

Video producer-director in mood to take comedy show sitting down

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After stand-up comedy comes sit-down comedy.

That's one of the themes to "Stand Up Comics Take a Stand!", the United Cerebral Palsy telethon that will be on Christian Broadcast Network at 7 tonight.

Former Houstonian Ron Roy is the host, and Roy also served as producer-director for the show, which will be rebroadcast at 10 p.m. Tuesday and 6 p.m. Sept. 23.

The show will feature several disabled comedians, including Gene Mitchener, the wheelchair-confined comedian who promotes "sit-down" comedy.

It's a different kind of concept, but Ron Roy (Ron Ring, to those who knew him as a student at Spring Branch High School) is used to developing video and film production with a different angle.

He was one of the first to become heavily involved with Fashion Video, those in-store videotapes designed to promote lines of clothing.

Roy has also produced and marketed a line of "Moodtapes", videotapes that are designed to set a mood.

His first mood tape was called "Tranquility", but the series of tapes is not just for relaxation. They are simply meant to induce moods that are pleasant to the watchers. The second tape, "Floral Fantasy", is "the world's first video bouquet." The next two, under production, are going to be "Energy", which Roy hopes to make "the world's ultimate party tape," and "Oceans and Dolphins." For the latter, Roy has joined the San Diego State University dolphin research team.

There is no narration on the tapes, and they have original music, but Roy knows that some people may want to use the images with their own music.

"The ads for the "Floral Fantasy" say, 'Turn your TV into a video vase.' I think people can use their TVs in different ways," Roy said. "I like to turn the TV on, just to have that light moving, or something to catch my eye, but I'll be listening to my stereo or records. Where I use my tapes is when I have people over for dinner, and there are little lulls in the conversation, there's always something on the screen that's a great conversation stimulator."

"Moodtapes" are sold in specialty stores, department stores and through specialty catalogs, such as Sharper Image, and the fashion videos are on monitors in clothing outlets and apparel markets. Airline magazines offer the "Moodtapes", and he's negotiating with Bloomingdale's to have a "Moodtapes" boutique in their stores for this Christmas.

These are not the kinds of things you can run down to your neighborhood video store and get, but that doesn't bother Roy.

"I mean, I like "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid", it's one of my favorite movies; but I can only watch it once, maybe twice a year maximum. With these tapes people come home and watch them every day.

"The thinking is so ingrained at a video store that either it's a movie or it's nothing," Roy said. "The distributors say they don't understand it, why would you buy one (of the "Moodtapes)," but then they take them and we get them asking to send everything we have, anything - one with penguins, if we had it."

For his comedy special, like his video productions, Roy bypassed conventional channels. When he got involved with the televised charity program, he wanted to do it in such a way that all the money would go back to the charity itself rather than paying for the production.

Roy got the idea for his "Moodtapes" one day when he was fiddling in the editing room with images of electronic lightning. He took about 15 minutes to get the sequence perfectly in synch with music, then stepped back to look at it.

"I thought, 'This is cool,' and then I noticed that it had drawn a crowd of about 10 people. They were going, 'Put it back on!' I thought that if I could do this with electricity, think what I could do with waves and clouds and flowers."

As for the fashion videos, Roy said that they are settling down after an initial period when they were trying to outdo one another for effects.

"As I predicted, even when I was doing them, they would not be cost effective. They cost too much for too little exposure. Only a few designers could afford a quarter of a million for a four- to five-minute video that would only be seen at the point of purchase. Now they're more like upbeat industrial videos and are made for \$15-\$80,000.

"This week, I'm working on one for Ocean Pacific, so it's going to be surfery and bouncy. But I'm also doing one for a Los Angeles designer named Jessica McClintock, whose clothes are very sensuous and Victorian and beautiful, and I wouldn't dream of using that concept. So there are lots of soft filters and fog images."

None of this has made Roy more fashion-conscious.

"I'm still blue jeans and sneakers. If you're fashion-trendy, you can spend a lot of money on clothes that are only good for one season.

"I did a video for a clothing company out of England. Boy George was one of the investors, and it was some of the weirdest clothing you've ever seen in your life, like you'd wreck your car if you saw people wearing this on the street. It had pterodactyl fins and things like that. I wouldn't have been caught dead in it. So I did a concept out of the "Twilight Zone" and they loved it."