

Comic Says TV Is Short On Comedy

HOLLYWOOD (NEA) — Jean Shepherd is one of the funniest men around. He does his thing mostly on radio, in college concerts and in books. It's a shame he hasn't done more TV than he has but he's young yet.

Anyhow, Shepherd is a student of comedy as well as a practitioner. And he's pessimistic about the future of the art.

"I don't know what will happen," he says, "when Hope and Benny and Skelton and the others of that generation die off. There are very few new comics coming up — they have no place to learn."

He thinks Flip Wilson is funny and will be around a long time.

"Flip is making it," Shepherd says, "because he laughs at himself, and that's always been the best source of humor. Look at Dick Gregory — he's a poor comedian because his humor is directed at others, not at himself."

He says the public still wants to laugh, but it's tougher to find comedy around.

"TV doesn't give them enough comedy," he says. "TV is living in the past, giving a renewal to Lucy every year. There hasn't been a good young comic on TV in years, except for black males and ugly white females."

Shepherd's newest book, "Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories," is funny and nostalgic and beautiful, all at the same time, which is a neat trick. He prefers books when he writes, rather than plays or movie scripts, because he feels that in books it's the author who counts.