

May 10, 2013

THE COMICS



THE PLAYERS

From left: **KRISTEN SCHAAL** best known for her work on HBO's *Flight of the Conchords*, *30 Rock*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and Fox's *Bob's Burgers*, the former *Weekend Update* and *Saturday Night Live* writer, 35, is starring on the ABC pilot. **NICK KROLL**, the touring *Barryman*, 34, whose credits include ABC's *Conan* and HBO's *The Life and Times of Tim*, stars in Comedy Central's *Weekend Update* and Fox's *The League*. **CECILY STRONG** After training at Second City and UChicago, Strong, 35, joined SNL in Fall 2012. **ROD DELANEY** He has yet to land a TV series, but the 35-year-old has a Twitter following of nearly 1 million, a large fan base and a book deal. **ANTHONY JIZELNIK** He adds to a notable base, first set into motion with *Saturday Night Live* and frequent *Weekend Update* performer, 34, stars in Comedy Central's *The Jason Mraz* *Offensive*.



WHAT NETWORK EXECS GET WRONG

SCHAAL Gosh, I think there's a certain network out there that is very nervous about putting female leads on their network. It's been five years or so since they had one, and they're like, "Well, it didn't work, so we're too scared." But there's been other male-driven comedies that didn't work, and you still went with males again. That really drives me crazy.

JESELNIK Are you talking about Oxygen?

SCHAAL I'm talking about (*coughs*). The big problem is that if they take a risk on something different and it works, then they're geniuses. But if they take a risk on something different and it fails, then they're fired. So everybody just wants to ride the middle ground. They just try to reproduce hits from the '90s. Wow, I got really nervous. Maybe I just like ruined my whole career.

JESELNIK Why would you even want to be on Comedy Central and take a pay cut at this point in your career? (*Laughs*.)

KROLL Technically, I'm on FX and Comedy Central right now. ... It's not a brag if you say it very casually. I've found that with FX, there is more of a hands-off approach. There's as much competition on the network side as there is on the talent side because there are so many venues to go do a show now that I think that there's less meddling, at least in the cable world. It used to be like, if you didn't get a show on Comedy Central or HBO, that was it.

JESELNIK I kind of agree, but I've definitely gotten some weird notes. We were talking about this story about some guy who put his baby in the dryer on my show, and we played a game with the panelists: Is that a baby in the dryer? We'd have this graphic of a baby in a dryer. Comedy Central was like, "This is really funny, but at the end, can you please say: 'Guys, this graphic isn't a real baby in the dryer. You shouldn't put your baby in the dryer.' " I was like, OK, and I just typed, "Everybody, Comedy Central wants me to tell you that you shouldn't put your baby in the dryer and Comedy Central thinks you're f—ing idiots." I got a call 10 minutes later: "Maybe you don't have to include that. Maybe people will know."

"Just to know that everyone has terrible anxiety and that that's OK," says Strong of the best advice she received upon joining SNL, before acknowledging that she still gets very nervous before the show.

MOST IMPORTANT COMIC WORKING TODAY

JESELNIK I don't even want to say his name because he's gotten so much smoke blown up his ass. But how can you not say ...

SCHAAL Louieeee.

JESELNIK Louis CK owns comedy right now, and it's not even in a way that gets you down about your own comedy. With Louis CK, every year there's a new hour of all of this new stuff. He'll also go on *Leno* and not let Leno say a word and just do a monologue that you'll never see in a stand-up or anything, and millions of people get to see it.

SKETCH COMEDY VS. STAND-UP

KROLL The worst part about doing sketch versus stand-up for me was at least in stand-up, you can acknowledge how badly it's going. But with sketch, when a sketch is going badly ...

SCHAAL You can't stop.

KROLL You can't stop it. And that's a terrible feeling.

SCHAAL Yeah, because in stand-up, the audience is more on your side if you just call out what everybody's feeling. They're relieved. You can get them back.

JESELNIK But you're never doing a sketch and thinking, "I've got an hour more of the sketch to do." With stand-up, it's like you're there forever.

STRONG I feel like you do [think that with sketch]. You're like, "If you didn't like that one, wait till you hear the next 80 minutes!" We got burned [doing sketch] by this old-people audience somewhere in Florida for New Year's Eve. These people hated us so much. We were like, "Now give us a line of dialogue that you haven't heard in the show so far." And this guy goes, "Humor."

"People think we enjoy comedy more than we do or that I would want to hear someone's dumb joke. Leave me alone."

—Jeselnik



From left: Schaal and Strong.



