

Comedy Special



Photo By Iris Wiener

Behind The Scenes with Bob Saget, Kathy Griffin and more at New York's The Laugh Factory

By Iris Wiener

New York has a whole new reason to laugh. In the wake of such city greats as Seinfeld and Sex and the City, it's about time the Big Apple gave New Yorker's something they could really sink their teeth into. Los Angeles' hottest comedy club, The Laugh Factory, comes to New York this month with more personality, hot talent and big stars than Times Square has seen in its one-hundred years.

Currently in previews, The Laugh Factory is already a big hit due to the graces of Bob

"My stand-up for a long time since I started has never been like how people perceive me in my TV persona. I did two family shows, in a way I've been frisked out from it a little bit. With everything that's going on in the media, I just feel I have to let myself go, kind of like an adrenaline rush, to be more bawdy or risqué. I'm not dirty for the sake of it, I'm just drawn to it, cause you don't get to see a dad from TV curse that way, but when you have kids you're going to curse sooner or later. In one show I had a penis cam, camera in my zipper, and went out into the audience and was like 'better or worse? I'm Jewish, I don't have a lens cap', it's all Jewish crotch jokes, but my comedy's always been like that." Why didn't viewers ever hear these jokes on America's Funniest Home Videos? "I'm

always known for the Video show, but it didn't display me as a stand up comedian, it was more lame family jokes that I thought were pretty annoying, but if you watch it there are some dirty hidden messages."

Cursing and crudeness aside (or not), Saget has the audience in tears with his take on 'the gay show he was on' to the paper cuts he gets on his penis from reading magazines on the can. "My stand up is in some ways for the people that grew up watching, like the college people. I just have fun with audiences, some people that haven't seen my stand up are in shock because it's a little more blue. It's not blue intentionally, I just want to have fun, that's one of the things I feel confident in, that I'm funny. But that's also subjective."

Saget's innocent veneer is lost when he appears on stage, but in real-life, the balance between his television and stand-up persona is entirely evident. "I think the reason college audiences sell out so well, they go insane, chanting my name before I come out, is because it's like an urban legend, cause I did cameos in movies and

secret.com, write a joke and here they are doing a set at a major comedy club. That's what it's all about, because I feel that women who want to be comedians aren't encouraged at all, if anything they're discouraged to be funny because they're women. They make it hard, a lot of clubs will unconsciously have a ratio, if they're doing their Friday night line up and I've gotten clubs that say 'I'm doing a Friday night line up and I don't have a woman.' And I'm like, 'It's important that you fill that ONE slot of having your woman since there's twenty

act is very improvisational. I like to talk about "The Swan". I don't sit at my computer and hone jokes and write jokes and change this word, so I really admire these women for doing that. I'm absolutely pulling for them."

After having received a tremendous amount of media attention over her cosmetic surgery, Griffin wants to tell it how it is: "I didn't mean to go public about my plastic surgery, and I just want to say this... I had a brow lift, nose job, and eye-lid job, I just want to say, it's like a third of what

other people are having. If you think that the chicks on "Friends" haven't done everything I've done, plus boob jobs, think again. I mean, it's such a joke when they say 'Oh my god, you've changed your face!' I'm like, 'Have you seen Courteney Cox?' So I didn't mean to talk about it but the process was so comical to me. I went to the plastic surgeon and they had a celebrity entrance, they said that's how it's done, when Michelle Pfeiffer comes, that's where she goes. I said 'Goddammit, I want to go in the celebrity entrance, I'm famous.' So I call and said 'This is Kathy Griffin, and I need to go into the backdoor,' and they were like 'Who are you?' So that's life on the D-list, and so many things like that were happening, and I thought that was funny, so that's my act. My act is that I take



Kathy Griffin

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everything that goes wrong in my life, which is daily, and I put it in my act, and go well, 'I'm just gonna go ahead and talk about it.'"

Comics that night.' And they think they're done because they have that one woman in there. So I think that what I like about this contest is that there are women out there who aren't professional comedians or housewives, but their coworkers think that they're funny, and they go online and write the funniest joke and get to come to The Laugh Factory."

Have no fear- despite the fact that Griffin is a judge in this competition, she dishes out some killer stand-up. "I never could have won a contest like this in a million years, I'm not a joke teller at all, I don't have a killer joke. I'm a story-teller, and my

Co-producers, Masada and Richard Basciano know that the best way to win over any New Yorker is through heart, something that they both have in excess. "We like to lead with our hearts instead of our heads, and when people leave The Laugh Factory, they leave with a happy spirit, and a smile. It's very touching," says Basciano with excitement.

The Laugh Factory opens April 21. For more information, visit laughfactory.com. ■

Saget and Kathy Griffin, true definitions of headliners. They've shared the stage with Howard Stern's partner in crime, Artie Lange and HBO star Sue Costello. Funny men Brad Garrett, Dave Chappelle and Damon Wayans are frequent Laugh Factory guests as well.

The inspiring story behind the acclaimed club keeps it going strong. In 1979 the club's owner, Jamie Masada, built the Laugh Factory in Los Angeles from the ground up. He came to the United States at the age of 14 with a dream of becoming a famous comic. Masada eventually opened his Laugh Factory in a tiny storefront on the famed Sunset Blvd. Today, the comedy stage has seen Richard Pryor, Rodney Dangerfield, Jerry Seinfeld, Jim Carrey, Keenan Ivory Wayans and Arsenio Hall walk its length.

Masada is also known for the heart he exhibits on and off the stage. He offers his club to numerous charity organizations to use for benefits. His philanthropy is evident in the programs he runs each holiday to feed the starving actors in the Hollywood community. "The greatest comedy we know came from New York," says founder and co-producer, Jamie Masada. "New York deserves good comedy and hopefully we can make that happen."

A veteran of The Laugh Factory in L.A., Bob Saget is no stranger to the excitement that the club inspires. "I love New York a lot. I haven't been here in a while, and I came here because my daughter was looking to go to college so Jamie said 'Why don't you come work the club?' I heard it was a really good room, that Dave Chappelle was in, and everyone was having a great time so here I am."

Saget may surprise Full House fans with his act, which tends to be a bit more 'dirty' than the workings of Mr. Danny Tanner.

year-olds love. They know that I cross the line and they also grew up watching me, that goofy dad, Mr. Brady or something," he jokes, "and they know that they like me, a good moral every week."

Much like his Full House alterego, Saget is a father to three daughters. "One minute I'm doing, 'don't wear that honey, don't talk like that,' etc. and the other minute I'm saying the worst thing. Like my daughter would bring her friends over, I'll say 'You want to get drunk, you want to do a shot, cause if you want to do that I'll kill you.' I'm very close to my kids, we have a great relationship, we're very lucky to have the family we have, and I know their friends like me cause I act like I'm nine years-old. I'm very G-rated and I'm very R-rated."

But there is no lack in R-rated moments on this stage. Artie Lange rails on the possibilities of Sesame Street characters with AIDS ("Grover's letter's are H, I, and V") and his hatred of "wiggers". Audiences may be treated to Sue Costello's Boston drawl as she rants on everything from her period boobs to slutty three-year-old Latinos. "I like to get it out there!" says Costello.

Kathy Griffin paid a visit to The Laugh Factory for a special event centered around...armpits? "The Sniff Check Comedy Search and Tour featured an on-line contest for women to compete and perform at a comedy club, and my ears perked up. Because I definitely feel that, and it's obvious that, there aren't enough female comedians. But women have to work to fight the myth that women aren't as funny. I have guys calling Howard Stern and saying 'Chicks aren't usually funny but you are.' I'm like, 'Thank you?' I love the notion that somebody can be at home, think of a joke about the sniff check and go onto