

SEE JANE MAKE YOU LAUGH

Northwest Women's Comedy Fest hits the Wildish with new talent

There's nothing more attractive than a funny woman (or rather, a funny person). Forget what the world of advertising tries to tell us; true beauty doesn't rest with spherical breasts south of a perfectly placed Monroe mole (or washboard abs south of a cleft chin). It lies with a person who can master perfect timing or who can observe the subtle hilarity in everyday life and discuss it on stage with only a microphone. The comedy scene, in general, is a sausage festival, but that doesn't stop a compelling group of talented comedians — who happen to be female — from coming together once a year in Springfield to perform under the same roof.

2013 marks the eighth year for the festival, and show curator/creator/comedian Leigh Anne Jasheway sees the dire importance of a comedic event, beyond the gender stigmas. "As we get into winter, you need comedy," she says. "I take an active approach to put more humor in your life."

Jasheway remembers eight years ago when she spoke with *EW* about the festival's debut and how *EW*'s style guide restricted the usage of "first annual." (This remains true based on the logic that if it's the "first" something, it can't quite be annual yet.) Today, as the 8th Annual Northwest Women's Comedy Festival approaches, Jasheway has a message for the *EW* employee who told her about the "annual" rule. "In your face, Bill!" she says, laughing.

This year's show will feature past favorites including Barbara Holm, Veronica Heath and Jen Seaman as well as a few newbies added to the mix. Notably, five young comics come from the University of Oregon; this festival will be the first of its kind for all of them. Maddie Dunkelberg, Zoe Muellner, Rhiannah

Johnson and Suzanna Akins are from the UO student group Absolute Improv, and student Gina Ginsberg has only started doing stand-up comedy in the past year. "We're interested in doing stand-up but we're afraid," Dunkelberg says.

The prevailing comedy's boys' club attitude is hard to ignore, but that doesn't stop these young comedians from making you laugh.

"As a new comic, I feel that the comedy scene is hard to break into, especially as a woman," Ginsberg says. "Women have it harder in every profession, comedy as well. Ninety percent of the time I'm introduced on stage, the MC says, 'Here's a very funny female comic.' Women are not taken seriously."

"I find it interesting that people think a man dressing up as a woman is funny but not women dressing up as men," Muellner says. "That needs to change." Comedy may have an intact glass ceiling, but it hasn't stopped these comics from making funny faces through the glass, doing what they do best, which is making people laugh.

"Women are on the come-up," Ginsberg says. "Years of being treated horribly, we have a lot of funny things to say about it." She pauses, realizing there's a joke to be said. "Women are the new Jews of comedy — years of struggle." ■

The 8th Annual Northwest Women's Comedy Festival kicks off at 7 pm Saturday, Nov. 9, at Wildish Theater, Springfield; \$30 (includes small glass of wine and a Larry's Cupcakes cupcake).



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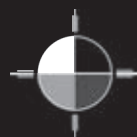
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