

## **Sun, The (San Bernardino, CA)**

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### **Downtown lit up with laughter**

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Article Text:

SAN BERNARDINO - Scott Fig owns the stage with a booming voice and an outrageous take on male-female relations. Plucking a would-be heckler out of the boisterous crowd, the scrappy High Desert comedian observes that the man's "head is so big, (he) be like doing a flip when he bends down to tie a shoe," a hilarious prelude to performing a clunky somersault on stage.

The crowd throatily approves. And Fig isn't alone. Ms. Jones, a straight-laced schoolteacher by day and sassy comedienne by night, roasts the men in her life for a slew of personal-hygiene peculiarities before closing her set with a crowd-whipping rap about foot care.

Then there's the headliner, A.J. Johnson, armed with a razor-sharp wit to complement a catalogue of major movie credits. Race, sex, wardrobe, your mother, it's all fair game to Johnson, who works so hard he totes a white towel to swab waves of perspiration from his face.

Six comics in total fired on all cylinders on Thursday's grand opening of what organizers hope becomes a fixture in the city's downtown: The Street Hustle Comedy Jam on Thursday nights. Organized and promoted by Street Hustle Records, a Hospitality Lane-based entertainment business specializing in rappers and comedians, the event is held at Ray's Downtown Nightclub. By day the venue is better known as Ray's Downtown Deli.

In its debut, the comedy show drew about 100 thirsty patrons to the full bar for entertainment at the intimate club, which is tucked in a small shopping center in the 100 block of South E Street.

Avant-garde it is not, but the sprouting of live, evening entertainment is exactly what city leaders and economists have long said is essential for the city's dim downtown.

If an event like this can thrive, the time for downtown San Bernardino's revitalization may have finally arrived.

"The goal is always to get more people downtown, but the second part of that question is what do they do when they get there," said City Councilman Neil Derry. "We have some housing projects emerging, and we need the entertainment and arts to come simultaneously." Derry said he's glad to see such a club crop up, and said the location of a nightclub near the 66ers stadium could help push the venture over the hump. "Their success could be that of the city," Derry said. "We need businesses big and small to succeed to rebuild our downtown economy."

Aside from a few microphone malfunctions and some hilarious misconnections between comedians and the DJ, all went smoothly.

But the real story was the talent - streetwise comics with a locally-inflected flavor that delighted the crowd. The troupe was fast-mouthed, gritty and armed with a nothing-is-sacred fearlessness that bruised feelings and stretched smiles.

Bobo Lamb, a veteran performer on P. Diddy's Bad Boys of Comedy label, took the audience on a gut-busting jaunt through his poor childhood of snatching bologna out of friends' refrigerators, premature potty training and Q-tips as a luxury item. Lamb tailored his material to the city's demographic like a politician with a team of poll analysts. "Y'all broke, who all is broke?" Lamb offered to hooting affirmation. "Well, y'all got to understand two broke people can't get together. It's like algebra, broke plus broke equals broke to the second power!"

The six comedians took the 8 p.m. show to well past 11 p.m., but few patrons were lost during the weeknight comedy marathon.

Thomas Mosley, a Street Hustle Records promoter, said the company will test the downtown market for live comedic entertainment at least through the summer before deciding the next move. "We

think San Bernardino's downtown area might be ready for this kind of live club entertainment," Mosley said.

Showtime

What: The Street Hustle Comedy Jam, live comedy show

When: 8 p.m. Thursdays

Where: Ray's Downtown Nightclub, 168 S. E St.

For information and tickets: (909) 386-0303

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