

A character grew from harassment defense

BY DAVIDA SINGER

"Star 69", upstairs at The Kitchen, has been about 10 years in the making for comedienne, actress, writer Linda Hill.

"I grew up in Kansas, moved to San Francisco to be an actress, and found improv comedy," says Hill. That became my niche. There was a boom from 1985-87. I wore vintage clothes, and had a look. Lots of gigs doing comedy. There were very few women in this at the time."

Then Hill started getting "weird" calls from an obsessed fan. It went on for a year and a half. "Star 69" dramatizes this phone stalking.

"Linda couldn't deal with it, so she created the persona of Miss Angel Drake," Hill tells me over late morning coffee. "Angel becomes her protector, and it's like a psychological thriller. We're calling it a comic nightmare. It's about finding out through solitude what ghosts are haunting you. It caused me to go deeply inside myself. One other element that's emerged is about my mother, who had a stroke during this time. So it's also about going after your dream, and nurturing. Embracing all our



Villager photo by Marc Geller

Linda Hill, as Miss Angel Drake.

aspects."

According to Hill, Angel calls herself a songstress and survivor of the blues. The

performer notes there are two special quotes she's working with in this show.

"One is from Jung: 'Anything that remains in the unconsciousness that is not made conscious will come to you as fate.' And one is from Wilde: 'The only difference between a saint and a sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.'"

"I was definitely exploring what it was like to be that naughty," she continues. "I've been working with the Angel character for years. She's become a teacher, and I really like her. We're like Thelma and Louise metged."

The entire performance of "Star 69," just over an hour, finds Hill alone on stage, with clearly defined areas (there's a San Francisco area, and a therapy area), and quite a few video pieces which include other actors and slides.

"We have an incredible crew of people," Hill says, including Dave Simons [Cucaracha] directing, and artist Annie Bonner doing all the video work. We're using stand-up clips from Nashville and other shows of me, with original sound and music by Sam Carter."

Hill backtracks, relates that she comes from so far out in the country there was no running water when she was growing up. She took off for San Francisco at 20, and rode the improv and stand-up wave until she peaked.

"Usually you reach a point where you're headlining San Francisco, and then you move to L.A.," explains the comic who's been on bills with Whoopie Goldberg and been likened to Carol Burnett. "But I didn't like L.A. so I came to New York."

Two weeks later [1988] she met her

English husband (artist and illustrator), and her mother died. Not to be taken lightly.

Now living in the East Village, Hill says she has no problem getting older, though she won't divulge age. ("It's too restricting a label for me and for Angel.")

"Everything makes sense now," she underlines. "Settling into yourself, knowing what you can do."

She surely does. She's taped a lot of comedy festivals, and done PBS. Still plays countless clubs on the road, with 4 different one-person shows. In May or June, she'll do a "video dream poem" called "Sacred Sex". And for the fall she's preparing a "mockumentary about Miss Angel Drake trying to get royalties to songs she wrote that were stolen from her, with a lot of anecdotal stuff-rock n roll and blues."

Being willing to experience the entire stalking episode again is what's most challenging for Hill about "Star 69".

"Sometimes it becomes such a release," she says. "The other thing that's hard is dramatizing something based on truth, so it still comes across as genuine. I hope the audience gets to see there's not anything good or bad about what we feel."

Her biggest frustration?

"I found out at least five other women performers [on the circuit] had quit because of being harassed. It's so much about being a woman in our society. There are so many elements to this show, and still I'm not able to say and show everything. This has real edges to it."

"Star 69," upstairs at The Kitchen, 512 W.19th St.; Feb.19-Mar. 2, Wed.-Sun. at 8 p.m.; \$12. 255-5793.

THE KITCHEN, 512 W. 19 St., 255-5793:
CONFINEMENT IN DANCE: JENNIFER MONSON
SENDER, Feb. 6-9, \$15.

THE KITCHEN, 512 W. 19 St., 255-5793: STAR 69, Linda Hill
1 woman, multimedia black comedy, until Mar. 2, 8 p.m., \$12.

LA MAMA, 74A E. 4th St., 475-7710; THE LITTLE FREIDA
MYSTERIES, David & Amy Geller, until Mar. 15, Thurs. Sat. 10

THE KITCHEN, 512 W. 19 St., 255-5793: STAR 69, Linda
Hill 1 woman, multimedia black comedy, Feb. 19-Mar. 2, 8
p.m., \$12; MIRACLES IN REVERSE, trauma & aftermath,
Julia Heyward, Feb. 13-16, 8 p.m., Feb. 16, 2 p.m., \$15.

LA MAMA, 74A E. 4th St., 475-7710; THE LITTLE FREIDA

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