



A CONVERSATION WITH *Colin* JOST

by *Katie Friel*

Photograph by Bella Bronson/NBC

THE *SNL* WEEKEND UPDATE CO-HOST
PREPARES FOR HIS MOONTOWER
COMEDY AND ODDITY FEST DEBUT
IN “LESLIE LOVES COLIN”

If you're a fan of *Saturday Night Live*, then Colin Jost needs no introduction. After graduating from Harvard, the Staten Island native joined the show as a writer in 2005. For the past two seasons, he has served as co-anchor of *SNL*'s Weekend Update alongside Michael Che, where the duo are ushering in a new era for the long-running segment.

Longtime viewers know that while the hosts may be the cornerstones of Weekend Update, it's their interactions with the guests (think Roseanne Roseannadanna, Stefon, et al) where the funniest moments often occur. Over the past few months, Leslie Jones, a featured player on *SNL* and co-star of this summer's *Ghostbusters* revival, has repeatedly come on to discuss the difficulties of dating in the modern age (and hit on Jost repeatedly). It's a funny bit, and one that Moontower Comedy and Oddity Festival is betting it can translate to a full-length performance.

Before their headline appearance at the Paramount Theatre on April 22, we chatted with Jost about armadillo races, why he loves Austin and what to expect from “Leslie Loves Colin.”

Why did you decide to develop “Leslie Loves Colin” for Moontower?

The festival proposed the idea to us, and we thought it was funny and would be fun to do together. We're kinda just doing it out of joy. I love being in Austin and I was excited to have a reason to go with someone I wanted to hang out with.

Oh, so you have been to Austin before?

I was there for SXSW maybe two years ago, and it was such a cool town. I mean I love a town that has a lot of great music venues and a lot of great barbecue — you've pretty much got all I need right there.

People seem really excited for the show, but few details have been announced. What can the audience expect?

We're definitely still figuring it out. We've been talking about how to interview each other. We'll have stories about what's going on at *SNL* [and] about each other and our experiences together.

What is it about Leslie that you find compelling?

The main thing is that she's really funny. I'm drawn to anyone who makes me laugh. It's why I'm doing this job in the first place. A lot of my friends went into finance or are lawyers or something, and it just seems like I always wanted to work with people who are really funny, and Leslie is really funny.

Plus you two seem to have a great dynamic.

We come from different places, we've been

through different things. Sometimes ... I tend to overthink things, and Leslie does not. She's very present and very in the moment, and most of her comedy is directly from her life. She goes on a bad date with someone, she has a whole new Update piece. And that's something I'm learning from her, to open up and do more of in my own standup, or even on Update.

Speaking of Weekend Update, it seems like such an interesting time to be behind the desk. With everything that's going on socially and politically, do you and co-host Michael Che feel pressure to ‘get it right?’

I don't feel pressure to be right ... cause at the end of the day we're not politicians, we're not policy makers, we are voters. Well, I think Michael's a registered voter. [Laughs] What we're mainly concerned about is whether what we're saying is funny. We want to come at it from the smartest possible place, and we want what we believe to come across. And we want it to be interesting, or a different take than other people have. But our main priority is ‘are these jokes working or not?’

SNL has a notoriously tough schedule. Are you looking forward to having some time off?

I've been touring on my off weeks from *SNL* ... and I'm going to be doing dates around the country all summer. I'm going to try and tape a special which I've never done before even though I've been doing stand up for a long time. So that's been fun, to start trying to build the best hour set [possible.]

Would you consider taking “Leslie Loves Colin” on the road, too?

We'll see what happens. It's exciting because we don't know. We love to do things together occasionally, and have been talking about what kind of project we can do outside of *SNL*, in the summers, if we should try to do a movie together or something like that. I think we'll see. It would be nice to keep working together.

Any other plans while you're in Austin?

Definitely hitting a bunch of food trucks. I would love to go to a good museum there, I always like going to a weird museum. Like a license plate museum or something. Are there any weird museums there?

We do have a place called The Museum of the Weird, but I'm a bad Austinite cause I've never been there.

My friend is from Austin and she and her husband got married there. And they had armadillo races at their wedding there which I thought was really awesome.

That's amazing.

I don't know if they have armadillo street races in downtown Austin, but I would go to those, too.

This interview has been edited and condensed.