

## Jessica Salomon left her job at the UN to become a standup comedian

### QUEBEC / Former war crimes lawyer is a rising star on the Montreal comedy scene

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In her characteristic deadpan, with just a hint of a smirk, comic Jessica Salomon credits "the dearth of hilarious lesbians" as the reason she got into standup. She's joking, of course, but she does have some explaining to do. Not many people leave a job at the UN to become standup comedians, but about two years ago, that's exactly what Salomon did. Formerly a war crimes lawyer, Salomon's now a rising star on the Montreal comedy scene, playing shows all over town and putting together a few of her own, like the sold-out "Girl on Girl on Girl Comedy Show," which featured an all-lesbian lineup. *Xtra* sat down with Salomon to talk law, lesbian audiences, and, um, double fisting.

#### **Xtra: What made you want to leave the world of war crimes law to get into standup?**

**JS:** I sort of lost my passion for the law. At the time, I was living in The Hague – the place where rain, wind and war crimes trials were invented – and I started watching a lot of comedy in my off time. Go figure. It made me realize that comedy was something I really wanted to try. I felt like I had it in me and that if I didn't go for it, it would be something I might always regret.

#### **Xtra: What was your first gig like?**

**JS:** The first time I got up onstage was at a comedy club in Amsterdam. I had really just gone to check the place out. I was comedy-curious, but they offered me a spot on that night's show. I was totally unprepared. It was a disaster. I just rambled on about Dutch things expats find annoying or strange. Like, "What's the deal with Dutch guys and orange corduroys?"

I also stood right next to the spotlight, not in it. I thought it was too hot, and I didn't like that I couldn't see anyone. You know you're an amateur when the feedback you get from the MC that night is, "Next time try standing under the spotlight."

#### **Xtra: Did anyone ever discourage you from getting into comedy?**

**JS:** The only person that really discouraged it was my 90-year-old grandmother. She thinks me being a standup comedian will make it hard for me to fit in with the Royal Family once Prince William finally proposes.

From time to time, though, she'll ask me how my "presentation" went. I choose to take that as encouragement.

#### **Xtra: Has your comedy ever gotten you into trouble?**

**JS:** At the very beginning, friends would ask me to do standup for them in social situations. I know never to agree to this now, but I didn't then. I agreed to do some of my standup at a wedding. My closer was a joke I have about double-fisting that works fine in a comedy club...

I skipped brunch the next day, but from what I understand, some of the older guests were asking for an explanation. Explaining jokes is bad to begin with. Explaining double-fisting to someone's grandmother is... well, actually, nothing is that bad.

#### **Xtra: Do you find performing for lesbian audiences different than performing for "regular" crowds? If so, how?**

**JS:** I really enjoy performing for lesbian audiences. In my limited experience, they seem like loyal fans that come out to have a good time and laugh at smart material. "Regular" crowds are harder to gauge. The only thing is that lesbians can be a little more sensitive to the politically incorrect. On the other hand, sometimes I'm disturbed by just how hard "regular" audiences laugh at politically incorrect material.

#### **Xtra: What have you got on the comedy agenda these days?**

**JS:** I'm opening for Joey Elias at the Comedy Nest the weekend of Nov 4 – Nov 6. I'm especially excited about those shows because after my failed attempt at standup in Amsterdam, I took a standup comedy class with Joey at the Comedy Nest about a year and a half ago and have never looked back since.

Okay, I look back in panic sometimes, but I can say with confidence that I have stood under the spotlight ever since.

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***Jessica Salomon***  
***(photo by Susan Moss)***