

Marla Lukofsky's comic talent prominent as nose on her face

By Bob Pomerantz

It's a good thing Marla Lukofsky decided against that nose job three years ago. Her pug is pulling in laughs, and laughs are the lifeblood of this young — and very different — Toronto comic.

On stage, the 23-year-old nose seizes your attention. Though it's no Jimmy Durante, Marla can make it seem the size of a cantelope as she employs it throughout her act.

"I was born with my father's eyes, mother's mouth and both my parents' noses," she says, squawking and snorting to underscore the shnozz. And after a playful rendition of Has Anybody Seen My Big Gypsy Nose?, the Pinocchio transformation is underway.

'Best thing'

Nasal gags are interspersed throughout her current Yuk-Yuk's Comedy Kabaret routine, which is dominated by musical parody. Playing on her nose as often as her guitar, she sings, mugs and honks her way through take-offs of popular tunes. Julie Andrews would swear off the sound of music forever if she heard Marla's risqué *These Are A Few Of My Least Favorite Things*.

A highlight is always her brilliant and fever-paced five minute interpretation of the Wizard of Oz — as seen through the eyes of Toto, Dorothy's dog. It's a favorite with audiences, while Marla calls it "the best thing I'll probably ever do."

"Generally I love singing and I love comedy, and what's always given me more work than many plain folksingers or comedians is the ability to blend both."

Marla is a growing concern on the Toronto Comedy scene. If you've been to Yuk Yuk's Comedy Kabaret, the Funny Bone or other local laugh spots, you've probably seen her doing an impression of a fly hitting a windshield — or other impressions the audience requests — along with that witty ditty *Grade 13 Blues*, based on her "forgettable and depressing" days at Bathurst Heights Secondary School.

'I'm shy'

"Back in high school, I was never popular and often miserable. And through my childhood, people were always making fun of my nose. But up on stage I feel popular and liked."

It's only because of that "fantastic feeling" she gets in front of an audience that Marla keeps hustling the limelight. "I'm an extremely shy person, and when I started performing seven years ago (as a last minute replacement at the old River Boat on Yorkville) I was constantly throwing up from nerves. But it was all worth that great feeling entertaining — and also helped keep my weight down."



Nose jab: Marla Lukofsky's jokes about her nose keep audiences snorting with laughter. She headlining — or is it noselining — at Yuk Yuk's this week. She finishes tomorrow.

After seven years, the work is "better than ever." Being one of a handful of comics who latched on to Yuk Yuk's when it opened three years ago, she started building up exposure and experience when the city's comic circuit was coming alive.

This week, ending tomorrow, she's headlining the show at Yuk Yuk's, on Bay St. She's only getting \$225, "but that's \$75 more a week than when I headlined there for the first time."

In spite of her growing TV and club exposure — with more work becoming available in American clubs and a mini tour of the Canadian West under her belt — showbiz still doesn't pay the bills. She follows a gruelling schedule working 9 to 5 at her father's North York paper box manufacturing company as a secretary, and "coming alive" evenings at the microphone.

"I live on three hours sleep, and

have some extra power to stay up longer than anyone I know. I'm fortunate to be able to miss a lot of days working for father — and save money by living at home."

Marla, who believes herself to be the only female comic regularly working Toronto, eventually hopes to break into "the very best clubs" or have her own television series. "I'm hoping I can start getting close to where I want in a couple of years."

But Marla gets very depressed when contemplating the odds of "ever making it in the big time."

"I know it's going okay now, but I wonder if I'll ever reach my goals. Everybody told me to have something else to fall back on and I became a legal clerk. I hated it, and really want all this effort to pay off."

"But," she joked, "it seems to be getting brighter, and I'm throwing up a lot less every week."