

a 3 p.m. matinee Jan. 30. Tickets are \$15 from 503-234-0973; Thursdays are \$5-\$15 sliding scale.
—Timothy Krause

Crap smear

There's one thing that members of the Portland comedy troupe **The Tragedies** must never forget: You have to be willing to make yourself look like a fool.

Tom Jackson and **Annie Vergnetti**, the two openly gay performers in the eight-person troupe, shared this trade secret a few weeks before the opening of their latest creation, *Crapectacular! Crapectacular!*

Directed by **Brian Linss**, the show consists of more than a dozen sketches that abound in political incorrectness. "If we offend someone and get them to think, that's a good thing," says Vergnetti.

Just how did the company land on such a, hmmm, colorful name for their show? "We went through a whole list of names. I just wanted to call it *Crap*," Jackson says with a laugh.

The name sure ain't eloquent, but at least it cuts straight to the chase. The Tragedies have no illusions that they're serving up a dignified evening of comedy. They just dish out silly and raunchy fun, pure and simple. In one sketch, Boy Scouts make out with each other and talk about sex. In a spoof of the 007 films, an elderly James Bond battles his nemesis, Blofeld, in a nursing home.

Jackson, who is originally from the South, moved to Portland in 2003 and founded The Tragedies the same year. It took a while to put a cast together, though, and the troupe did not make its debut until last April at Conan's Pub.

Jackson and Vergnetti note that it was especially difficult to attract female performers to sketch comedy. "Women are brought up to be proper," says Vergnetti, a songwriter who took up sketch comedy to broaden her performance repertoire. Men, she suspects, have an easier time cutting loose because they're not raised with so many restrictions.

When asked about her queer influences, Vergnetti cited musician Melissa Ferrick and comedian Ellen DeGeneres. Jackson bemoaned the scarcity of out male performers, but he did applaud the show *Queer as Folk* for its realistic portrayal of gay life.

Apart from performing on stage, The Tragedies have recorded a CD of audio sketches called *Sound Financial Investment*. The troupe hopes to travel to Chicago, Seattle and other cities for sketch competitions.

Crapectacular! Crapectacular! plays 10:30 p.m.



From left, Victorian explorers Julianna Jaffe, Wade McCollum and Lindsay Lucas travel on a serendipitous safari across space and time to the 1950s in *On the Verge*

Jan. 28 and 29 and Feb. 4 and 5 at Backdoor Theatre, 4319 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. Tickets are \$8 from 503-984-4549.

—Stephen Blair

Matchmaker throws party for older lesbians

Where have all the old dykes gone?

If you've ever asked that question, now there's an answer, at least for one night. They'll be at the first **Hot Flash Dance Party** Jan. 29 at Embers, 110 N.W. Broadway. From 4 to 8:30 p.m., lesbians 36 and older will fill the club, hanging out and dancing. Admission is \$7.

You won't be turned away at the door if you're younger than 36, but the outing is purposefully geared toward older women. Hot Flash organizer and matchmaking maven **Pauline Miriam** expects that most partygoers will be between their late 30s and mid 40s.

"You have to recognize that there is no social venue for older lesbians in Portland," says Miriam, who also runs Cruise Control PDX, a dating service for lesbians. "There are potlucks and organizations, but if you want to go out for the evening, there are no bars to go to."

Hot Flash is not a singles party, though the idea was shaped by the requests of Cruise Control attendees. Both singles and couples are

welcome at the event.

Still, there is sure to be some cruising going on. Single women will even have the option of wearing a sticker signaling their availability.

"Miriam might be wearing a sticker herself. After all, she founded Cruise Control out of necessity. When she divorced at age 50, she found that there was no place for her to go to meet other lesbians. Miriam hopes Hot Flash will help create such a social network by bringing together lesbians of similar age and experience.

The No. 1 goal of the night is simply to have a good time. "It will be like going to the bar when you're in your 20s, except now you'll be older," says Miriam.

Even the music will be the same, featuring hits from the '70s and '80s. "It'll be the kind of stuff we danced to," says Miriam, offering Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" as an example. "It's not going to be techno music."

Miriam hopes to see 300 lesbians at the party, dancing and talking and generally enjoying themselves. If this first night is a success, she will work to make Hot Flash an ongoing event.

So if you'd like to see that happen, make an appearance at Embers and add to the head count. Or should that be booty count?

—Rebecca Ragain

Gus Van Sant joins film and video board

Gov. Ted Kulongoski announced Dec. 15 the appointment of film director **Gus Van Sant** to the board of the Oregon Film and Video Office. The five-member board oversees the activities of the semi-independent state agency charged with building the film, video and multimedia industry in Oregon.

"Gus needs no introduction—his films speak for themselves and to the great talent he will bring to the Oregon Film and Video Board," Kulongoski said. "I am pleased Gus has accepted this appointment and look forward to working with him and the other board members as we look to the future of the growing film industry in Oregon—one that both helps our communities economically and encourages the cultural diversity we strive to achieve as a state."

—Sarah Dougher

Compiled by JIM RADOSTA



The Tragedies have two queer members. Tom Jackson (second from top left) and Annie Vergnetti (second from bottom left)

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—Don Clarkson, Mayor (Mosier, OR)
and Personal Coach

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