

## TRIBUTE TO A TALENT

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*By Louis B. Parks*

Stand-up comedian Bill Hicks, one of the more outrageous comics of recent times, seemed ready to break big in the United States.

Before his death of pancreatic cancer in February, the 32-year-old Houston-raised comic had appeared with David Letterman a dozen times, made a couple of albums (Dangerous and Revelations), did two HBO specials and achieved fame in England.

Now, American fame is coming posthumously. The current issue of Entertainment Weekly has a profile on Hicks. Comedy Central cable network will present It's Just a Ride: The Bill Hicks Tribute on June 19. Two more albums, Arizona Bay and Rant in E Minor, will be released soon. GQ magazine has an upcoming feature.

In Houston, where Hicks began performing at age 15 and was a regular member of the "Outlaw Comics" of the '80s, friends and fellow comedians will pay tribute to him Friday at the Laff Stop.

"Everybody knew he was destined for greatness," said longtime friend and fellow comic Jimmy Pineapple, who performed with Hicks when they were teen-agers. Pineapple organized the Houston tribute.

Hicks was nominated for the American Comedy Awards as best stand-up comedian four times, and filled houses in his tours in Great Britain.

"He was a genius," Dennis Miller told Entertainment Weekly.

"He was one of the five best comics I've ever seen in my life. " Pineapple said the tribute show will be upbeat.

"This is a celebration of Bill's life and career," he said.

"For Bill's fans in Houston, this (his death) came out of the blue. He was gone.

"Bill's friends, comedians who are scattered to the four winds, are coming into town to pay a tribute. Some of the guys are from the old Outlaw Comedy days and the annex days of Comedy Workshop. They are all paying their own way, just to do a few minutes. "

Among those scheduled to appear are Andy Huggins, Charles Shannon, Riley Barber, T. Sean Shannon, Ron Shock, Jim Patterson, Carl Falkenberry, Jack Wilkes, Johnny Torrez, Pineapple and Bill's brother Steve Hicks.

The show will include extensive clips from Hicks' stand-up shows, including clips from a hilarious routine from Austin in 1989.

There also will be filmed interviews, a music video and other recorded material.

"I'm going to try to show a side of Bill that a lot of people didn't see," said Pineapple. "Some interviews they've never seen before. "

Hicks' comedy often dealt with sensitive social issues such as abortion, corporate hypocrisy, commercialism, sex and even Elvis Presley worship. His comedy style was often extremely graphic, adult, angry and politically incorrect. It offended some people - in fact, his 12th and final performance for Letterman's show was cut by the network for dealing with too many sensitive issues.

But the same hard-hitting, any-topic approach made him more than just another stand-up to his followers.

"He had a way of speaking about hypocrisy and corruption and making a strong point, but doing it in a very funny way," said Collen McGarr, his manager. "He was to me the most important artist of his day in terms of spoken word. "

