

OPINION

Circus is gone; where's the bread?



And the band played on. It wailed and stomped. The saxophone sounded great. The Crazy 8s are a fun band, and the crowd appreciated the entertainment. But this was a different kind of concert, usually the comedians come on before the band.

You'd have thought the Cultural Forum was putting on another evening of entertainment. But it wasn't. It was a campaign stop for a man running for the highest office in the land and one of the most important jobs in the world.

And the crowd showed its approval of the impending political discourse by doing The Wave. Just like cheering for a SuperBowl win, the crowd screamed and stamped its collective feet.

And it seems that's what politics has come to. Keep us entertained, damn it. Don't lead us. Don't bore us with specifics or details about your programs. We might start calling you a "policy wonk."

Bread and circuses. If you keep us entertained (distracted) and keep food on the table, we won't want to know how you've done it. Just don't make it boring, and we won't notice democracy jumping on a toboggan for a good slide down a moral and ethical slope.

But you can't blame us. We are barraged daily by images of constant gratification. We can sit in front of a tube and have the world brought to us, so we don't read. We want action. We want drama. We don't want facts.

Obviously, the 10,000 people inside — and all those left outside — of Mac Court didn't come to see the Crazy 8s. But where were they when Clinton was here during May for the primaries? Same man, same



A Crazy 8s member warms up the crowd before Bill Clinton comes out to tell how he'll put more bread on voters' tables.

plan, not the same crowd. Of course he wasn't the front runner for president at that time.

And that's what this is about — the entertainment value of seeing the flesh, not hearing the message or digging for the details of the change that will take place next year. Clinton is now a celebrity, like the Terminator and Roc, and that's why there are more people pushing and shoving to see him this time around.

You can learn more about Clinton by reading his booklet than you can by hearing him speak for half an hour. But a society that created infotainment does not want specifics. The closest thing we want to news is 30 minutes of TV during dinner. We won't read a news story if it jumps to the inside pages or there's no four-color graphic.

But don't tell that to the pack of media that cruised into Mac Court, found the modems and plugged in their laptops used to

finish the already half-written stories that most of the electorate will never read beyond the headlines.

Believe it or not, this is not a criticism of Bill Clinton. There's finally a presidential candidate who's got enough bottom-line, fight-the-good-fight motivation that a person can feel good about voting this year.

This is a mourning for democracy and an electorate that is placing celebrity status on a government "by the PEOPLE." This is a death march for voters gladly placing their fates in a system they want to be entertained by.

Or to quote a dead Greek guy, Nameus Irrelevantus: "The People that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions, and all else, now concerns itself no more, and longs eagerly for just two things — bread and circuses."

Pat Malach is the editor of the Emerald.

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Rent too high?

Think twice about who you vote for Nov. 3rd in House District 41. Marie Bell has supported affordable housing and has refused to vote yes on rent increases, while her opponent has consistently supported increases in property taxes for renters, foster homes, retirement centers and small business renters.

Marie Bell
For State Representative

Authorized by Friends of Marie Bell, 1574 Coburg Rd., #282, Eugene, Oregon 97401

THE FAR SIDE By GARY LARSON

Suddenly, there he was, running along the far shore right in front of Bob and Vera, who would always remember they once saw the legendary "Character of the Lake."