

# New improv comedy show takes off from 'the ground'

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Collegian Staff Writer

Top-paid scientists might not be able to figure out how a human being could transform herself into a chest of drawers, but Amy Von Freyemann figured out the secret.

On the new original F/X series, "Instant Comedy with the Groundlings," (Monday through Friday, 10 p.m.) cast member Von Freyemann has been asked to pretend she is many things — from a chest of drawers to a transvestite.

The show, which premiered in September, is based on the 24-year-old improv comedy troupe, The Groundlings, which is required to act out suggestions it receives from the audience.

For example, in an episode of "Instant Comedy," one of the cast members comes out and asks the audience to make up a name for a talk show host, a theme to a song The Groundlings will sing or a disease the guest star has to diagnose.

For example, when Groundling-alumnae Kathy Griffin was on the show, she had to guess from a series of clues from the others that she had the made-up disease, "drop-to-the-ground-syndrome."

"Sometimes the audience will shout out

"... the more normal a suggestion, the funnier the situation turns out to be."

— Amy Von Freyemann  
cast member

the most bizarre suggestions because they think it will be funny to see," Von Freyemann said, "but the more normal a suggestion, the funnier the situation turns out to be."

In addition to Von Freyemann, a more recent addition to the group, other members of the cast include Mindy Sterling and Mike McDonald, both of whom have appeared on "Ellen" and the movie *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*. Brian Palermo, a former staff member of "Wheel of Fortune," is a regular on the show.

Before becoming Groundlings, cast members had to pass a series of classes at The Groundlings School of Improvisation. McDonald decided to join the school after seeing the show.

"I was blown away by it," McDonald said. "I quit my job that Friday and audi-

tioned for the Groundlings school."

The classes teach students improvisation and writing skills; the group has welcomed many famous actors such as Kevin Costner, Darryl Hannah, Lisa Kudrow and Paul Reubens (better known as Pee-Wee Herman).

Some of the graduates, such as Kudrow, have been guest stars on the show. However, Von Freyemann's favorite guest star was not a member of the troupe.

"All the guests were great, but Sandra Bernhard was just amazing when she was on the show," Von Freyemann said.

In the future, Von Freyemann said she is looking forward to working with guest stars such as Debbie Allen and Chad Lowe.

But she's not stopping there. In the works for the near future is a short film she wrote based on a sketch about a 17-year-old, played by Soleil Moon Frye, and her 19-year-old best friend, who also happens to be her stepmother.

She hopes to show the film at film festivals.

But for now, you will have to settle for seeing Von Freyemann and the Groundlings — as well as a slew of guest stars — pretend they have eating disorders and rap about being lost in Compton.



Photo courtesy of F/X Networks

The cast members of the new original F/X series, "Instant Comedy with the Groundlings." The show airs Monday through Friday at 10 p.m.

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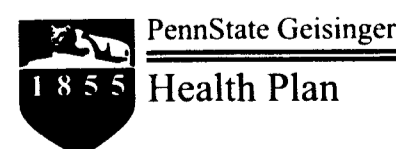
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