

April 1, 2005: Brian McKim & Traci Skene are asked by the editors of USA Today to choose and describe "10 great places to sit down and watch stand-up." The resulting half-page article ran on the top of page 3D of the paper's Travel Section.

Travel

10 great places to sit down and watch stand-up

If you don't feel April Foolish today, inspire your sense of humor at a live comedy show. Whether you're home or traveling, there's one near you, say **Brian McKim** and **Traci Skene**, who have performed in all 50 states. They also run *shecky* magazine.com, an online monthly for comedians and their fans, which they launched five years ago today. McKim shares some of the couple's favorite comedy clubs with **Anne Goodfriend** for USA TODAY.

The Laugh Factory

Los Angeles

Richard Pryor got his start in this "star-studded room (where) you'll always see someone you know" onstage. *Saturday Night Live* alum Jon Lovitz holds forth on Wednesday nights, and Fox TV's *Comic Strip Live* is taped here on Saturdays. "So many comedians move to Hollywood, (the club) always has a good choice" of headliners. 323-656-1336; laughfactory.com.

The Punch Line

San Francisco

"A wonderful comedy town with savvy fans," San Francisco isn't as loaded with industry types as Los Angeles, so comics can "do longer sets and be a little more experimental" here. Margaret Cho, Dave Chapelle and other cutting-edge stars have graced the Punch Line, which bills itself as the city's longest-running and only full-time comedy club. 415-397-7573; punchlinecomedyclub.com.

Gotham

New York

"Everything is right about" this relatively new club in the hip Flatiron District: Its chic ambience ices the cake of "decent prices and good sight lines. When comics are happy, the crowds are, too." Tonight and Saturday, four stand-up acts are the "All-Pro Lineup from Letterman, Leno, Conan, Comedy Central & HBO." 212-367-9000; gothamcomedyclub.com.



By Roger Mastroianni, Hilarities 4th Street Theatre

In Cleveland: Hilarities 4th Street Theatre, inside Pickwick & Frolic, hosts national and homegrown talent.

The Comedy Club at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa
 Atlantic City

"The newest club in town ... was built especially for performers, mostly for comedy." A "tremendous room" in both senses, it's also "a rarity — it holds about 900 people." The room boasts tiered seating and "understated, classy décor." Dennis Miller appears April 23. 609-317-1000; theborgata.com.

Hilarities 4th Street Theatre
 Cleveland

The old Hilarities Comedy Hall helped revive the city's historic Warehouse District; its successor is part of a restaurant and entertainment facility. Although the theater can hold up to 425 guests, it still feels intimate. "If a room is run correctly — the show starts on time, there's a warm-up before the headliner, the first drink has been served, the lights and sound are good — and the crowd knows what to expect from professional comics, they'll have a good time." 216-241-7425; pickwickandfrolic.com.

The Comix Café
 Tonawanda, N.Y.

"The audience was rabid when we played there in January. It's not fancy, just a shoe-box-shaped room in a strip mall" near Buffalo. "But when the show starts, it's a love affair between the audience and the comic." 716-835-4242; comixcafe.com.



By Kathie Nelson, The Punchline

In Atlanta: Dave Attell, writer and host of Comedy Central's *Insomniac*, performs at the Punchline with Groucho looking over his shoulder.

The Riviera Comedy Club

Las Vegas

Booked "consistently well" by Steve Schirripa (who plays Bobby "Bacala" Baccalieri on HBO's *The Sopranos*), this club "always has three or four comics on the bill, usually from L.A. or New York." The hotel, a Vegas classic, describes the room on its website as "reminiscent of a Manhattan nightclub, complete with neon-studded walls and canopy entrance." 877-892-7469; rivierahotel.com/entertainment_comedyclub.asp.

Charlie Goodnight's

Raleigh, N.C.

"A lot of stand-up comics come from the South, and they'll base themselves here, or Atlanta or Chattanooga." This club "draws on comics from all over the Southeast as well as the Northeast." The greats and near-greats have autographed the stage wall, where one yukster scrawled, "Raleigh: Where Barney Fife goes to party." 919-828-5233; charliegoodnights.com.

Bear's Place Ale House & Eatery

Bloomington, Ind.

"We have to include a one-nighter," the staple of comic road warriors everywhere. This one, just off the Indiana University campus, presents its "Comedy Caravan" only two nights a week, "but it gets packed, and everybody who's anybody in comedy has played there — there are pictures of them on the walls." 812-339-3460; bearsplacebar.com.

The Punchline

Atlanta

"This might be the best club in the country," with its top acts and a room that holds "185 rabid comedy fans." The stage that has featured such stars as Robin Williams and Rich Little welcomes Nick DiPaolo — Emmy-nominated for his writing on *The Chris Rock Show* — next week, Monday-Thursday. 404-252-5233; punchline.com.

Looking for more travel ideas? Review "10 Great" lists on the Internet at 10greats.usatoday.com

