

the 3-d funny business of comedy sportz

What makes Comedy Sportz good family entertainment?

"The process of coming up with interesting suggestions to shout out is a good way for family members to get to know each other's twisted minds."

What does Comedy Sportz have that AMC Plenty-Plex doesn't?

"It's what we don't have. No crummy plots, no special effects, no scantily clad women."

Why is laughter important?

"It's the best part about being human."

Mark Twain said that the human race has one really effective weapon—

coupon for \$1.00 off the regular price of \$10.00.) Additional perks include a smoke-free atmosphere, "sugar in liquid forms" (you're

invited to bring your own beer or wine), free parking, and no drink minimum.

Because the humor is squeaky clean, the venue—a sprawling brick church on Heights Boulevard—is frequently packed with drama students, youth groups, and assorted celebrations honoring birthday boys and girls ranging in age from 6-60. According to troupe members, it also makes a great first date. "This is the best place to take a date at any point in a relationship," says Kelly, a Musical Theater teacher and a student at the University of Houston. "Even if the relationship includes two or three kids."



and that's laughter. If that's the case, Houston is equipped with ammo funny enough to tackle any negativity that befalls our humble town. It's ComedySportz—an improvisational troupe of comedians who convene every Friday night at 8pm and battle for laughs and points as they concoct fast-paced games, dramas, operettas, offbeat commercials and other outrageous scenes right before your eyes. There's a "referee" outfitted in black and white stripes calling the fouls between the Chuckleheads and the Wise Guys, and "Mr. Voice" providing sound effects. After ninety minutes of hilarity, 100 or so "loyal fanz" (audience members) determine the winners of the evening's match.

Dianah Dulaney, part-time legal clerk and CSz manager, founded a local chapter of this national group in 1990 to provide Houston with something no one else was offering, then or now: live, interactive comedy that's also family-friendly and super affordable at \$10.00 a pop. (If you're a serious penny pincher, log on to www.comedysportzhouston.com and print out the

"It's interactive, clean, creative and hilarious," adds Ellen, a consultant and educational trainer. "It's one-of-a-kind Friday night entertainment that lets you escape from the stress of everyday life."

ComedySportz performs throughout the year for corporate and private events, holiday parties, fundraisers and churches. It's also active in nine Houston high schools, hosting improvisational leagues that compete against one another. "I take pride in being part of a group that willfully chooses the high road when it comes to making people laugh and enjoy themselves," says Stephen, a Java programmer by day. "Crude humor typically doesn't require much thought or creativity. I love knowing that anyone can come to one of our shows and have a great time."

During their 12th Anniversary Match on Friday, November 8th Comedy Sportz will present their 6th annual Silent Auction to benefit Gilda's Club, the national charity for the Comedy League of America. Founded in 1995 in memory of comedienne Gilda Radner, who died of ovarian cancer.

By Margaret Winchell Miller
Photography by Monica Kressman

Gilda's Club provides a free emotional and social support community for people with cancer and their families and friends. One hundred percent of the auction proceeds will be donated to the charity.

Like most creative pursuits, comedy generates wages that are sinfully small. Still, despite mid-week rehearsals, night shifts, and puny paychecks, troupe members find the job irresistible. They say they do it because it's therapeutic, they love the people they perform with, and because "there's no bigger rush than having others laugh at you...and not being sent to the principal's office afterwards."

Judi, a piano teacher who has been with the group for more than 7 years, suggests that anyone faced with another ho-hum Friday night take Mark Twain's advice to heart. "Instead of vegging out in front of a TV or



movie screen, come to CSz and stimulate your brain. You could even challenge your body by volunteering to be on stage and winning a \$20 gift certificate! You'll leave the theater feeling more alive than ever."

Chris Craig, a 10-year veteran of the group, sums it up like the architect he plays in real life: "A ComedySportz match utilizes a live, 3-D performance that responds to audience suggestions and judgments. Ultimately the result is a collaborative, spontaneous project in which the audience, for a \$10 fee, partners with the artist."

Somewhere, Gilda's laughing.

Lambert Hall is located at 1703 Heights Blvd at 17th Street. To donate an item or service to the auction, to inquire about workshops, or to make a reservation for the Anniversary Match/Silent Auction, email info@comedysportzhouston.com or call 713-868-1444. Group, student, and senior discounts are available.

EVENT INTEXTURE DESIGN & M ARCHITECTS FEATURE SARTOSH VARUGHESE
WHAT ARTIST'S RECEPTION
WHERE ERIE CITY IRON WORKS BUILDING

August 29

The show is titled *discontinuity of self deception*. For more than 15 years, Varughese has explored unique ideas in creating imagery and has implemented uncommon processes and technologies in the realization of his work. His abstract work examines the human condition – and the interrelatedness of everything.



Photography by Monica Kressman