

Comedian Profile

ANTHONY SPANNO

By *Nicole Pellicia*

Are you sick and tired of the same comedians telling the same jokes over and over again? Come on, there are only so many knock, knock jokes a person can take without them feeling bored to tears, right? If you've ever felt this way, then you must not have caught Anthony Spanno's stand-up act!

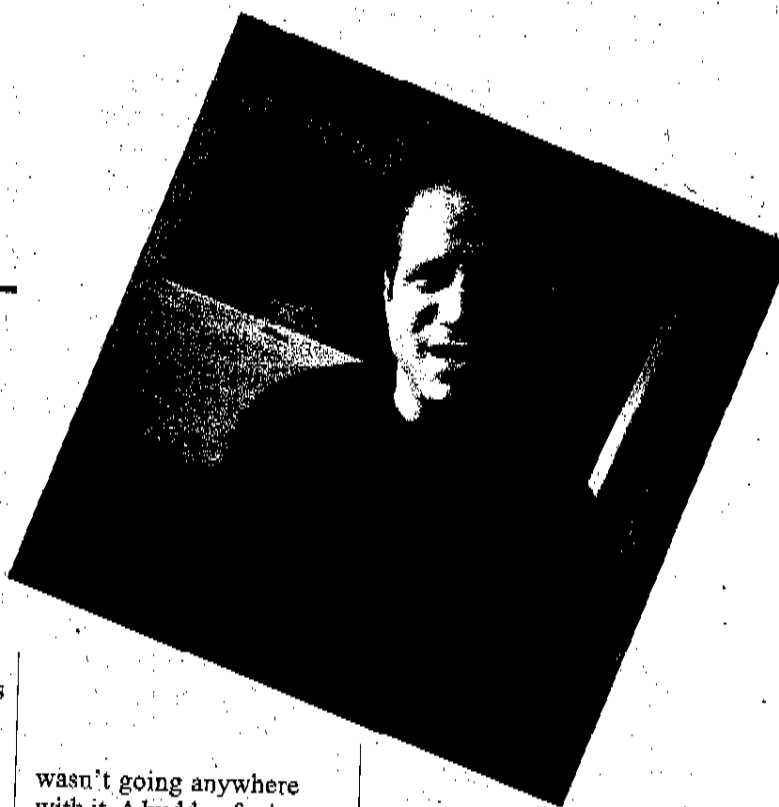
Anthony Spanno is an up and coming comedian from Jersey, who has brought many laughs and smiles to the crowds that he has performed in front of. He has played a variety of places from his hometown's Rascals on the Hudson in Jersey City to Point Pleasants own Uncle Vinnie's Comedy Club.

Comedy, one of his many passions, was not always a career for this stand up comedian. It wasn't until recently when he discovered his natural abilities and his love to make people laugh was the best career move he could have made. It's that love and passion that has led him to share the mic with some of comedy's veterans like Artie Lange of the Howard Stern Show.

Night And Day recently had the chance to talk to this funny man to see how his once hobby, is now a full time job!

Night And Day: Can you tell a little about yourself?

Anthony Spanno: I was a retirement planning specialist for a long time, customer service representative, as well as a business analyst. I did that for about 15 years. I always joked that I should be a comedian, I should be on television. Basically, I was told to get off my butt and do it, and I just said "you know what... maybe I should do this." Once I got on stage I had people laughing. I knew that was perfect for me. I started playing at the comic strip where you had to bring people. I didn't know where to go. I didn't have any friends in the business so you get a lot of these open mics and they're helpful to try out new material, but you're not getting a good gauge on what the audience thinks. It's almost like a cut throat thing, like you go out there, say all this stuff, and I noticed I



wasn't going anywhere with it. A buddy of mine comes out of nowhere and tells me he wants to get a showcase together bringing in the guys of the Howard Stern show: Artie Lange, Joc Florentine, Bob Levy, and Jimmy Polumbo, and he asks if I would be willing to do a few minutes. Now, here's a guy whose only been playing in front of the comic strip on a Tuesday night. I went from playing in front of no people to in front of 700 people. I was petrified and I see Jim Florentine on stage. Looking at him I see he's fantastic, he's a tremendous comedian. I say 'you know what, you can do that!' He raised the bar for me. To make a long story short, it was 2003, in May, at William Paterson University and sure enough there's 700 fans and I was nervous as heck and Artie Lange came by and puts his hand on me and says "don't worry about it man, you're going to do fine." So I forgot everything, I went out, said

a couple of things, got them laughing, sure enough it was exactly what I wanted it to be.

N&D: How long have you been doing stand up?

AS: I would say it's going on three years now.

N&D: Who are some of your influences as a comedian?

AS: The first album I ever heard was Bill Cosby, and just laughing, laughing, laughing listening to Bill Cosby when I was a young kid. I was like this guy's funny. He was like one of my first guys, but I would say the guy that just made me think "wow" was Richard Prior. Listening to Richard Prior as a kid, he was definitely my first hero. I liked it more and more. I remember even seeing Jerry Seinfeld in the early 80s, everything was very clean than, it was respected. Bill Cosby was always very

clean. I respected that fact...to make people laugh without using the f word. That is a challenge because a lot of comics would just rely on that, and to use the f word, and yeah people like to hear it, but if that's all your material is...they kind of phase you out. As I got older Nick DiPaolo became one of my favorites. DiPaolo and Prior I would say are my heroes, and Eddie Murphy.

N&D: Where are some of the places you perform at, besides Uncle Vinnie's in Point Pleasant?

AS: We're trying to get back into Banana's, they love me there. I used to play Rascals a lot. I've stayed away from the city for a while, because they don't really pay and it's the same breed of shows. The one good thing about not

playing in the City and playing in Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, is it has given me the opportunity to work on my craft. So now I have 30 good minutes. It's given the opportunity to work on my craft instead of saying 'oh, I got a great 10 minutes.'

N&D: Do you have any advice for aspiring comedians?

AS: Yes, a number of things. One, I would never, if you feel you can do it, don't listen to your friends; don't ever listen to your family. If it's something that you love and you go out constantly and you know eventually that you can do it, and get the feedback, then you never give up on that dream. Two, constantly go out and play. Make friends with other comedians because

they'll also have other places they'll be playing. If you get in line with a headliner, you talk with the headliner and if they say they could use you in this area, jump on it, even if there's no money involved. That's better than any open mic you can imagine. It gives you the opportunity to work on your stuff.

N&D: How do people normally respond to your stuff?

AS: Good. There are times that it didn't always go well. There was a time I was in real, real South Jersey and it was a little over their heads, I guess, and the comedians after me would just make fun of the people in the audience. I'd rather have my material. It's also important to interact with the audience, but some of them like to be part of the show, and it's important that

you can go in and out of both of your bits. It's just the audience. You have to keep on trying. I rarely have hecklers. When they're there you have to shoot them down, not too mean, because you don't want to loose your audience. Keep on trying.

Anthony Spano is definitely one of those comedians to look out for. If you want to check him out be sure to stop by the Uncle Vinnie's comedy clubs the last weekend in June. He's performing with Mike Marino on June 28, at The Uncle Vinnie's at The Holiday Inn in Toms River and June 29 and June 30 at Uncle Vinnies in Point Pleasant Beach.

For more information on this funny guy stop by his official site, www.anthonyspano.com for all the latest news, information, and schedule.

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