

Who's That Clown on the Bridge?

A performer's quest for more than a living

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

There are no statistics to show how many unemployed computer programmers have become street performers.

It can safely be said, however, that Kirk Reeves' career path is fairly unique.

At least Reeves doesn't approach people downtown with screams of "GIMME MONEY," as he is the first to point out. He uses a trumpet, a puppet collection and costume to support his entertaining acting and musical skills.

Passersby often react positively to his manner of assaulting the senses, giving him six dollars in one half-hour period recently. It probably helps that he chooses places like the Hawthorne Bridge on-ramp, where tens of thousands pass daily.

His aspirations go beyond this modest income. Claiming to have never missed a practice even while in a coma, he seems to sincerely want musical-legend status someday.

"I don't miss practice because I intend to be one of the best-known trumpet players in the world," he says. "I think I am well on my way."

It all started when he found himself at



Trumpeter Kirk Reeves brings a lot of theater to the street when he sits down to perform as cars pass on the on-ramp to the Hawthorne Bridge in southeast Portland.

a garage sale right after he was laid off from his job as a "computer nerd." He describes the euphoria of blowing into a trumpet that he bought there on a whim for \$15.

"It made the exact same sound as a cartoon character falling over, so I knew that I was back in business," he says.

Reeves says another aspect of his attempt to become famous nationally is "Low Comedy," his Portland version of Saturday Night Live that he writes and produces for cable access.

The show's reinterpretation of "Scooby Doo" has become popular online, where Reeves can be seen playing the title character in an oversized, hairy bodysuit.

The show is also a way for him to avoid Portland's wet winters.

After a particularly harsh day of performing in a snowstorm, he swore off the colder months and found a nearly perfect venue at Portland Community Media. He would consider it ideal in all ways if it had a larger broadcast range and if it paid anything.

"Once my 'Low Comedy' show gets picked up by a network, I will have a big payday," he says. "But mainly it's the members of the ensemble cast that deserve to be stars."

"Low Comedy" tapes Wednesdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Portland Community Media, 2766 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., and airs Thursdays at 9 p.m. on channel 23.

Music Millennium Scales Back

Northwest 23rd store to close

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Music Millennium owner Terry Currier opened a second store in northwest Portland in 1989, he was pioneering a neighborhood that was more risky than trendy.

But times have changed and so has Northwest 23rd Avenue, prompting Currier to announce last week that he will close the store at NW 23rd and Johnson at the end of August, focusing solely on running the East Burnside location.



Terry Currier

The Portland Observer first reported on the struggling retailer in March, when Currier said they began selling more "lifestyle" items, including candy and retro toys. But Currier, who has owned Music Millennium since 1984, said he borrowed \$400,000 against the Burnside location last year to pay off some debt created by the northwest store.

Facing higher rent on 23rd Avenue, he was close to signing a lease for another location but decided not to after facing the bleak financial situation.

"It was a tough decision, but the store has been losing money for some time," he said.

Currier also noted that the northwest store fared much worse when downloading technology began to diminish CD sales, and that its location was affected by the neighborhood's changing demographics. The latter issue hasn't affected the East Burnside store as much.

"There are a lot of national retailers moving in on that street," he said, "our customer base has probably

moved on to Mississippi and Alberta and Hawthorne [districts]."

Music Millennium is the oldest music store in the Pacific Northwest, opened in 1969 at 3185 E. Burnside. The original location and website, musicmillennium.com, will remain open.

At the end of August Currier plans to celebrate the Northwest 23rd Avenue store's final days with several live performances. He also said they are not opposed to opening up another store, if future circumstances allow.

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