Written by Mike Schulz
Thursday, 20 October 2011 07:58

“A guy once sent me this story,” begins comedian Tim Bedore. “He had a great muscle car from the ’60s, and he had it all waxed and polished to this beautiful shine, and he had it parked under a tree. And this squirrel started dropping nuts onto his hood, over and over again.

“He finally moved the car underneath a *different* tree, because he wanted to keep the car in the shade and not ruin his perfect wax job. But after he did, the squirrel jumped over to the *other* tree, and started dropping nuts on the hood. It could’ve dropped them anywhere, but it had to drop them onto the hood of his car. It was a *purposeful* thing.

“Now, biologists could probably come up with some explanation for this. It liked the sound. Or it thought the car was an enemy. *Or*,” Bedore suggests, “it just wanted to piss off a human. I mean, why not just go to the *simpler* explanation?”

As longtime listeners of radio’s *The Bob & Tom Show* will attest, Bedore has spent years espousing this simple explanation for such erratic, and seemingly mean-spirited, behavior. In his “Animal Conspiracy” segments, the Minnesota-based touring comedian and frequent on-air guest explores news reports of crimes (or sometimes just misdemeanors) committed by various mammals, birds, and reptiles. And in addition to his stand-up material and stories from his popular “Vague but True” radio features, Bedore’s October 28 engagement at Rock Island’s Establishment Theatre will find the comic sharing even deeper insight into why, perhaps, animals appear so routinely intent on pissing us off.

“Some people think it’s an exercise in a false argument,” says Bedore, during a recent phone interview, of his “Animal Conspiracy” theory. “But I do think that animals are changing, and getting smarter. I mean, why *wouldn’t* they notice that they go into one side of a building, and come out in Saran Wrap on the other side? If everybody is evolving – if *we’re*

evolving – then
they're
evolving."

Born in Chicago and raised in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Bedore says that his interest in comedy wasn't developed so much as inherent. "I was a teeny little kid, and trying to protect myself from the bullies and get away with stuff with the nuns, and humor was the way to do it. Humor gives you deniability in Catholic school. You get to say stuff that you wouldn't be able to say otherwise because you're just *joking*; you're saying X but meaning Y. And that helps with the nuns, because they *will* kill you.

"So I think comedy's in the DNA," Bedore continues. "How much you want to pursue it is another matter. And that was the world I wanted to be in. I wanted to get on the radio and get on stage."

After majoring in communications at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, Bedore set off, in the early 1980s, for California, where he worked his way to hosting an afternoon program on KQAK radio in San Francisco. And it wasn't long after landing his own show, says the comedian, that professionals in the comedy world began paying attention.

"Comedy-club owners would hear me on the radio," recalls Bedore, "and say, 'That guy's funny – let's get our comics on the air *with* him.'" Consequently, the KQAK host began booking numerous, San Francisco-based stand-ups on his program, many of whose names are more recognizable now than then.

"Looking back, the amount of talent that you were around was really unbelievable," he says. "You know, Robin Williams and Dana Carvey were on the San Francisco comedy scene, becoming famous or *already* famous. There was Paula Poundstone, and Kevin Pollak, and Bob Goldthwait ... . And these were not necessarily even thought to be the funniest people on the scene there."

Bedore's radio spots eventually led to his being asked to host area open-mic nights and comedy showcases, which, in turn, segued into performing his own scripted material.

"People always ask about stand-up," he continues, "and how difficult it is, and 'How do you *do* it ?' And it's literally just stage time, and failing, and wondering *why* , and then doing it again. I mean, even the funniest people fail. It's just a matter of 'Are you willing to figure out why what you tried failed, and try something else?' That's really all you can do."

It was during his time in California that Bedore, in the early '90s, initiated his most notable professional successes – the "Vague but True" and "Animal Conspiracy" routines that make up a substantial portion of his stand-up act and have resulted in four comedy albums to date.

"In radio, I always liked to do little features," says Bedore. "I'm pretty sure it came from Carson – his Karnac, and Tea-Time Movie, and Aunt Blabby – and Letterman, who loved to do little mock-broadcasting features and was a huge, huge influence. Those just spoke to me. It was broadcasting like you grew up with, but you got to make fun of it at the same time.

"So I did a feature called 'Mother's Little Helper,' which was bad advice on how to raise kids parading as *good* advice on how to raise kids, and 'The Bible According to Tim,' and 'Are You a Smart or Stupid Teen?' – all these specific things. And if I wanted to do something that was *not* in a specific area, that was just kind of a comment on what was going on in the world, I would put it into a feature called 'Vague but True.' That was the catchall mock editorial."

Bedore began performing the feature – which finds the comedian pontificating on everything from "Being Cool Is Dangerous" to "Stevie Wonder Is God" to "Some Thoughts on Circumcision" – on KQAK and then, following a relocation, on a friend's radio program in Los Angeles. "And then I would take these 'Vague but True's, the evergreen ones that were kind of the best of the year, to *The Bob & Tom Show*, and that's what I would do when I visited them on the radio. And then it just got to be a regular thing."

[redacted]

VagueButTrue.com EstablishmentTheatre.com