

THE BITCH IS BACK ON TELEVISION AND ON TOUR



Britain braces itself for Rivers in comic flow

by ZEDDY LAWRENCE

I was a tough choice when I came out of shul on Saturday night. Do I do what I've done for the past 34 Yom Kippurs and break the fast with my mother, or do I hop on a plane to New York and join the queen of the cutting remark for her family feast?

"Darling," said Joan Rivers in her trademark New York accent, "if you're in town, just come. I've got 18 people turning up after temple. It's very easy to find me, just follow the cooking smells."

And such cooking. "I'm making a krepalach soup and gefilte fish for hors d'oeuvres," revealed the comedienne, "and then we'll have a beautiful veal or lamb dish."

And what was my mother offering? Bagels, smoked salmon and a baked potato. A less exotic menu, matched only, no doubt, by less exotic conversation. I'm not saying my mum's a prude but if, like Joan, she had a new advice show starting on Channel 5 next weekend, I can't imagine her producers would be looking for "pensioners with active sex lives", "swingers" and "women who are considering getting designer private parts". And those are the ones I can just about mention in a family newspaper. The rest, if you could understand them, would leave you blushing.

"I've always been amazed," Joan said, "at how stiff upper-lipped the Brits are when it comes to sex and personal problems."

"I hope my no-nonsense advice will help viewers come to terms with things they were previously too

embarrassed to talk about. Watch out UK, they've let me out of my cage." They certainly have. During the course of our chat, I learnt that, given the choice, Rivers would rather sleep with Woody Allen than Mel Brooks (although John Cleese would be her preferred bedfellow) and that, aside from a sense of humour, all she's really looking for in a man is "someone who's breathing on his own and someone who's not wearing an adult diaper".

Given the naughty nature of our conversation, it's hard to believe that Joan is a staggering 71 years old. Or rather, not staggering – during her

and clearly visible face lifts. "Actually," she pointed out, "there haven't been as many as you all seem to think. I've only had one face lift – and a lot of tweaks. But I'm the only person who'll own up to it. I'm so sick when every one else says, 'I've done nothing.' Meanwhile, they're going to the toilet through their ears."

In a rare display of good grace, Joan doesn't name names, but anyone who's seen her in action, knows how unforgiving and uncompromising she can be.

"There's nobody I've really upset," she protested, then relented. "Well, maybe Kathy Bates. I merely joked that if she hadn't been on the Titanic, it wouldn't have sunk."

"I don't do it that much. I'll do a two-hour show and I'll make just one harsh comment, and that's what the press picks up on. But I don't care. My allegiance is to the audience, not Pamela Anderson or Christina Aguilera."

But can she take it as well as she dishes it out? "They say very mean things about me all the time," the star admitted. "But that's fine. I learnt many years ago that as long as they're talking about you, you're in the public eye and that's wonderful. When you're not being talked about, that's when you need to worry."

The Joan Rivers Position is on Channel 5 from 10 October. The *Broke and Alone* tour visits various towns, not including London, from 8 to 18 October. For details and tickets, call 08702 422898