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Rivers opens up about her reputation, what fuels her shows

Author(s): JANA THOMPSON **Date:** November 5, 2009 **Section:** Sidetracks

"Who" are you wearing, **Joan Rivers**? "I hate to tell you – it's not attractive – I'm wearing exercise pants and a T-shirt that says 'How'd You Get So Rich?'"

At age 76, a nice, quiet retirement is out of the question for **Rivers**. Not that she couldn't.

"For what? What could be nicer than making people laugh every night and getting a check at the end? In a previous life, I must have been very good."

The hardy comedian's inner youth is driving her eternal popularity. She thrives on pop culture. She knows fashion. And she Twitters. But not egregiously.

"(I post) a lot of jokes or when I think of a funny line. I don't really tell them when I'm getting my hair bleached."

Current events fuel her show, which will be coming Saturday to the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake.

"What if Tom Cruise came out of the closet or Michael Jackson isn't dead? Or whatever the hell just happened. I do lot of poking at things I don't agree with. But it's not going down memory lane."

Like most comedians, **Rivers** had to claw her way to success, but she sees the comedy world as equal-opportunity. "If you're funny, you're funny, you're funny, you're funny. You have to be very strong to be a comedian. It's a man's field, but many of us are in it. You really have to take command of the stage."

Her résumé proves nothing has held her back. **Rivers** is an author, actress, jewelry designer, playwright and talk show host, among other things.

She's probably most known for her celebrity-greeting gigs on the red carpet and her proclivity for plastic surgery. Neither seem to scare her.

She wrote a book: "Men Are Stupid ... and They Like Big Boobs: A Woman's Guide to Beauty Through Plastic Surgery."

"It's very serious. It's for anyone who wants anything done: Botox or Restylane, boob job, vagina lift ... In that book I did so much research. I talked to 24 different plastic surgeons."

However, **Rivers** admits to being intimidated by some of Hollywood's "amazing performers" as she interviews stars on the red carpet names like Leonardo DiCaprio and George Clooney.

"Beauty becomes nothing; they are all beautiful. Everybody is perfect, not an ounce of fat on them. The hair is perfect, the eyes are perfect."

Rivers is a red-carpet fashionista with a relaxed sensibility. The only way to get it wrong is by "not taking a chance. I think you shouldn't talk fashion seriously, and those who do are idiots. We're all our own Barbie Dolls. ... Put on another necklace. Try blue and red. That's supposed to be the fun of it. Nobody's looking. They're all so nervous about themselves."

The red-carpet shtick and the facelifts have been fodder for TV and stand-up, but she's not hurt.

"Oh, god no. You have to be known to be spoofed. Cher told me that a long time ago."

She even survived a Comedy Central roast in August. "I was very nervous because I knew I was going last, and I'd better be better than all of them."

That's surprising because **Rivers** has been a ubiquitous TV personality for decades, hosting an array of talk shows, a job she says she enjoyed because "I just love to ask people questions."

Her gift for gab won her "Celebrity Apprentice" in May. Her duty as winner: "Just to keep out their way."

Of poker champ Annie Duke, an acrimonious rival, she simply said, "No we didn't get along at all."

Rivers enjoyed working with daughter Melissa **Rivers** on

“Apprentice.” “We covered each other’s rears. She knows my weaknesses and I know hers. I can trust her totally, and vice versa.”

She now hosts a TV Land show called “How’d You Get So Rich?” which chronicles the spending idiosyncrasies of the wealthy.

Her comic reputation precedes her into Europe. **Rivers** continues to cultivate an adoring fanbase across the pond. “Once they love you, they love you. We have such a volatile society over here. We love you, we hate you. In the UK, once they love you, you are loved for life.”

Her greatest comedic accomplishment?

“That I’m still here! And as my manager says, ‘You’re relevant, thank god.’ ... I know who Amy Winehouse is.”

Joan Rivers

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

Where: Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake

Tickets: \$62-\$68

Info: www.rauecenter.org

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