

**MIRROR****go**This week... **Theatre**  
*this week*

## The chairmen cometh

The Cripplingly Funny Comedy Show aims to enlighten while it entertains



CHUCKLES AND CHALLENGES: Michael Lifshitz

by [RUPERT BOTTENBERG](#)

It's perhaps inaccurate to call this Friday's Cripplingly Funny Comedy Show an evening of stand-up comedy—two of the four performers won't be doing much standing up. Ottawa's Alan Shain, diagnosed with cerebral palsy as a small child, and organizer Michael Lifshitz, whose condition is Multiple Congenital Musculoskeletal Abnormalities, will both be "rockin' the wheels of steel," so to speak.

"If you think about it," says Lifshitz, "at Just For Laughs and a lot of comedy festivals, you have ethnic comedy, sexual orientation comedy, all different types, but you don't particularly have a disabled comedy show. I started doing comedy because it's a great way to make people a bit more comfortable and open them up to talking about disabilities and seeing you as a regular person. It can make them more sensitized to the issues people with disabilities face—without, of course, complaining or preaching to them."

In addition to Shain's and Lifshitz's side of the story (expect a few cracks at the

expense of Montreal's public transport system), Montreal musician/comic E.J. Brulé addresses matters of the mind. "I have this theory," says Lifshitz, "that people with physical disabilities, such as Alan and myself, people assume we can't do anything. With mental-health issues, it goes to the other extreme—they figure they're faking or doing it for attention or making excuses, as opposed to recognizing that it's as much of a challenge as a physical disability."



DOING IT FOR ATTENTION: E.J. Brulé

The odd man out, unless you regard "career in comedy" as a heartbreaking handicap, is host Peter J. Radomski. Lifshitz, in his Facebook announcement, calls Radomski "bi-directionally challenged" (i.e. short and fat). "It makes the point that everybody has something," says Lifshitz. "I like to say we all have challenges—mine just gives me a better parking spot."

"We're going to have a Q&A at the end of the comedy show so that people can ask us any question that they have in mind. We'll do it anonymously, at the door, because people may be a little shy. By the end of the night, if people can go home a little more aware as well as having had a nice evening out, then we'll have achieved our objective."

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