never get paid."