

ARTS & CULTURE

Crackin' Up comedy showcase brings laughter to CG

BY SOPHIA EDELBLUTE
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Shadows grow long across Covered Bridge Brewing Group's beer garden as people settle down for a night of drinks and comedy on Sunday, July 25. Thanks to the Crackin' Up comedy showcase, hosted by Alex Elkin and organized by Jennifer Davis, Cottage Grove was treated to special guest Bruce Jingles.

Jingles has two specials on Showtime, credits on VH1, NuvoTV, FOX, TMZ, USO Tours and has his own podcast.

He's been in comedy for years, since he hopped on the mic at an amateur night at Ontario Improv comedy club. He also happened to meet Elkin at that very same club in 2004. That night Jingles won second place in a comedy contest and it was only the second time he'd been on stage.

"The reason I got into comedy is because nobody was funny," says Jingles. "I swear to god the night I went nobody was funny. And my best friend, Josh, was with me and he said, 'Man you could do that.' And that's it, that's how I got in."

Jingles definitely stoked up laughs from the crowd with jokes about his weed dealer, his mom and other life experiences. It's safe to say he's found his comedic "voice," as Elkin, a fellow comic, describes.

"When you finally get to that place in your comedy when you're like 'Okay, this is me, this is my personal journey,' or whatever you want to call it. It allows me to bring it you on stage," says Elkin.

"Everything you think is

original, isn't," says Jingles. "Somebody's had their version of it. I'm not saying anybody's a thief or anything. But there's only so many jokes out there. It's your interpretation of it."

Elkin, who started off the Crackin' Up showcase in May with his own performance, is set to host the rest of them through September. Thanks to knowing a variety of comics, Elkin is also able to book talent like Jingles to come through Cottage Grove.

Elkin himself started comedy in 1994 at his high school talent show and has been telling jokes since then. He started doing it full time professionally in 2007. He appreciates smaller towns like Cottage Grove "because smaller towns, where they don't the big entertainment that comes through, boy they really treat you well. I really enjoy that so give me a Cottage Grove any day of the week over Portland, or Salem or Seattle because they really appreciate it when you come out here. They're good people," says Elkin.

Both comics have traveled overseas to entertain US troops in Iraq or Afghanistan. Jingles has also been to Bosnia and Germany.

"That's an audience that really feels forgotten by people at home. I had somebody with tears in their eyes. I've been over six times," says Jingles. "It's a thing I always wanted to do."

Elkin and Jingles have been given mementos from soldiers who were killed while on duty. Elkin recalls a time when he performed and afterwards a man came up to him and gave him a copper bracelet with the man's brother's name

engraved on it, who had heard Elkin's show overseas. Jingles has multiple lighters with names engraved on them of soldiers who passed.

"You captured this person, you brought them into your world, and they're grateful because you took them out of that just for that moment, and that moment lasts a lifetime," says Jingles.

Sometimes jokes can come under fire though. For example, recently, back in Oregon, Elkin faced criticism for the topics of his jokes. Salem's Historic Grand Theatre canceled his show on July 3 based on protests from the community citing racist and transphobic comments, according to the Statesman Journal.

Elkin insists that people should just listen to his comedy and understand that he's not racist, he told the Statesman.

"I don't have a day job, this is what I do. And when you attack the first amendment, which is what I live off of, it's my bread and butter, I get angry about it and it's time to speak up about this kind of stuff," said Elkin. "We can't shut down speech. We have to hear everything, even the bad ideas."

Jingles also weighed in on the importance of First Amendment rights for comics and, more generally, our lives as a whole.

"Like I've told people before, if the Klan marched down the street, that's their right, you know they have a right to do that. Just like BLM. Everybody has a right to do that, it's what you do with that right that makes a difference," he said.

A symphonic return to CG



SOPHIA EDELBLUTE/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The Eugene Symphony brought its talents back to Bohemia Park on July 26 for the first time since 2019.

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On Monday, July 26, Bohemia Park was brimming with an eager audience. After 18 months of no live performances, the Eugene Symphony was back in Cottage Grove. The last time they visited was in 2019.

"It feels like you're coming home," says Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong.

Their first live audience performance was on Saturday, July 24 at the Cuthbert Amphitheater in Eugene. The second, was in our very own Cottage Grove.

"Making music, you gotta have people to share it with," says Lecce-Chong. "It feels really great and there's that extra intensity too within the orchestra."

The concert included nine pieces, from Tchaikovsky's "1912 Overture" to "Wicked" the musical's "Defying Gravity," vocalized by Eynne Hollens, who is a Eugene native and a guest vocalist with the

Symphony.

Getting the Symphony to Cottage Grove was no easy feat. Transporting instruments and people takes a lot of combined effort.

"We have an incredible crew, I can't take any credit for that," says Lecce-Chong. "They are able to load everything, especially all the percussion. Whenever you have something like 1812 overture, you're gonna have a lot of percussion."

Scott Freck, executive director of the Eugene Symphony, appreciates coming to perform in Bohemia Park, and all the hard work it took to get everything put together. This was the Symphony's sixth performance in Cottage Grove.

"It's just such a great partnership and we're so grateful. We love coming here," says Freck. "It's a great audience. After a year off it's all the more special."

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