

Portlandia' finds followers



By Mandie Gavitt
Associate News Editor

Imagine a world where the things you held in the 1990s live on. Imagine a land where the "talking car never runs dry," cars don't stop and people form bands and sing about saving the planet. A place where it is OK to be unambitious, where young people go to retire and all the cute girls wear glasses. Most of us don't have to dream up a place: we live there. But those unfortunate souls who live outside of the Portland-area who don't know those of us who enjoy relishing our good fortune, there is Portlandia. "Portlandia" is a new TV show

that premiered on the IFC channel Jan. 21. It tries to capture the uniqueness and diversity Portland offers.

The opening song to the first episode is "The Dream of the 90s is Still Alive." The song alone captures what it is that makes Portland, well, Portland. The rest of the pilot episode is a silly but clever description of what it means to live in the area.

In the opening of the episode we see various sights familiar to most Portlanders, such as Burnside, Powell's and people riding bikes. This does a good job of setting the scene and giving those who may not be familiar with it a glimpse of what Portland is like.

"Portlandia" interweaves short clips about Portland together to create a seamless and nearly perfect representation of the Rose City. In

one of the clips we meet Peter and Nance, a couple who have embarked on a romantic and ethical date.

When the waitress comes to take their order, they ask her dozens of questions about the chicken they want. They want to know if it is organic and if it had room to run around before it was killed to be their meal. The way the waitress seems unphased by their questioning makes it seem as if this is a normal thing for her. She pulls out a file on a chicken named Colin and promises that he is not only organic but also ethically treated before he died.

Peter and Nance chose not to take the waitress's word or the papers on Colin and instead decide to check out the local farm Colin the Chicken was raised on. While their

venture to the farm ends up taking a total of five years, Peter and Nance do a good job of representing a phenomenon in Portland's culture: the desire many hold to eat only what they know was treated ethically, if they eat meat at all.

In the pilot episode we also meet the "Women and Women First" book store, a feminist book store that only allows paying customers to use their bathroom. On their back wall they have a chalk board that lists different classes and protests that are being held in the Portland area around that time because, "if you're not outraged, you aren't paying attention."

There is also the adult hide and seek league that meets in the Portland Community College library. While one team runs to hide, the other

counts vegan bacon cheeseburgers. When there is a dispute about who should get a particular hiding spot the referee, a 10-year-old boy, is called and reads the rules to the players in question. When a player decides to hide under a table where an old lady is sitting she says, "There are weirdos everywhere."

Portland is so rich in culture and diversity it is almost shocking that "Portlandia" has not come into existence sooner. All the same, "Portlandia" does an excellent job of capturing what it is that makes Portland so unique and so weird. In a light hearted and humorous manner it pays tribute to the people that make up the culture of Portland. I am excited to see how future episodes put Portland in the spotlight.

Photo courtesy of IFC

'Shadow Testament' offers poignant perspective of cult mindset

By John Simmons
Copy Editor

Some of us have experienced the negative impact cults have on those in them and around them. As I was sitting in a small theater in Southeast Portland waiting for "The Shadow Testament" to begin, I hoped that the play would shed light on an avoided topic and bring the cult of Corvallis to life. I was not disappointed. The cast, consisting of Sam Reba Sparrow, Jeff Jade Hobbs, Jeremy Don Kinder, Anne Marty Winborne, Tom Mark McCallum and Baehr, did a spectacular job of starting to finish, flowing from scene to scene in a choreographed way and bringing life into the script. The play begins with Jane (Sparrow) sleeping in a bed. She startslees awake, her eyes turning to nightmares as she reflects on the events that led to her present situation. We soon learn that Jane is in an asylum, where she was sent without trial. About the play Jane tries to piece together if she is guilty or if she is the shadows of her past testimony. The events of the play are presented as Jane's memories, which she shifts between reality and her thoughts, popping in and out with almost fluid-like ease. The first memory we are

shown, Jane and her friend Clara (Hobbs) are eating lunch on Kiger's Island, escaping for just a little while from the ever-watchful eye of their boss. There they meet Joshua (Schwab), the new preacher they had heard about. He seems nice enough and treats both girls kindly, but right from the beginning something seems a little off about him. He exudes sex appeal and is able to convince the girls to return to hear him preach.

After hearing what proved to be a captivating sermon, Clara is the first to convert to Joshua's church. Others soon follow, including Isabella (Gettles), the married mother of two girls. In a time when women were expected to stay at home and obey their fathers or husbands, Joshua offered liberation.

Isabella had a somewhat strained relationship with her husband Clarence (Winborne) before, but once she joined Joshua, things took a steep dive in their marriage. Clarence and Mr. Marshall (Kinder) eventually become fed up with Joshua and try to drive him out of town, leaving him tied to a tree on the island, tarred and feathered. Jane goes to find him and set him free, and it is during the following exchange that she truly starts believing in Joshua and becomes one of his most fanatic followers.

The scariest thing about Joshua is that he is so convincing and, in the beginning, the things he says didn't seem that strange. He preached what many would consider to be biblical truth, saying how God isn't a mental exercise

and that all are worthy of his love. As the play progresses, however, we can see a shift in what he preaches about.

There is no denying that he is well-versed in the Bible, but he manipulates scripture and misquotes passages to suit his own needs, and his followers accept every word. Eventually he transitions from being a preacher to being from God or even God himself, and some characters begin to pray to him for help.

What I found most interesting about the play was the way it shifted from Jane's memories to her present situation. In the beginning it was clear to see the boundaries between the two, but as the story moved forward the lines blurred, demonstrating the confusion that Jane experiences as she gets closer to deciphering what really happened.

Another overarching theme was that of the trial. Jane never had a real trial, so she had one for herself in her mind. The other characters sat on benches on the side of the stage, waiting their turn to be called to the witness stand of Jane's mind to act out their role in the story. This aspect was more subtle than other themes, but I think it worked beautifully with the story and helped tie everything together.

The relationships in this play were very believable. Jane and her brother Henry (Munger) share a closeness that is at times very touching, and it was heart-wrenching to see it deteriorate as Jane became more and more involved with Joshua. The relationship



John Simmons Clackamas Print

Joshua (Jeff Schwab) kneels in prayer after a sermon. Reverent followers are captivated by his presence.

between Mr. Marshall and his children was also very interesting. Although at first we see Mr. Marshall as only stern and unloving, as the play progresses we see that he was once a gentle and kind man but was hardened by what life had given him, resulting in his children fearing him and obeying due to that fear.

One of my favorite characters is Joseph (Benjamin), Jane's attendant in the asylum. He acts as a sounding board for Jane as she pieces together her case, and his reactions to her thoughts add a humorous touch to an otherwise serious play.

Overall the play was truly cap-

tivating. The cast, from the wonderfully acted supporting roles to the captivating main characters, truly did this play justice, bringing it to life in a way that few others could.

"The Shadow Testament" premiered on the Jan. 20 and will be performed Jan. 27-29 at Performance Works Northwest, 4625 SE 67th Ave. in Portland. All shows start at 8 p.m. and cost \$10 per person. For ticket information, call 503-367-2650 or e-mail tickets@portlandwt.com. There are only about 45 seats available in the theater, so those planning on attending should to arrive early if they want a good seat.