

Chris Vetter Inside Portland Writing Samples

Portland Center Stage

<http://insideportland.com/theater.htm>



Portland is not Manhattan. Our theater scene is often mediocre. Budgets are limited. Most local stages are small. Repertory companies rise and fall; surviving from season to season is a Darwinian struggle. Name a famous local actor or

actress. Even if you think really, really hard, there are no famous actors in our city. In fact, traveling to Portland to perform in a play or musical is a sign that you are slipping, irrelevant, or provincial. Carol Channing? Robert Goulet? Game show host John Davidson? "Oh my God," Tony Curtis probably thought to himself when his *Some Like It Hot* revival pulled into town last May. "This is where celebrities come to die."

Portland Bottling Company

http://insideportland.com/index_031303.htm



Landmarks define cities. Washington D.C. has the Jefferson Memorial and the Washington Monument. Chicago offers Wrigley Field and the Sears Tower. Seattle

is synonymous with the Space Needle. The City of Roses has Portlandia, but she arrived on the scene in 1985, barely enough time to qualify for consideration. Beyond bridges or buildings, the most famous commercial landmark in city history sits atop the Portland Bottling Company headquarters in the Kerns District. For over 60 years, their giant 7-Up display sign has dominated the local landscape, a beacon of capitalism that has survived twelve Presidential administrations, countless storms and natural disasters, World War 2, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Gulf War, the coming Gulf War, and the cancellation of Ally McBeal.

"The Portland Bottling Company seemed destined for the dustbin of history," said Bottling Specialist James Marsh. "The plant might have been plowed over, with a plaque placed on the site to commemorate what was once a proud business."

Disaster at the Alpenrose Dairy

http://insideportland.com/index_041003.htm



Nothing inspires human misery like the holidays. In November, we endure a procession of distasteful relatives on Thanksgiving. We

drain our bank accounts in preparation for December 25. We risk death or paralysis when our neighbors drink too much and get behind the wheel to celebrate the New Year. Easter is another strange occasion. The rise of Jesus Christ from the dead would appear to have nothing in common with bunnies and eggs, but somehow the concepts are married. How we arrived at Easter is probably irrelevant, since candy baskets, chocolate rabbits, and dressing up for church will remain in vogue for the foreseeable future.

The mid-morning Egg Hunt excluded children, and was open only to mothers. The participants were mostly middle-aged women, lured by the prospect of discovering a "special" chocolate egg they could redeem for a pair of diamond earrings. The sight of several hundred slightly overweight women getting on their hands and knees to search for a diamond confirmed my worst suspicions about human nature.

Amazingly, no fistfights broke out, but visible bruises and bite marks were in abundance. For anyone keeping score at home, behavior like this is why communism failed.

Adding fear to misery, someone in a giant bunny suit was patrolling the grounds. Rabbits are traditionally furry, cuddly, and cute. Despite their sex drive, they are innocuous creatures.

Not this bunny. More than a handful of children took one look at the rabbit and began to cry. Why were they sobbing, you ask? Were these children hungry? Tired after waiting all day for the next Egg Hunt to launch? We have to tread carefully but my subjective assessment is that any child who greeted the bunny and began to cry did so because the bunny was extremely scary looking, with a giant bucktooth designed to rip apart human flesh. If I had a shotgun, the bunny might never have left the dairy alive.

The Goldschmidt Scandal

<http://insideportland.com/stanford.htm>

Neil Goldschmidt is probably the most important leader this state ever produced. His genius for urban revitalization in the seventies transformed Portland into a modern city. In eight years as mayor, Goldschmidt launched Pioneer Courthouse Square, expanded parks, created the bus mall, overhauled land use planning, reformed city services, increased



public support for the arts, introduced new Rose Festival traditions, funded light rail, and championed economic development policies that fueled responsible growth. If you view the skyline from the 30th floor of the US Bank Tower at the Portland City Grill, you could not point to a single city block that does not bear his influence. His impact on Portland was so profound that President Jimmy Carter tapped Goldschmidt to become his Secretary of Transportation in August 1979. His rise to national prominence was meteoric, almost as dramatic as his fall from grace.

Chaos at the Oregonian

<http://insideportland.com/affair.htm>

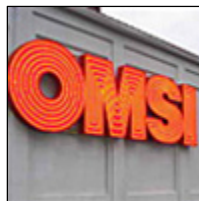


As Willamette Week posted the initial details of the Goldschmidt scandal on May 6, the former governor arranged a meeting with Oregonian editors to confirm allegations he sexually abused an underage girl during his tenure as mayor. He prepared a

written statement for publication the following day, suggesting the relationship was consensual. The Oregonian ran an above-the-fold cover story on May 7 with the headline “Goldschmidt confesses 70’s affair with girl, 14.” The Oregonian ran an above-the-fold cover story on May 7 with the headline “Goldschmidt confesses 70’s affair with girl, 14.” Though Goldschmidt confessed to child molestation, the headline wrongly suggested the incident of child rape was consensual. In a May 10 interview with Inside Portland, Stanford slammed his former colleagues for their handling of the Goldschmidt confession: “What happened with the Oregonian is that, in an attempt to cover their ass because they were being beaten so badly by Willamette Week, they allowed themselves to be used by Goldschmidt—even to the point of describing his statutory rape as an affair.”

Coral Reef Adventure Docks at OMSI

http://insideportland.com/index_022003.htm



The late Jacques Cousteau may be the only French export worth embracing in a climate of escalating friction between our two countries. Cousteau was an adventurer and visionary. His daring and resourcefulness changed the face of oceanography. Unfortunately, his approach to sharing his discoveries was often plodding. Even on a good

day, Cousteau could be deadly dull. The Mayo clinic uses his fifteen-part series on Plankton to treat sleeping disorders. When Stanley Kubrick shot A Clockwork Orange in 1971, he endlessly looped Jacques Cousteau documentaries in the prison rehabilitation room, driving Malcolm McDowell to a state of screaming hysterics. His exposed retinas could endure scenes of violence or torture, but Cousteau was another matter.

Trail Blazers Rebuild

<http://insideportland.com/rebound.htm>

In the November 2003 debut issue of Portland Monthly Magazine, writer Adam Van Loom profiled the marketing and public relations staff of the Portland Trail Blazers. His article detailed the challenges facing executives as they sought to restore confidence in the team. The story is familiar. Players behaved badly. Mistakes happened. Charity efforts and positive contributions the Blazers made to the community were overlooked. Oppressive publicity diminished confidence in the franchise. For the past two seasons, consultants and managers explored strategies to recapture public support. The summer of 2005 is the turning point for the team. Blazers executives hired a new coach, drafted capable players, overhauled the roster, and attracted a new corporate sponsor. Few predict a playoff run, but the team has a plan for restoring the faith of disgruntled fans.

Rick Adelman Faces His Old Team

<http://insideportland.com/adelman.htm>

Barring a major felony, significant injury, or act of God, the Blazers are going to keep Rick Adelman awake at night in the first round of the playoffs. When asked earlier this month if coaching against Portland means more to him than competing against other teams, Adelman raised his eyebrows and smiled broadly, communicating in silence what words could not express.

The Return of Blazermania

<http://insideportland.com/adelman2.htm>

NBA success can unite a city. The transformation of Portland in the late seventies and early nineties was an extraordinary spectacle, with thousands of Blazers signs blanketing cars, businesses, and homes. "Blazermania" was a profound force, a juggernaut that brought together Oregonians of every race, creed and color. The city is ready to embrace their team again, cautiously optimistic that the best days of the franchise lie ahead.

Portland Playoff Hopes Dim

http://insideportland.com/houston_032204.htm



Portland was down by 17 points in the first half but mounted a huge comeback to pull ahead by five points in the fourth quarter. Missed free throws, losing defensive powerhouse Ratliff to foul trouble, questionable substitutions, and the complete collapse of the Blazers offense in overtime may have cost Portland an opportunity to compete in the postseason.

The Fame Game

http://insideportland.com/index_022003.htm

We live in a city where furniture salespeople and car dealers are celebrities. From Tom Peterson to Ron Tonkin, most of these men have bad hair. They are not loved or respected, merely tolerated. Tonkin and others forced their way into our lives with an endless procession of television commercials. Nerdy auto mogul Scott Thomason inspired citywide fear and loathing when he pioneered the placement of local car ads at multiplexes. Unless we arrived late to the cinema, there was no escape from his advertisements. His coke bottle glasses and beady eyes stared back at us from across the darkness.

Hope Fades for Hillary Clinton

<http://insideportland.com/obama2.htm>



The former First Lady continues to throw the kitchen sink at Obama. Despite a victory looming in the Pennsylvania Primary and a surge of support from

uneducated white males and laborers, Hillary will not capture the delegate or popular vote lead in the remaining ten contests. Her Waterloo moment came last week when Florida and Michigan lawmakers closed the casket on her efforts to force new elections in both states. Florida and Michigan violated DNC rules by changing the date of their respective primaries and lost their right to seat delegates at the 2008 Democratic Convention in Denver. The New York Senator caused herself unnecessary embarrassment by claiming she dodged sniper fire during a 1996 visit to Bosnia. CBS video footage confirmed Clinton was stretching the truth in an effort to appear heroic. Liar, liar, pantsuit on fire.

Dwight Jaynes and the Portland Tribune

http://insideportland.com/index_030603.htm



Speculation on why Pamplin created the Tribune is the subject of rumor. In 1999, the Oregonian was less-than-kind with its coverage of his Ross Island Sand & Gravel

Company as it confronted accusations of environmental dumping. With his vast business interests over a variety of industries, Pamplin likely had zero knowledge of the illegal dredging. Once the story broke, he reformed his company almost overnight, to the delight of salmon everywhere. The unflattering attention from the *Oregonian* allegedly ruffled his feathers. Less than two years later, the Portland Tribune was born.

Western Culinary Institute

http://insideportland.com/index_022703.htm



Montana native Jessica Whalen, 23, is enjoying her time at the college but hopes to see more women running restaurants and kitchens. "I like going into a field that is

male-dominated. I'm going to help turn that around. I don't know exactly how many women are executive chefs or own their own restaurants, but I believe it is less than one in ten. I work for a woman who runs her own restaurant here in town, but she is the exception that proves the rule. We need more balance in the industry." Demographics at the school boast two women for every three men, but global recruitment efforts look to balance those numbers in the years ahead.

Oregon Naval Reservists Confront Financial Ruin

http://insideportland.com/index_030603.htm

Oregonians serving in the military risk more than their lives while on assignment in the Gulf. Their credit rating is also in jeopardy. Naval reservists consistently receive their paychecks weeks or months late. "Most of us have severe pay problems. They have not paid us at all," wrote a Navy reservist currently in the Middle East speaking on condition of anonymity. "My mortgage check will bounce and the fees will begin to snowball and I will file chapter 11 when I return."

The Randy Leonard Show

http://insideportland.com/index_031303.htm

The guarantee of boredom that accompanies City Hall meetings expired last November with the election of Commissioner Randy Leonard, a fireman turned State Representative who took over the City Council seat vacated by Charlie Hales. Leonard is a no-nonsense pragmatist

whose patience with verbose speakers is extremely limited. If a city official or invited guest is not providing answers quickly enough, he will turn on them—setting his glasses low on his nose, scowling, frowning, and radiating disapproval. The effect can be withering on ill-prepared speakers. Guests before the Council have stammered, hesitated, fretted, and stared at the floor in response to the “Randy treatment.”

Willy Wonka Review

<http://insideportland.com/wonka.htm>



The last time Director Tim Burton remade a classic film from the seventies, he chose Planet of Apes. The result was painful. Replacing Moses with the leader of the Funky

Bunch, viewers found themselves rooting for the monkeys to shave a few minutes off the running time. Roddy McDowall, who passed away in 1998, actually rose from the grave to condemn the remake, jamming his cold, dead thumb into the soil.

Billy Bob Thornton Profile

<http://insideportland.com/astronaut.htm>

Being a journalist occasionally has rewards. Most people lead lives of quiet desperation, working 40 or more hours a week to provide for their families. Entertainment writers are no different; they just get to hang out with celebrities. Walking into a roundtable session with Stephen Spielberg or Halle Barry remains a singular thrill, as close as many of us will ever come to being part of the Hollywood dream.

“Will I really get to meet Billy Bob?” asked freelance writer Rachel Quinn, whose previous experience with celebrity journalism amounted to watching Access Hollywood twice a week. “Absolutely,” I assured our rookie journalist, “Just try not to drool on him.”

Return of the Backstreet Boys

<http://insideportland.com/backstreet.htm>

Watching the Backstreet Boys was low on my list of concert priorities this year. Their mindless boy band optimism, goofy choreography, frozen smiles, and creepy popularity with underage girls made them an easy target for my contempt. I went to the show anyway. The crowd was a broad demographic mix.

Thousands of college-age women attended the



concert, along with teenage girls, suburban housewives and a small but visible coterie of homosexual men. In the front row, three forty-something guys dressed in slacks and dress shirts danced throughout the performance, lip-synching to every song, clearly enthralled with the band. They repeatedly slapped hands, living and dying with each falsetto blast.

Portland Opera Review

http://insideportland.com/index_021303.htm

At this point in her career, Liza Minnelli is essentially an oldies act. Her face is bloated and



world-weary. Decades of bad decision-making corrupted her talents. Anything she is involved with is immediately suspect. You see her presenting a medal to

Michael Jackson on some contrived International Music Awards show. You glare at the television. Liza stares back at you. “Should I actually continue to watch this?” you ponder. As swiftly as the thought enters your head, you grab the remote and slap the channel changer button with the same intensity Jared Fogle devours a Subway sandwich. It does not matter what you watch next. It can be anything. Anything but Liza.