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PEOPLE

Leave 'em laughing

Comedy co-eds bring levity to final hours of Portland Pride

BY CHELSEA FINE

After shaking off Saturday night's libations, applying aloe to your sun-burned shoulders and popping a few aspirin you find you've missed Portland's Pride parade, you can still haul your pride back down to Waterfront Park on Sunday afternoon, when Elvira Kurt and Jim David, two of the brightest comedians working today, will have their way with your funny bone.

Kurt, who hails from Canada, is making the first Portland appearance of her 17-year career. San Francisco Pride is also on her itinerary this summer before she heads home for Toronto to continue work on a television show she's developing with Canada's Comedy Network.

She describes the show, *Pop Cultured*, as an arts and culture version of *The Daily Show*. "It's like *Entertainment Tonight*, if Mary Hart went off her meds and said everything she was thinking," she tells me over the phone while on tour in Canada.

Working on the show would enable Kurt to be home more, which is becoming important to her family: partner, two cats, two dogs, two Subarus. The couple are also in the blueprint stage of having human kids.

Kurt began her act in the closet but came out onstage nine years ago and hasn't looked back. The Second City alum's career includes appearances on HBO, VH1, Showtime and Lifetime sprinkled among appearances in top comedy clubs like Caroline's and The Improv. She has also been a contributing writer to Ellen DeGeneres and is the voice of *Reality Chick* on Oxygen's animated series.

"It's nice now—I can basically pick and choose the shows I want to do," says Kurt. The queer visibility of late in entertainment and the media has had a bit of an impact, she adds. "There is a bigger turnout and a healthy mix of queer and straight comedy fans. I'm getting a lot of, 'My mother thinks you're great,' which is weird."

Like queer fave Margaret Cho, Kurt's parents are fodder for a lot of her material. "I think it's funny...I don't use it out of a cathartic place, it's just real life," says Kurt, whose parents wanted her to be a doctor but have admitted after 17 years that, much like the lesbianism, comedy isn't just a phase.

Jim David is also a 17-year veteran of the stage and has been delivering out material for the past seven of them. Talking to me while on the road at Las Vegas' Riviera Hotel and Casino, he notes, "Vegas has been like a German shepherd sitting on your face; the sun is pure hell." But, he admits, "Vegas is fantastic—you have to come."

David, a North Carolina transplant, will bounce home to New York (and his partner of 16 years) after his Portland appearance for a John Kerry fund-raiser before heading out on a tour of Amsterdam.



Comedians Elvira Kurt and Jim David are tickled pink to be coming to the Rose City

Like Kurt, David is all over the place. He appears regularly on Comedy Central's *Tough Crowd with Colin Quinn*, and the network frequently repeats his half-hour comedy special.

David has appeared on Broadway, off-Broadway and in films. His one-man show, *South Pathetic*, about the worst community theater in the South, opened in New York City in January. And the comedian just released his second CD, *Live from Jimville*. His biting wit can also be found in the pages of *Us Weekly* as a part-time fashion guru.

But you may recognize David from his recent appearance on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* as a guest comedy consultant. "I have received so much attention for that," he says of his stint with the Fab Five, "probably more attention than with anything else I've done."

David says things haven't changed that much for him since he became an out performer, as he still plays for mostly straight audiences. But, he notes, they are "much more receptive" than they used to be. "They just go with it."

Although he has never had any negative feedback from the audience concerning gay material, he has had Bush supporters wait outside stage doors to speak with him after shows. (President Bush and Britney Spears are favorite targets.)

According to David, if he wasn't a comedian he would be tending bar in the Caribbean like a *Magnum, P.I.* character, mixing drinks in a Hawaiian shirt and saying, "Sorry, officer, I haven't seen him in a couple of days." □

JIM DAVID and ELVIRA KURT close out the Portland Pride stage at 3:25 and 4 p.m. June 20, respectively.

CHELSEA FINE is a southern Oregon free-lance writer and photographer.