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SPORTS

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OBITUARIES

EDITORIAL

ARCHIVES

PHOTO GALLERY

POLLS

ABOUT US/FORMS

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

BACK ISSUES

CELEBRATIONS

PLACE AN AD

ARCHIVES

Something downright funny at the film festival

By James J. Gillis/Daily News staff



Rachel Dratch performs with the Upright Citizens Brigade on Wednesday at the Newport Blues Cafe. (T.J. Kirkpatrick u Daily News staff)

NEWPORT - If it's film festival season, there's a good chance Rachel Dratch is in town.

For four out of the past five years, Dratch has starred with the Upright Citizens Brigade in nights of improvisation as part of the Newport International Film Festival.

With "Saturday Night Live" on hiatus, Dratch and co-star Horatio Sanz took to the stage at the Newport Blues Cafe before a full house Wednesday and Thursday nights, working on the fly.

For Dratch, who grew up in Lexington, Mass., Newport is a built-in early summer vacation.

"It's chance to get out of the city (New York) and have some fun in a great place," she said. "We have a great time with it, get to clear our heads a little."

The 40-year-old Dratch and her friends perform most Sunday nights in New York at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater, keeping their improvisation skills sharp.

"I think it's fun and it keeps us in shape for the show ("Saturday Night Live") on Saturdays, which, of course, is also live," Dratch said.

In previous years, cast mates including Tina Fey and Amy Poehler have visited Newport as part of the troupe. But Dratch is the mainstay of these always sold-out film festival events, which originated at Area 22, now Area Venue.

Dratch also has appeared in films, such as "Down With Love" and "Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star," as well as a recurring role on "King of Queens" and a guest spot on "Monk."

"But to me the show (SNL) is the most important thing," she said.

Dratch joined SNL in 1999 as a featured player, drawing early attention with an impression of Calista Flockhart as "Ally McBeal." She is now in her seventh season,



*Rollover for Info

having become a full-fledged cast member in 2001. That tenure surpasses the original 1975-80 cast, including John Belushi and Gilda Radner.

"That's right," Dratch said. "I really hadn't thought of it like that."

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