

STREET CRACKS

Janine Gardner: If this is Monday, it must be . . .

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Her dog looks like Toto, her 1984 Mazda serves as her pair of ruby slippers. She even experienced her first tornado in Texas recently.

But unlike Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz," comedian Janine Gardner is apparently in no hurry to get home.

That's at least judging by Gardner's frantic schedule, which includes performing 48 weeks out of the year on the road. Gardner and her dog, Kiwi, tool around the country in her Mazda RX 7 that has 243,000 miles on its engine.

"I wrote them (Mazda) a letter telling them I've encircled the globe at least eight times in my Mazda," said Gardner, who performs Wednesday through Saturday at Joe's in Livonia.

"I keep writing them. I would like them to give me another car to test drive. At least they could have done a send me a filler for a free lube job."

Such a nomadic existence is commonplace in the world of comedy. Whereas many comedians bemoan being on the road, Gardner appears to relish a life of hotels, fast food and rest stops.

GARDNER DESCRIBES herself "poor as a church mouse." Any money made from comedy club engagements is often eaten up in expenses, she said.

All of this serves to configure up clichéd images of a woman and her dog facing a cold, cruel world alone. Really, Gardner's comedic adventure perhaps attacks a sexist stereotype that views women as being too

naïve for such endeavors.

"Men have been doing it for years. There's a lot of benefits. I don't have to make a bed every day. I don't have to do dishes all the time . . . and I get to see the country."

"If I want to see someone who lives four hours away, I just get in my car and go. My sister packs a compass to go to the supermarket."

AFTER CONQUERING a number of jobs, comedy greeted her at age 30. In nearly seven years, she has criss-crossed the country in a whirlwind odyssey.

Onstage, Gardner's humor can be personally revealing.

She jokes about growing up in a dysfunctional family with a mother who was addicted to Valium. She brings humor in being raised Catholic in the Mormon hub of Salt Lake City.

OBVIOUSLY, Gardner's not a "joke machine." She adheres to the belief comics should leave something of themselves with an audience during a routine.

"At first, (comedy) was therapeutic. I feel no one could steal my jokes unless they lived my life. I want my comedy to say something."

On the urging of friends, Gardner plied her comedic talents at a club contest in Salt Lake City. Soon, she earned the title of "Funniest Woman in Utah."

EVEN BEFORE then, though, Gardner remembers being a cutup in the fifth grade.

One of her favorite plays was to roll up a paper, point it toward the P.A. speaker and call herself out of

class. The teacher fell for the trick every time.

In reality, Gardner was merely coping with her environment.

"I felt like I stuck out in a crowd. The Mormons were sheltered people, especially the staunch ones. They were unsympathetic towards me just because of the fact my parents drank coffee and smoked. Some kids were not allowed to play with us because we were Catholic."

Roseanne Barr is also from Utah.

It was the "Star-Spangled" singing comedian who gave Gardner her best advice: Write three punch lines and throw the first two away. That way, the most obscure humor will rise to the top.

WORKING IN the male-dominated field doesn't bother Gardner. She has had several jobs outside of comedy where women are the minority, including as a customer service analyst for a company that designed sewage treatment systems.

Yet a few things gnaw at her being a female comedian. For example, few women comedians are booked together on the same bill. At Joe's in Livonia, though, Gardner will appear with Gilda Hauser.

"They use us as sandwich fillers. There's this myth out there that if you're a woman, especially an attractive one, you can't be funny."

Janine Gardner appears Wednesday-Saturday, June 3-8, at Joe's Comedy Club in Livonia. For information, call 261-0555. She also appears Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, at Joe's at the Roxy in Belleville. For information, call 699-1829.



Comedienne Janine Gardner has a frantic schedule, so much so that her Mazda RX 7 has 243,000 miles on its engine.

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are listings of some comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is appearing at your club, send the information to: Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

● **COMEDY CASTLE**
Mark Sweetman will perform Tuesday-Saturday, June 4-8, at the Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Show time is 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9900.

● **JOEY'S ALLEN PARK**
Brent Cushman will perform Wednesday-Saturday, June 5-8, at Joe's Comedy Club and Sports Emporium, 15246 Southfield Road, Allen Park. Show times are 9 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 and 10:45 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 382-7041.

● **JOEY'S LIVONIA**
Janine Gardner will perform Wednesday-Saturday, June 5-8, at Joe's Comedy Club, Stoyan's Seafood & Steakhouse, 34071 Plymouth Road, Livonia. For information or reservations, call 261-0555.

● **JOEY'S AT THE ROXY**
Gary Tison will perform Friday-Saturday, June 7-8, at The Roxy, Haggerty Road, near I-94, Belleville. For information, call 699-1829.

● **HOLLY HOTEL**
Dessell will perform with Perry

Wright and Bill Hildebrandt Thursday-Saturday, June 6-8, at the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Thursday, 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 634-1891.

● **MISS KITTY'S**
John Connell will perform with Dan Liberto Friday-Saturday, June 7-8, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. For information, call 628-6500.

● **MAINSTREET**
Peter Berman will appear Friday-Saturday, June 7-8, at MainStreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and 7, 9 and 11 p.m.

Saturday. For information, call 996-9080.

● **BEA'S COMEDY CLUB**
Mike Bonner, Steve Bills and Downtown Tony Brown will perform Friday-Saturday, June 7-8, at Bea's Comedy Club, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 8:30 and 11 p.m. For information, call 961-2581.

● **LOONEY BIN**
Tony Hayes will appear with Bill Bar and Mike Reyes Friday-Saturday, June 7-8, at The Wolverine Restaurant and Looney Bin Comedy Club, 1655 Gt. Wyand, Wyand. For reservations and show times, call 669-9374.

● **DUFFY'S**
The Bob Postel Comedy Show will

perform 9 and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays during June at Duffy's Waterfront Inn, 8635 Cooley Lake Road, Utica. For reservations, call 363-9469.

● **TIM ALLEN**
Tim Allen will appear with special guest Lowell Sanders 7:30 and 10 p.m. Friday, June 7, at the Power Center, 121 Fletcher, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$17.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **PINE KNOB**
The New Pine Knob Music Theatre Series No. 1 will feature Red Skelton, June 30; Don Rickles with Toni Tennille, July 9; and Alan King with Paula Poundstone, Aug. 7. Series No. 14 features Budd Friedman's "Night at the Improv" with Louie Anderson, Joe Raposo, Mike Binder, Bobby Collins and Ron Pearson, July 1; Jay Leno, July 24; and George Carlin with America, July 25. For information, call 377-8200.

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ENTRY FORM:

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Send your responses to: Showcase Film Quiz, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150. Responses of this Quiz and 1000's of Readers' Responses and Showcase Contests are not being held. Enter a Showcase is held on all matters. Please call for a better program. The above contest is for fun and prizes are not guaranteed.