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Stage Door: Capitol Steps

By Fern Siegel

On a more earthly plane, *Capitol Steps* will launch its 2010 season at Town Hall, Feb. 19. The bipartisan troupe, whose specialty is political satire, will feature songs from their latest album, *Obama Mia*. The group, whose claim to fame is that they put "the mock in democracy," happily slams both sides of the political aisle.

Formed in December 1981 by a group of congressional staffers, it has subsequently performed on stage, TV, NPR and recorded 29 albums. Many current cast members, 31 in all, are drawn from former staffers who collectively served 11 senators and seven congressmen of both parties.

Performer and co-writer Mark Eaton joined Capitol Steps in 1993; he worked on the Hill for 10 years before becoming a lobbyist. "We're currently taking shots at anything in the headlines," he says. "Sarah Palin's book tour and move to Fox News, the health-care debate, auto bailouts and Tiger Woods."

While Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart hit comic gold with George W. Bush, Eaton says Obama doesn't supply the same amount of material. But he quickly adds the president has surrounded himself with "plenty of funny, gaffe-prone people, including Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid. We've always said our show's greatest enemy is a competent government. Therefore, we should be around for a long, long time."

The ongoing success of Comedy Central's late-night kings, as well as Capitol Steps' success, underscores Eaton's point: "People love to laugh at the rich and powerful; they are the best targets for satire. It makes us feel a bit better to knock a politician or public figure down a few pegs."

The Capitol Steps perform every Friday and Saturday year-round in Washington, D.C. at the Ronald Reagan Building. Next month, New Yorkers get a chance to see them in action.

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