

Steve Martin—'wild and craazy' in Bananaland

By Casey McCabe

The Steve Martin phenomenon hit Lincoln Saturday night, and 7,500 people filled Pershing Auditorium to prove that they too were "wild and craazy guys".

The man outside the auditorium was doing brisk business selling fake noses, and arrows-through-the-head. Balloon heads and umbrella heads, other Martin inspired trademarks, were fairly visible as well. The atmosphere in the crowd was slightly under lunacy. It seems that Steve Martin has almost single-handedly made being an idiot socially acceptable.

It is a phenomenon in that 7,500 people paid the unusually high price of \$7.50 and \$8.50 to see a comedian, who a year ago was limited mostly to appearances on *The Tonight Show*. Today he has the biggest selling comedy album of all time, and more offers than he can count, all for one simple reason; he's outrageously funny.

But the 32-year-old Martin put 10 years in the comedy business before achieving his recent success. He quit UCLA after landing a job as a comedy writer for the original *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*. Through that, he later went on to write for Glen Campbell, Ray Stevens, Pat Paulsen, and Sonny and Cher.

Martin soon learned that the best person to do his material was himself. So he soon quit writing and became a performer, opening for shows anywhere he could. Frequently he led off for The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, and it was through one of the band members, John McEuen, that Steve first learned to play the banjo. The banjo has since become a regular feature of Martin's act.

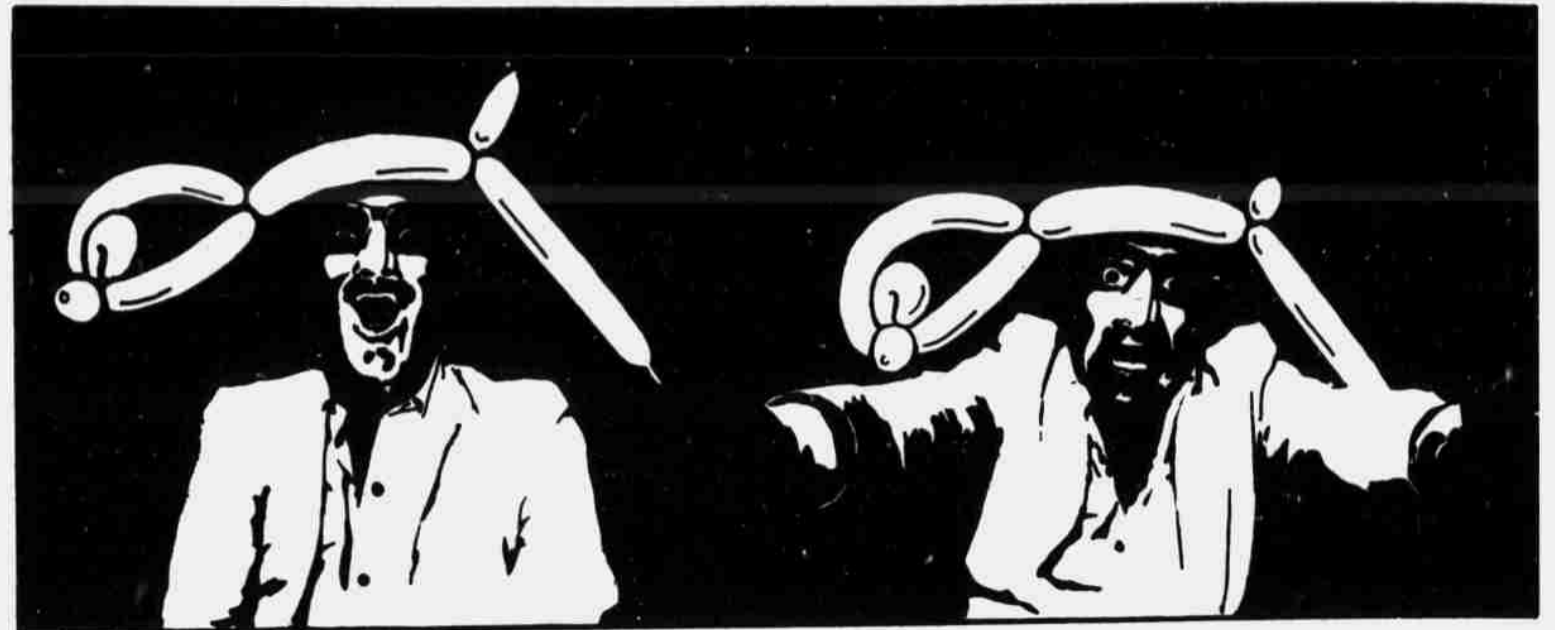
While he had been experiencing moments of success, Steve Martin was ready to abandon show business in 1975. He'd had several appearances on the *Tonight Show*, but not much was coming out of them. He bombed a couple of shows when the audience, almost understandably, didn't have the vaguest idea what he was talking about. He returned to his home in Aspen, Colo., and contemplated his career.

In the meantime, his material began to move to the slightly more bizarre. He began insulting the audience, and removing any dignity that might have been found in his art before. At one university he led 300 members of the audience to the local McDonald's and ordered one order of french-fries. Another time he led the crowd to an empty swimming pool, had them climb in, and swam across their bodies. It was something comedy had never seen before, but the people loved it.

One of the major catalysts to Martin's career was hosting *Saturday Night Live* (he has since become one of the show's most prolific hosts). Together with more frequent spots on *The Tonight Show*, now as a host), people began to remember his name. Since then, he's struck paydirt with his first album *Lets Get Small* which went platinum, and a comedy short film *The Absent Minded Watier* which earned an academy award nomination.

If you haven't heard of Steve Martin by now, it can be assumed you've been living in a cave.

Devotion to the Martin style of humor is cropping up everywhere. More and more people are finding themselves inadvertently slipping into his deep-throated "hi! I'm a neat guy" voice, or taking his advice from "The Grandma Song" and "being tasteless, rude, and of-



fensive." Except it's all done in the name of "se-mi-pro-fessional" comedy.

As the leader of this new cult, Martin has created a fanatic following. As mentioned earlier, the Lincoln fans, like all over the country, dress accordingly to fit the demented atmosphere. When the spotlight hits Martin as he comes out on stage, bedlam erupts. The crowd goes wild with enthusiastic cheering, and he hasn't even said anything yet.

Let's assume you have been living in a cave. What makes Steve Martin funny? It's rather hard to describe unless you can picture a basically handsome, gray-haired friend of John Denver, who admittedly will do anything for a laugh. For instance, a casual Martin announces to the audience; "Here's something you don't see every day"... (proceeds to leap up and down several times, stretch out his mouth with both hands and scream "Aaaarrrgh!") then quickly returns to a state of composure).

Other times the comedy might be based on something as innocent as a card or magic trick. It isn't especially funny making a dime disappear, but when he dedicates it to the people way up in the cheap seats, it's a different story. Another one is the infamous, drawn out King of Hearts routine.

He fans out a deck of cards and picks a volunteer from the crowd. Taking the King of Heats and placing it visibly in the deck, he tells the volunteer; "When the vibes are right, I want you to yell out "King of Hearts, Come Down and Dance!" Now everyone has to concentrate on the King of Hearts."

After a few seconds of silent suspense from the crowd, the volunteer yells "King of Hearts, Come down and dance!". At which Martin plucks the King from the deck and with his hands makes the card do an idiotic little dance down the mike stand and on the floor, all the while singing "doo di doodle, di doo doo woe, woe..."

He's sort of into humiliating himself and the audience like that. He constantly ribs them about what they paid to get in; \$8.50 to get in here? I mean for that I ought to just come out here and do this, (flips off the crowd), "Okay, once more for the photographers."

Some of the best parts of Martin's routine are his emotionally involved stories where he puts on a serious front,

while the listener is on the edge of his seat waiting for the inevitably twisted result. One is his famous meeting with Jackie Onassis in a Tuscon Arizona laundromat. Another is the sad story of his girlfriend which he tells with tragic self-pity:

"We were together for three years, we went every place together and—I shouldn't even talk about this, but... well, she's not living anymore, and... and I guess I blame myself for her death. We were at a party one night, and we were arguing. And she started drinking quite heavily. Finally we had this big screaming argument, and she went out to the car; and she asked me to drive her home, and I refused. I didn't realize how much she'd been drinking. She asked me again, she said 'Please, drive me home. I didn't want to... so I shot her.'"

It's almost easy to see how people's first reaction to Steve Martin is often, "hey, what is this?" But it grows on you, and the secret is in Martin's reckless abandon approach to comedy. From deadpan delivery of hilarious material, to total loss of control with a case of "happy feet", Martin always seems able to hit on the irrelevant chord of his crowd. And that crowd is getting bigger, and Martin is becoming one of the most popular comedians to ever come out of Bananaland.

Perhaps the heart of Steve Martin can be found in the following little song he sings to a one-chord banjo accompaniment;

*We're having some fun.
We've got music and laughter and wonderful times.
We're having some fun.
That's so important in today's world, oh yeah.
It's so hard to laugh.
It seems that short of tripping a nun nothing is funny anymore.
But you know,
I see people going to college for fourteen years,
Studying to be doctors and lawyers,
And I see people going to work at the drugstore at
7:30 every morning
To sell Flair Pens,
But the most amazing thing to me is
I get paid
For doing
This.*

daytime		THURS THRU WED
MORNING		
7:00	ARCHIES	
	TODAY	
	GOOD MORNING AMERICA	
8:00	BOZO	
	NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY	
	PTL PROGRAM	
	VARIOUS PROGRAMMING	
	FARM REPORT (FRI.) Answer Is Love (WED.)	
8:05	CBS NEWS	
	FARM AND RANCH REPORT	
8:10	NEWS	
8:15	UNO SCENE (WED.)	
8:30	ROMPER ROOM	
	COUNTRY DAY	
	SUNRISE SEMESTER	
	VARIOUS PROGRAMMING	
	BLINKY'S FUN CLUB	
7:00	ARCHIES	
	TODAY	
	GOOD MORNING AMERICA	
	CBS NEWS	
	I DREAM OF JEANNIE	
	MORNING SHOW	
	SESAME STREET	
7:30	FLINTSTONES	
	MCHALE'S NAVY	
8:00	POPEYE	
	CAPTAIN KANGAROO	
	FLINTSTONES	
	IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (Until 3:30) Hyde Park (THUR.), Nova (FRI.)	
8:30	LITTLE RASCALS	
	CARTOONS	
9:00	700 CLUB	
	CARD SHARKS	

ALL MY CHILDREN	HIGH HOPES
MAY MAGAZINE (THUR.)	IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (Until 3:30)
Pass The Buck (EXC. THUR.)	AFTERNOON
PHIL DONAHUE SHOW	
NEW ZOO REVUE	
MAY MAGAZINE (THUR.)	
Romper Room (EXC. THUR.)	
9:30	HOLLYWOOD SQUARES
	PRICE IS RIGHT (EXC. THUR.)
	BEWITCHED
10:00	HIGH ROLLERS
	HAPPY DAYS
	PRICE IS RIGHT (THUR.)
	HAPPY DAYS (EXC. FRI.)
	Martha's Kitchen (FRI.)
	NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY
	IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (Until 3:30)
10:30	RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMING
	WHEEL OF FORTUNE
	FAMILY FEUD
	LOVE OF LIFE
	FATHER KNOWS BEST
11:00	NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY
	SANFORD AND SON
	\$20,000 PYRAMID
	YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS
	\$20,000 PYRAMID
	MAYBERRY R.F.D.
11:30	JIM NABORS SHOW
	CONVERSATIONS
	RYAN'S HOPE
	GONG SHOW
	SEARCH FOR TOMORROW
	NEWS
	ALL MY CHILDREN
	JIM NABORS SHOW
	SESAME STREET
	FARM ACTION
12:15	DICK VAN DYKE SHOW
12:30	DAYS OF OUR LIVES
	CROSS WITS
	AS THE WORLD TURNS
1:00	LUCY SHOW
	ONE LIFE TO LIVE
	MOVIE 'Andy Hardy's Double Life' (THUR.), 'Our Very Own' (FRI.), 'Anna Christie' (MON.), 'Personal Property' (TUE.), 'As You Desire Me' (WED.)
	IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (Until 3:30)
1:30	BEVERLY HILLBILLIES
	DOCTORS
	GUIDING LIGHT
2:00	PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DAISIES
	ANOTHER WORLD
	GENERAL HOSPITAL
2:30	GOMER PYLE
	ALL IN THE FAMILY
	DENVER NOW
3:00	MICKY MOUSE CLUB
	FOR RICHER, FOR POORER
	EDGE OF NIGHT
	MATCH GAME
	FLINTSTONES
3:30	TOM AND JERRY
	GILLIGAN'S ISLAND
	PASS THE BUCK
	PHIL DONAHUE SHOW
	I LOVE LUCY
	MERV GRIFFIN
	GILLIGAN'S ISLAND
	KALAMITY KATE'S CARTOONS
	ELECTRIC COMPANY
	GILLIGAN'S ISLAND
	MY THREE SONS
	TARZAN
	DINAH
	MY FAVORITE MARTIAN
	MIKE DOUGLAS
	MISTER ROGERS
4:30	LEAVE IT TO BEAVER
	BEWITCHED
	BIG VALLEY
	FAMILY AFFAIR
	SESAME STREET
5:00	ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW
	ODD COUPLE
	ABC NEWS
	I LOVE LUCY
5:30	ROOKIES
	NBC NEWS
	BEWITCHED
	CBS NEWS
	NEWS
	ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW
	OVER EASY



Barbi Benton stars as herself, performing at the world's largest singles party in New Orleans, in "MURDER AT THE MARDI GRAS," the May 10 feature on the CBS Wednesday Night Movie.

Ad lib

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