



COMEDIAN MARCIA BELSKY

# BINDERS FULL OF FUNNY

Springfield festival helps women take back comedy

**Q**uick: Name ten female stand-up comedians ... not as easy as you'd think, right? Naming ten male comics is much easier. But local comedian Leigh Anne Jasheway hopes to change that. "According to research, between 12 to 18 percent of professional touring stand-up comedians are women," Jasheway says. "Of the top 100 American Film Institute comedy movies of all time, only two were written by women. Most daily and weekly comedy talk shows have one or no female comedy writers."

The Northwest Women's Comedy Festival, now in its seventh year, is one way Jasheway hopes to level the comedy playing field, helping women take back the funny. "Estrogen is the hormone of nurturing and relationships, so a lot of women's comedy comes from that place," Jasheway says. "Drew Carey once said that if someone falls down on an escalator and farts, a man will think that's really funny. A woman will rush up to the person who fell and ask if he or she is okay. Then she'll go home and call her friend and say, 'The funniest thing happened today.'"

Headlining this year's festival is veteran Northwest comedian Susan Rice, who has worked with big names like Jerry Seinfeld and Paula Poundstone. "The rest of the world used to think that there had to be a difference [between male and female comedy] and people still cash in on that theory," Rice says. "Comedy is honesty embellished upon and men and women both make things bigger to enhance the humor of a situation."

"Male comedians are assumed to be funny unless they prove otherwise; for we women, it seems to work the other way," Jasheway says, adding, "You wouldn't believe the number of times in my life I've heard, 'For a woman, you're pretty funny.'"

This year's festival, "The Post-Election, Pre-Apocalypse, Women Take Back the Funny Comedy Show," will be emceed by Mix 94.5 Radio-host Liz Kelly and feature performances from Bahiyiyih Mudd, one of only three touring Native American comedians, and Stephanie Purtle, the winner of the 2012 Eugene Laff Off.

So if divisive politics and the "war on women" brought you down this year, remember laughter is sometimes the best way to keep from crying. "I believe that there is a group of ultra-conservative men who fear that women have gotten too big for their britches and should be reined in," Jasheway says. Rice adds, "There will always be idiots. I rely on these jackasses. They make my job so much easier." ■

The 7th Annual Northwest Women's Comedy Festival runs 7 pm Saturday, Nov. 10, at Wildish Theatre; \$25.

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