

HICKS ADDS CUD-LY CHARACTER TO HIS ROUTINE

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By Ernest Tucker

Longtime readers of Comedy Zone have watched the growth of Bill Hicks through the years. The comic has gone from a bile-spewing twenty-something to a bile-spewing 31-year-old. But along the way, Hicks has evolved.

For one thing, the Texas native embarked on two successful tours of England last year, one of which was taped for an upcoming hour-long HBO cable special. For another thing, Hicks - always a civil libertarian - has discovered another character emerging from his churning soul: a creature he calls Goatboy.

Hicks admits he is still not completely at ease with the critter. In general, Goatboy (as portrayed during part of his act) is a natural force, a Pan for all seasons, and a pretty randy one at that. Goatboy, you see, is not ashamed of his, ah, primal urges. He tends to get pretty graphic, too. And for that reason, those offended by sexual content should steer clear of Goatboy. But if you already knew Hicks, you're aware of his sharp tongue.

Hicks believes that he has found a new mixture of music and comedy, something he has created in a soon-to-be released album titled Arizona Bay. So certain is he of this path that he already has begun recording his fourth album, Rant in G-Minor, and will put music to it with cohorts in Austin, Texas. Call it "New Rage" comedy. That approach will not be on display during his live sets this weekend at the Funny Firm, but it does signal a milestone in Hicks' career.

"I don't see anything wrong with mixing in something to make the medicine easier to swallow," he joked about the music.

As for his stage work - which began when he was a 15-year-old, sneaking out of his house to appear on stage in Houston - he also has matured, he says. Gone, for the most part, will be his rants against non-smokers, and the "Just Say No" campaign.

"I can't stay in my angry 14-year-old persona forever," Hicks reasons.

Despite his world-weary stage presence, Hicks shines through as an (gulp!) idealist. He claims he doesn't dwell on entrenched political and social folly because it would destroy him.

"I believe I reflect the views of an audience which is just as frustrated as I am. I'm just trying to be honest, emotionally," he says. "I get a certain kick out of being an outsider constantly. It allows me to be creative. I don't like anything in the mainstream and they don't like me. I'm hoping to change the definition of mainstream."

His humor is one way, he says, of being an "agent for evolution." His comedy is a step "closer to Eden." And that Eden, he is convinced, will come about by people realizing they don't have to be encumbered by superstitions or religious baggage.

That, in short, is the heart of his vision, which sometimes is, in his own words, rancid, but is really nothing more than one man, speaking honestly. And, usually, one man speaking very humorously.