

# Prescott Tolk to Open for Jon Lovitz at The Improv

TOP DOG: So far, it's been a good year for Prescott Tolk

BY ROBERT BUSCEMI



Prescott Tolk is having quite the 2010. Fresh off a breakout appearance at June's Just for Laughs festival, the savvy standup comedian—a 1999 alum of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism—got tapped to open for Jon Lovitz August 5th through 8th at The Improv in Schaumburg.

Tolk, 33, is preternaturally even keeled, never riled or angry, a pitch-perfect cocktail of wry stoner philosopher and tough-guy Jersey native. Despite his calm exterior, he has set a brisk pace this year in particular, spinning his youthful woes into comedy gold in the form of a hit one-man show. Whereas most guys are content to tell tales of their juvenile misdeeds over a beer at the bar, Tolk wrote his down, workshopped them onstage, and then booked Bucktown's Gorilla Tango Theatre for a six-week run this spring, which nabbed him a prized solo slot at the Just for Laughs fest.

Tolk caught the stage bug early, watching comedians open for music acts on family vacations in the Catskills. Forget Neil Sedaka; Tolk dug the jokers. "It was one man versus an army, and not everyone was on the comic's side at first," he says. Tolk learned quickly that comedy takes guts. "I don't mind taking a few nasty bumps on the head to get new material," he says. Indeed, some of Tolk's best bits exhibit an old-school, chops-busting feel. "I just bought Rosetta Stone," he jokes. "Learn a foreign language just how you learned English. Turns out it's five CDs of my parents fighting in French."

Ever the scrapper, Tolk bucked the traditional comedy trend and actually returned to Chicago in 2003 after living in Weehawken, New Jersey, for four years, covering Jersey City politics for the *Hudson Reporter* by day and commuting into Manhattan to do standup at night. He has found the Windy City to be no less than "a comedic Shangri-la." As talented peers migrate to the coasts, "brilliant comics continually replenish the scene," he says. Plus, he gets stage time galore to test new material.

Which may be why, in Tolk's case, the one man seems to be winning, while the army retreats.

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREAS E. G. LARSSON  
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