

The Local Lady of Laughter

Chris Rich, a comedian from Lower Makefield, was the big winner in the Bud Light Ladies of Laughter comedy contest recently in Atlantic City.

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A mob gathered around as Chris Rich of Lower Makefield walked out of Circus Maximus with an oversized check. "People kept grabbing me and asking me what machine I had hit," Rich said.

Chris Rich was the big winner of the "Bud Light Ladies of Laughter" comedy contest, held on Aug. 6 at Caesars in Atlantic City. More than 200 women from New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey sent tapes of their acts to be entered into the event.

The "Ladies of Laughter" was conceived by Peggy Boyce, the executive director of Andover Communications. Boyce contacted several companies in search of a sponsor for the Ladies of Laughter competition. At the same time, Bud Light was exploring new areas of interest.

"Women make up a huge market for them," Boyce said. "They're interested in supporting women, and having them as a sponsor really helped to get

the word out in a big way."

Four rounds of preliminary events were held at comedy clubs in New Jersey from July 15 - Aug. 3. There were two divisions of competition: professionals and new comedians.

The professionals were often well-know opening acts or performers who had been in the business for several years. New comedians were those who had never performed before, or up-and-coming performers with very little stage time.

The 10 finalists then were sent to Atlantic City for the finals on Aug. 6. Each finalist was given a suite at Caesars.

"I felt like I'd already won," Rich said. "I had this great room, and of course my husband loved it, he got to spend the night downstairs gambling."

Each performer in the professional division had to humor the audience for eight minutes and each new comedian performed five minutes

before a crowd of 1,100 people at Circus Maximus.

"It was really an overwhelming place to perform in," Rich said, noting that Bill Cosby performed there the next night.

The contestants were judged by a group of television directors and producers, and included the casting director from ABC television and a producer of TV's "The Rosie O'Donnell Show."

Rich won \$2,500, which she plans to use in part to have her grandmother's trunk refinished. "It's the trunk she used when she came over from Ireland," Rich said.

Rich, a native of the Kensington section of Philadelphia, has been a professional stand-up comedian for 10 years. "It's a great job," she said from her home in Lower Makefield. "I can't type and I carry some kind of virus that shuts down computers. So this is it for me."

Spotlight



One immediate result of the contest was a booking on Comedy Central's "Premium Blend."

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