

‘It’s not all great, but a lot of it is very good, and if you don’t like something, it’ll be over in five minutes.’

— JAMIE HOSLER

an alternative to something called Five Minutes to Midnight, a show that was exclusive to grad students in the famous Iowa Writers’ Workshop. The inaugural No Shame performance was held October 1986 in the cargo bed of Ristau’s pickup truck, which was parked in the middle of a theater parking lot.

Geiger, who participated in No Shame’s original location in Iowa City, says the theater “was born in scrappy opposition” to the workshop show. “They basically decided they wanted something that was completely accessible,” he says. “Since then, there’s sort of a loose national movement.”

Jamie Hosler, whose Jan. 3 No Shame monologue “Eugene 1990” detailed his adventures as bass player for the punk band Cheese Gargle, says he enjoys performing in such a supportive grassroots venue. “I think No Shame is awesome because it’s homemade entertainment,” says Hosler, co-owner of Bijou Art Cinemas. “It’s not bland product from a big company trying to appeal to the broadest spectrum in order to sell things. It’s not all great, but a lot of it is very good, and if you don’t like something, it’ll be over in five minutes.”

Geiger says one of the things that makes No Shame Eugene special is the early starting time at 7:30 pm, as well as the fact that performances are all-ages and free. “Our operating budget is like a \$1,000 a year,” he says. Also, the show is divided into two parts: The first half is G-rated or family friendly, with the second half dedicated to more adult or PG-13 material, and signaled by the menacing theme from the movie *Jaws*. Geiger calls this the “pre-shark and post-shark” split, during which “the kids just wash out of the room” as the more outrageous acts take the stage.



The shark, by the way — along with perennial No Shamer Mike Anderson, the “Mad Viking” — has become the informal mascot of No Shame, represented by several performers stalking the stage and attacking folks with shark masks perched atop their heads. As build-up to the five-year anniversary, shark mobs have been showing up around the city at places like the Valley River footbridge and the new WJ Skatepark.

The Eugene chapter of No Shame got its start when Geiger, along with fellow writers Tamathy Howald and Mike Anderson, began holding Thursday workshops in 2008, at the Tango Center on Broadway. As attendance at these workshops increased, the group moved around until landing at its current location at New Zone Gallery, where the first public No Shame show took place April 2009. They have since moved performance venues to the Atrium Building, where they now reside.

Howald, who first discovered No Shame as an aspiring writer in Roanoke, Va., says that she was immediately hooked by the theater’s egalitarian philosophy. “No Shame Theater attracts and retains performers and audience members who understand, appreciate and embrace its core philosophy,” she says. “Anything goes. Anyone can play. Anyone can join, in any capacity.”

Part of the attraction of No Shame, Howald explains, is just this sense of inclusion in the arts. “Audience members become performers and vice versa,” she says. “I think that is its appeal. Everyone sitting in the audience thinking, ‘I can do better than that’ knows they could be on stage next month, and maybe they will.” ■

No Shame Eugene’s free fifth-year anniversary show takes place 7:30 pm Friday, June 6, in the Atrium Building at 10th & Olive; for further info, visit facebook.com/noshameeugene.

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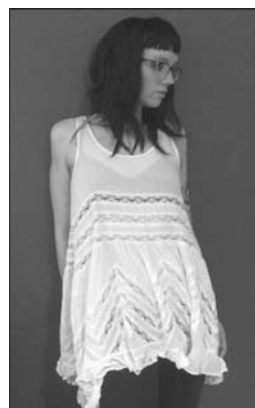


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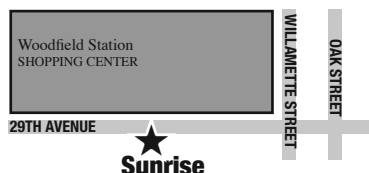
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