

COMEDY

TimeOut
New York

Interview

Joy shtick

The View's Joy Behar brings her sardonic gab to the Marshalls Women in Comedy Festival

By **Karen Iris Tucker**

Comedian Joy Behar has just finished taping the 500th episode of *The View*, a daily roundtable gabfest she cohosts with Barbara Walters, Meredith Vieira, Star Jones and Lisa Ling. She is back in the makeup room, sampling lipsticks instead of searching for a quiet place for us to chat. "Ooh, this is a nice shade," she says in a thick New York drawl while scrutinizing her cinnamon-glazed pucker in the mirror. Then, suddenly, Behar is off, racing down the hall, waving goodbye to Vieira, rattling the doorknob of Walters's locked dressing room, before finally directing us to seats in her own cluttered office.

Behar's breakneck pace makes her hard to keep up with. It also matches the salty, cut-the-crap comedy she lets rip on her television show. She fires barbs quickly, and she's always blunt. When Mayor Rudolph Giuliani guested on the show, she asked him, "If Derek Jeter double-parked his car before the championship game, would you tow it away?" (The mayor admitted he'd look the other way.)

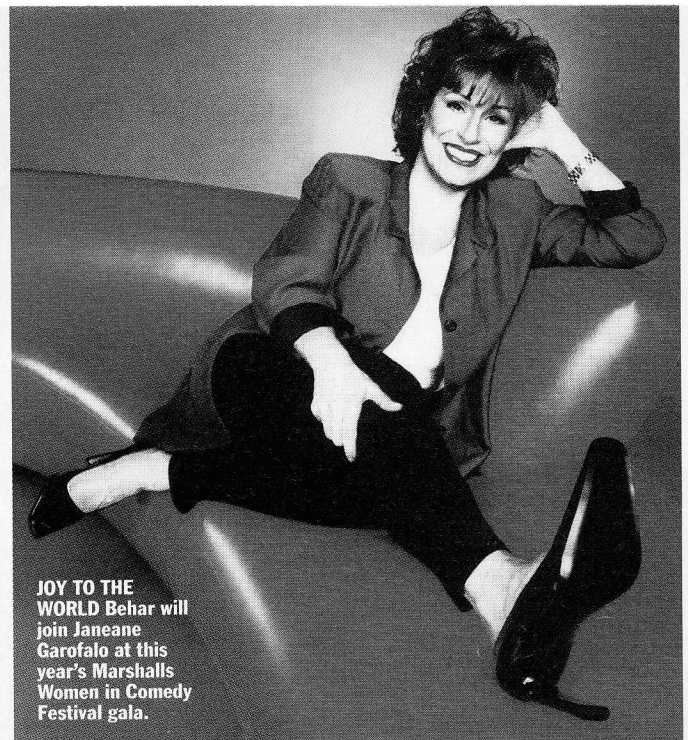
This week, fans of *The View* can catch the cohost live as she brings her brand of comedy to the Marshalls Women in Comedy Festival. Behar will headline an opening gala

with Janeane Garofalo on Wednesday 10 at Avery Fisher Hall. The two will perform and present a lifetime-achievement award to trailblazer Phyllis Diller.

Although she herself is now one of the top performers in her field, things were not always this rosy for the 56-year-old Brooklyn native. Behar grew up in a tenement with a large Italian family who provided the perfect audience for the burgeoning comic to practice her routines. "Even as a kid I was carrying on," she recalls. "Instead of a TV, they had me."

Instead of acting on her comic potential, Behar found herself in a static, 17-year marriage, living in the Long Island "boonies," immobilized by depression. In 1981, she summoned the strength to leave with her young daughter and enrolled at SUNY Stony Brook, where she earned an M.A. in English before teaching for several years.

It was at this point in her life that she rediscovered the performance bug. "In 1983, when I began doing stand-up," Behar recalls, "women were first starting to come out on the comedy-club circuit." She appeared Thursdays at "Women's Night" in the Greenwich Village club Comedy U. "We all used to bond there, be-



JOY TO THE WORLD Behar will join Janeane Garofalo at this year's Marshalls Women in Comedy Festival gala.

cause it was just women onstage," she says, though she acknowledges that back then, "when you wanted to be in the big leagues, you had to be with the boys, too."

Behar's ability to compete with her male peers, as well as winning over crowds at Catch a Rising Star and Carolines, led quickly to larger gigs. She hosted a call-in radio show on WABC for three years (where she honed her irreverent take on politics) and landed a plum role in Woody Allen's 1993 film *Manhattan Murder Mystery*. Then, luckily, Behar was asked to do ten minutes at Milton Berle's 89th birthday party. One of the star-studded celebrity guests was Walters.

"I was thrilled, of course," says Behar. "Milton Berle is a Friar; he's really the big daddy of us all." She did her routine and recalls that "everyone seemed to like it. My boyfriend said, 'Barbara was the only one not laughing.' And I said, 'Well, I'm not going to ever work

with Barbara Walters, so what do I care?" A few weeks later, Behar received the offer to cohost *The View*.

"The show is interesting to women because they know us and they can get into our little quirks," Behar theorizes about the hit program. "You can gossip about us," she adds. "Look at her hair today. 'Do you believe what she said to Barbara?' 'I think Barbara is mad at them.'"

Behar names Nathan Lane, Meryl Streep and Dustin Hoffman among her favorite interviewees. "The bigger the star," she claims, "the better the interview, because they're relaxed; they've already made it." Who would she invite on the show if she could have anyone? "Well, I'd like to interview Hitler," she says, laughing, "find out what made him tick—and then shoot him."

Joy Behar will perform with Janeane Garofalo Wednesday 10 at 8pm at Avery Fisher Hall. See daily listings. The View airs weekdays at 11am on ABC.

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