

New Jersey

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ON THE JOB

With Melissa Rauch



Photograph: Courtesy of Melissa Rauch

The 25-year-old comedian from Morganville is a regular commentator on VH1's *Best Week Ever*. Her one-woman show, *The Miss Education of Jenna Bush*, runs August 12–28 at the New York City Fringe Festival. This fall she'll perform stand-up at Montclair State and Monmouth universities.

When did you decide to pursue a career in comedy?

I was seven years old, and my parents were trying to get me to go to bed so they could watch an episode of *Three's Company*. I just started imitating Don Knotts as a stalling tactic. Once I heard my dad's laughter, I was hooked, and I got to stay up an extra two hours.

What's your link to Jenna Bush?

My boyfriend, Winston Beigel, and I started writing a one-woman show for me the day we graduated from college, and it was about that "now what?" phase every twentysomething goes through after they graduate. Then we saw Jenna speak at the Republican National Convention. She would crack jokes and you could tell that they were written for her. Jenna plans on teaching public school this fall, and the show is set entirely on the eve of her first day of school.

How did you get a job as a talking head?

I'd been doing stand-up in New York since my freshman year of college. Some of the writers on the show had seen me, and so they asked me for a tape to show to the producers. I went in for auditions, and they called me back in to be in the show.

Is the commentary on the show improv?

Most of it is ad lib, some of it isn't. I try to keep very current on pop culture, which is easy. I don't have to search back to what happened in 1981 with Cavariccis.

Do you have fun doing *Best Week Ever*?

It is such an awesome opportunity to share my thoughts on the week with a national audience, which is much more gratifying than telling my dry cleaner—no offense to Mai Lin, my dry cleaner.