

# CARROT TOP

## give him props

HE'S A HUGE SUCCESS, AND NO ONE SEEMS MORE SURPRISED THAN THE ENTERTAINER HIMSELF

**O**nstage, Scott Thompson (a/k/a Carrot Top) is a one-man multimedia comedy whirlwind of props, jokes, impersonations and rock 'n' roll. More than just a "prop comic," he's an entertainer in the purest sense of the word. Holding nothing back, the showbiz sensation has a singular mission: to wow his audience, and the sold-out crowds love him for it. We caught up with Carrot Top to talk about his first exposure to HUSTLER, the rumors, comedy groupies and being pictured on Las Vegas billboards.

**HUSTLER:** We heard you are really excited to be in HUSTLER.

**Carrot Top:** To be in HUSTLER is kind of crazy. Pinch me.

**Do you remember the first time you saw a HUSTLER?**

Yeah. I was in a hurry because I was trying to hide it. My dad was coming in. He had a lot of magazines, and I remember looking through the different ones and loving HUSTLER because it was more risqué. I didn't put it back in the same

place, and my dad found out. My dad is very anal, and everything has to be in exactly the right place. He found the misplaced HUSTLER and said, "You looking in my magazines again?" I said, "No." He said, "I know you did because you put it back in a different stack, out of order. But it's okay because you picked a good one. You've got good taste, son."

**Were your dad's mags organized chronologically or alphabetically?**

Probably in whatever order his cum-shot

desired. I don't know how he had it, but I screwed it up.

**Isn't it a little early in the interview to talk about your dad's cum-shot?**

It's never too early to talk about that.

**How long have you been doing comedy?**

I started in 1986. I didn't come from a showbiz family. My dad worked for NASA, and my brother was an Air Force pilot. I was always kind of the class clown. I went to college [at Florida Atlantic University] to get a degree in marketing. They had an open mic night at the college, and my roommate said, "We should go to that thing, and you should be in it. You're funny." I went up and told old knock-knock jokes. It was well received.

The energy of being onstage telling jokes in front of my friends was kind of fun. I was always telling jokes at tailgate parties and campfires, but the stage was different. They had that open mic every semester, and I would go up every time. Eventually I started to make it more me. I'd make jokes about my appearance or about school. Local jokes. There was a street called Butts Road. I said, "I was driving down Butts Road. It's where all the assholes live." Stupid jokes like that. My act evolved.

**When did you add the props?**

The props came into play when I went down to the local comedy club. They said, "You can't just do jokes about college. That's not going to work with a general crowd. Maybe Butts Road is funny in Boca [Raton, Florida] but not here." I started adding signs that I stole. I had one of those "Slow: Children at Play" signs. The act became observational things that I discovered and stole.

**When did you transition from stealing props to making them?**

One day I was driving behind this old lady whose head you couldn't see above the steering wheel. Based on that, I made this hat with an old woman's head on top of it on a spring. I said it was for old people to wear so you could see their heads above the steering wheel. That was the first prop I ever made. It killed onstage because 20-plus years ago no one worked with props. Everyone in the audience laughed because it was something they saw every day. After that I made a cowboy boot with a kickstand on it so you won't fall down when you're drunk. And I started thinking of more and more props.

**How did your folks take it when you told them you were going to be a comic?**

My parents knew I was kind of funny, but when I went off to college, they didn't think I'd come back a comedian. My dad said, "A comedian? What do you mean?" I told him, "I'm telling jokes, and they're paying me." He said, "Paying you? How much? And who are these people that are paying you?"

I called my dad the first time I was going to do *The Tonight Show*. He said, "You're going to

watch *The Tonight Show*?" I said, "No. You have to watch it because I'm on it." He said, "You're on *The Tonight Show*? Yeah, right."

**A lot of comics say their material comes out of personal sadness or tragedy, but you seem pretty happy.**

I think it's a cliché that every clown is sad. I think to a degree there is a struggle or roadblock or something that happened when you were younger that makes you become a comic. If you go way back into their childhood, they were the ones that didn't fit into the group. I was picked on as a kid, but it wasn't that bad. You learn right away the art of self-deprecation. You're going to make fun of me? Well, I'll make fun of myself. Then I get the laugh, and I got you.

**You're billed as a prop comic. Do you find that label a bit restricting?**

It is restricting. But someone like yourself who follows comedy understands that. The general public doesn't know the difference. It's a way to tell people what you do in as few words as possible. If you see my show, it's a whole variety of genres in one. There are props, but there is also stand-up and some old-school schtick complete with rim-shots with some impersonations and video clips thrown in.

**Does it bother you that some people criticize your use of props?**

It absolutely bothers me. As you go further in your life, you learn how to deal with different obstacles. That was one of them. There were clubs in the South that wouldn't book me because I was a prop comic. In Atlanta this one snooty club would never book me just because I had some props and a strobe light in my act.

Years later I ended up playing the Fox Theater in Atlanta, and I sold out 6,000 seats. On a Wednesday! I wasn't allowed to play the 200-seat Punchline, but I could sell out the Fox Theater. Being kept from doing something just because you're perceived a different way would bother anybody.

**What is life like for you in Las Vegas?**

It's great. It's a good community to be in. I've been here for a long time, and I get a lot of local support and a lot of local love. My face is everywhere, so you'd think people would be tired of seeing me, but they're not. They even tell me how much they love my new billboards.

**What is the biggest misconception people have about you?**

That I'm just a stupid, wacky prop guy. After the live show, people come up to me all the time. They don't intend to be mean, but they say, "Wow! That show was way better than I thought it would be." A lady walked up to me and said, "Your show was the best show we went to that we didn't want to go to." I find that flattering. The biggest thing is that people think of you a certain way without actually taking the time to investigate.

**Do you still get nervous before a show?**

You get that anxious blast of adrenaline because it's a new beginning every night. The night before you could have killed and gotten a standing ovation. Then the next night you're there putting your mic on going, *I have to fucking do that all over again?* You can't say, "You should have seen me last night. I fucking killed."

**What was your worst gig ever?**

I was playing at the bar of a ski resort.

There were all these skiers and snowboarders, and they were plastered—as drunk as they could be. I did my act, and everything was wrong.

The room sucked. The sound didn't work, and the heat was blasting. It was horrible.

At the end of my show I'm only dressed in my Mick Jagger outfit, which is shirtless with bike shorts. I walked right off the stage, directly out into

the snow and down the highway all the way back to my hotel two miles away, cursing and muttering "Fucking, fuck, fucker!" to myself the whole way.

**Best gig?**

I did a stadium

gig for 82,000 people at the University of Florida. I was a Gator my whole life. I used to go to all the games there. I loved the University of Florida. The weirdest part was the delay. I said, "Go Gators!" and heard it go out there a few seconds later like an echo. Then the reaction came back in a wave. It took me a few minutes to figure out the timing of the sound. But I killed.

**Both you and Criss Angel headline at the Luxor. Is there a competition between the two of**