

Phillipe and Jorge's Cool, Cool World: Bus Stop, a Drop, and Rock 'n' Roll

Bus World

Issues having to do with RIPTA buses are always on Jorge's mind as he has been riding them his entire life and has never had a driver's license. He talks to drivers and other passengers and, with the weather we have been experiencing, it seems that the frustrations of many folks who are "on the buses" have been greatly exacerbated. Jorge also knows many other regular bus riders who are quite knowledgeable about how government and the buses work. Among them are Don Rhodes, the President and Legislative lobbyist for the RIPTA Riders Alliance and Bob Rizzo, the veteran multi-media artist who, for many years, ran arts programs for the city of Providence.

Bob lives in the Pawtuxet Village area (Cranston/Warwick) and mentions, specifically, the 1/4 mile (7 blocks) distances between stops on the R Line, a complaint also voiced by regular RIPTA rider Annette Gagne. That the R-line buses are almost always crowded, frequently so crowded that they pass by passengers waiting at stops because they can't take on any more riders, is also a concern. And, although Jorge's experience has been with the R Line, he has been informed that the stops being far apart is true of a number of other main lines as well.

With all the snow came the worries about who is responsible for clearing out the snow at shelters and stops. One driver told me how concerned he was about the safety of passengers waiting at the #3 stop on Eddy Street outside of Rhode Island Hospital. People were standing in the street and it was clearly dangerous. "Someone's going to get killed," the driver told me. In fact, Don Rhodes was nearly hit on a couple of occasions because he had to stand in the street due to the shelters/stops being unshoveled. Rhodes says that the current RIDOT model for street clearance is "outdated" and after the second, third or fourth passes by the plows, people often find that their driveways and sidewalks that they are legally required to keep clear are continually being clogged up by icy, hard snow that is nearly impossible to shovel.

At a recent meeting of the RIPTA Riders Alliance, Lamar, the advertising company that has a contract with RIPTA, said that they would be "responsible for keeping clear the 25 busiest bus shelters in the state." This is a nice start, but they are in no way legally required to do this and if they are unable to follow through with their pledge, there are no consequences.

Since it is the poor and disenfranchised who comprise the majority of regular bus riders, this is a near-invisible problem. But when people start getting hit and injured because no one has addressed these storm-related issues, there will be an "I can't believe this happened" public outcry. Don't say that you weren't warned.

For Rock & Roll Collectors

It's time again for another meeting of the Original Southern New England Rock & Roll Collectors Convention. Created by Dr. Oldie himself (the Mad Peck), this is a must for anyone who collects vinyl, posters or any other sort of rock 'n' roll-related stuff. It's also an opportunity to meet other collectors and fans. It takes place at its "new" location — the Knights of Columbus Hall on 304 Highland Ave (Rte. 123), South Attleboro, Mass, on Sun, March 1. Doors open at 10am and close at 3pm, and admission is still only two bucks! If you're tired of being cooped up indoors and have been looking for an excuse to get out, this is it! So spread the word and let's hope the weather cooperates!

Saturday Night Live 40

There was only one thing that P&J wanted to see in the big “Saturday Night Live” 40th anniversary show ... acknowledgement of our late and much loved friend, Charles Rocket, who was a cast member and anchored the Weekend Update segment of SNL in 1980. And he was acknowledged in a brief segment on cast members who have passed away.

It’s a long story, but in most histories of SNL, the 1980-81 season is usually ignored. Charlie was a major talent who was dealt a very bad hand, but those who remember his influence on the Providence underground art scene of the late 1960s and ’70s, know well his brilliance.

And, speaking of “Saturday Night Live,” kudos to its original set designer — about the best and most sought-after in the business — Providence’s own Eugene Lee.

Stairway to Hospital

Poor Phillipe learned this week that socks on stairs don’t mix when he slid down a set and landed in the hospital. He got a nasty bump on the noggin that would send excited shivers down the spine of any phrenologist, but he’ll be back in fine shape in time for our next column.