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**Q & A With Janeane Garofalo**  
By Alison Prato, Photos by Brigette Sire

Janeane Garofalo has never been one to mince words. From the minute she danced awkwardly onto the big screen in the 1994 Gen X-grunge-angst flick *Reality Bites*, Garofalo cemented her reputation as a fiercely outspoken presence in Hollywood, a comedian-turned-actress who didn't look like everyone else and who would go on to choose her movie and TV roles as carefully as the jokes she spewed in her stand-up act.

Since *Bites*, in which she co-starred alongside the film's director (and her good friend), Ben Stiller, Garofalo has popped up in several TV shows (most memorably *The West Wing*). She's also had roles in nearly 50 movies, including the cult hits *Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion*, *Half Baked*, and *Wet Hot American Summer*, and, most recently, the massively successful animated *Ratatouille* (in which she played the French-accented Colette). Off-screen, Garofalo has flaunted her liberal views as a regular on *Real Time With Bill Maher* and on a now-defunct radio show on *Air America*, which, aside from stand-up, she calls her "proudest creative experience." Even Garofalo's tattoos are political statements: She has "Valor," "Liberal," and "Truth" on various body parts.

We caught up with the 44-year-old actress, who, beginning in January, portrays FBI agent Janis Gold on the hugely popular Fox series *24*. Even though she had just finished a rough-and-tumble day of shooting, she was game for any question lobbed her way. And as we've come to expect and admire, no subject-from why Dane Cook's not funny to her own forays into plastic surgery-was off limits.

**INKED: How many tattoos do you have?**

**JANEANE GAROFALO:** I think I have 14 or 15. They're all kind of splattered about—mostly on my arms, some on my stomach, some on my legs. My very first one was a star on my left calf. I got that because it was small and easily hidden. I liked it and I kept going from there.

**Do you have a favorite tattoo shop?** Yes—Dare Devil Tattoo on Ludlow Street in New York City. And one of my favorite tattoo artists is Friday Jones. She can come to you with her kit. She's wonderful. She's done some of my favorite pieces. She did the Rosie the Riveter on my right arm.

**Why Rosie?** I really like the iconography. Although instead of the government slogan "We Can Do It" underneath, I put "Valor," from the phrase "A woman of valor, who can find?" For her price is far above rubies."

**Meaning?** Meaning it's very difficult to find a courageous person—man, woman, or otherwise. It's very valuable to be courageous, so I put it on my arm to remind me. I also didn't want a government slogan from the World War II era on my arm.

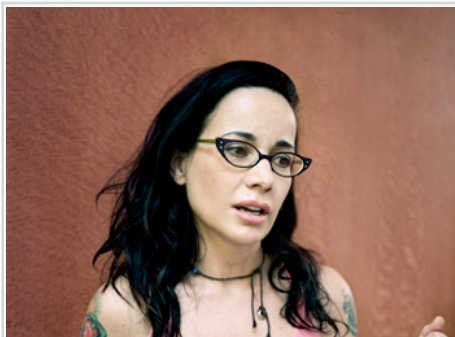
**You also have "Liberal" on your left shoulder. What does that word mean to you?** Being liberal is something to be very proud of. Over the last 30 years or so, the right wing of this country has managed to bastardize the word. They think it's something to be feared because liberalism equals progress and social justice, and Republicans and conservatives hate progress and social justice. Liberal is not a dirty word. It's not a pejorative.

**Has a fan ever flaunted a Janeane Garofalo tattoo?** Yes, oddly. It's unbelievable, I know. I can't explain it, and I have no idea why anyone would do it. A very young, nervous girl came up to me at a comedy club and showed me a tattoo of me on her arm. I was shocked and speechless, thinking, She's gonna regret that. It was such a big piece on her little arm. I think I hurt her feelings by my reaction, and if I had it to do over again, I would've been more supportive. She was really proud of it.

**Was it at least a good rendering?** It was! It was from a photo taken at the Clay Pigeons screening party years ago. I was in corduroys and a T-shirt, karate-kicking towards the camera. She had the picture exactly. Hopefully she was able to turn it into something better later on. Any suggestions on what she could turn it into? I would put Sarah Silverman's face on my body.

**Who besides Silverman do you think is funny right now?** So many. Upright Citizens Brigade, David Cross and Bob Odenkirk, Tim and Eric, *Flight of the Conchords*...

**What's your opinion of Dane Cook?** I don't know him. He might be a nice guy, but my issue with his comedy is that I've tried to watch it and I do not see one funny thing. I don't



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**Does the "SNL effect" on politics get more credit than it deserves?** It's blown out of proportion. SNL definitely has an effect in a pop-culture way, but it doesn't have an effect on anybody who wasn't already voting one way or the other. Nobody changes his vote because of a comedy bit. I do think, though, that cumulatively, shows like *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, SNL, Bill Maher, and David Letterman are showing the hypocrisies and absurdities of the contemporary Republican party. They're hopefully helping to shape the feeling. Wow, this party is extinct. It should go the way of the dinosaurs.

**Is it true that you were hesitant about taking the role on 24 because some of the show's creators were so right wing?** Yes. My agent called and said we'd gotten a call from 24. I'm always flattered when somebody offers me a job, but I initially passed because some of the show's creators' politics are a little right wing for me. But then I realized, A. I need a job. B. I'm not myself on the show.

**Creator Joel Surnow has jokingly called himself "a right-wing nut job." Oh, it's not a joke. He is a right-wing nut job.** While being a very funny guy, he's also a right-wing nut job. That's part of the reason I didn't want to do it. He's not on the show anymore, but he's the one who sort of talked me into it. He charmed me. But I can't honestly say that my conscience is clear about the torture on the show.

**Were you a 24 fan before you joined the cast? I hadn't seen it before. I obviously knew it was huge.** When I got hired I got the DVDs and really enjoyed it—except for the torture.

**You've also worked with Henry Rollins on *The Henry Rollins Show*. Do you guys talk tattoos?** Not really. He doesn't discuss his. He has a lot of tattoos all over his body, some good, some not so good. He also doesn't take care of them, so a lot of them have faded terribly. He refuses to moisturize his skin because that would be girly—a little too metrosexual for him—so they're not all in great stead. But of course the iconic Black Flag bars are the best. If it didn't look like I was copying, I'd love to have those.

**Would that piss him off?** Yeah, he would not like that. I actually told him that I wished I could get the bars, and he said, "Don't."

**Is it true that you turned down the role of Monica on *Friends*?** No. There is some truth to it, but not exactly that. Long ago before *Friends* was *Friends*, when it was in its infancy, it was a show called *Friends Like Us*, and I was being considered for a role, like a goth girl, which I think morphed into Phoebe. *Friends* was created for Courteney Cox, so she was always Monica.

**What about rumors that you were close to getting the role of Dorothy Boyd in *Jerry Maguire*, which eventually went to Renée Zellweger?** One of the producers wanted me to do it, with the caveat that I lose weight. Then I lost a bunch of weight and it turned out that the consensus was that I was too old. But also, Renée Zellweger was, and is, a better actor. It's hard to deny that she was perfect in that role. But I was first too fat and then too old. Ultimately I don't think the powers that be wanted anyone besides Renée anyway.

**You've been so open about body image. Do people still ask you to lose weight or change your appearance?** Not anymore. When I started acting at 27, it was always, "Can you lose weight?" But then again, it's an elective profession. No one forces you to do this, so you have nobody to blame but yourself. It's kind of crappy, but that's the gig. They pay you to look good on camera. I don't agree with this, and I think with the advent of HDTV, it's even worse, because nobody looks good on HD. It looks so cheesy when everybody's hair looks like glass and their eyebrows are perfect. It bothers me. I don't find any connection in it. Although at the same time, when I was watching *Pride and Prejudice* with Keira Knightley and [Matthew Macfadyen], I was reveling in how gorgeous they were. So there are times when I love looking at beautiful people too.

**What are your thoughts on plastic surgery? You've talked about your breast reduction.** I did that many years ago, because at five foot one, I had boobs like Dolly Parton. I've never thought big boobs were good. I hated them the second I got them. I did nothing but try to hide them my whole life, and as soon as I was in college I was like, These have got to go. I just didn't like those



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