

Brooklyn Comedy Company

Mon., Jan. 31

A comedy scene grows in Brooklyn, and not of the wiry-rimmed, hipster variety, either. It's the brainchild of a 26-year-old Bed-Stuy native, Elon James White. In November, White banded together a bunch of his friends and favorite local comics to form the Brooklyn Comedy Company. Since then, he's hosted a weekly stand-up show at the Ripple Bar in Prospect Heights. Though under the radar, recent shows have been standing-room only.

"The whole point was that I was tired of the comedy nonsense in New York," he said on a recent Monday night, his hulking frame draped in an orange hooded sweatshirt. "If you don't know 20 people in New York, you're not gonna get any stage time."

Many of the larger comedy clubs in Manhattan operate on the bring-your-own-crowd rule. "Here's there're no weird policies like that," says White. "No five-person minimum. [We're just] here to do comedy for comedy's sake."

The audience at the Ripple Bar is mostly young and African-American (when I entered, one of the comedians pointed at me and said, "Don't worry, no one's gonna..." then made his hand into a gun and pointed it at his head).

The bar is handsomely outfitted; a requisite brick wall is wallpapered in cartoon caricatures. Ceiling fans keep the air breathable. The stage, coated in orange and aqua blue paint, is small and intimate. But with seating sparse, White has considered expanding to a larger venue and is in talks with the Lower East Side's Laugh Lounge.

"I like the idea of 'you give us a venue and we'll run it,'" he put it bluntly.

So far the funding for the BcCo has come mostly from White's own wallet. But what he calls a "labor of love" for now could soon turn profitable. After all, says Dafina McMillan, a BcCo publicist, there's definitely demand for more comedy—and comedy venues—in Brooklyn.

"It's kind of lacking here," she says. "Usually I always have to go to Manhattan and pay a two-drink minimum."

BcCo's shows have no cover charge or drink minimums. Comics work for free and come from all boroughs and ethnic backgrounds. Still, the performer who generated the most laughs at a recent performance, hands-down, was Wil Sylvince, a Haitian comic from Brooklyn.

And as he succinctly put it to the three white people in the audience, "Support anything black you can. After all, we supported you for the past 400 years."

Ripple Bar, 769 Washington Ave. (betw. St. Johns & Lincoln Pls.), Brooklyn, 347-866-8266; 8:30; free.