

Comedian Tom Clark's pretty serious about his career.

The Milwaukee native, who performed at local clubs like Stooges, moved in 2001 to Los Angeles to pursue comedy full time.

But the 30-something graduate of St. Norbert College, where he earned a degree in international studies, wasn't always interested in the funny business.

"I was never like the class clown or the guy who would get up in front of the class," says Clark.

After college, Clark traveled to Mexico, where he entertained people by playing classic rock on his guitar — his first entry into the performing arts. But with his career path still up in the air, he returned to Milwaukee and began working at Goodwill, where he ran a mentoring program for kids.

That's when comedy came a knockin'.

In 1994 his brother convinced him to sign up for a six-week comedy class run by comedians Roz Turner and Dobie Maxwell at Cardinal Stritch College. "It was something I liked doing," he says. "And, eventually, it became something I had to do."

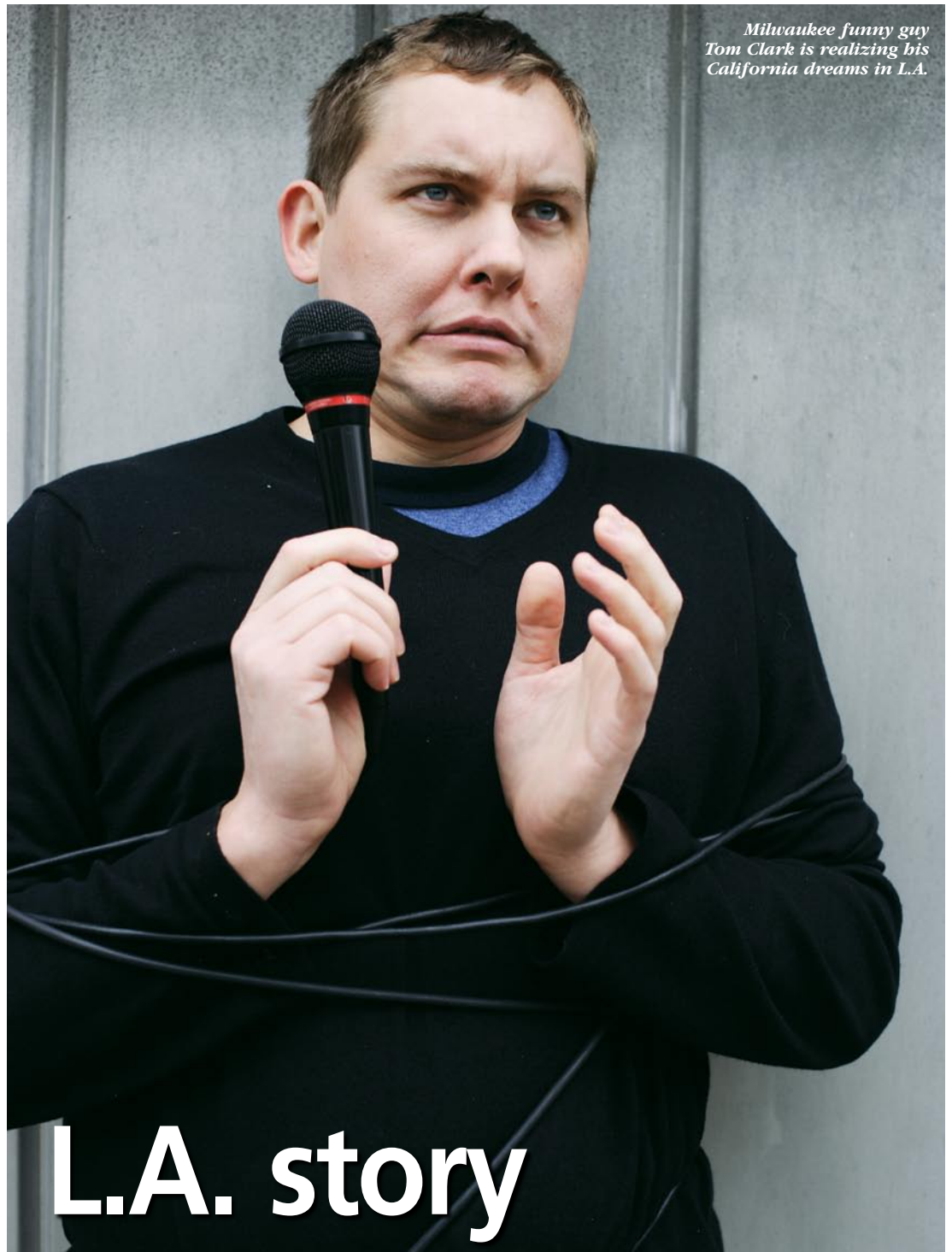
Four years later, he got his big break at the Chicago Comedy Festival. "I got some attention from some industry types," he says. "That gave me the first idea I was pretty good at this."

A year later, he won the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Chicago and completed the Conservatory Program at Second City in Chicago. Yet, he still wasn't convinced he was destined for the stage.

That changed in 2001, with his move to L.A.

"The first year was really hard. You're starting over," says Clark. "I knew that going in, but it is a shock to your system that no one knows who you are."

Today, he's more recognizable. Shortly after moving to California, the wholesome Midwesterner, who jokingly calls himself The Bad Boy of Comedy, won the Comedy Central contest "Laugh Riot." Moving on to face eight other comedians across the country, he finished second, but the contest opened up some important doors. "All the judges were industry types,



*Milwaukee funny guy Tom Clark is realizing his California dreams in L.A.*

## L.A. story

and a year later, I wound up doing Comedy Blend on Comedy Central," he says.

Since then, Clark, who says his "surreal, quirky" material is inspired by Steve Martin, has done some TV and film work, including the short "El Dorko," based on his experiences in Mexico.

"I'm trying to figure out what the next step's going to be," says Clark. "I still consider myself The Bad Boy of Comedy, so don't mess with me ... if you don't mind."