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Media Life: The 'other' legendary Piano Man set for Auburn gig

By Gus Thomson, Journal Staff Writer

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Gus Thomson, Media Life

Bob Milne is back by popular demand for a third annual pre-Thanksgiving Day show.

The lightning-fingered piano player has wowed audiences in Auburn in two previous appearances at the Downtown Auburn Arts Building.

This time around, the Nov. 25 performance has found a larger venue with better acoustics – and an even better house piano for Milne to show off his multi-genre musical vocabulary on.

Fran Haynes, who organized the initial two shows as benefits for the Auburn Education Foundation, said that it wasn't hard to convince Milne to come back for another performance. He'll drop the Auburn performance into a roster of gigs that sees him ping-ponging across the west, traveling from Lincoln City, Ore., to Menlo Park, Calif., to Sedona, Ariz., and then on to the local show.

Milne not only played to appreciative, sell-out audiences the last two years, he also gave a smaller audience of locals at nearby Pistol Pete's some schooling on his other field of expertise – shooting pool.

Milne's forte is ragtime and boogie-woogie piano, with some barrelhouse and blues thrown into the mix. He provides a window into the musical past with his nimble playing and a sometimes-scholarly, sometimes-irreverent, always-interesting viewpoint on the songs.

You might remember a Mike Wallace interview with Milne for "60 Minutes" or heard about his designation by the U.S. State Department as a "musical ambassador" for this nation. His most recent visit overseas in that capacity saw him performing in several venues in Japan.

Milne has also performed before George and Barbara Bush and, another time, in front of the Swiss Parliament. Traveling with his wife, he puts on up to 250 shows a year.

A multi-tasker if ever there was one, Milne is working on his autobiography and has recently released a CD that includes his between-song discourses as well as music.

LARGER VENUE

Haynes, who first heard Milne during her college days in the 1960s in Detroit, said that the move to a bigger venue – the Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalist Church at 190 Finley St. in Auburn – is a bit of a risk but one she's taking after two full houses. The hall would increase seating by about half while offering better acoustics. As a bonus, Haynes said the expert piano tuner brought in for the show has judged the piano Milne will be playing on as superb.

Needless to say, tucked onto a side street, it won't provide the same rumbustious ambience of Downtown Auburn's Lincoln Way at night. During Milne's first appearance, a drunken denizen wandered in off the street and started addressing Milne during his monologue. Showing the studied calm of a performer who played many years in Michigan beerhouses, Milne was able to calm the drunk with soothing politeness, while adeptly pointing him to the door so he could continue entertaining the paying customers.

While the venue is set to change, Haynes said tickets remain \$25, and include admission to the ever-popular, super-calorific, dessert bar during intermission. There will also be a limited number of premium reserved seats for \$50. Tickets are available at the door but with previous sell-outs, it might be advisable to purchase them in advance. Showtime is 7 p.m. Numbers to call to reserve tickets are (530) 878-0228, (530) 906-1920, or (530) 885-9891. They're also available through the front desk at E.V. Cain School in Auburn during regular school hours.

MEDIA LIFE MULLINGS

Auburn's radio advice maven Joni Hilton has new hours. Her newly minted KAH1 950 AM show is moving from the 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. slot weekdays to a 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday time. The number to call is 1(800) 950-5244. It's also streaming online at kahi.com. Dave Rosenthal's afternoon-evening show will now go from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays ... The recently released movie "Nick & Nora's Infinite Playlist" was graced with opening titles from Los Angeles-based Shadowplay Studios. That would be the studio co-founded by Auburn expatriate Gareth Smith. Smith, the studio's art director-designer, and designer-illustrator Jenny Lee were also responsible for the much-lauded "Juno" opening titles sequence ... The score by Auburn musician Mars on the new documentary "Lovecraft: Fear of The Unknown," is getting some prestigious airings. Early this month, the film played at the showcase Cinema Du Parc in Montreal, Canada as part of the Fantasia International Film Festival. At the same time, it was being viewed at the Rojo Sangre film festival in Buenos Aires, Argentina ... More Martin Ramirez media attention, this time from the London-based news and international affairs



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weekly The Economist. Ramirez, an artist whose surviving works were created at the DeWitt State Hospital in North Auburn, received a glowing tribute in the Nov. 6 edition. "His hundreds of drawings and collages vibrate with a rare intensity of hypnotic lines and warmly muted colors," says The Economist review. More high praise for an artist who went relatively unrecognized in life, died in 1963, and now is coming into his own in critical circles as one of the great artists of the last century.

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Keywords

[bob milne](#), [fran haynes](#), [mike wallace](#), [joni hilton](#), [kahi](#), [dave rosenthal](#), [gareth smith](#), [jenny lee](#), [mars](#), [martin ramirez](#), [media life](#), [gus thomson](#)

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