



COURTESY RACHAEL O'BRIEN

Comedian Rachael O'Brien, a Warrenton High School graduate, does stand-up.

# SCRATCHPAD

## A WHS grad's career in comedy

By **ERICK BENDEL**  
COAST WEEKEND

A comedian, almost by definition, has had to overcome hurdles. "You wouldn't become a comedian if you didn't," said Rachael O'Brien, a stand-up comic from Los Angeles, invoking the pain-plus-time-equals-comedy formula that governs her profession.

O'Brien, 33, who graduated from Warrenton High School in 2003, performs Sunday, Nov. 4, at Portland's Curious Comedy Theater and took a moment to chat with Coast Weekend.

After her monologue, O'Brien and her friend, Sabrina Danzl — a fellow WHS grad who often goes on the road with her — will cohost a live episode of O'Brien's podcast, "Be Here For a While." Some VIP ticket holders will have a chance to join them onstage.

Though she studied political science at the University of Oregon, graduating in three years before moving to California, O'Brien figured out early on that political humor wasn't her expertise. "There's other comedians that do it so much better that I don't want to get into that," she said.

Instead, the rising comic found her voice in dry, self-deprecating humor — the deadpan, drawn-from-life depictions of such experiences as, say, being a chubby kid and not realizing it at the time.

"My parents didn't tell



THOMAS ROTT PHOTO

Features Editor Erick Bengel.

Spade (her biggest comedic influence). Stage fright was never a problem for her, but appearing in front of her idols is its own gauntlet. "I get more nervous to do well in front of them than I do in front of an audience of people I don't know," she said.

She's also gone on United Service Organizations tours for troops overseas, on military bases in Kosovo, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and all over the U.K.

Asked if, as her career got underway, she had shows flop, she said, "Oh yeah. Everyone's bombed. Of course."

Each audience is like a focus group for the next one — sometimes the laughter, or its lack, is in the comic's control, sometimes not.

With each successive show, comedians must do with their routines what they do with their lives: take stock of their shortcomings and turn that knowledge into a strength. It's in that scary realm of self-awareness that their art is born.

"No one wants to hear you tell jokes about all the wonderful things that are happening to you all the time," O'Brien said.

And, she added, "you have to have a certain amount of empathy. You have to be able to look at situations and see the darkness in it, but then also the humor."

Tickets for O'Brien's show can be purchased at [curiouscomedy.org](http://curiouscomedy.org).

## coast weekend

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

arts & entertainment

**2 THE ARTS**  
**North Coast Food Web**  
2019 calendar highlights local farms, restaurants

**4 COASTAL LIFE**  
**Close to Home**  
Maori artists visit Astoria

**8 FEATURE**  
**Stormy Weather Arts Festival**  
New beginnings for artists young and experienced



**12 DINING**  
**A South County vacation**  
Gearhart Golf Links, McMenamins expand options

### FURTHER ENJOYMENT

MUSIC CALENDAR .....5  
CROSSWORD .....6  
ART WALKS .....7  
SEE + DO ..... 10, 11  
CW MARKETPLACE ..... 15, 16



**Find it all online!**

[CoastWeekend.com](http://CoastWeekend.com)

features full calendar listings, keyword search and easy sharing on social media.

**COAST WEEKEND EDITOR**  
ERICK BENDEL

**CALENDAR COORDINATOR**  
REBECCA HERREN

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
DAVID CAMPICHE  
RJ MARX  
BRENNIA VISSER  
JON WILLIAMS

To advertise in Coast Weekend, call 503-325-3211 or contact your local sales representative.  
© 2018 COAST WEEKEND

New items for publication consideration must be submitted by 10 a.m. Tuesday, one week and two days before publication.

### TO SUBMIT AN ITEM

Phone: 503.325.3211 Ext. 217  
or 800.781.3211

Fax: 503.325.6573

E-mail: [editor@coastweekend.com](mailto:editor@coastweekend.com)

Address: P.O. Box 210 •  
949 Exchange St. Astoria,  
OR 97103

*Coast Weekend* is published every Thursday by the EO Media Group, all rights reserved. No part of this publication can be reproduced without consent of the publisher. Coast Weekend appears weekly in The Daily Astorian and the Chinook Observer.