

Setting the Gold standard

Judy Gold mines her own life and current events for comic gems

By Sue Harrison

BANNER STAFF

Judy Gold is a busy woman. She writes and performs comedy for HBO and other television channels, travels around the country doing live standup shows, takes on corporate appearances, does a weekly political satire show and raises two kids. But none of that will stop her from returning to Provincetown for Women's Week to perform at the Post Office Cabaret.

"Stand-up is who I am, it's what I do," she says by phone from her office where she's busy writing for upcoming TV comedy specials. "Audiences in Provincetown are so amazing. And Provincetown has been good to me and always felt like home."

As a gay woman Gold had both the regular comedy grind of coming up through late night

slots and the separate gay circuit to work on her way up. And she worked them both, hard. She took on the closing spots at 3 a.m., working a room with only four patrons left (on a busy night) and pretty much jumped on stage any time she got the chance. It paid off. When a last minute cancellation happened on TV's "Caroline's Comedy Hour," Gold got the nod and things started to really pick up.

But getting to that point was no easy job.

Gold, raised in Clark, N.J. in a close knit Jewish family, stood out from an early age but not in a good way. She was tall, taller than her teachers by middle school and topped out at 6'3" in her teens. As an adult that might be cool, supermodelish, but as a kid, disaster. She was teased, ostracized and generally left out of the school-age cliques that are so all important at that age. She joined the marching band, orchestra and choir and notes on her website that if her height wasn't enough, those nerdy pursuits were the social kiss of death. She comments on the

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Comedian Judy Gold is heading back for her annual Women's Week shows at the Post Office Cabaret.

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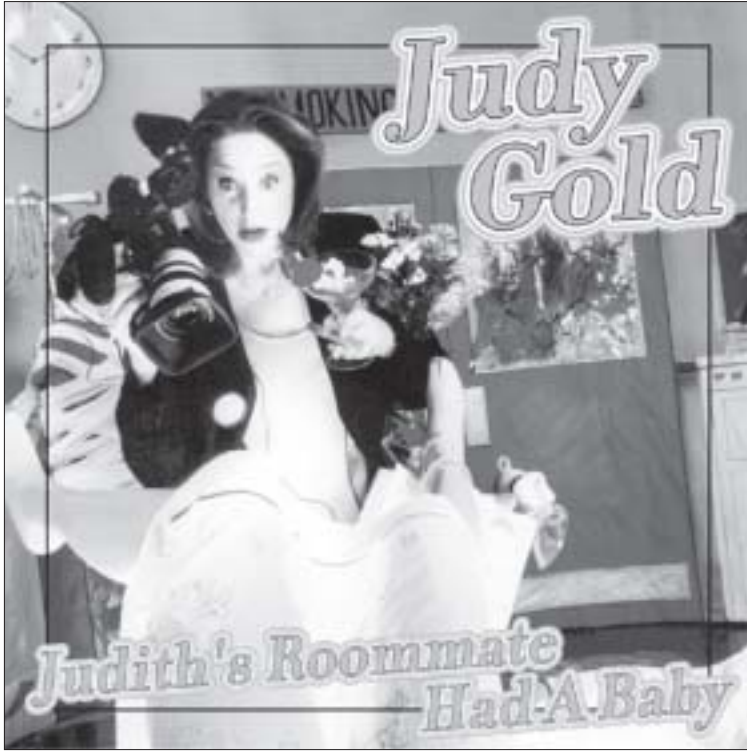
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Cover of Gold's most recent comedy CD.



A young Judy with her parents in New Jersey.

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website, "I was teased incessantly, but I knew deep down inside, I was really cool."

The young Gold got great grades except for one very black mark, a D in self-control in the fourth grade. That should have given her some idea where she was headed.

In college things changed and suddenly she had friends and more of a social life. A dare by a dorm mate that she do a comedy routine in the lounge with the other girls as her subjects started her on her stand-up journey. She did the show, got

the laughs and describes the experience as a kind of high she had never encountered. She started to hit the local clubs for open mike nights but managed to stay in school long enough to pick up her degree in music.

After taking all those early rough time slots in tiny clubs, her career finally got going. She's done film, television, theater, comedy venues and picked up awards for her work. She won a Cable Ace Award in 1996 for Best Comedy Special and in the same year received an American Comedy Award nominee for Best Female Comedienne. In '98 and '99 she picked up back

to back Emmys as writer/producer for the Rosie O'Donnell Show. And in 2001 she was nominated again in the Best Female Comedienne category.

Her films include "Lois Lives a Little," "Sex Lives of Superheroes" and Woody Allen's "The Curse of the Jade Scorpion." On TV she's appeared in "Sex and the City," "Law & Order," "The Drew Carey Show," "Ed," "The Tonight Show," "As the World Turns," "Roseanne," "The View" and "Wings," among others. She appeared often on "Hollywood Squares" and currently hosts HBO's "At the Multiplex with Judy Gold."

She's a current regular on "Tough Crowd with Colin Quinn" and hosted "100 Greatest Stand-ups of All Times." She pops up on VH-1 and reruns of her award winning "Comedy Central Presents Judy Gold" continues to pull strong audience numbers.

Showing a different side, she co-starred with Glenn Close in the CBS movie "The Ballad of Lucy Whipple" and can regularly be seen on Disney's "All American Girl."

In her spare time she's done bits on "Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher" and performed in "The Vagina Monologues" on

stage at the West Side Theater in New York City.

Although her professional life is right on track, her personal life took a recent hit when she and her long-time partner of 19 years split up. They had two children together. The kids live with Gold but her former partner, who lives a few blocks away, remains a daily presence and cares for them while Gold is on the road.

Gold recorded her current comedy CD, "Judith's Roommate Had a Baby" during last year's Women's Week performances. The title, she says,

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comes from how her mother explained having a grandchild since her daughter was a lesbian.

When asked about this year's show and possible surprises, she shoots back, "Why should I tell you, it wouldn't be a surprise then."

What she will say is it will be all her, no film clips as she sometimes uses. "Just me, the mike and a glass of water," she says adding that her preparation for going on stage includes arriving about 30 seconds before the curtain. She does look over her notes and reads the newspaper every day for something new to add to the show. One rule she adheres to is no drinking before shows. "You need to have all your senses," she says.

Gold tells the Banner she's currently writing for the syndicated TV show "Life & Style" and has an ongoing show based on the presidential race called Campaign '04 Unzipped." She's appearing live twice a week in New York at the Zipper Theater.

"I talk about my disdain for that liar or should I say liars in the White House," she says, turning serious. She refers to President George Bush as "that thing in the White House."

She's hopeful that things will make a turnaround after the debates. "Kerry comes from behind and he's a master debater. I'm really looking forward to the debates. When you travel like I

'Just me, the mike and a glass of water.'

—Judy Gold, on her Provincetown show

do you realize how stupid so many people in this country are. Actually, they are smart but they still believe all those lies."

She considers the public furor around former President Bill Clinton's not-so-private sex life and compares that with the disinformation that is the backbone of the current administration. "How much money was spent on that blow job?" she asks incredulously. "And how many lives are now being lost because of [Bush's] policies?"

Almost worse, she says, is the smoke and mirror effect that all the attention to the Iraqi war is taking up in the media. "No one

is really looking at his domestic agenda on things like social security or economics."

And, she adds, she doesn't want to hear another word about the liberal, left-leaning media. Most media, she asserts, is firmly under the control of right wing conservatives with a vested interest in maintaining the Republican status quo.

Stepping away from politics, she says she's also been doing a one-woman show on stage based on interviews with Jewish mothers all over the country. The show, "G-d Doesn't Pay Rent Here" is a response to charges that her material —

based on her mother — promotes stereotypes.

She shrugs off the PC attack and says humor is always the way to reach people. "I play in Houston and go on stage and say, 'I'm a gay mom. Afterward, people come up and say they are not gay but I really spoke to them. I hope they leave saying to themselves, 'She's really cool and funny.' It's amazing what you can do with humor. Laughter is always the best way to get a point across."

Not that she's funny all the time. Nope, she's just a regular gal who's funny for money. "There are those people who al-

ways want me to tell a joke, or worse, those who want to tell me a joke," she says. "Sometimes I meet people and they say, 'She wasn't that funny.' It's my job."

That may be true but throw Gold a straight line and she's quick to supply the laugh.

Just before the interview ends, she's asked if she was terribly disappointed she wasn't named as Jay Leno's successor for the Tonight Show.

There is a brief silence and then an almost inaudible snuffling sob.

"I wasn't? No one told me." More sniffling. "No, really, it's fine." □



Judy Gold (right) with President Bill Clinton and comedian Caroline Rhea.



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