



NEW TAXES BAD: BILL Sizemore REBUTS

Bill Sizemore
OREGON TAXPAYERS UNITED

FRIDAY MARCH 9, 11:50 AM
DOWNTOWN ATHLETIC CLUB

\$3 admission • Free to City Club Members
485-7433
www.cityclubofeugene.org



OPENS MARCH 16!!



Book & Lyrics by Jerry Colker
Music by Michael Rupert
Directed by Joe Zingo
Dinner, Dessert & Beverages Available

GET TICKETS EARLY!!



The Most Spectacular Place
ACE will be the first theater in the country to produce the newest show from Nickelodeon!!
Saturday & Sundays at 2:00 PM

ADDED SHOWS

March 10 - April 7 2007

AUDITIONS!!

Sunday, March 18 at 5:00 PM
Northwest Premiere Production of



Needs 8 men & 8 women
Prepare a short Broadway style song.
Must have sheet music or
Accompaniment CD.

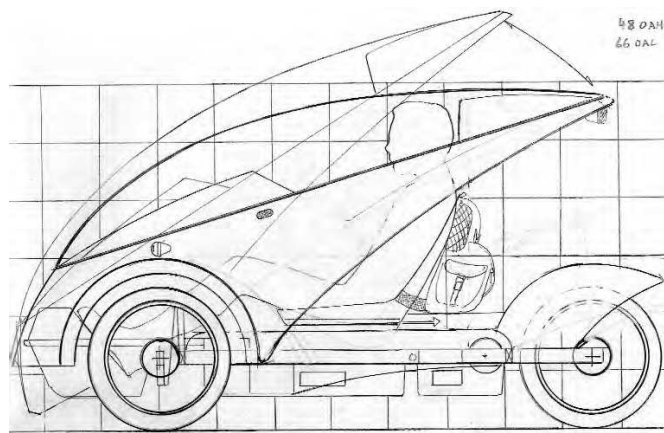
Performs June 29 - July 21 at ACE
July 27 - 29 at the Hult Center

Inspired by and featuring the songs of Elvis Presley. It'll have you jumpin' out of your blue suede shoes with such classics as "Heartbreak Hotel," "Jailhouse Rock," and "Don't Be Cruel."



Saturday, March 17
at 11:00 AM
Music and Lyrics by
Stephen Sondheim
Book by James Lapine
Taught by Rebecca Teran
Prepare a short song
and a short monologue

Call 683-4368
www.actorscabaret.org



It's the thrill of the creation that makes the BugE kit so appealing.

trademark curvy-topped yellow and blue trailer of today.

But a couple of years later, Murphy and a few co-designers had a new idea: a personal electric vehicle. Since Burley wasn't interested, Murphy and his partners left and created the Neighborhood Electric Vehicle Company (NEVCO) in 1995.

Murphy envisioned a personal vehicle that was compact, clean and slow — something suitable for neighborhood or around-town driving. And so the Gizmo was born: an award-winning enclosed electric vehicle with a cartoon countenance, three wheels and a top speed of 40 mph. But while local investors praised the Gizmo's simplicity and efficiency, manufacturing the car proved expensive and, ultimately, unfeasible.

"The biggest problem was that we designed a business plan that required a factory," Murphy says. "Nobody knew anybody with enough money to get us up and running." After limping along for a decade, NEVCO halted Gizmo production and shelved the design. But Murphy wouldn't abandon his dream of a clean, personal vehicle.

During the Gizmo days, Murphy was simultaneously designing electric racecars through his side company, Blue Sky Design. He built the "Aerocoupes" as kits and shipped them off to schools participating in Electrathon America, a sport where students compete in a race not of speed but of energy efficiency with the goal of finding out which car can go the farthest in one hour. With Murphy's Aerocoupe kit, students assemble the car themselves and experiment to find the winning combination of speed and weight. Murphy still sends Aerocoupes to about 25 schools per year, mostly out of state but including a few Portland area schools. Murphy says the assembly projects become science experiments that teach students physics, conservation, aerodynamics and construction in a hands-on, empowering educational experience. "When kids build something and race it, they understand it," Murphy says. "It's not just a true or false quiz."

So when Murphy revisited the Gizmo concept, he simplified the design, cut the number of vehicle parts in half and, drawing on his Aerocoupe work, made the BugE into a kit. Assembly requires no welding, only basic screwdrivers and hardware — and a bit of patience. But the experience of building a practical, usable machine with one's own hands, Murphy says, is priceless. Who doesn't remember the feeling, as a child, upon tightening the last screw onto that Erector Set racecar and watching it zoom across the living room floor? It's the thrill of creation, the childhood reawakening of problem solving and stretching one's imagination, Murphy believes, that makes

the BugE kit so appealing. For this reason, he encourages BugE buyers to add features, gadgets, even solar panels, to suit individual tastes and needs.

Murphy emanates a youthful glee as he talks about his BugE and his old Gizmo parked in the driveway (he calls the Gizmo his wife Trish's "garage-sale boat"). But his excitement is not merely one of childlike awe — Murphy knows he's creating a new paradigm for clean, personal transportation. Former NEVCO president Dale Van Metre praises the BugE design. "What Mark has done is to change the business model," Van Metre says. A locally made kit and a simplified design "both help to address the problems with the Gizmo," he adds.

With gas prices teetering around \$3 per gallon and likely rising, Murphy says people are looking for economic transportation alternatives. A BugE plugs into the existing grid for a penny per mile — it doesn't get much cheaper than that. So why hasn't the U.S. caught the electric bug? Murphy says it's a combination of consumer ambivalence and unwillingness to change habits and auto companies' reluctance to invest. The 2006 documentary *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (review at www.eugeneweekly.com/2006/08/17/movie1.html) discusses how auto and oil companies' fear of profit losses led to the downfall of GM's electric car, the EV1. GM recalled and destroyed hundreds of EV1s in the late '90s, citing lack of consumer interest — even as prospective lessees remained on waiting lists.

There's no doubt that electric vehicles' zero emissions at the tailpipe means cleaner air. However, EVs still draw electricity from the existing grid, an energy pool compiled from resources including wind, hydropower, infinitesimal amounts of solar and geothermal — but mainly coal and petroleum. Some skeptics claim that EVs' clean image merely covers up an "emissions-elsewhere" reality. But EV experts say that electric cars still produce far less pollution per mile. An Oct. 6, 2006, report put out by Tesla Motors, Inc., "The 21st Century Electric Car," examines the new Tesla Roadster, an electric sports car. It goes from 0-60 in four seconds, gets the equivalent of 135 mpg, has a top speed of 130 mph and can run for 250 miles without recharging. Oh, and it costs \$92,000.

Murphy calls the Roadster "a rich man's toy." While he acknowledges the hot design, he says, "It doesn't solve my problem or your problem" — it's not affordable, and it's not practical.

The BugE tops out at about 50 mph, though Murphy advises drivers to keep the

maximum speed at 40 mph. "It seems happy at that speed," he says, and the battery doesn't run down so fast. Recently, Murphy and a few buddies took the first BugE for some test rides around the block. So far, the BugE seems to be winning everyone over.

Murphy's friend and BugE site webmaster Ed Gunderson is smitten. "It's wonderful!" he says. "It's really peppy. I like the visibility. I like the handling. And it's got lots of leg room." Gunderson says the BugE will be perfect for his transportation needs, which require travel from Creswell into Eugene. Taking the bus isn't always an option for Gunderson as there are not enough evening routes back to Creswell. While the BugE doesn't have a lot of carrying capacity, Gunderson says, it is enough for him. "It carries much more than my bicycle." But the BugE is not meant to haul goods but people.

Videos of the first and second drives are posted at www.blueskydsn.com, linked to YouTube. Other than a simple website, fuzzy online videos and word-of-mouth touting, there has not been a lot of publicity about the BugE. Which is why Murphy is surprised by the flood of emails he's received over the past couple of months — dozens upon dozens of messages from across the country and even outside the U.S. making inquiries and placing orders. One man from Europe wants to order 1,000 BugEs. "I don't know what to tell him," Murphy says, who starts shipping this month and adds that he and his vendors plan to prepare one kit per week, then gradually bump it up to two. "We want to walk before we can run," he says.

Perhaps this exceeding patience and modest practicality will be the secret to Murphy's success. And it seems he's chosen the right time and place to get started. "I'm glad I'm in this area," he says. "It's nice when we get a community that responds to these types of innovations. People [here] understand what I'm trying to do."

For now, the electric car's U.S. comeback lurks in garages and tool sheds across the country. "There's a lot of people being very clever and inventive," Murphy says. He hopes the BugE will arouse curiosity, inspire action and offer consumers a choice. He also hopes the BugE kits will foster sustainable community businesses, where people could start up small enterprises building and selling BugEs. As for the rebirth of the electric car, Murphy says that improving battery technology is making manufacturing more feasible. But until then, "The best thing we can do is be energy aware," Murphy says. "We'll plant some seeds for now."

For more information about Murphy and the BugE, check out www.blueskydsn.com