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The last laugh

Funny Women of Comedy Show at Wiley's

By JENNIFER HANAUER LUMPKIN

At some point or another, we all need a release, an escape from the troubles of this life. And what better way to do that than an evening with the hottest female comedy show of the year? Hosted by comedian Teddy Smith and presented by CLWard Entertainment, Kim Coles, Crystal Ward and Robin Montague will take the stage at the Venue on 3rd this Saturday, May 2.

"It's time for females to be strong because they're just as funny as guys," says Crystal Ward, the Dayton native behind the show. "That's why I started the Women of Comedy."

The former Stivers student spent 10 years with the police force before finishing her undergrad and bouncing back and forth between Dayton and New York City. Ward then had to make the difficult choice between law school and comedy.

"I always say standup comedy is like a relationship; it's hard to commit," Ward laughs. "So when I finally made the commitment to standup, I stopped going to law school and I came back to New York, and I've been here ever since."

Ward and company are taking the Funny Women of Comedy Show around the country, with stops in Cincinnati, Chicago and Alabama.

Robin Montague, a performer since the age of three and known for her appearances on *Comedy Central*, recently took the time to talk to *Dayton City Paper* about inspirational comedians, doors that have opened for women in comedy and the maniacal entity in your living room known as the television.

Growing up, did you have people you wanted to emulate, people who inspired you?

Robin Montague: Yeah, naturally. I was very inspired by *Saturday Night Live*, by Gilda Radner in particular. Also Lucille Ball and Carol Burnett. However, they weren't standup comics, per se. ... In the standup vein, I had Joan Rivers and Moms Mabley to look at, as well as Richard Pryor.

I've spoken with a few comedians since Joan Rivers passed, and you can really feel that loss in the community.

RM: She was pretty amazing, what she did for females in comedy. If you're really like me, and I live the comedy life, you've got to acknowledge Joan and respect her because she opened doors, for real. I mean, they

all did, Phyllis Diller and Moms Mabley, as well, but Joan Rivers did a whole lot.

What do you feel like you're able to do now that maybe you wouldn't have been able to do 20 or 30 years ago when women started opening these doors?

RM: Equal pay. And, to a certain extent, to be in the running for all things comedy. I could audition for a host just as well as Kevin Hart could. I'd be seen as well, whereas years ago they might not even consider a woman.

Do you think we're close to having a female late-night talk show host?

"That's the goal, to make everybody happy, to make everybody feel good."

— comedian Robin Montague

RM: Oh, man. I thought it would happen a few years ago when Ellen was so successful. I had hoped. I do consider *Chelsea Lately*, that Chelsea Handler did it. She was late night and she was on *Comedy Central*, so I give Chelsea a lot of credit.

You're a true inspiration to future comedians. We're so fortunate to have you come to our city!

RM: I'm happy to come. I'm looking forward to it. We're going to be funny as all get out, smart-funny and courageous and funny and funny and funny. And that's the goal, to make everybody happy, to make everybody feel good, whether they want to pursue [a standup career] or not. It's a really rough road. It's not one that I recommend lightly. It has to be a passion that, almost like you can't help but do it kind of thing. I know this is lofty, but it's almost like if you were a young girl and you wanted to be a nun, you know what I mean? You're going to be a nun, no matter how odd that seems to anyone. It's that kind of thing, where you just have to do it no matter what.

It's not really easy-breezy times right now for anyone, so to get



The Funny Women of Comedy Show featuring comedian Kim Coles will take place May 2 at Wiley's Comedy Joint

that escape, that laughter, is really important in people's lives.

RM: I do think that that's really important. I have a lot of people come up to me after shows, telling me how they just didn't have to think about their problems or the news or whatever for an hour, and it made them feel better. That's something that is priceless to me, that I affect people in that way. Television is so maniacal. To me, sometimes television stresses people out, and they don't realize it. You know, with all the commercials and everything, you got to do this, you got to look like this, you got to be this, you need this, you got to get this right away! And at least with a comedy show, you hear people laugh, people are saying what you think in a better way than you might have thought it, and you can have fun. There's no badgering. We're all funny, and we're equal in that no matter what our size, shape or color. So that's what I appreciate about it.

The Funny Women of Comedy Show will take place Saturday, May 2 at 5 p.m. at Wiley's Comedy Joint, 101 Pine St. Advance tickets are \$30 and available for purchase at 14 Karat Gold Records (4180 W. Hillcrest Ave., Dayton), All-Star Barber Shop (3625 Dayton-Xenia Rd., Beavercreek) and Cognacs Restaurant and Ultra Lounge (6504 Union Rd., Clayton). Tickets at the door are \$35. For more information, please call 937.239.8225.

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