

ITINERARIES | Mar 18, 2011 8:49 AM Like 1 Tweet 2 0

# No Joke: The Best Comedy In Chicago

By Shani Silver



Photos by Angela Manginelli

Chicago is pretty lucky. We realize that sometimes the city is blanketed beneath four feet of snow, but once it melts we can get out and see some **totally legit comedy**. Feel free to bask in some major **local pride**, too, as our fine city has bred some of the best when it comes to legendary laugh-makers. **Bill Murray** is from Chicago. Okay a suburb of Chicago, but it still counts. SNL alum **Horatio Sanz** honed his craft right here. **John and James Belushi**? Chi-town baby. Yes, this city is straight-up qualified as a starting point for lots of up-and-coming comedians. But if your busy schedules don't leave much time to sort through the shlock, never fear. We've whittled down a list of venues for taking in the biggest **local laughs** we could find. (And if we've left anyone out that you love...well, that's what the comments are for!)

### 1. Gorilla Tango Theater

If you need a better lure than a Mario Brothers-themed burlesque comedy, we can't help you. **Boobs and Goombas**, (we're serious) is just one of the performances you can catch at Gorilla Tango. We're in. Plus, we're generally fans of any place that will let us imbibe while we're being entertained. GTT is way more than a comedy club. For anyone craving the **stand-up spotlight**, the venue will let you put on your own show, provided you're legit and can guarantee them a professional production. And, you know, ticket sales. In other words, leave the sock puppets at home. Can't decide how to spend girls' night this week? **Share this story on Facebook** and we'll take care of it. One reader will **win a 4-pack of tickets** to Gorilla Tango, on us. [Gorilla Tango Theater](#), 1919 North Milwaukee Avenue (at Western Avenue, and just across the street from Margie's!); 773-598-4549.

### 2. iO Chicago Theater

What's better than being funny? Being funnier than *everyone else*. Since 1981, iO (formerly ImprovOlympic), has been laying Chicago in the aisles. Even better? They can teach you how to get in on the action, too. iO offers **classes in improvisation** to bring out your inner (and hopefully funny) performer. If you're not really the on-stage type, try your hand at iO's script writing program instead. This is one venue that hosts shows **every night** of the week, so you know where to find a good laugh, right now. [iO Chicago Theater](#), 3541 North Clark Street (just South of Addison Street); 773-880-0199.



### 3. Chicago Underground Comedy

Here we go Chicago, the real deal. Just a comic, a microphone, and hopefully no rotten tomatoes being hurled toward the stage. [Chicago Underground Comedy](#) boasts some of the **best stand-up** you can find in Windy City limits. CUC comics aren't afraid to **push the limits**, in other words, no Chicago topic is safe. Running for office? You're on deck. Saving parking spaces with lawn furniture? Prepare to be laughed at. Shows are Tuesday nights only at [The Beat Kitchen](#), 2100 West Belmont Avenue (at Hoyne Avenue); [Email Chicago Underground Theater for more info](#).

### 4. Off-Off Campus

Let's hear it for the kids. Okay maybe not kids, we're pretty sure they can all vote. Nonetheless, [Off-Off Campus](#) is an improvisation and sketch comedy group composed of University of Chicago students. The club started in 1986, and it's still running, making it the second oldest student comedy club in the country. This is a **student gig**, so all us graduates get to cash in on the fact that the performers are really trying to make their mark (with serious comedic effort), and we can enjoy the show for only \$4. Off-Off Campus' last quarterly review was **Leave It To Beiber** (let that sink in), and the spring review is currently in rehearsal. Keep an eye on their website for first dibs.

### 5. The Second City

We leave you in classic style, with the venue that's been dubbed "**A Comedy Empire**" by the New York Times. We'd list all the amazing talent that entered The Second City only to go on to fame and fortune, but we'd miss our next birthday before we finished. This is the classic spot to see **Chicago funny**, and we highly recommend it for impressing the hell out of your in-laws, clients, or potential significant others. Get tickets in advance, *months* in advance, to ensure smooth sailing. Go forth and laugh, you have our blessing. [The Second City](#), 1616 North Wells Street (at North Avenue); 312-337-3992.