



MAHER'S ATTACKS

Is another *Bill* just what Washington needs?
The answer may be *Politically Incorrect*

BILL MAHER is cooling down at home in L.A. after his Saturday workout: three-on-three basketball with some fellow comics. It's a brief respite before Comedy Central's *Politically Incorrect* host hits the road with his timely stand-up

act and tapes a new HBO special to air in January.

The break is well deserved. *PI* is enjoying a postconvention bounce: It doubled its length to an hour during those weeks, doubled its ratings, and snared long-sought-after guests. Since the political planets align only

HOT SEAT: In his stand-up, Maher uses politics as a jumping-off point

once every four years, the timing seems ideal for Maher, 40, and his show to become the center of the poli-satire universe. Come inauguration time next January, Maher's show will be moving to ABC and a privileged post-*Nightline* spot.

The comedian just plain ol' loves talking politics. On Ross Perot's '96 chances: "I think he shot his wad." Or the mood of the candidates now: "Like you're in the showroom, about to either buy that car or walk out, and they're the salesman, saying 'What do I have to say to get you in this car?'"

Maher will be doing more and more of that talking on stage as Election Day nears. He'll be at Boston's Berklee Performance Center Oct. 11, Dallas' Majestic Theatre Nov. 15, and Austin's Paramount Theatre Nov. 16. "Stand-up is a completely different animal" from TV monologues, he says. "It's a different kind of joke, a different rhythm.

"It's not so geared to what's going on in Washington. When I do something directly political, even if [an audience] doesn't agree with it, if it's funny and true, they gotta give it up.... Stand-up is more personal; a monologue is standing on the corner watching the parade go by and making wisecracks about it."

He's getting in as many live preelection wisecracks as possible. Maher says he loves performing "to people familiar with what I do. You don't have to spend any time winning them over. All you have to do is make sure the \$30 they paid is well worth it." —Michael Giltz