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# Moms the word

**'Jewtopia'**  
duo call  
mothers  
for help

By ANNA JANE GROSSMAN

There are two recorded voices New Yorkers have been dialing up recently — and neither be longs to James Earl Jones. "If this is Joyce Bernstein, please call my cell so we can make lunch plans," says the answering machine at Linda Fogel's home in Denver, "because I'm not picking up this phone right now because my son gave my home number to 10 million New Yorkers."

From Ariene Wolfson's answering machine in Jacksonville, Fla., comes a similar story:

"Ten million New Yorkers [my son] gives my number to," hers says. "Why does he hurt me like this?"

Why, indeed. Ariene and Linda happen to be the mothers of Sam Wolfson and Bryan Fogel, the authors and stars of "Jewtopia," the longest-running comedic play in L.A. history (it ran for a year), it begins previews Tuesday at off-Broadway's Westside Theatre.

To market their New York effort, Fogel and Wolfson have enlisted secret weapons: their own Jewish mothers.

Needless to say, the 31-year-old writers/actors say, the play was based on their own families.

They met in the mid-1990s on the stand-up circuit in L.A. and soon started swapping stories about their singleness and Jewishness. Fogel was raised Conservative; Wolfson wasn't.

"For all I knew, I was Episcopalian," Wolfson says. "I had a bar mitzvah but I didn't realize it was a religious thing — it had a 'Miami Vice' theme."

They'd both tired of stand-up and decided to collaborate on a sketch for a one-act play festival. Fogel was producing, instead. Wolfson suggested they dress in suits and yell at each other; Fogel suggested they yell at each other while dancing to "Hava Nagila" at a singles mixer.

The sketch was a hit, and "Jewtopia" was born.

And, although their mothers profess distaste on the recordings ("You fail the bar one time, that doesn't mean you need to try to become the next Neil Simon!" Ariene says on hers), they told The Post that they're thrilled with their sons' success — and the phone fame it's brought them.

Naturally, if "Jewtopia" brought them grandchildren, that'd be nice, too.

"One man called to see if my son is single and if he'd meet his daughter for a drink after the show," says Ariene, hopefully.

With any luck, she'll be a nice Jewish girl.



Bryan Fogel (left) and Sam Wolfson gave out their mothers' phone numbers to promote their off-Broadway "Jewtopia."

In a direct mailing sent to 100,000 homes, they wrote: "If you hate the show, you can call [our mothers] and tell them that they were idiots to encourage their sons to drop out of law school. Linda Fogel can be reached at (303) 575-1388 and Ariene Wolfson can be reached at (904) 346-1160."

The mothers Wolfson and Fogel were tipped off to the play in advance and have been dutifully returning calls ever since. Or, at least, they returned The Post's. They said that Sam and Bryan are "very nice boys," even if returning all those phone calls has become a full-time job.

And yes, the mothers say, they've seen the show — and they love it. "Jewtopia" is about Chris O'Connell (Fogel), a gentle who dreams of meeting a Jewish girl so he'll "never have to make another decision."

At an Inter-Temple Rocking Singles Mixer, he meets Adam Lipschitz (Wolfson), a Jewish man whose

mother calls him with the numbers of several dozen "nice Jewish girls" — including her gynecologist — every day.

Adam teaches Chris how to fit in as a Jew — and the stereotyping begins: Never say you're healthy, wear sunscreen always, order dressing on the side....