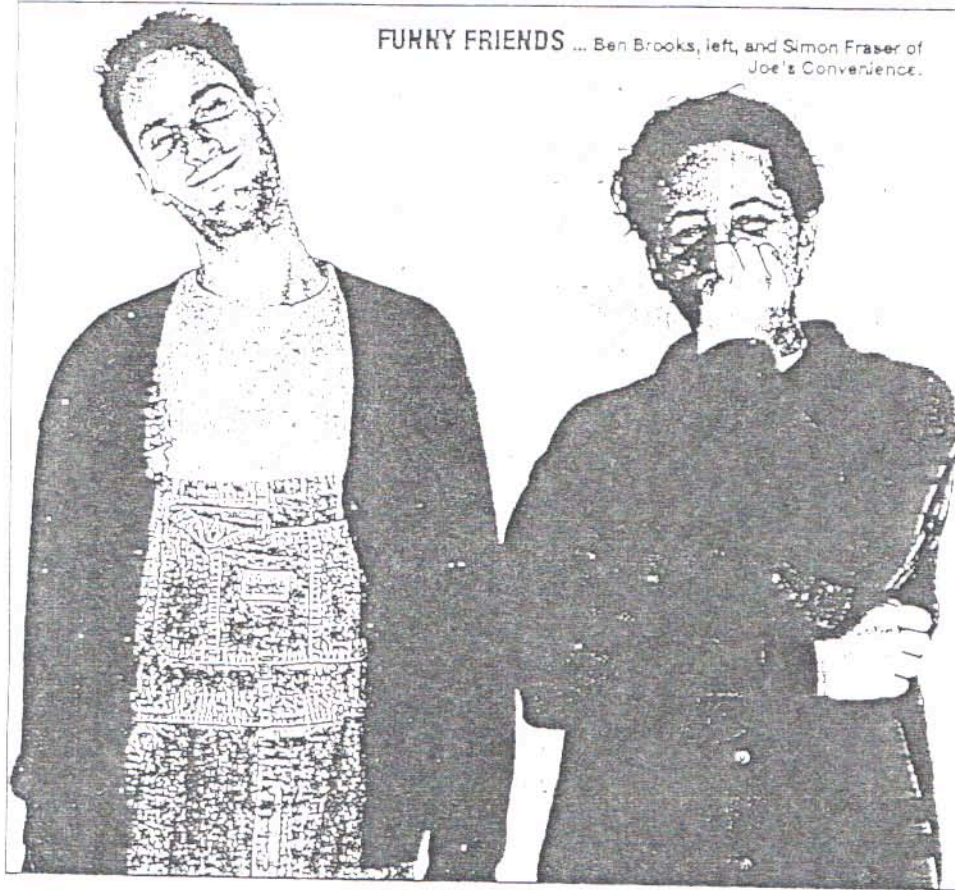


FUKKY FRIENDS ... Ben Brooks, left, and Simon Fraser of Joe's Convenience.



# Funny about TV...

If you subscribe to the notion that being on TV means you've made it, then this has been a big year for one half of the Toronto comedy duo Joe's Convenience.

That would be the half represented by Simon Fraser, the sharp-tongued local sketch veteran, who found a regular gig as one of the two flannel-wearing X-ers in the Carling's "beer-umentary" ads who travel the country, hiding in the bushes and studying beer drinking habits.

It would be synonymous if the other guy in the ad were Simon's partner Ben Brooks. But it's not. It's Jack Nicholson, ex of the Leslie Spit Treo.

Fringe benefits? Well, sadly, he doesn't get free beer. But he has somewhat of a TV-Q now. "I've been recognized about ten times," says Simon, with an underwhelmed tone.

"It's like my friend David, who's an actor," interjects Ben. "A woman came up and said 'I know you, I know I've seen you.' And he starts saying 'Well, I've been in a few things...' And she says 'I know! You were our waiter the other night!'"

TV nearly insinuated itself on the other half of Joe's Convenience when Brooks was invited to fly down and audition for the cast of Saturday Night Live.

He didn't get the job, but U of T's

CIUT radio reported he had. "I was going to call CIUT and say that after their broadcast I'd used my last dime to fly back to New York only to find it wasn't true, and it was now CIUT's responsibility to raise the money to fly me back."

Ironic indeed if he'd have landed the SNL gig. Simon spent years in short-lived troupes like Delaware Water Gap and Mature Themes Violence Course Language, before finally finding a partner he could live with, literally (the two are roommates).

They've been together two years. "If I can't have you, no one can!" Simon shouts, pretending to shoot Brooks at the notion of losing him to SNL. "No wait a minute," he says, changing his firing motion. "I'd use two guns, John Woo style."

So TV keeps intruding on their lives, alternately threatening and seducing. Hence the dynamic behind *Hungry For The Box*, the new Joe's Convenience show Dec. 4 at the Rivoli. "We don't like what's on television, and yet we want to be on television," says Ben. "It's a never-ending passion."

To that end, they have a pilot sitcom script making the rounds, about the life of two sketch comics (hey, write what you know). It's been pitched to MTV in the U.S., but we may see it first as an episode of

CBC's Comics.

In the meantime, fans will be getting all-new material at the Rivoli show (including a BBC game show spoof called *Spot The Whore*). Prolific writers, Fraser and Brooks normally debut about 80% new material — though they do repeat the best skits, including the why-did-she-leave-me? song *You're Ugly* and a very funny skit about two roommates pretending to be francophones while speaking Grade Nine French.

And, bravely, they assume their crowds to be reasonably eclectic. Recently, they filmed an 11-minute spoof of the film *Thirty Eight Short Films About Glenn Gould* and played it for an audience. "Nobody'd seen the movie," moans Simon. "I mean, we really nailed some of the vignettes. I know we did. But it was all for naught."

"I'd still rather take the chance. Anybody can do sh-n-piss humor. I really believe there's an audience for the other stuff."



Jim SLOTEK COMEDY