



Julia Sweeney and Jill Sobule perform at The Purple Crayon on Sunday, Nov. 24.

## Famous friends get real at Purple Crayon

By Hilari Graff

Serendipitous moments mix with witty songs and hilarious monologues for a unique performance in the Rivertowns this weekend, where an intimate and engaging exchange between two friends — who happen to be famous — takes center stage.

Acclaimed singer/guitarist/songwriter Jill Sobule, who has tackled a broad spectrum of subjects such as love, adolescence, anorexia, and the death penalty, and performer/writer Julia Sweeney, best known for the androgynous “Pat” character on television’s “Saturday Night Live” and her one-woman show “God Said, Ha!” have translated their relationship into “The Jill and Julia

Show,” coming to The Purple Crayon at 52 Main Street in Hastings, this Sunday, Nov. 24, at 8 p.m.

Pairing the dynamic talents of Sobule and Sweeney, the show — a blend of music and storytelling — is a distinct reflection of what is going on in the lives of these accomplished women, from romance and the complicated joys of family to career paths and politics. Every stage becomes a “living room” for Sobule and Sweeney, where they essentially invite the audience

to “hang out” with them as they journey with words and music through the trials and tribulations of living in a modern world. The show celebrates the power of conversation, camaraderie, and connection — between Sobule and Sweeney and between them and the audience.

“The format of the show is great. It is not just monologue and not just music. It keeps people interested because two peo-

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## Jill and Julia

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ple are interacting,” Sobule noted. “The ups and downs of our love lives and career paths really resonate with audiences. We both can make fun of ourselves and laugh at our down times, and people can really relate to that.”

Heavy doses of humor and compassion set the tone of the show. “The audience wants to be entertained through this music/monologue experience,” Sweeney said. “They want something complex where stories might have surprise endings and several layers to them.”

While there typically is a basic structure of four or five songs and stories that will be used, the show is ever changing, reflecting what is current with the two women. “The show has a very organic feel and grows out of our conversations,” Sobule said. “We’ll be traveling together and Julia will tell me a great story, and I’ll say, ‘You’ve got to tell this one on stage.’”

“I always want to nail down our show to what we are going to be doing exactly,” Sweeney observed. “Jill is more spontaneous and wants to make it all up as we go along. In fact, if it were up to her, she’d have the audience dictate the entire show. But, our styles meld nicely.”

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## Jill and Julia

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Sobule and Sweeney first met in 2006 at a TED conference in Monterey, Calif. They were mutual fans, learned they lived only a few blocks away from one another in Los Angeles, and struck up a friendship. When, during one of Sobule’s solo gigs at Largo, a club in Los Angeles, she asked Sweeney to come on stage and tell a story, they realized they’d hit on something special, and “The Jill and Julia Show” was born.

When asked about inspiration behind a performance’s content, Sweeney stated, “It’s very immediate — what we’re thinking about right now, along with stories that we know will work, and songs we know are great. We really use the show itself as the force that makes us put the show together.”

“On the surface, Julia’s stories are funny,” Sobule said, “but if you dig deeper, they can also be impactful and tragic.” She added, “My lyrics can also be sad and powerful.”

The respect and adoration Sobule and Sweeney have for each other is apparent. “I usually play solo but this show is one of my favorite things to do because I get to watch Julia as a fan, and we can hang out with each other,” Sobule remarked. “I get a chance to stop in between songs and watch Julia connecting with the audience.”

“We’ve done about 15 shows a year for the last seven years,” Sweeney said. “Julia does a lot of other things — writes musical plays, collaborates with other musicians, and has her own tour schedule. I do other things, too, mostly write. But, we have come together for the last seven years to do these shows because our sensibilities are so similar, and we really love each other so much. It’s a way for us to spend time together.”

Since their first meeting, geography has come between the two friends. Sobule

is based in Los Angeles and frequently comes to New York, while Sweeney now lives outside Chicago.

In addition to spending time with Sobule, Sweeney raves about another perk of “The Jill and Julia Show” — “Really, this is my big excuse to get to feel like I’m in a band, even though I play no instrument and can barely sing! Music is a visceral pleasure, and this is almost a sneaky way for me to get that experience.”

The Purple Crayon has a relationship with the agency representing the women, so “as soon as we heard they were touring together we knew we had to bring them here,” said Sarah Silbert Hinawi, the venue’s executive director. “The Jill and Julia Show” is part of The Purple Crayon’s Live! series of events that endeavor to provide guests with inspiring experiences showcasing reflection and creativity.

“With every show we bring to The Purple Crayon, we want to remind the audience how amazing it is to be truly engaged; we want to reawaken something for them during the performance,” Hinawi noted.

Capacity at The Purple Crayon is around 200, making for an ideal size to foster intimacy between performers and the audience. “Small venues are the best for our show because of the great energy in the room,” Sweeney said. “The space is another instrument in the show.”

“The Jill and Julia Show” runs about 90 minutes. Emerging singer-songwriter Brian Gelfand is the opening act. Tickets cost \$25 and can be purchased online ([www.purplecrayoncenter.org](http://www.purplecrayoncenter.org)) or on site. Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis the night of the show.

“It’s not like anything you’ve seen before,” Hinawi reflected, “but I think the experience will bring together elements of musical theater, stand-up comedy, concert performance, and just a really great time around a table with good friends.”