



SETH MILSTEIN

(Laugh)TrackTown, USA

EUGENE COMICS BUILD LOCAL SCENE WITH OPEN MICS AND SHOWCASES

BY WILLIAM KENNEDY

As a kid, Eugene-based stand-up comedian Seth Milstein watched *Saturday Night Live* religiously. “I thought it was the greatest,” Milstein recalls of NBC’s long-running sketch comedy show.

Then one night Milstein, who grew up in New York, stayed up late enough to catch *Comic Strip Live*, a late night TV stand-up comedy showcase popular in the ’80s and ’90s. “It was just a guy and a microphone,” Milstein describes. “That was amazing to me.”

“I was always terrified of public speaking,” Milstein continues. Nevertheless, he dreamed of trying stand-up comedy. It took until he was in his 30s to finally get up the nerve. “The first time I got a laugh on stage I was like, ‘Oh, I just do this now,’” he says.

Now Milstein performs all the time. “I go up five times a week usually,” he says. Milstein hosts and participates in comedy open mics at local venues like Luckey’s, The Green Room and The Wandering Goat. He says each comedy show appeals to different types of people, and performers are pretty diverse — all part of a local comedy scene Milstein says is “growing.”

“We’re all weirdos,” Milstein jokes. “That’s Eugene. But it’s a weird that I chose. If you’re a fan of comedy, you’re going to have a good time.”

In addition to local open mics, Brickwall Comedy Club, inside Kowloons at 2222 MLK Blvd., hosts comedy shows from touring acts, and more big name comedians are booking into Eugene’s larger venues like the Hult Center and McDonald Theatre. There are also regular comedy nights at smaller venues like Wayward Lamb, The Barn Light and Sam Bond’s Garage.

“Any known comic coming through here is a good thing,” Milstein says. So even if you’re just a person who’s always been “funny at parties,” curious to try your hand with comedy on-stage, Milstein encourages you to give it a shot and come out for an open mic. “I say go for it,” he says. “Maybe you are that kind of funny.”

Amusedays! Comedy Night with Seth Milstein is 9 pm every Tuesday at Luckey’s Cigar Club, 933 Olive St.; sign-up at 8:30 pm, 21-plus. The Green Room Comedy Open Mic, hosted by Michael Sevigny, is 8:30 pm every Thursday at The Green Room next to Doc’s Pad, 710 Willamette St.; sign-up at 8 pm, 21-plus.

Comedy Calendar:

JERRY SEINFELD
7 pm Thursday, Nov. 3
Hult Center • All Ages

BRIAN REGAN
8 pm Saturday, Jan. 14
Hult Center • All Ages

ADAM DEVINE
8 pm Thursday, March 2
WOW Hall • All Ages



BILL HULINGS AND JANE BRINKLEY IN RADIO REDUX’S ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Left of the Dial

FRED CRAFTS BRINGS BACK THE GOLDEN DAYS WITH RADIO REDUX

BY RACHAEL CARNES

From screwball comedies to hardboiled gumshoes to fantasy, science fiction and holiday fare, Radio Redux brings the past into the present.

“We’re exploring great stories, great literature, and we want to expose that to our audience” says Radio Redux artistic director Fred Crafts. “It’s our mission to preserve and advance radio theater.”

The company opened its current season with *Radio Days: Comedy Capers*, and offers a variety of shows throughout the year, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *A Cowboy Christmas*, *The Maltese Falcon* and Orson Wells’ *War of the Worlds*.

Scripts are plumbed from the golden age of radio, echoing productions that were broadcast throughout the 1930s to 1950s by companies like Lux Radio Theater (eponymously named for its sponsoring toilet soap), Mercury Theater on Air and the Screen Guild Players.

“All of these stories are vivid, with colorful characters, rich language, spectacular landscapes,” Crafts says. “They fire the imagination. We’re about working the audience’s minds.”

Crafts suggests that Radio Redux operates kind of like a great book does: It gives you a framework and you fill in the details. “Listening is a great activity for a human being,” he explains. “Most things are handed to you, and that’s just the way it is. But Radio Redux is like a paint-by-numbers or a coloring book. The audience has to work with us.”

Crafts was born in Eugene and grew up listening to radio in the 1940s. One of his earliest memories is listening to *Straight Arrow*, a western adventure series that featured a golden cave. “I just loved that golden cave,” Crafts recalls, noting that *his* cave probably looked different than the ones the minds of other listeners.

“If a story is well presented to you, it tickles your imagination” he says. “You want to work with it and you get swept up in it if it’s really well done. It takes you beyond yourself.”

Crafts likens the feeling of being transported by radio theater to driving somewhere and not really realizing how you got there, but finding you’ve just arrived. “I started doing that when I was a kid,” he says. “Listening to radio shows, the voices, sound effects and music sparked my imagination. I remember the Lone Ranger, with his big, deep voice.”

Crafts didn’t travel much as a child; his family mostly stayed in Eugene. But through books and radio — through wondrous and engaging stories — he says he developed a lifelong affinity for the arts and culture, as well as for the big world out there.

Now retired from a career in journalism and broadcasting, Crafts estimates that Radio Redux has presented 40 shows since it began in 2009.

And at a Radio Redux performance, the focus is squarely on the story. “I don’t want to gimmick it up with a fancy set or a whole lotta costumes,” Crafts says. “I want you to work your imagination.”

This season’s shows center around themes of transformation, hope and possibilities.

For more information on Fred Crafts’ Radio Redux, visit radioreduxusa.com.