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## What's so funny?

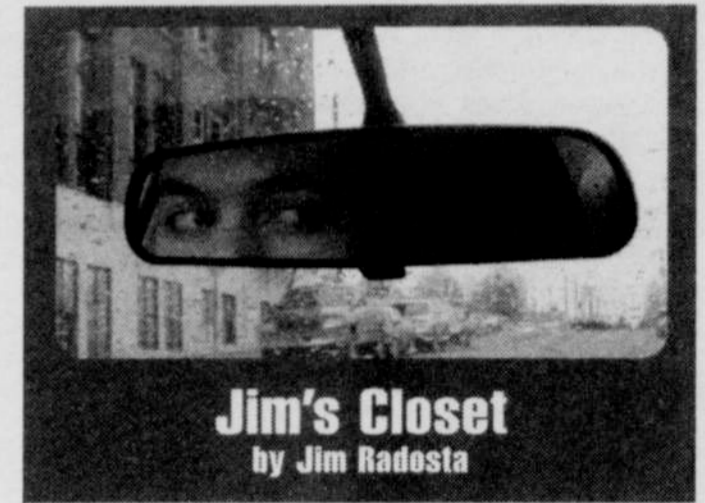
Queer queens of comedy give us something to laugh about

The trouble with Harry (Miers). Quagmire in Iraq. Tsunami devastates Southeast Asia. Earthquake demolishes Pakistan. Hurricane floods New Orleans. And here comes Wilma.

There really isn't much to smile about these days.

In fact, the only person who seems to be blissful is the ignorant Tom "The Hammer" DeLay. The former House majority leader turned himself in on state conspiracy and money laundering charges Oct. 20, sporting a shit-eating grin for his booking photo.

Thankfully, some of the funniest women alive are coming to Oregon to cheer us up.



girlfriend of 11 years—including a disturbing riff about the time she masked over rainbow bumper stickers with duct tape ("apparently, it was easier to be thought of as white trash than homosexual").

Margaret Cho made history in 1994 with *All-American Girl*, the first television show to star an Asian-American woman. Although the series didn't survive past its second season, the behind-the-scenes drama led to her first one-woman show, *I'm the One That I Want*, which became the basis of a best-selling book and hit film of the same name.



Last year she made headlines when the Human Rights Campaign "uninvited" her to a benefit performance that was intended to "celebrate GLBT strength and unity" during the Democratic National Convention. The queers feared "a potential media firestorm" from her "incendiary and controversial" material.

Fortunately for us, Cho isn't letting the bastards get her down. She has penned *I Have Chosen to Stay and Fight* (Riverhead Books, 2005; \$23.95 hardcover), a survival guide to make it through four more years of Dubya.

"The only way to push forward instead of wasting away in the purgatorial procrastination of worry is to just not care what the outcome is," she writes. "I need to just start running downhill with my eyes shut."

Suzanne Westenhofer was one of the first openly gay comedians to perform to straight audiences in mainstream clubs. In 1991 she appeared on a groundbreaking episode of *Sally Jessy Raphael* called "Breaking the Lesbian Stereotype: Lesbians Who Don't Look Like Lesbians."



"I still get mail from people who tell me how that show changed their lives," she says. "It changed mine, too."

A blond femme often mistaken for child actress Susan Olsen of *The Brady Bunch* (inspiring her to release 2000's *I'm Not Cindy Brady*), Westenhofer performs more than 100 live concerts a year. Her latest DVD, *Live from the Village* (Image Entertainment), contains a funny rant about her trip to Provincetown on a small plane ("they ask your weight...like it matters...I'm getting on a plane with seven gay guys who you know are lying!"), but she wastes too much time on petty spats with her closeted

Kate Clinton has performed nationally since 1981, working her way up from Unitarian Church basements to appearances on *Good Morning America* and *Nightline*. In 1996 she served as a writer for fellow dyke comic Rosie O'Donnell's talk show.



Clinton writes monthly columns for *The Progressive* and *The Advocate* in which she waxes comical and philosophical about the state of our nation—and those who have put us in such a state. In 1999 the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award, and in May she received Lambda Legal's highest honor, The Liberty Award.

*What the L?* (Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2005; \$14.95 softcover) is her second book, following 1998's *Don't Get Me Started*. Some of the essays are dated—written back in the glory days of that other famous Clinton—but she has a delicious way with words, taking on everything from same-sex marriage ("mad vow disease") to the vice president's wife ("Lon Cheney").

"I believe humor will get us through," Clinton writes. "In addition to the frivolous, salutatory pleasure of laughing, I believe in the power of laughter to subvert authority and promote democracy. Laughter takes the tyranny of the lies we are told and told and told and it blows them apart. I espouse humor activism." □

MARGARET CHO reads from her new book, *I Have Chosen to Stay and Fight*, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 3 at Powell's, 1005 W. Burnside St. Her new film, *Margaret Cho: Assassin*, plays through Oct. 27 at Cinema 21.  
 SUZANNE WESTENHOEFER performs 8 p.m. Oct. 28 at Aladdin Theater, 3017 S.E. Milwaukie Ave. Tickets are \$28 at the door or \$25 in advance from the box office or Ticketmaster. She'll be back 8 p.m. Nov. 18 at McDonald Theatre, 1010 Willamette St. in Eugene. Tickets are \$27 at the door or \$25 in advance from TicketsWest.  
 KATE CLINTON performs 8 p.m. Oct. 27 at Eugene's McDonald Theatre. Tickets are \$25 at the door or \$22 in advance from TicketsWest.

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.