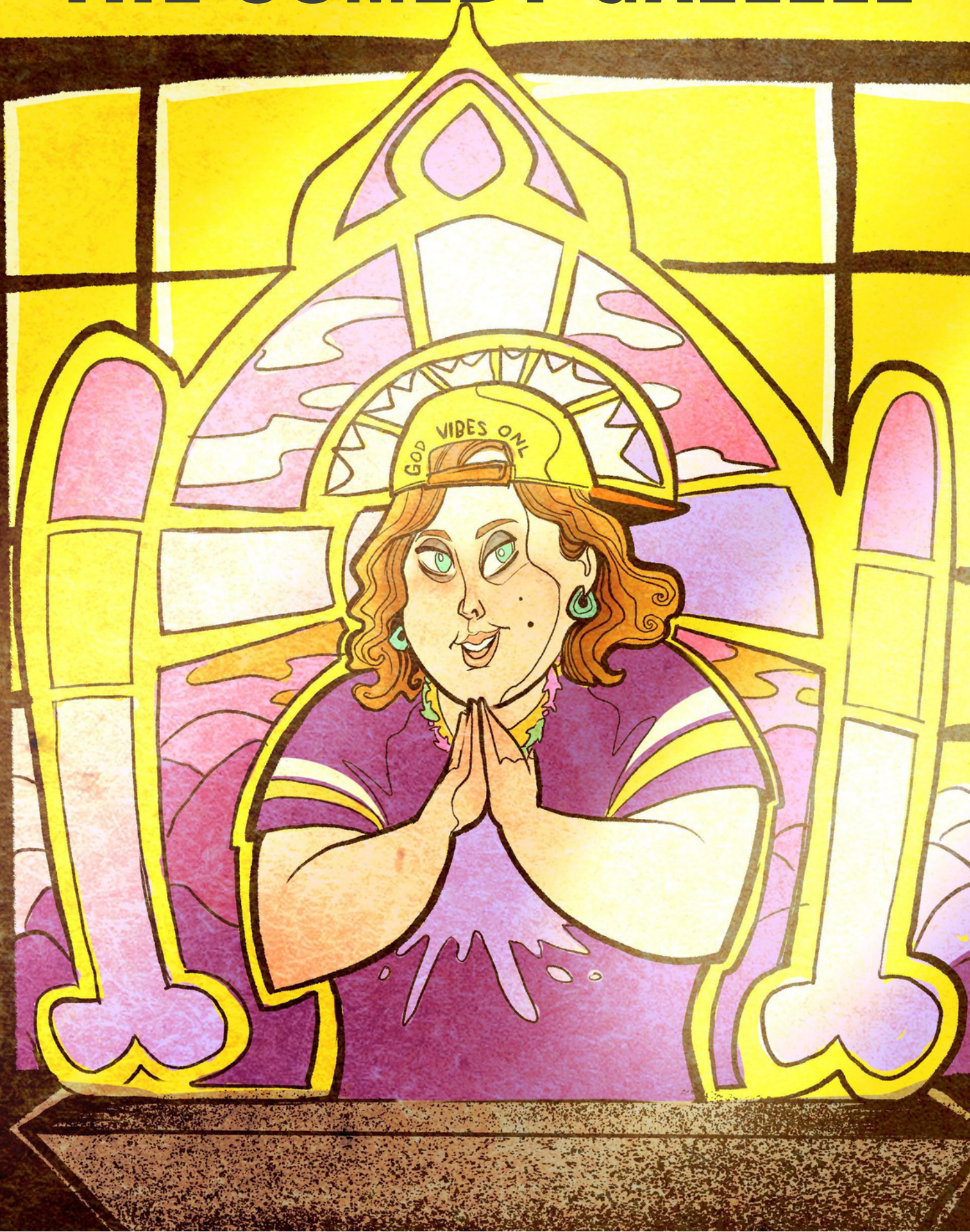


THE COMEDY GAZELLE



ABOUT THE GAZELLE

When I first moved to Chicago, I was immediately struck by the level of talent in the scene. "Fuck, she's good," I thought as I watched Kristen Toomey annihilate a sold out Laugh Factory. *Why haven't I heard of her before?*

It's a question I come back to often, and a major problem here. The city's bursting with household-name-level talent, but unless you're in the midst of it, it can pass you by.

That's why I started The Comedy Gazelle – to bring outsiders into the heart of Chicago comedy, and to share knowledge that can hopefully make the scene that much stronger. It was also the pandemic and I had shit else to do.

Thanks for your support!

– Jerry

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INTERVIEW: MAGGIE WINTERS

Maggie Winters (@saggiesplinters) is a comedian, actress, improviser, internet personality, and assistant youth pastor. She plays Taryn in Season 3 of Righteous Gemstones, opposite Adam DeVine and Tony Cavalero, and recently appeared on JFL's 2023 New Faces of Comedy. We talked her debut role, her management team, putting yourself out there, and more!

I enjoyed my homework for this. I got to binge Season 3 of Righteous Gemstones.

Yes! We love to hear it. Did you like it?

It was amazing. And a little jarring seeing somebody that you actually met.

Yeah, it was jarring seeing myself. I filmed it last year in 2022, and then I was watching it with my family. I was like, "What the hell?" And also you just feel like you're watching yourself. I'm supposed to be a character, but it just feels like me.

Are you self-critical of it, or do you like how it came out?

I think the editors did a great job, especially the scene where I danced. They did slow-mo and the music was cool. And obviously the flip part — secret: I didn't do the flips. I thought it was really cool to see that come together. But as far as my performance, I think I left that to everyone else to judge. I was like, "Whatever everybody says is what I'll go with." But people were very nice.

Can you walk me through the process of getting that role? That's a big deal.

Yeah, last May my managers found the posting of the audition and submitted me. The casting people had actually seen some of my videos and were like, "Yes, we would love to see her tape." So I did a self tape in my studio apartment and I only had these dirty white walls: those kinds of walls in apartments you try to scrub clean, but it's just not working. In the script it said, "Woman, Taryn, in a backwards hat," so I wore a backwards hat. And I messaged Lily Sullivan, who played BJ's sister, KJ, in Season 2; I asked her if she had any tips for the audition process, and she was like, "I think you should improvise at the end. Do what the script says, but then add your own improv at the end." So I did that and filmed it with my friend, Garrett, who was also an improviser, so it was easy for us to bounce



off each other. I was obsessed with the show, so I almost didn't want to audition because I was like, "I don't want to not get this."

Yeah, and have a sour taste about one of your favorite shows.

Yes, exactly. But I sent it in, and then after a couple of weeks my manager called me and was like, "They really like it; they're gonna send it to the producers," which is like Danny McBride and crew. So I truly had a breakdown where I was waking up at 5 a.m. every day, between then and the time I got it, just panicking. Like this is the closest I've ever gotten to anything and then I ended up actually getting it. And the day I got it, my manager called me twice, so I kind of had a feeling it was going to be the answer, either yes or no. I was like, "Oh my god!" and I absolutely sobbed. It was a dream come true; I didn't even know how to handle it.

So you're filming your first significant role on a kick ass TV show. How are you feeling on set? What's going on in your head?

I was so hyped up, excited. I had no idea what to expect. Got to set early and got to see a lot of pieces of the set around; I didn't see any of the actors yet. Then the day on set, I showed up and it was Jody Hill directing, who's in the show too, he

plays Levi, and is someone I really love, and he was just super nice right away. He was like, "Oh man, we loved your audition!" which gave me confidence that I am the right person; they didn't accidentally pick me.

That's so cool.

Yeah, but I thought they would maybe explain a little more. They were just kind of like, "Just jump in the scene. Just do what you did in your audition and go!" And you're like, "Okay." I didn't know specific filming things. They would use certain terms and I would be like, "What does that mean?" And they'd be like, "You're so green." I've been an extra, but I've never had like a stand-in; I was blown away by someone having to stand there for me. I was looking around like, "Isn't this cool?" They're like, "Calm down. That's normal."

I just acted in my first sketch, and the whole time I was like, "Is this going well?" I had no idea if I was doing anything right. Did you have that at all?

Yes, immediately. The first thing that I shot was me jumping out of the Smutbusters van, and they were just like, "Ok, get in the van. We go action, and then you jump out." So I jump out and immediately they stop. They're like, "Ok, so you're jumping up and off camera. We're going to need you to go forward." So I was like, "Ok, stay on camera!" But everyone's very nice and the director is there to tell you to do those things, so I had to trust that they're gonna tell me if I'm fucking up. They're not gonna let me ruin their show, like, "Well, she's a bad actress, but we're just gonna let it go!"

Last thing about the show: what's happening with your character?

So that's a good question. I actually had an ending, but they cut it. A lot of people were like, "That could be a good thing. It could mean more for you, or you could just be done." I actually have no idea. With the strike, obviously I have no clue, but I also would love to know too. Maybe we can get a hashtag going: #whathappenedtotaryn.

What's the dream for you? Is it stand up? Acting?

I think my main goal would be a recurring role on a TV show; that would be the dream. But I love performing live. So always being able to do that. I don't know if the tour life is necessarily for me. People say you have to really commit and it sounds tiring. If I got the chance to do mini tours, for sure, or open for someone and then I could go see different places, that'd be cool. But ultimately, I think being on a show or getting to do movies. It feels fully crazy when you say that, when



you're like, "I want to be on TV!" Even though I was, you feel nuts.

Yeah, it's like, "What? Who do you think you are?"

Yeah, "You need to stay at your office job!" It's like, "Well, okay, hold on." Even though we're working so hard and we're putting ourselves out there nonstop.

So did you start in acting? How did you get to where you are now?

When I was little, I was very interested in theater. Then the comedy part came as I progressed. Loved to make people laugh, loved attention. In high school, I got more interested in improv. I actually tried to start an improv club at my high school and the theater teacher was like, "No, we're not doing that." I was like, "Probably good, probably smart." A parent should say no, because it is ultimately a horrible thing. But, I love improv; I started in improv. After college, I worked at Disney World for a little bit, and then I was like, "You know what? I'm gonna go back to Chicago and try to do the iO, Second City thing." Did iO, did CIC; I did improv for like five years. Then right before the pandemic, I took FemCom at the Lincoln Lodge, which is like to get women to do stand up. It was crazy, because at the time you write five minutes and then you perform it at the end. And I remember thinking, "Five minutes? That is so long, I'm going to

die!" And now I think if I had to do five minutes, I'd be like, "No, I need 25." You get addicted to it, you're like, "No, I need to talk forever." So then I just started doing stand up and stuck with that post pandemic.

You put out a lot of solo sketches online. Did you get into that during the pandemic?

Yeah, in the pandemic and a little bit before. I just got into it and then not being able to perform live really pushed me to do it more. My older brother actually started sending me ideas. One of my first ones was "Midwestern Mom Takes an Edible." He wrote it and then I edited it and performed it, and then I kind of went from there. And now it feels like we're in a world where you kind of have to be posting.

Do you have any advice for people trying to put themselves out there more, whether it be social media or trying a different form of comedy?

I think just going for it is the best thing I can say. It's scary and it sucks, but every time you do it – you did it. You just have to keep going, keep doing it, and eventually a year later, you're like, "Oh, I did a bunch of stand up this year." For a while I'd be like, "I want to do stand up. I'm going to try it soon." And then six months later, I didn't try it. Do it. You're gonna bomb, and then you're gonna do well, and then you're gonna bomb again. Also, I think going to shows and watching people that you really like do not so great – not that you wanna see people you love not do great – but it makes you feel like, "Oh yeah, anyone can try this." Is this making any sense or am I just absolutely blind?

No, totally. You put certain comics on pedestals and assume it comes naturally to them. It's nice to realize, "Oh, these people had to work hard and there's bumps along the road for them as well."

And they also try things. You have to try your stupid ideas, and then if they don't work, move on. But you have to go out there. One of the first times I did stand up, I stared down at the ground. I was so nervous and I remember being like, "Well that wasn't fun for me or the audience." But I was like, "I did it at least." Then my goal for the next show was to look at the audience. Every time you make little improvements, then eventually you're screaming at the guy in the front row having a blast.

Yeah, and now you're doing JFL. How was that whole experience?

It was really cool to get to go to Montreal. You do two shows and one show was your big recorded show, and it's like 800 people or something. That one was a blast. The second one was smaller, the encore show, and it was mostly for French Canadian men, and they hated us; they wanted us dead. I was like seventh, and everyone before me they just hated. So I was like, "Okay, let me just join it!" People were like, "Oh my god, did you have so much fun? Did you crush?" And I was like, "Kinda, sorta?" But I had a really good time, and just to get paid to go to a different city and perform is like my ultimate dream. Which contradicts me saying that I don't want to tour, but you know what I mean!

But the recorded show went well?

Yes, I kept saying that's the one that counts at least; that's the one on film. You couldn't see anything, you're absolutely blinded, and you only get six minutes and it's a hard out at 6:30.

How do you even choose what jokes to do?

The kind of positive thing is that they want you to do what you did in your audition. So if you get picked, you're kind of just like, "Okay, I know they liked this." I switched one joke and I went to my manager team and they asked JFL. You don't have to start from scratch when you go, which is a good feeling. Except for the second show when I was like, "I wish I did a whole different set."

You mentioned your management team. How long have you had your manager for?

Since fall of 2021. He reached out to me, and he's the best. Shout out to Tommy Stackhouse and Rachel Heffler. I have two actually. But I started with just one and then I added on Rachel. They're in LA, both of them.

I know in Chicago, a lot of people don't even believe that they can even get representation. Is that a myth?

I did have a really hard time. I would submit to agencies in Chicago a lot and wouldn't even hear back, wouldn't even get the chance to audition. So I did find it really difficult. My manager found me from my online content. We don't have that much industry here, so you had to be doing those shows that they were seeing. But I think Chicago people have way more of a shot now. If you put your stuff out there online, at least a little bit, someone can at least know who you are. Word of mouth I feel like has played a big part. Like, I signed on and then my friend Parker Callahan signed on a couple of months later.

I feel like for so many comics in Chicago, that's just a world we're not really familiar with. What's it like having a management team?

Yeah, it's definitely like having someone in your court, right? Someone on your team. I remember I was gaining momentum and I got this show with somebody who was kind of going through a cancellation, and I was like, "I don't really know if I want to do this person's show." I remember calling my manager and I was able to talk through it with him. What I found is that I can bring any sort of comedy question to him and he's always willing to handle it. He'll be like, "Okay, give me their email. I'm going to figure it out." He's like, "I work for you." And then when Rachel came on, they work together now and we can always just brainstorm ideas. It's just nice to have someone looking out for you. Then on the networking side of it, they obviously know people in the industry and they know other managers and they know agents. That's how the world is, it's like all connections. But I also wanna say, I love living in Chicago because I do love not having to go to shows and be like, "Is Netflix here, is Hulu here?" It's so nice to be able to perform for the love of it, which is why I think people in Chicago are the best performers.

You've been very involved in the Chicago scene. If there was anything you could change about it, what would you change?

I would want people to respect us more. That's not an inside change, but for a long time I was so frustrated that everything would be like, "New York or LA, New York or LA!" and I'd be like, "Chicago!" So many people start in Chicago to get their base. I understand that there's industry in New York and LA, but so much comedy was born from here. I just think we need to be put on the map a little bit more. I'm biased, but I just

think our comics are the absolute best and should be put up for more stuff.

And anything within the scene you'd want to change?

There's so much serious shit I could talk about. It's interesting because standup is more diverse in race, and then improv is more diverse in gender to me. I've done a lot of shows as the only woman on the stand up lineup, and then I've done a lot of improv shows where there'll be seven white women and one black man. It's just kind of crazy. I wish those worlds would mix it up a little bit more.

Last question: what's the best advice you've gotten over the years?

Do you know Eunji Kim? We're very good friends, but she has been doing stand up way longer than me and I feel like I always go to her for advice. She's always like, "Just do the thing. Who cares about other people's opinions of you?" I love that she'll just be like, "Oh, I bombed last night!" Owning who you are, owning when you fail, and owning when you do well. Owning all parts of you, I feel like is what she's taught me – not shying away. Because then you show other people, "Yeah, sometimes you fucking suck and you just have to laugh about it."



Catch Maggie Tuesday, September 5 at 7:30pm @ Laugh Factory as part of our VOUCH comedy show! She will also be performing at the New York Comedy Festival in November.

Maggie Winters' Top 10 Chicago Comics

- 1. EUNJI KIM**
- 2. PARKER CALLAHAN**
- 3. JACK FELKER**
- 4. CLEVELAND ANDERSON**
- 5. DEANNA ORTIZ**
- 6. VICTOR CARLESI**
- 7. JACKIE COOPER**
- 8. KENYA ELAN**
- 9. VICTORIA VINCENT**
- 10. LUCIA WHALEN**

The Comedy Gazelle

Presents

VOUCHER

Featuring

Chris Trani

Kieron Harrell

Drew Gregory

Lele Mason

Tom Ryan

Steven Haas

Maggie Winters



Hosted by
Jerry Hamedi

Tuesday, September 5 – 7:30pm

Laugh Factory

3175 n Broadway, Chicago, IL 60657

Comedians Recognizing Comedians

DREW GREGORY

"I believe he's been shouted out before but who cares. Drew is a premise machine. His angles are smart and clever yet relatable and simple. Every time he goes up I feel excitement and dread. I'm excited for what he has to say, and dread realizing I could be working a lot harder. Also a really nice guy with a good mustache."

CAM HONEYAGER

"Cam makes comedy seem easy. He is so stinking funny and can light up any stage big or small. He truly understands the writing and performance process. On top of that he works hard, is incredibly humble and is just fun as hell to be around. He should be headlining way more shows."

CLAIRE MALKIE

"Claire always has great material whenever she performs. Her autobiographical jokes are always on point and she has a very clear point of view and voice on stage. She also could not be kinder off stage. She would make any show better!"

STEVEN HAAS

"His sketches are amazing but he's also an incredible standup. My friends saw him months ago and still quote his jokes. Super unique and relatable. Book him!"

ALEX HUDEC

"Alex Hudec is hilarious!! He mainly performs in the suburbs, so not sure many Chicago comics know him, although I think he's starting to perform at Zanies a bit. His off the cuff jokes on what happened in the news that day are spot on, as well as his crowdwork. He's also so nice and supportive of other comics in the scene."

TOM FEEBACK

"Great comic. Great jokes. Works hard & is always writing original material. One of the best new comers in Chicago."

NOSHOD BARROW

"Noshod is so damn funny. I am always shocked when I don't see his name pop up on flyers for upcoming shows. Noshod is a good dude and you can always count on him to deliver a killer set."

Comedians Recognizing Comedians

MATT BANWART

"There's probably nobody in the Chicago scene that is as strategic in promotion as him, and I think a lot of comics take that aspect of being a performer for granted. So much of the battle is actually getting your jokes out to people. I've seen him murder at a lot of these self-made shows, too. Crowds of 200-300 in Iowa and the Chicago suburbs. It's one thing to get the spot because of good networking or a viral TikTok, but it's another to actually kill in that spot once you get it - and I've seen him do it over and over."

MICHAEL SERIO

"Michael's inventiveness and willingness to take risks leads to consistently fresh and exciting characters. He truly stands out as unique in our scene and masterfully toes the line between the worlds of standup, improv, and sketch comedy."

KHAYA OSBOURNE

"Khaya is one of the funniest and most talented people I know. They only started doing comedy three months ago, but they are going to open mics every single night and constantly supporting independent shows and other comedians. They work so hard and I cannot wait to see how they develop as a comedian."

SETH GERSBACH

"Seth brings great energy and great jokes every time he performs. I have seen him turn quiet rooms around with his upbeat vibe and sharp comebacks in crowd interactions. He definitely deserves more stage time and would crush on basically any show."

KNUTE GREGORY

"Knutte has incredible jokes every time I see him. Super well written and delivered perfectly. Whether it's new stuff or older stuff it always seems to kill and he should definitely be getting booked on more shows because he would crush."

SAM DICKE

"Sam is consistently a great comedian and writer! His jokes are intelligent in that they give the audience a new perspective about the world they live in."

STEVE RAINES

"Steve Raines is one of the most natural talents in the city right now. Of all the oncoming comics to take a chance on, there's no safer bet than someone like Steve who's whole worldview is funny, unique, and entertaining. #mobilizetheraineman"

**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO
MADE THIS POSSIBLE.**

**HAVE SUGGESTIONS?
WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?**

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