



**BILL
BROWNSTEIN**
ON A COUPLE OF COMEDIANS

**"The trick is,
we still make
each other laugh."**

Comedians Brian McKim and Traci Skene agree there's nothing like taking a shot at your spouse's expense to get a crowd going. They do it all the time.

OK, that's not so unique in the comedy biz. What is unique is that McKim and Skene are married and perform on the same bill together. Local audiences can catch the couple unload on one another tonight through Saturday at Ernie Butler's Comedy Nest in the Pepsi Forum.

Even more amazing, after being together for 21 years, on and off stage, is that Philadelphia natives McKim and Skene still talk to each other: "Truth is, we don't ever shut up," McKim says.

Oddly, about the only time they are apart is on the stage. They do solo shticks. All of which brings up the sensitive issue of who's on top. Minds out of the gutter, we're talking in terms of billing. The answer is they have equal billing, but Skene invariably opens their shows.

"I have the luxury of following Traci every night and of knowing exactly what she'll be doing," McKim explains. "I don't have to worry about covering the same material, which is a big plus."

Adds Skene: "We're pretty sick of each other's acts, 'cuz we've just heard them so many times."

McKim has been doing stand-up for almost 30 years. Skene on-

ly resorted to comedy shortly after starting to date McKim. Draw your own conclusions.

According to their bios, McKim is a member of the 50-state club. Again, minds out of the gutter. This is merely a reference to the fact he has performed comedy throughout the U.S. Skene, on the other hand, appears to have done only 49 states.

"This is how fights start," Skene laments. "If my husband had bothered to update my bio, he would have noted that I, too, am now a member of the 50-state club. I just played Tennessee." And she has the scars to prove it.

They've played only three provinces, but are now setting their sights on the other seven, as well as the Yukon and Northwest Territories. "I'm proud to say I'm probably the only American comic who has done an impression of the late, great Canadian curler Sandra Schmirler," Skene says. Likely the only comic in Canada, too.

McKim would be the first to admit he's come a long way since starting out as a human crayon on open-mike nights in Philly. Yup, he's moved on to ink. Kidding. His act now revolves around much wordplay, observation - and Skene. At present, he's a bit bummed: "Last week someone sent me a chainsaw in the mail ... and now I have to send a chainsaw to 10 other people."

"People call him an intellectual comic," Skene says. "I don't get that. He's really not that bright."

That's a joke, insists Skene, whose act is "more adult and relationship-driven." No joke, though, is that they knew several comic couples, but no longer. The others have all divorced.

"The trick is, we still make each other laugh," Skene says. "When we're alone." Minds out of the gutter once more. With their clothes on - as well as off.



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