

# Film

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INTERVIEW » CARLA COLLINS

## People made fun of her for years, she says. Now, it's her turn

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THE Q&A

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Carla Collins is a force of nature. Augmented nature, mind you – but if a leggy blond hurricane swooped into your neighbourhood, wouldn't you expect her makeup to be flawless as the morning dew, her lip gloss to shine brighter than deep sea coral, and her golden lioness hair to be permanently wind tickled, even indoors? When helpless objects (a.k.a. me) meet unstoppable forces, they just stand still and wait to be swept away.

Anybody who owned a radio, a television, or was blessed with literacy in Canada in the 1990s and early 2000s got a daily, wise-mouthed dose of Carla Collins. Her sharp observational comedy and natural screwball abilities graced everything from morning radio drive shows to movie gossip magazines to the hit show *Paradise Falls* and the variety series *Sonic Temple* as well as the *eTalk* precursor *eNow*. Then, all of a sudden, she disappeared.

Well, not exactly – she moved to Los Angeles, that great Hell Mouth that swallows so many talented Canadians. In L.A., however, she did anything but evaporate. She got married (to the son of legendary studio-era star Tyrone Power, no less), set herself some new goals, and embarked on a career upgrade that is now beginning to bear very funny fruit.

Her hilarious new pseudo-reality show *CarlaWood* (it's really more a meta-reality show, a reality show that skewers reality shows), tracks the seen-it-all star as she negotiates her new home and career ambitions while realizing that she is not even close to seeing it all.



On her new show *CarlaWood*, Carla Collins turns the lens on her own Hollywood ambitions. JENNIFER ROBERTS FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

L.A. may be just a great big freeway, but *CarlaWood*, launching April 19 on TVTropolis, shows us that under those clean expressways lives a nation's worth of freaks, lunatics and very desperate players. Who better to catch them on camera than the queen of the flabbergasted reaction?

**In your own stand-up, you make fun of stars and actors and their bad habits. If the ambitions you show in *CarlaWood* play out, you'll be the target of the same sort of ridicule.**

Well, I think that would be a good thing! You have to get up the mast before anybody will take a shot at you – otherwise, it's "punch line ... who?" My theory of comedy, and I hope that I don't come across as mean, is that I aim for somebody higher on the food chain. I mean, really, is Joaquin Phoenix losing sleep?

**So, you're ready for it?**  
Absolutely. I think that being the punchline is, well, I don't

want to say an honour, but it's close to it. First thing, I won't write about someone who is too heinous. I like dark humour a lot, and I seem to be doing it more and more, but you put energy into a show, and it's a bit of an homage. And people have made fun of me for years! And I've always been pretty good with it. If you don't have a sense of humour, you're done.

**There's a school of thought about "making it" in Hollywood that says you must never let the people in power see how much you want to get ahead, never let them see you sweat. Isn't making a reality show that follows you around from audition to audition self-defeating?**

It wouldn't be the first time! No, I don't think so, because I don't think there is one direct route. And, honestly, I really enjoy doing the show, but a week before we started, I was thinking, I gotta get out of this. I gotta Navy Seal this thing shut.

**But I'm pretty black and white about things: I think a show works or it doesn't. I really like honest, I really like organic. Maybe because I'm just not that good an actress! But, with comedy, people can smell it when it's fake. But when things are done more naturally, I think you get some great, honest moments. And we're living in an age when, well, how could you not just show everything? I mean, you grab a phone and put something instantly on YouTube – there's not a lot of privacy out there.**

**How does the show actually work? When you go for auditions, do you tell the casting people ahead of time that you're showing up with a camera crew? Do they ever balk?**  
We say we're doing a documentary, and, c'mon, it's L.A. – they're very good friends with the camera. They'll jump in front of speeding cars for one. It's a very different vibe there, and very cool with everything being on camera.

**How do you know their reactions are honest?**

Oh, I think you know! Ha! I mean, they're not nice. They're like, okay, it's some Canadian with a camera, whatever.

**But I haven't seen anyone be nasty with you. Crazy, yes.**

Oh, and you're gonna see more. A lot of crazy. It's scary when I'm the stable figure. Something's probably not right!

But, in episode three, we taped at one of my favourite places to do comedy, this gay bar. Now, the last two times I played there I got a standing ovation. Paula Abdul's hairdresser came on stage drunk and fondled me for 45 minutes, he even did my hair, and I couldn't do any of my routine, but it was a riot.

So, this time, I'm all ready to go do the place again, and it turned out to be lesbian night.

I died so horribly. They did not love me. It might have been the Anne Heche joke –

that Anne Heche is a leap-year lesbian, every four years she goes back to a chick. But you can't have a win every night. That wouldn't be real. Lord knows.

**I see you are wearing a Kabbalah string. Is that mandatory in L.A. now?**

No, they give you a choice. Kabbalah or Scientology. It's the Bloods or the Crips. You gotta get your colours!

**Is L.A. just the worst place on Earth?**

No, no. But here's two things I've noticed. When it rains – hilarious. They fall apart. They scatter from the streets like Godzilla has arrived. And everything gets cancelled. Everything.

Another L.A. moment happened when I was having lunch, a tuna melt, and it was huge – American portions – so I took the rest out to this homeless guy.

He says, "I don't do dairy. And neither should you."