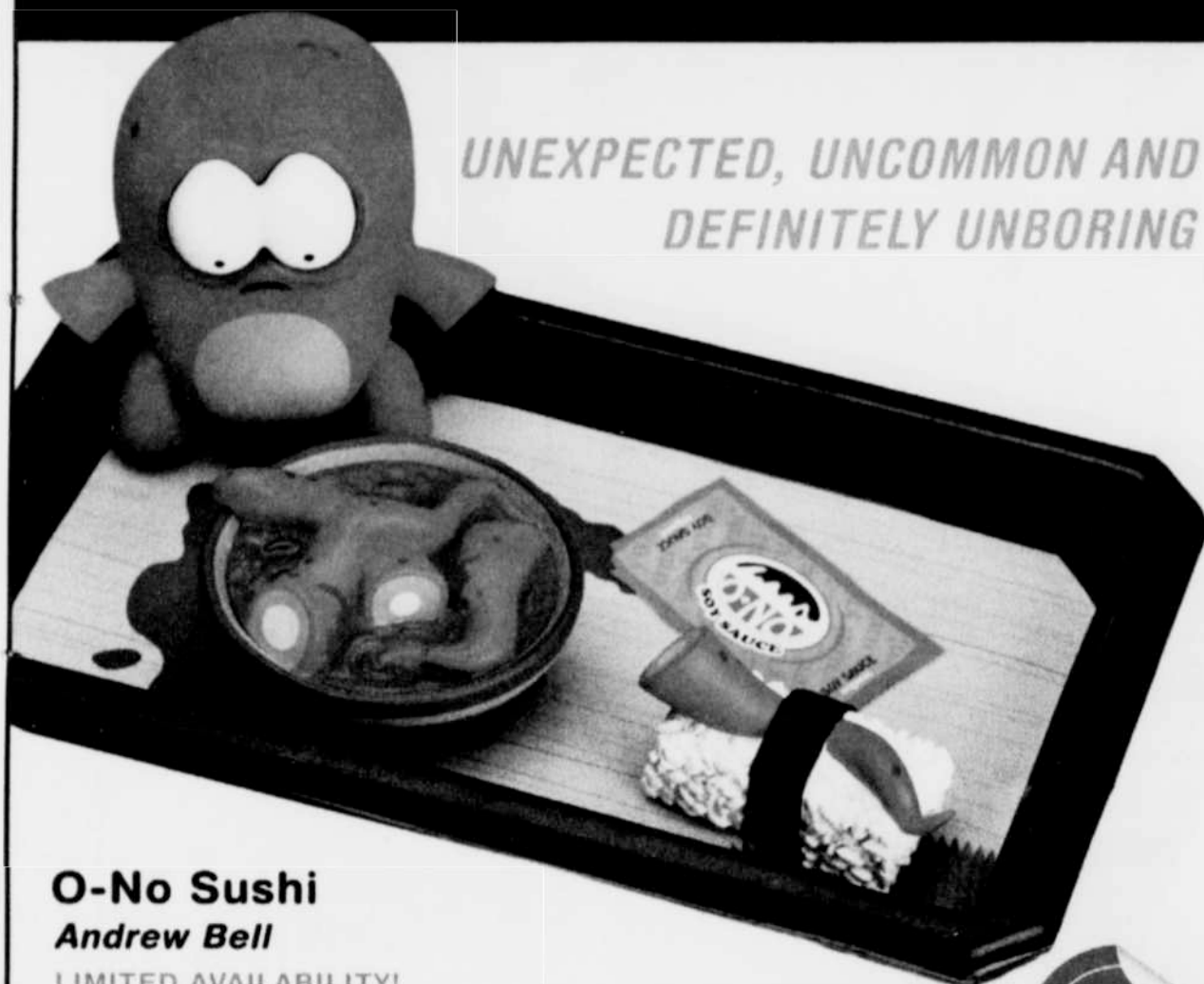


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Mirror, Mirror

Kate Clinton turns tears to laughter with poignant reflections

BY ERIN ROOK

Talking to political humorist and lesbian Kate Clinton, one thing is clear—life is seriously funny. Though our conversation is peppered with laughter, the heaviness of the subject matter prompts the 63-year-old New Yorker to remind me that her comedy show really is funny.

“Well that sounds like a lot of fun in a show, doesn’t it?” Clinton quips after describing one of the themes in her current show, *The Glee Party*. “But actually people do laugh. Everyone’s just jamming their drink straws in their eyes. But it’s fun. They do laugh.”

Clinton’s brand of political humor is so funny (and so sad) because it’s true. In the 30 years she’s been performing nationally, Clinton has honed an uncanny ability to provide sharp commentary on current events and inspire audiences to action, all in the guise of entertainment.

In addition to taking the stage as a comedian, Clinton has also appeared on film, Broadway and television; written three books (*I Told You So*, *What the L?*, *Don’t Get Me Started*); contributed to *The Progressive*, *The Advocate* and Bilerico Project; and provided political commentary on CNN, ABC News and *The Rachel Maddow Show* (MSNBC).

“Kate Clinton has held the mirror that reflects every single issue that has faced us for the last 25 years. We’ve laughed with her, we’ve cried with her, and we’ve been changed by her,” Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said in 2006.

Clinton talked to *Just Out* last month in advance of her tour’s October 29 stop in Portland. She reflected on Tea Party antics, women in comedy and the role of anger in revolution.

Just Out: How did the current tour come about? And what does it have to do with the Tea Party?

Kate Clinton: Since the economy crashed and all kinds of things have been happening, people are kind of depressed. So I thought,

what better antidote to that than *Glee*? Everybody loves that show and I think they love that show because problems are solved in 42 minutes or less and, for no apparent reason, people break into song and dance. It’s a happy show and I think that’s important. And it’s a little Tea Party because I think they have that same sort of quality. The tea baggers think ... everything should be solved in two years or less. And you ask them questions and they break into these

song-and-dance routines. And you’re like, “What are you talking about?”

JO: Some say we should ignore Michele Bachmann, that talking about her gives her power. How do you think we should respond?

Clinton: I think that you have to stand up to bullies. You can’t just let them say things and not be challenged. I think that’s a mistake when we don’t [challenge them]. I do think that the



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24/7 news cycle and constant internet feeds give it an importance that it doesn’t really have. When you think about the fact that Michele Bachmann won the Iowa straw poll—you would have thought she became president that day. And it was only 4,700 votes. There’s a certain kind of annoying inflation of things that really aren’t that important. Inflation like this is really an insane minority and not a huge movement.

JO: Speaking of gays and Republicans, what do you think about GOProud’s new diva-in-residence, Ann Coulter?

Clinton: I admire gay people who are in the Catholic Church and are trying to transform it from within. It’s nothing I could ever do—I don’t behave well in those situations—but I really admire their willingness to just go toe-to-toe with the opposition in that organization, in that church. And for the same reason I admire people who are present in the Republican Party, LGBT people—not really, just some Gs, but whatever—who are working from within to transform the Republican Party.