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Will McKinley

Drag Queen Lady Bunny and the cast of "LOL at Comix"

At Meatpacking club, a comedic coming out party

By Will McKinley

"It's a wonderful night on the eve of change in our country."

So said drag king Murray Hill on Wednesday night as he kicked off "LOL @ Comix," an alternative comedy and musical revue at the new Comix club in the Meatpacking District. Hill, a comedian introduced as "the hardest working 50-year-old man in show biz," was the first in a gender-bending parade of performers who entertained a sparse but enthusiastic crowd with consistently provocative, often tasteless and occasionally hilarious comedy.

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Happening merely hours after a seismic shift in the American political landscape, “LOL @ Comix” was something of a comedic coming out party, a post-Rumsfeld repudiation of six years of enforced social conservatism. The gang-up on the losers continued with lesbian comic Julie Goldman, who joked about her “illegal lezzie wife” and questioned the likelihood of God choosing to talk with President Bush after 2,000 years of silence. Goldman may have been preaching to the liberal choir, but it’s always fun to watch her work. She engages the crowd with a raw, self-directed sarcasm that makes you feel slightly guilty for laughing at her pain.

The hosts for the evening were The Dueling Bankheads, a drag duo of Tallulah Bankhead impersonators, both of whom captured perfectly the droll androgyny of the classic movie icon. Other standouts were Dr. Julia Wonder, a faux celebrity psychic/motivational speaker who entertained the audience with a PowerPoint explanation of what we should be doing in Iraq, and Ken Bullock as the bizarre, toothless storyteller Ragu Mountain Woman. Respected Downtown performers such as Frank Decaro, Mike Albo, Bradford Scobie, David Ilku’s Next Door Neighbor, Brenda Bergman & the Bodacious Tatas and the gay gangsta rapper Mint Tea filled out an uneven but entertaining bill.

A showcase format, with many comedic performers doing short sets, can be exhausting for a live audience — particularly one hung-over from a bit of election night revelry. But “LOL @ Comix” never repeated itself or felt redundant. Each act was stranger than the previous one.

The highlight of the evening was the show-stopping closing number by transvestite singing sensation Lady Bunny, whose campy, crass songs and “Laugh In”-style one-liners sent the crowd home with a smile. I’ve never seen a comedian lip synch jokes, but Lady Bunny pulled it off with aplomb. (And plenty of mascara.)

But for me the star of the evening was the venue. The majority of comedy clubs in New York City are decrepit establishments with all the ambiance of a VFW Hall. Nightclub comedy in this city is often a bridge and tunnel celebration of stale jokes and warmed over cheese fries, but Comix appears to be making a valiant effort to buck that trend. With its stylish interior, diverse food menu (I had the tasty steak frites) and \$525 bottles of Cristal, Comix fits perfectly into the trendy zeitgeist of the new Meatpacking District.

Comedian Frank Decaro honored the seedy memory of the previous incarnation of the neighborhood during his act. “Do you remember when the only reason we came here was to come here?” he quipped with a twinkle in his eye. “It was all casual sex and Florent.”

Now there’s another reason to visit the Meatpacking District. Comix may just make real New Yorkers feel like it’s cool to go to a comedy club again.

To find out where the next LOL@ will be held, [email info@abenyc.com](mailto:info@abenyc.com).

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