
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Tongue & Pencil Draws Laughs and a Long Bow

Adam Leipzig · Sunday, August 15th, 2010

The narrative this weekend at the movies was Sandbox Redux: boys vs. girls, Sly vs. Julia *The Expendables* vs. *Eat, Pray, Love*. As in kindergarten, the outcome was the same. Most of our cultural offerings, and the narratives surrounding them, are expected and mundane. So it was a rare joy to sit on the concrete floor of Titmouse Animation's lobby on Wednesday night and see something truly inventive, a stand-up comedy and animation improv show called *Tongue & Pencil*.

A stand-up comedian stands on the stage, uh, tiny platform, and behind him there's a wall where an animator can do real-time drawings. The comedian and the animator haven't worked things out in advance, so you get to see how they improv and relate their talents to each other. When the gears click, it kills better than an act at the Comedy Story. When it misses, it's still pretty amusing. There's a schematic of how it works, slightly R-rated, at this [link](#).

Tongue & Pencil is the brain-child of Mike Funt, who is an interesting guy. I first met Mike when he was our office manager at National Geographic Films; I realized he was a unique guy when he slept over in the Wilshire Blvd. high-rise a few nights so he could meet trades-people at 5 AM when we were renovating the offices. At one point he sold his car as a personal effort at green citizenship, and now only walks or takes public transportation. Many days he would walk to work, six miles. He had a great time, and got trim in the process. Over the years, he developed his voice-over and stand-up career, and he recently quit the job to pursue his art full-time.

Mike has an encyclopedic knowledge of TV cartoon shows dating back to the sixties and seventies – to the last decades in America when you could say you wanted to be an animator or a writer and people wouldn't look at you funny or advise you to go get a real job. One of the biggest problems we have today is that creativity-as-career-path is devalued and meets with skepticism. *Tongue & Pencil* has the opposite motive. Here are creative people, onstage, onscreen and in the audience. They're enjoying their craft. They're doing what they want to do with their lives.

Some of the stand-up guys found a good rhythm with their animators, and those moments worked the best. One guy went on too long and died. Another guy braved through technical difficulties and still killed. On the whole, it was about ten times funnier than *Saturday Night Live* (Question for Lorne Michaels: Why hasn't your show been funny in years except when it is doing political satire?). It was funnier than *Tosh.O.*

At this point *Tongue & Pencil* only convenes once a month, and when I went it was SRO. You should Like them on [Facebook](#) so you know about the next event, show up with \$5 and BYOB. I predict they'll need to move to a bigger venue soon. For creativity, innovation and pure passion,

they're kicking sand in the face of the other kids in the entertainment sandbox.

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