

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

TV regular Natasha Leggero prefers live stand-up

By John Wenzel
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Natasha Leggero often adopts the guise of an aloof L.A. princess for her stand-up routine — the perfect persona to indict the most bloated, superficial aspects of our culture.

It's what makes her brand of comedy so ripe for dissection, but it's also just plain fun, allowing audiences to feel OK guffawing about any number of potentially unsavory and taboo topics.

We talked via phone with the TV regular ("Chelsea Lately," "Ugly Americans," "Nick Swardson's Pretend Time") about her upcoming Comedy Central special and her judging stint on the most recent season of "Last Comic Standing" in advance of her Comedy Works shows today and Saturday.

Q: You just taped your first Comedy Central special, in New York, and are recording your first Comedy Central album, here in Denver. Are you approaching the two things differently?

A: With comedy on television your stuff always has to be slightly neutered, and there are so many things that can't get passed, like rights for band names and songs. But the New York taping still went great. And in Denver, it's definitely going to be uncensored.

Q: Have you noticed a profile bump since you were a judge on "Last Comic Standing" this season?

A: Yeah, definitely. Anything you can do to get more people to come to your live shows is good, because that's where you can really do what you do. Everyone's on the same page and you don't have to win strangers over as much.

Q: What do most people know you from?

A: There are some die-hard "Chelsea Lately" fans, and that's where the majority of my fans come from. Chelsea is really helping make comedy audiences hipper and edgier.

Q: How so?



Cable TV regular and "Last Comic Standing" judge Natasha Leggero

A: A lot of fans from her TV show will come out to our shows, and they've never even been to a comedy club. But they're totally cool with you making fun of pop culture and society and being a little mean if you want to, and everyone loves it. I feel like she's really helping expand and broaden the comedy club audiences.

Q: You've been in show business since you were a kid in Chicago, appearing in plays, TV movies and commercials. Did you ever fantasize about being a comedian when you were little?

A: Coming from the Midwest, I didn't know about stand-up as an art. I just thought stand-up comedians were old men in suits talking about their wives. I had never seen anyone young and cool doing it until I moved to L.A. and saw this girl I knew. She was just talking about her life, and I hadn't made the connection that you can just go on stage and react to society and talk about what's on your mind.

Q: Did your first time go well?

A: The first time I tried it, it was very strong, positive reaction from the crowd. It was the best feeling I've ever had, and I thought, "Now I'm just trying to get that feeling back!" And I was so conceited the next time I went on stage it was a terrible, terrible bomb. I almost got beat up.

Q: Do you have a joke you used to love to tell, but now can't stand?

A: Yeah, my whole act. . . . But really, I do have one about male comics who were always coming up to me and being like, "Aren't you a little attractive to be a comedian?" And I'm like, "Aren't you a little ugly to be talking to me?" That's one of the first jokes I wrote doing open mics a few years ago and that would actually happen. The joke popped into my head on the way to a club where I was getting paid \$3 to get harassed by male comics. But it doesn't really ring true anymore — fortunately.

NATASHA LEGGERO.

Stand-up. Comedy Works, 1226 15th St. Today-Saturday. 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. today; 6:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. \$22. 303-595-3637 or comedyworks.com