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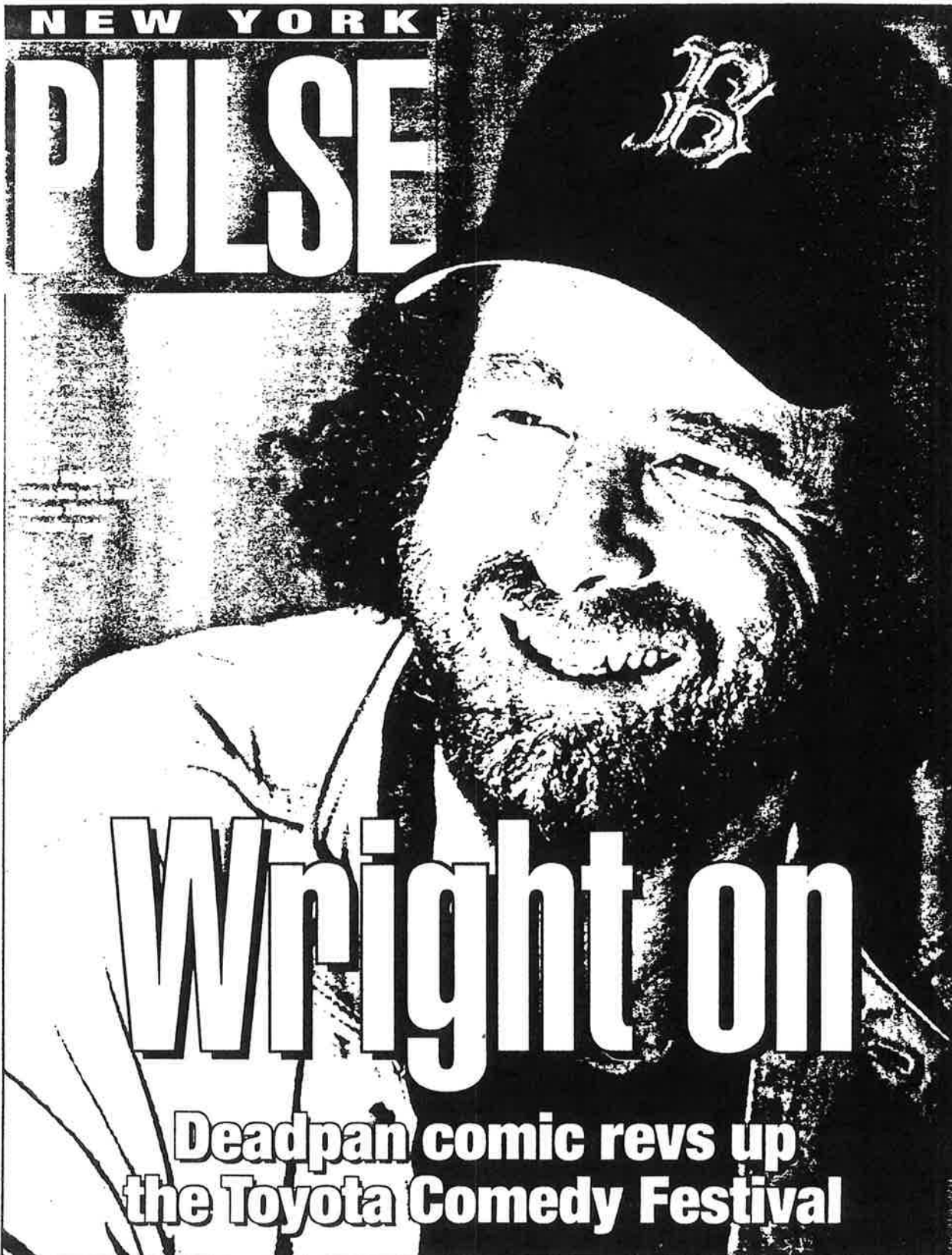
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NEW YORK
PULSE

Wright on

**Deadpan comic revs up
the Toyota Comedy Festival**

The Week Ahead by Sally Brompton

IF SUNDAY, JUNE 9, IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: With the sun and Saturn conjoined on your birthday, there are two things you can be certain of: that you'll have to work very hard indeed, and that you'll be handsomely rewarded. Saturn will demand the best of you, but if you respond to the challenge, you'll succeed beyond your wildest dreams.

■ **FOR YOUR EXTENDED HOROSCOPE AND BIRTHDAY FORECAST**, dial the number below your forecast; 99 cents per minute; average length of call, 4-6 minutes. You must be 18 or over. The New York Post and News America, 121-1 Sixth Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. (212) 782-8050

■ **GEMINI (May 22-June 21)**
A solar eclipse in your birth sign holds out hope of a new start whenever you think needs it most. However, because the sun also aspects Saturn, planet of limitation, your objectives must be serious. You've already wasted too much time and energy on things that may have been fun but were of no real benefit.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7812*

■ **CANCER (June 22-July 23)**
With Monday's solar eclipse, you now have the power to change your life, but do you have the confidence? You may be timid, but this is one of those occasions when the meek most definitely will not inherit the earth, so get out there and let the world know what you can do.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7813*

■ **LEO (July 24-Aug. 23)**
You may not fully understand what's going, but your instincts tell you some major changes are about to take place, changes that you're ideally placed to take advantage of. However, if you insist on going it alone, you won't accomplish half as much as you can if you bring other people into your plans.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7814*

■ **VIRGO (Aug. 24-Sept. 23)**
Today's sun-Saturn alliance will help you to wise up about something you've been a little naive about. Just because you always deal honestly with people doesn't mean they'll always deal honestly with you. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, and the quicker you realize that, the quicker you'll have success.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7815*

■ **LIBRA (Sept. 24-Oct. 23)**
Under no circumstances allow others to claim the credit for something that you've done. You may be a nice guy by nature, but nice doesn't pay the bills — in fact, in some situations, it puts you at a distinct disadvantage. Everything may be going well for you now, but you know from long experience how quickly things can change, so put your own interests first this week and don't let anyone possess what should have been yours.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7816*

■ **SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)**
Although tomorrow's solar eclipse makes this a rather emotional time, today's sun-Saturn conjunction will help you stay in control. With any luck, it will also make you a bit more wary about whom you trust in business, as you appear to have been a bit too lenient lately. Your birth sign has a reputation as ruthless; this would be a good time to live up to it.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7817*

■ **SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)**
Tomorrow's solar eclipse in your opposite sign of Gemini promises that if you have the courage to confront your emotions, you can come to terms with a situation that has caused you a great deal of anguish. It will be easier if you stop thinking in terms of "them" and "us" and start thinking about ways you can work with others for your mutual benefit.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7818*

■ **CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)**
Capricorn is both an earth sign and a cardinal sign, which means you're traditional but also ambitious. Because the sun aspects Saturn, your ruler, today, you'll be tempted to go with what you know and do things the way they've always been done, but tomorrow's eclipse urges you to be more adventurous, especially at work, where you could be in for a major promotion.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7819*

■ **AQUARIUS (Jan. 21-Feb. 19)**
Today's sun-Saturn alliance will help focus your mind on what's important, while tomorrow's eclipse in your fellow air sign of Gemini will give you the confidence to take advantage of the golden opportunity that's heading your way. This is potentially one of the best times of the year for you, but it all depends on your ability to focus on essentials.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7808*

■ **PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)**
You must get the balance right this week. Spend time helping loved ones overcome problems, but take advantage of tomorrow's solar eclipse to stamp your authority on a situation that's beginning to spin out of control. Maybe it's someone close who's causing the trouble to get your attention.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7809*

■ **ARIES (Mar. 21-April 20)**
What takes place in the next two or three days may appear to be out of the blue, it's been building slowly for quite some time. But no matter what you lose, you'll more than make up for it in the weeks and months ahead. The old must always give way to the new.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7810*

■ **TAURUS (April 21-May 21)**
Although today's sun-Saturn conjunction makes it seem as if your life has come to a standstill, tomorrow's solar eclipse will get things moving again, so don't lose heart. The current cosmic alignment will help break the deadlock in your financial affairs and inspire you to try new things. Be more adventurous.
For your **EXTENDED HOROSCOPE**, call: 1-900-990-7811*

The Wright

Laconic comic to enliven festival with low-key delivery

By TRIPP WHETSELL

Perhaps the funniest thing about Steven Wright, the poker-faced comedian whose slovenly dress and morose manner made him one of the hottest stand-up acts of the '80s, is that his act was never really an act.

Nearly two decades after he burst onto the scene, it still isn't.

With Wright, who's suddenly hot again and doing his first New York performance in eight years Thursday as part of the Toyota Comedy Festival, what you see is pretty much what you get.

This was abundantly clear in an interview last week, during which the laconic comic seemed only half-awake, despite the late-morning hour. Sporting a scruffy beard and faded blue jeans, he spoke in his trademark monotone. When he shook hands, his palm was wet with sweat.

A Boston Red Sox cap was pulled down over his eyes, and he sipped coffee out of a street vendor's paper cup. At one point during our chat, he lost his train of thought and asked to hear the question again.

Was he even conscious?

Well... yes. He just does things at his own pace. Wright, who now tours six months out of the year and has kept up his TV and film appearances, finds it funny that fans assume he's taken on a persona for his performances.

"I'm fascinated when people come up to me and say, 'Oh, you're really like that.' Because a lot of comedians aren't like how they are on stage," Wright said.



He's so sad, it's funny

He's known for spinning some of the driest, funniest one-liners in comedy-dom. So what will be the featured quips when Steven Wright takes the stage Thursday night? Here's a sampling...

"I have a fax machine. I have fax wiring."

"If you didn't know me, would you think I was a stranger?"

"I was walking home one day and I accidentally fell asleep in somebody's satellite dish. My dreams were showing up on TVs all over the world."

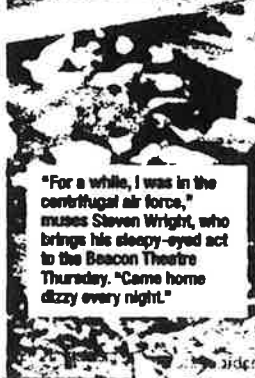
"I'm staying in an old hotel. They sent me a wake-up letter. Near the elevator is an existentialist map. It says

"You are here" all over it."

"I don't like the sound of my phone ringing, so I put the phone inside my fish tank. I can't hear it anymore, but I can tell when I get a call because the fish go back and forth like this. I go down to the pet store: 'Give me another 10 guppies. I got a lot of calls yesterday.'"

"I remember the first time I ever went to sleep. My mother said, 'Steven go to sleep.' I said, 'What do you mean?' She said, 'Go all the way down to the end of tired and take a right.' So I went all the way down to the end of tired and, just out of curiosity, I took a left, and my mother was there and she said, 'I thought I told you to go to sleep.'"

— Tripp Whetsell



Stuff

Comedy



"I love playing here," says the Boston-bred comedian, holding up traffic single-handedly.

"When people say that to me, I sometimes think, 'Wow, not only do they think I write all of these jokes, they think I even came up with a whole new way of speaking this stuff.' It kind of amuses me."

The 47-year-old Massachusetts native, who could easily pass for Art Garfunkel's brother, is clearly more concerned about telling jokes than what other people think about his demeanor.

Among some of his favorite bits:
 ■ "I knew I wasn't going to be the first-born even before I was born. There was graffiti in the womb: 'Bob was here.'"
 ■ "If you shoot a mime, should you use a silencer?"

■ "For a while I was in the centrifugal air force. Came home dizzy every night."

He's also obsessed with electrolysis.
 "Stuff just comes," explained Wright. "I recently wrote down the word electrolysis while I was looking for words in the newspaper I thought might be amusing."

"Then I came up with a joke a few days later, about a pony who was involved in a bizarre electrolysis accident. I say in my act that all of his hair was removed except for the tail, and now I rent him out for Hare Krishna family picnics."

"I'm also really into Lent right now, in the sense of Lent in the dryer."

Besides his road shows across the United States and Canada, Wright continues to work in film and TV. In March, he was the only comedian invited to perform on David Letterman's 20th anniversary special, and last year he wrote, directed and starred in an independent film, "One Soldier."

The movie, appropriately enough, is about a man obsessed with the unanswerable questions in life.

Wright doesn't do nearly as many live performances as he did a decade ago, and he welcomes the chance to choose his own projects now.

Which may also explain why he recently gave up homes in New York and Los Angeles, and permanently relocated to Lexington, Mass.

"I never consciously made a decision to

stay out of the limelight, but that's kind of what's happened," he said.

"And I'm not as driven to be on TV as I was. I still like going on Letterman and Leno occasionally, but I've changed from where I was a decade ago."

A graduate of Boston's Emerson College, Wright became an instant hit on the national comedy scene in 1982, after the executive producer of "The Tonight Show" saw him perform at a Boston Chinese restaurant that doubled as a comedy club.

His first appearance so impressed Johnny Carson that the king of late night invited him back for a command performance within a week, which led to guest spots on "Saturday Night Live" and more couch time on both Carson and "Late Night with David Letterman."

A 1986 Grammy-nominated comedy album and HBO specials followed, as did recurring roles on "Mad About You," "Becker" and "The Simpsons."

In 1989, Wright's "The Appointments of Dennis Jennings" won Best Short Film at the Academy Awards, and he had forgettable roles in such flicks as "Desperately Seeking Susan" and "Natural Born Killers."

For a while, Wright's existentialist schtick about putting instant coffee in the microwave and using spot remover on his dog became so popular overseas that fans in England began confusing him with a popular London disc jockey. Still, Wright says he never understood his appeal.

"Comedy is about observing the world," he said. "It's observing and interpreting things differently, layering double meanings and moving things away. Some of these things could really happen and most of them couldn't, but there's still enough logic to make sense."

"And the reality is that I'm just talking about what everyone else is dealing with."

Two subjects he won't talk about are his personal life (he's never been married) and the new jokes in his upcoming show. Wright is fiercely protective about his material.

"He said people have a bad habit of steal-

ing his jokes and posting them — wrong — on the Internet.

Pressed for couple of zingers, he had his manager send an e-mail with a few lines (see story opposite page).

Is he nervous about being back in New York?

"Not at all," Wright said. "I love playing here. The audiences are good, and the Beacon Theatre is great, so I'm really looking forward to it."

And what about the new act? "You're

going to see a man doing 90 minutes of what I'm doing now," he said.

"It's not like what you think. My brain is not like, 'Where's the joke?' ... Oh, my God. There's a joke."

"It's very calm, and I'm like anyone else walking around."

Steven Wright performs at the Beacon Theatre Thursday at 8 p.m. as part of the Toyota Comedy Festival. Tickets are \$30. Call (212) 307-7171 or go to www.toyotacomedy.com.

Yukking it up all over the place

If you're planning to attend any of the shows at the Toyota Comedy Festival, expect the unexpected.

Among the shocking routines will be one from Sarah Silverman, the ex-"Saturday Night Live" player who once offered a crowd double their money back if she couldn't recite all 50 states alphabetically in 30 seconds.

The only catch? She needed silence — and her hand under her armpit.

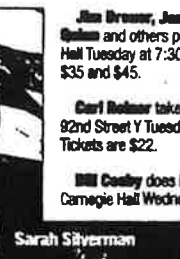
Silverman, 30, told the Post to expect a "short, but tight show with some surprises." Listen for one-liners like: "I wanted to be a stripper ever since I was molested."

This from a woman whose use of a racial epithet infuriated Asian Americans.

Here is a lineup of some of the featured joke-mongers also on the shick:



Jon Stewart



Sarah Silverman



Bill Cosby



Lewis Black

Jim Brewer, Jon Stewart, Colin Hanks and others perform at Town Hall Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 and \$45.

Carl Rowan takes the mike at the 92nd Street Y Tuesday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$22.

Bill Cosby does his thing at Carnegie Hall Wednesday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$60 and \$75.

Lewis Black storms Town Hall Friday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and \$30.

Sarah Silverman slips into Joe's Pub Friday at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20.

To order tickets, call (212) 307-7171 or go to www.toyotacomedy.com.

BY FARRAH WEINSTEIN AND HOLLY AGUIRRE