



Trump jokes pervade Off-JFL shows

## Description

# A sampling of Off-Just For Laughs offerings

By Byron Toben

July 27, 2022  
Previously published on August 3, 2016

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For reasons beyond my control, I am unable to attend the 2022 Just For Laughs Comedy Festival in Montreal.

Instead, I present my previously published article ***Trump jokes pervade Off-JFL shows***, published back in 2016 just before the U.S. elections. Enjoy!

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The wildly successful annual **Just For Laughs festival** ended last Sunday. As is my wont, I eschewed the massive PDA galas and focused on the more intimate **Off-JFL shows**, industry panels and films. One recurring thread at many of these presentations was The Donald. Mr. Trump has been God's gift to stand up comics.



James Adomian

The most specific was the wonderful spoof *Trump vs. Bernie*, which, since its creation at the Upright Citizen's Brigade improv Mecca in Manhattan last January, has become the most watched comedy special on Fusion's multi platform media company. **James Adomian** (as Sanders) and **Andrew Atamanuik** (as Trump) were spot on, eclipsing many Trump impersonators like John Di Domenico, Taran Kliah, Conan O'Brien and Jimmy Fallon. [Click to watch much of their act on Fusion.](#)

The rumpiled Mr. Adomian (who credits Phil Hartman and Janeane Garofalo as influences) has captured Sanders' accent and finger movements to a T. Mr. Atamanuik (who credits SCTV and George Carlin as influences) states that they take many statements and mannerisms and pursue them reductio ad absurdum. The night I saw it, **Andy Kindler**, the "comic's comic" acted as moderator.



Anthony Atamanuik

When I got home, I received an email that the real Donald had topped again any imitator's exaggeration, claiming that the USA had made a mistake in "allowing" Canada to become independent. [Click to see that Friends of Fox report.](#)

In some industry panels, Trump and his policies (or non policies?) formed a goodly part of the patter to the audience of agents, managers and talents. Such was the case with the acerbic **Lewis Black** – playwright, stand up, producer – whose observations in a political conversation were moderated by comic **Greg Proops**. I would

love to see Mr. Black do a one-man show of the irreverent journalist H.L. Mencken, who wrote in the *Baltimore Evening Sun* in July 1920, “As democracy is perfected, the office of President presents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day, the plain folk of the land will reach their heart’s desire and at last, the White House will be adorned by a downright idiot.”



Lewis Black (left) with Greg Proops

Mr. Black is one of many comics (Bill Maher, Louie C.K.) comparing Trump’s statements, pledges and rallies to Hitlerian techniques. At another ever popular industry special, ***State Of The Industry Address***, Andy Kindler, who has delivered it for all 20 years of the festival as he “turns water into wine”, complained that he got no credit for originating Hitler comparisons. “I’ve been calling people Hitler since I was 5 years old,” sez he.

Other subjects were discussed at two public shows I saw. For years, I have wanted to catch **Janeane Garofalo** since I saw her, along with other liberals like Paul Newman, on full page ads as regular readers of *The Nation* weekly. Her act is hard to describe. As she herself commented, she is not really a joke writer and wasn’t sure what she delivered. Finally, a well wisher in St. Louis thanked her for her “talk”. That’s it sez she, “I just talk and fast, jumping topics.”



Janeane Garofalo

She apologized to the men in the audience for perhaps seeming sexist, but “really guys, when you wear open toed sandals, you gotta clip those toe nails”. To an Australian fellow in the audience, she exhibited a talent to expound in colourful Australian slang. Of course, she does New Jersey Italian as well.

Ms. Garofalo obviously researches the local cities she visits. She stated she regularly reads *Walrus Magazine* and complimented the **Mainline theatre** in having a unisex washroom. She did refer to writer Mordechai “Richlieu”, but I thought that was a deliberate bit to entice audience dialogue. No one responded. Similarly, she referred to discovering that William Shatner was actually a French Canadian who had attended Concordia (actually, Jewish and McGill). Again, no interruption of correction... polite Canadians, eh? She also claimed to be working on a revisiting of the assassination of Julius Caesar and I could not ascertain if that was inspired by our current all-woman **Shakespeare-in-the-Parc** show or not.

All in all, an intelligent and witty gal, forever youthful at 52... hope she revisits us.

## Fun at the Movies



... interest to be shown at the **Cinema du Parc**.

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. In this, heart surgeon **Bassem Youssef** turns into a comic with a satirical show influenced by **Jon Stewart's Daily show**, a real novelty in the Arab world.

Wildly popular at first after the Arab Spring, it eventually contributed to the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood's Morsi. Alas, dictators of all stripes think alike, so successor el-Sisi's government put increasing pressure so that Youssef had to flee to California, where he is now working with FusionMedia on a new satirical show. This doc was first shown at New York's Tribeca festival and its one night here was only its second showing. [Click to check out the trailer](#). Fantastic show blending comedy and serious events.



Del Close

Another fine documentary was **Thank You Del: The Story of the Del Close Marathon**. **Del Close** was the most important person in modern comedy that no one knows. Close, an acting student of **Viola Spolin**, whose games for children's confidence and development led to his involvement with Compass Players at the University of Chicago, which eventually morphed into **The Second City**, directed by Ms. Spolin's son, **Paul Sills**. He became a teacher and mentor there, interspersed with time at San Francisco's **Committee** and eventually New York's **Upright Citizen's Brigade**. Dozens of improvisation successes interacted with his vision of long form improv as a unique art form. This was difficult as he was pursued by his own demons of alcohol and drugs, dying in 1988.

In 1999, associates at the Upright Citizens Brigade (including **Amy Poehler** and **Louie C. K.**) instituted an annual Marathon in his honour, attracting dozens of improv groups from the USA and even overseas (Portugal, Italy, Japan). Fans of Montréal's **Theatre Ste-Catherine** and **Montreal Improv Theatre** would love this film, which focuses on a startup amateur St. Louis quintet joining the festivities in the Big Apple. [Click to watch the trailer](#).

*Images: courtesy of Just For Laughs*

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**Byron Toben**, a past president of The Montreal Press Club, has been WestmountMag.ca's theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites Rover Arts and Charlebois Post, print weekly The Downtowner and print monthly The Senior Times. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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### Date Created

July 2022