

N.Y Fringe Festival hit finds a home in the San Fernando Valley

Lisa David Dean brings solo show to the Whitefire

BY AMY LYONS

Lisa David Dean has a monster under her bed, but the beast is far removed from the typical ankle-grabbing goblin responsible for making things go bump in the night in many a toddler's room.

Dean's monster is a ghoul of addictions, embarrassing moments and situational absurdities that have morphed into a one-woman show, winning the actress/comedienne accolades at the New York International Fringe Festival.

The show sold-out for the entire Big Apple run, which is an accomplishment that only achieved by eleven of the 184 shows in the festival. Dean, a Sherman Oaks resident, now brings her self-created bedfellow — *The Monster Under My Bed Drank My Vodka* — to The Whitefire Theatre, making her commute from home to stage a snap.

Though New York was a nice stop on Dean's solo show ride, the play was born on the west coast, when she took a one-person show class with Beverly Sanders. The class allowed Dean to begin a process of shaping her life story. "She [Sanders] didn't expect us to know what our shows were about. She just had us bring a 3-5 minute event from our lives into class, keeping it in dialogue format, with as little commentary as possible," said Dean. She began carrying a tape recorder in her car, a tool that allowed her to record ideas as they arrived in her mind. The show premiered in 2003 and Dean has performed it at the Zephyr Theatre and the Santa Monica Playhouse.

No stranger to the entertainment world, Dean is a recurring sketch comedy actress on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. She has done stand-up at several Los Angeles venues, including *The Improv* and *The Icehouse*, and her resume includes voice-over credits as well as commercial work.

The New York native was inspired to pursue acting at the tender age of five, after seeing *The Fantasticks* Off-Broadway. Around the same time, Dean says her obsessive-compulsive behavior began to manifest.

"Basically, from the time I was a kid, I just wanted to be somewhere else," said Dean, who recalls being dropped off for

kindergarten and proceeding to take baby-steps to school, convincing herself that her tardiness was acceptable, as long as she was heading towards school. As the little girl began to grow up, seemingly harmless, quirky behaviors gave way to food addictions, alcohol abuse and relationship tangles.

"I would do anything that made me feel really relaxed or gave me an intense adrenaline rush," said Dean, whose addiction issues and dating debacles are



Lisa David Dean in her solo show, *The Monster Under My Bed Drank My Vodka* at the Whitefire Theater.

packaged in a comedic style of storytelling that Dean says make *Monster*, with all of its dark underpinnings, a comedy. "My favorite kind of comedy comes from that which is real and uncomfortable. The comedians who I really admire have just a touch of sadness to them... you know that they have been through something," said Dean, citing Lucille Ball, Goldie Hawn and Gene Wilder as some of her humorist heroes.

"My dad is a doctor and he never wanted to watch the news when he wasn't working, he wanted to watch comedy. He turned me on to Gene Wilder and Woody Allen," said Dean, who laughingly admits that she has respectfully asked her parents not to see *Monster*.

"My parents are amazing people and they are very supportive of me, but they are private people by nature," said Dean, who wants to keep her storytelling as honest as possible. She is grateful to Whitefire Artistic Director Bryan Rasmussen for his Sunday Solo Series, which gives her and other one-person show performers the chance to perform one Sunday per month. "Bryan and his wife are so artist friendly and the space is perfect for solo shows." ✨

The Monster Under My Bed Drank My Vodka has two show upcoming show dates at the Whitefire: Sundays, March 12 and April 9 at 7 pm. The Whitefire is located at 13500 Ventura Boulevard, Sherman Oaks. Call 323-850-8526 for tickets and information. For more on Lisa David Dean, visit www.lisadaviddean.com.

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