

For these guys **'BINGO'** is a real drag

By Wesley Horton

Professional actors Rowan Joseph and Shane Partlow love playing BINGO in real life but on-stage it's a real drag. The male actors star in the new hit comedy, *The Queen of Bingo*, as 'Sis' and 'Babe' – two sisters on the other side of 50 who want to add a little fun, zest and excitement to their lives...but where to find it? BINGO!

"I've played BINGO for years but this is the first time I've ever played a woman," said Joseph, who portrays the younger, diet crazy, brassy and slightly overweight sister, 'Babe'. "Doing this role has given me an even greater sense of respect for the opposite sex. If you ask me, every man should have to *walk a mile in another woman's bra* at some point in his life!" joked the actor. Joseph, 51, is appearing for the first time as one of the two sisters in the play after having directed both the Off-Broadway (New York City) and Chicago productions of the hit comedy.

"Babe, like many women in their 50's, has an issue with her weight. She bemoans the fact that she's on the verge of '*a size eighteen!*' just at the time when the local high school football coach has asked her out to the homecoming celebration. She ticks off the endless list of diets she has been on, which is always greeted with howls of laughter by the audience," said Joseph.

"I, on the other hand, have walked a LOT of miles in my heels as Sis!" said 40 year-old, Shane Partlow. Partlow has been starring for the past two years in the successful touring production of the play, appearing at dozens of theatres across the U.S., as well as, the Capitol Theater in Windsor, Canada. "Playing my role has given me a better understanding of the issues a lot of older women face, being a widow, not wanting to depend on your children all the time, even dating! At one point in the play she says, '*Who wants to go out on a date? Some old fart wanting me to take care of him, no thanks, once was enough for me.*' That always gets a big laugh from the seniors in the audiences, men and women both."

Ironically, the Red Hat Society ladies have been special patrons of the play since its "male" reincarnation began several years ago. The Red Hat philosophy of "silliness is the comic relief of life" fits perfectly with the nature of the play's humor. Joseph and Partlow feel that much of the show's success has been due in large part to the gals in red & purple who frequent performances wherever it's presented. In fact, the touring version of *The Queen of Bingo* was the entertainment at a Red Hat convention in Lapeer, MI. "The Red Hats are definitely our Guardian Angels," said Partlow, "even more so than BINGO players."

“Yes, I would have to agree with that, BINGO players don’t seem to have discovered this play yet,” Joseph added. “But they certainly love it when they do. Our favorite performances are the ones where we know we have BINGO players in the audience. They get every single joke. They scream when Sis takes out all of her paraphernalia, especially her good luck charms. They can relate to the gripes that ‘Babe’ and ‘Sis’ have with ‘the Caller’ and other players. BINGO players always comment on just how true to life it all is.”

“We are always extra careful in all of our advertising and promotion not to make fun of the game and those who play it,” Partlow explained. “One of the problems we’ve faced is that some of the theater critics in New York and L.A. took such a negative attitude towards the play and even the game of BINGO itself; unlike Chicago and other smaller cities and towns where the show has been a huge hit. The truth is that most people lead simple, honest, ordinary lives and what’s wrong with that? Sometimes people just want a good belly laugh, which is exactly what the show and the characters we play offer.”