

Absurdity lovers flock to Shepherd's second visit

By ANDREW WILSON

"Wouldn't this place make a great john?"

That's Jean Shepherd's vision of Alexander Hall — the most grandiose privy in the western world.

And that's Jean Shepherd — an absurd fellow trying very hard to be funny — thinning hair falling over his forehead, paunch stretching his sports jacket, he sauntered around the stage, talking about the fifth grade, naughty words, and privies.

I thought he was funny; but I was drunk. Shep is the kind of performer who is probably best appreciated while one's critical faculties are slightly impaired.

Alexander Privy was literally packed with absurdity fans — not only were all the seats filled, all the aisles were occupied, too. They were treated to some really absurd entertainment: Shep brought a jug band with him, and they warmed the audience up with some ridiculous music.

And after Shepherd was finished with his routines, he brought

the band out to back him in a classic rendition of "I'm the Sheik of Araby." Shep played jew's harp and head ("I have the rarest and most desirable kind, a C melody head," he explained).

It was a great moment in musical history.

Shep is a six-nights-a-week disk jockey for WOR; working that much means that even a comedian with his huge repertoire has to repeat stories often. It was obvious that the material he used Friday night was far from new — but Shep's strutting demeanor and speed-freak's face enlivened his jokes immensely.

He grabbed his largely middle-aged audience with tales of his elementary-school days (he was always stuck in the back of the classroom, in the "alphabetical ghetto"), and of his Army career as a radarman.

You couldn't smell the smoke from the bonfire in Alexander Privy Friday night, but you could vaguely hear the rock band — if you stopped listening to Shepherd.



Photos by Wayne Bladh

Jean Shepherd plays his head