

Don't even try to fit Reno into any kind of box or slap some kind of label on her—this woman is an original. You'll just have to see for yourself when she arrives Sept. 14 for a two-night run of her one-gal show *Citizen Reno*.

When I ask how she refers to herself—as a comic, an actress, a performance artist or a raving maniac—her reply offers some insight. “I’ve never really settled on something I like. I just let other people do it... I don’t know fuckin’ what to say. I don’t like any of the words that are out there, and I don’t want to be precious about making up my own stupid-ass word.”

OK, then, we’ll just call her a performer.

You might have caught her act on Bravo, on HBO or even off Broadway. She’s loud, she’s mouthy, she’s mad at the way the world isn’t working, and she’s not the least bit shy about sharing her rants. This might also piss her off, but she sounds like a lesbo Dennis Miller, although not nearly as nice.

So, has she always been so angry? “Yes, God damn it!” she responds, nearly blowing the receiver off my ear. “I’m not into fiction. The reality around me is crazy enough. Because I have this fragmented way of living in the world, I pursue distractions, and that becomes my adventure for the day.”

In her show, she has a scheduled train of thought she can ride when she wants to, but she pretty much jumps off for side trips whenever the spirit moves her.

A few years back she made a feature for HBO called *Reno Finds Her Mom*, so I have to ask about that intriguing title. As an adopted child she says she didn’t have much interest in finding her birth mother. But when the opportunity presented itself to film her search for her

Take a wild trip to Reno

Not the city, but her own peculiar state of mind

BY ORIANA GREEN

mother, she jumped on it.

So where did she find her? “She was in my least favorite place in the whole country: the ‘burbs, the [San Fernando] Valley.”

On top of that, Reno’s worst nightmare was realized: Her mother is a Republican. “I’m glad she gave me up. I wouldn’t have wanted to be brought up by her. She’s a real right-winger.”

However, Reno does sound fascinated by her mother’s look. “She’s Cuban and Puerto Rican, a femme fatale clotheshorse who looks exactly like Valerie Harper in the ‘70s.”

Is she sorry she found her? “No, it was a big step. But she started to sue me, so I suppose you could say she rejected me twice,” she adds sardonically.

And how much is being a lesbian part of her rage? Plenty, it appears. “Whenever I’m in



Reno

the town of Los Angeles there is such a forced heterosexuality, I feel like I have to rub my clit against a fuckin’ totem pole. People think it’s an insult to think you’re a lesbian, like that’s a liability.”

Apparently, most things tick her off, but what does she find amusing? “A lot of my work is not side-slapping funny. It’s more, ‘Oh, don’t you think this is weird, too?’ I’m no Jerry Seinfeld.”

Well, how about politics? When I ask if she has any comments on Dubya, Reno first lets out a heavy sigh.

“Oh, he hurts me,” she says, genuine pain evident in her voice. Then she pauses—some-

thing she rarely does—as though she can’t even pick one thing to start ranting on.

Does she think we can survive four years of him? “I don’t think so. He’s so obviously incompetent. There are real bullies in positions of power that we don’t know about. Treasury Secretary O’Neill wants to stop corporate taxes in America, as though they really pay their share anyway! He thinks able-bodied adults should sock away enough money in their lifetimes to meet their later needs... he wants to eliminate Social Security and Medicare. This shit isn’t being talked about at all!”

I get the feeling she’ll be talking about it in her act. I’m starting to think this hardcore New Yorker might enjoy her visit to our green, environmentally aware part of the map—until I find out where she’s calling from.

“Right now I’m in the country in northern Maine, and it’s scary as shit! The fact that there’s nobody around, there are too many implications in the rustling of the trees,” she says, sounding like she can’t wait to be rescued.

She has a whole riff in her act about her dislike of the great outdoors. “That’s the thing about the country—it’s outside! What is this we’re stepping on? It’s dirt! In the city we have this all-purpose covering called cement, and it’s washable! You wash dirt and it’s mud!”

Reno sums herself up this way: “I reek city.” So much for my thought of offering to show her Trillium Lake! **J**

Howie Baggadonutz presents CITIZEN RENO 8 p.m. Sept. 14 and 15 at the Echo Theatre, 1515 S.E. 37th Ave. The opening act will be Portland soul diva Tahoe Jackson. Tickets are \$18 at the door or \$15 in advance from In Other Words, It’s My Pleasure or Fastixx.



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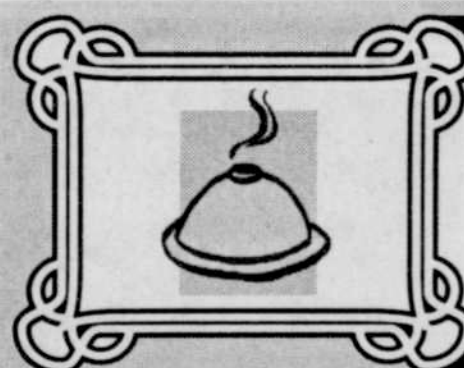
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