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From eastbayexpress.com

Originally published by *East Bay Express* Jan 07, 2004

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Yadda-Yadda

Jerry Seinfeld plays Oakland. Don't hate yourself for not knowing what the big deal is.

BY STEFANIE KALEM

What's worse than a self-hating Jew? A self-hating New York Jew. You know her: Long Island born-and-bred, neurotic, bespectacled, but *not a Seinfeld fan*. Did her genetic kreplach sit in the broth for too long? In honor of this week's **Jerry**

Seinfeld shows at the Paramount (2025 Broadway, Oakland, Friday at 7 p.m., Saturday at 7 and 9:30 p.m.), we decided to consult an expert -- SF comic, and fellow Jew, Dattner.



Jerry Seinfeld

Q: What does Jerry Seinfeld mean to you as a comedian?

A: What's meaningful to me is that he's returned to stand-up after finishing his show. That's a lot of pressure to live up to people's expectations. Lots of comics who reach his level of success say, "Phew! That's over with," and go make family movies about talking horses or they disappear into the abyss of San Fernando Valley.

Q: What does he mean to you as a Jew, or as a Jewish comedian?

A: Seinfeld's success as a comic is simply evidence of the abundance of funny Jews. Is it our kvetchy rising-intonation that's so integral to observational

comedy? Our sense of timing? "Quick, let's hightail it out of here before Pharaoh changes his mind!" Forty years in the desert, telling the same stories over and over, you'd eventually hone those punch lines just right, too. Our quick wit? "Hey, that bush is on fire -- no, put the water bucket down -- God, is that you?"

Q: Jerry Seinfeld was so all over the place during his show's reign, we couldn't stand him. Can you tell us why we should revisit that opinion?

A: I think it's important to differentiate between the show and his act. Most sitcoms, including his, depend on stereotypical characters for their humor. Comedy works ironically, by creating expectations and disrupting them. So in a TV show, that can get annoying because the show always has to end in the same place it began, and nobody gets to learn anything. But seeing Seinfeld perform live is exciting because you have the opportunity to experience the fullness of his character.

Dattner's new film, *Comedy: The Other Black Gold*, is making the national festival rounds. Learn more about her at MonkPunk.org. Tickets for Jerry Seinfeld cost \$45.50-\$75.50. 510-625-8497.