

The Guardian

by Doug Gallant

For some, the initial visual of comic Lorne Elliott standing at the microphone at Charlottetown's City Cinema is enough to open the floodgates of laughter. That's not unexpected. Before he even opens his mouth, he's got your undivided attention, drawn like a magnet to the trademark Elliott coiffure which, like his successful CBC radio show, goes madly off in all directions.

Then there's the undersized electric guitar which, when attached to Elliott's long, lanky frame, looks even smaller, much like Herman Munster clutching a ukulele. And then there's the look, a cat-who-swallowed-the-canary expression that lets you know you're in for it and you better be ready .

Then he starts. And for the next 90 minutes Elliott, a perennial favorite on the comedy club circuit and at festivals like Montreal's highly touted Just For Laughs event, lets you have it. There are comic observations on such everyday things as a trip to a P.E.I. beach, in which he discovers the male body's natural reaction to water just the other side of freezing, or his inability to do home repairs. There are unique insights into the intellectual workings of those who lead our nation and those who head our households who, according to Elliott are women, whom he rightly proclaims are by far the more intelligent of the species.

A good measure of Elliott's observationist humor is directed at himself and the dumb things he sometimes finds himself doing. Much of the rest is directed at the dumb things the rest of us do. A prime example is his reference to the fact that with the completion last year of the Confederation Bridge and a series of new toll roads on the mainland that allow you to bypass virtually every city, town and village between point A and point B, motorists can now drive completely around the Maritimes without seeing anything but other motorists.

Having spent several summers here, both working and playing, he's also developed some keen insights about Islanders and the tourists who flock to our shores, which he happily shares, like the fact that the two do not prepare for a day on a P.E.I. beach in quite the same way. One, he notes, packs sunscreen, tanning mats, flashy swimwear and assorted other paraphernalia. The other travels much lighter, taking beer and smokes.

There's more, much more, but that's between him and you. Elliott's comedy is a near perfect marriage of observation, imitation and illumination, a potent combination nurtured by over 20 years of live performances both as a solo artist and, early on, as half of the fabled duo known as Free Beer. Add an aptitude for slapstick and sight gags and the ability to transpose his musings to music and you've got the full picture of what the Montreal-born, Newfoundland-educated and P.E.I.-seasoned comic can throw at you in the course of one very hilarious evening.

Elliott's show has a good deal of new material, but those who've made his annual pilgrimage to P.E.I. part of their summer will find that he still features classics like his musical salute to lawn ornaments and his tale of weather-induced debauchery, *Stormstayed In Stanhope*. Elliott plays all this week and again next week at City Cinema. The show goes six nights a week, Tuesday to Sunday, at 9:15 p.m. The doors open at 8:45 p.m.