

By MICHAEL GILTZ

FOR Andy Richter — the once and future sidekick of Conan O'Brien — saying yes to rejoining O'Brien when the talk show host takes over the "Tonight" show this June was almost entirely positive.

"The only down side was I felt like I might have to eat some crow from some of the more snarky members of the entertainment press," admits the 42-year-old actor and comedian. "But then I thought, 'Crow can be prepared in very delicious ways. Crow burrito. I love burritos!'"

Though Richter said goodbye to late night nine years ago, he's returned often (including as a guest on O'Brien's final show) and been working steadily with everything from voice-work in the "Madagascar" movies to sitcoms like "Andy Barker, P.I." (overseen by O'Brien) and "Andy Richter Controls The Universe," both of which came and went quickly.

For Richter, Conan's offer couldn't have come at a better time.

"I really do feel like — especially in the last couple of years — that I've been standing in a storm and someone opened a door and said, 'Get out of the rain. Come in here with us,'" says Richter. If Conan hesitated in asking, it wasn't for lack of desire.

"I guess Conan said, 'God, I wish Andy would do it. Do you think he would do it? He probably wouldn't come back,'" says Richter.

"I guess he guessed every-



Andy Richter (left) will rejoin Conan O'Brien when he moves into the "Tonight" spot this summer.

Richter: Reunion came just in time

body and kept going over it for a couple of months. And, finally, Jeff Ross the [executive] producer just got sick of him and said, 'Why don't you call him?'"

"And that's what he did. That night he called me at home, and we talked for an

hour. And I knew what she was going to say, but I said 'Let me talk to my wife.'

"I'm just so thrilled to be working with friends and getting out of having to sit across the table from idiots," he laughs.

"The only person I really

feel like I got to worry about talking about whether or not something's funny is Conan O'Brien and I can't think of anybody better to have that conversation with.

"He's done a wonderful thing giving me this opportunity."