

## ***Curb* Star Is Now Big Girl on *Campus***

by Matt Webb Mitovich



*Campus Ladies'*  
Christen Sussin,  
Carrie Aizley and  
(inset) Cheryl  
Hines

*Curb Your Enthusiasm* player [Cheryl Hines](#) is going back to school — the fictional University of the Midwest — as executive producer of Oxygen's new improvised comedy series, [Campus Ladies](#) (premiering Jan. 8 at 10 pm/ET). Starring **Carrie Aizley** and **Christen Sussin** as Joan and Barri, two middle-aged housewives in search of the wild college years they missed the first time around, *Campus Ladies* represents one of Oxygen's most daring endeavors ever. TVGuide.com spoke with Hines about the series' origins, May-December sex and whether *Curb* fans should perhaps rein in their enthusiasm for another season.

**TVGuide.com:** I just watched the *Campus Ladies* pilot. What a riot!

**Cheryl Hines:** I like to think it's funny!

**TVGuide.com:** How did this idea come about?

**Hines:** Well, Carrie Aizley and Christen Sussin and I all performed at the Groundlings [comedy troupe] together, and Carrie and Christen wrote what was in essence a pilot presentation and put it up, and I thought it was so funny. I had been talking to [Oxygen founder] **Geraldine Laybourne** several months prior, and she said the network was looking for funny, smart shows, so I called Geraldine personally and said, "I think you should come see this. It could be very funny on Oxygen." She sent some of her people and the next thing you know, we're moving forward. They bought the pilot and we shot it with [David Steinberg](#), an Emmy-winning director who has directed several *Curbs*. I just told him what the show was and he was onboard. He ended up having such a good time he wanted to direct more! It was just one of those things where funny people came together and did their thing.

**TVGuide.com:** For something "unproven" — meaning, not yet on the air — how on earth did you assemble such a great lineup of guest stars? You've got *Malcolm in the Middle's* [Jane Kaczmarek](#), *Saturday Night Live's* [Will Forte](#), [Anthony Anderson](#)... that funny "foreigner" guy from *The Comeback*, even. Every scene has you saying, "Oh, I know that person!"

**Hines:** I know, we got *very* lucky — since the show hasn't been on, it was a leap of faith for all of those performers, really. But Carrie and Christen are very funny, and I think just the cachet of having come out of the Groundlings [helped]; people know what kind of performers come out of there. Some of the people we know personally, like Will Forte and [Maya Rudolph](#), and the ones

we didn't know, like **Dan Castellaneta**, we just called and told them what the idea was, and they said yes.

**TVGuide.com:** I have to imagine the word "improv" is like catnip to comedians.

**Hines:** I think so. It's a really fun way to work and it's very freeing. Not that many shows are improvised, so when a comedian has the chance to do it, they like to.

**TVGuide.com:** Then again, improv is such a fluid word these days, especially since the arrival of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. How much of *Campus Ladies* is actually improvised?

**Hines:** Well, it's structured like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* with a story outline....

**TVGuide.com:** Like, "Will Forte starts to clumsily come on to Joan, and then she gets a phone call from Abdul."

**Hines:** Right, you get the beats of the action. And once in a while there will be a phrase that Carrie and Christen want the actors to hit, like "No means no." But other than that, it's really "anything goes." Oxygen has been really supportive at letting us stick to the vision of the show and push the envelope.

**TVGuide.com:** What kind of envelopes will you be pushing? May-December sex scenes between the ladies and hottie college boys?

**Hines:** I'm afraid those are the only sex scenes we *can* have. [Laughs] So yeah, Barri gets a lot of action in college. But Joan catches up every once in a while!

**TVGuide.com:** Did Oxygen have any reservations? Did they worry it'd be too *Strangers with Candy*-esque?

**Hines:** They actually did raise that concern. I love *Strangers with Candy*, but that show [about a 46-year-old ex-drug addict returning to high school] was a lot more campy and a big wink to the audience. *Campus Ladies* is a little more grounded. When you watch the show, you think to yourself, "Oh my gosh, I know those two women." With *Strangers with Candy*, you'd watch and go, "Uh, she's hilarious, but I've never seen anybody like that in my life."

**TVGuide.com:** How did you steel yourself for your first executive-producing gig? What made you decide you could handle it?

**Hines:** Well, I've been working on *Curb* for five seasons, and I've been involved in the casting process all along, and I've talked with [series creator-star] [Larry \[David\]](#) at times about story ideas. This last year, I was really watching the directors and how we did it. I just didn't realize I was setting myself up to be an executive producer on my own show! [Laughs] But when Christen and Carrie wanted to do a show that was improvised, it just became a natural fit.

**TVGuide.com:** Speaking of *Curb*, what does the future hold? Some fans came away from the recent season finale thinking it might be a *series* finale.

**Hines:** I know.... Well, I think we're waiting to see what's going to happen, because Larry hasn't decided if he's coming back or not. It's up in the air.

**TVGuide.com:** Yeah, I suppose Larry David's participation is a *small* factor.

**Hines:** Yeah, exactly! [Laughs] So that's it, we're waiting for word.

**TVGuide.com:** But is there a chance the series might be done?

**Hines:** There's a chance, yeah. There's a chance it might be done.

**TVGuide.com:** Does that very prospect make you sad?

**Hines:** It does. I really like doing *Curb* — it's my favorite thing in the world and I love working with Larry and [Jeff \[Garlin\]](#), we all have a really good time. And at the same time, we do 10 episodes a year and last year we were off for over a year, so.... [Laughs]

**TVGuide.com:** It's not like you were doing 23 episodes a season....

**Hines:** Yeah. If we didn't come back, my day-to-day life wouldn't change that much. [Laughs] But I hope that we do come back, I really do.