

Dr. Ruth a 'real' show

By Stew Magnuson
Staff Reporter

For me, the best things to watch on television are the real things. TV dramas are too predictable, and most of the sitcoms just aren't funny anymore. So I spend my TV time watching the real dramas unfold — things like sports, and game shows. Every day, little human dramas unfold on the TV screen. Maybe you've never considered the Wheel of Fortune as being dramatic, but I do.

Tube Talk

The Dr. Ruth Show, which airs on weeknights at 9 p.m., is my new favorite "real" show. For those who have never heard of Dr. Ruth Westheimer, a description is necessary. Dr. Ruth is a diminutive sex therapist, as old as most grandmothers, who lets such words as "orgasm," "dildo" and "vaginal lubrication," roll off her tongue without hesitation. With her German accent, she just sounds intelligent, and, you know, she is.

Dr. Ruth hit it big as a frequent guest on Late Night with David Letterman, where she often turned the conservative Letterman red-faced with her frank talk.

Now, Dr. Ruth has an hour-long show five nights a week on the Lifetime net-

work, which is only available on cable. The show isn't as hilarious as Dr. Ruth's Letterman appearances, but it's still entertaining and educational. For about half of the show, Dr. Ruth answers callers' questions as she does on her popular radio show. This is "real" television at its best. With the assistance of her co-host Larry Angelo, Dr. Ruth fields questions from callers all over the country.

On a recent show, a female caller explained how her husband made her tell make-believe stories about her having sex with other women so he could maintain an erection. "But wait, that isn't even the problem," she said. "Now he's making me tell stories about my friends and sisters!"

Dr. Ruth tells the problem through, trying to get the details. But since these calls can last only a few minutes, she inevitably refers them to a sex therapist or a marriage counselor.

But not always. One woman calls in to complain that she has a terrible problem. It seems that when her boyfriend simply touches her hand or kisses her, she starts having orgasms.

"Marry him immediately!" Dr. Ruth says, tittering with her famous laugh.

I think people, including myself, are attracted to shows like Dr. Ruth's in the same way that we are attracted to juicy gossip. Everyone wants to hear about someone else's problems, espe-

cially when the problems concern almost everyone's favorite subject: sex.

Just having Dr. Ruth help callers with their sex problems for an hour would be entertainment enough for me. Instead, Dr. Ruth breaks to have a simulated therapy session where an actor comes in to play the part of a patient with some terrible problem. If I just pretend and go along with it, I still can get that "real" feeling, but not quite. The acting is good, and the situations are taken from real life, but I just can't get into these simulated therapy sessions.

The real low point of the show comes with the interviews. Dr. Ruth either sits down with some quasi-celebrity and makes small talk about his or her marriage, or talks with a professional about the latest sex research. This part of the show is rarely as interesting as the actual phone calls.

But during the last 15 minutes, Dr. Ruth gets in a few quickies from the unfulfilled wives and the shy men who can't get dates. Every once in a while, she'll read a letter from a distraught viewer.

While all the networks are showing the same nighttime soap operas with the same worn-out plots, Dr. Ruth is a great escape into reality. And hey, these callers have problems that make Alexis and Pam Ewing's silly love affairs just seem dull.

No mindless disco here

New funkmasters creep back

By Stew Magnuson
Staff Reporter

Watch out, funk is back. And thank God. Just when it was almost too safe to step on a dance floor, the second generation of funkmasters are creeping slowly back into American music. The music of Fishbone, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Trouble Funk and This Is The Funk is being heard on the turntables of local record stores and on the trendy, late-night progressive rock shows on KZUM.

Backtracks

But what is the funk? Where did the funk come from? No one knows for sure. Sometime in the late '60s Dyke and the Blazers recorded the song, "Funky Broadway," a James Brown rip-off for sure, but Dyke managed to take a word that, according to the dictionary, means "smelly," and start a movement. So maybe the funk is the smell of sweat on a sticky summer night when a band is laying down a heavy groove.

Whatever the origin of the word, one man, George Clinton, took the funk and made it into a genre. Clinton masterminded such forgotten groups as Parliament, Bootsy's Rubber Band, The Brides of Funkenstein and Funkadelic. Today, the Mothership has left; no one knows what happened to Sir Nose DeVoidoffunk and Bootsy. The Horny Horns have stopped blowing.

Clinton and his bands, along with such groups as War, Kool and the Gang (before they started writing garbage) and Earth, Wind and Fire made some of the most intensified dance music in the history of soul. While the silly white folks were shaking their booties to mindless disco trash, Clinton took mean baselines and overlaid them with rapidfire horns and acid rock guitar rifts.

"Free your ass, and your mind will follow!" Clinton proclaimed. But the message never really got to the right people. Funk remained almost exclusively a black music genre.

Radio during the mid and late '70s was even more racist than today, and Dr. Funkenstein's music stayed off the air, with the exception of small black stations like the now-gone KOWH in Omaha.

So there I was, a white, middle-class kid in West Omaha tuning into KOWH in my suburban bedroom listening to Bootsy and Parliament when I got bored with the hard rock stations playing the same mid-'70s dinosaur bands (big and dumb).

Clinton and his bands eventually faded away in the late '70s. War broke up as well. Earth, Wind and Fire and

Kool and The Gang stated writing pop trash for the new hit stations. But the funk remains.

And it evolved. The funk baseline mixed with Jamaican dubbing and the disco beat to make today's rap music. War's mixture of Latin music and funk is coming back in vogue with some bad nouveau disco bands. And many groups like Talking Heads, never gave up on funk.

The second generation of funk bands might not be stuck in a racially segregated sub-genre, though. It's 10 years later and the racial/musical barriers are slowly — very slowly, mind you — crumbling. Prince, always five years ahead of anyone writing music, incorporates some funk and attracts a multi-racial audience. Red Hot Chili Peppers, an all-white funk band, and Fishbone, funk/ska band, both had an almost all-white audience last year during their Lincoln appearance.

But best of all is Washington, D.C.'s Trouble Funk, part of the Go-Go movement which has had almost no exposure in the Midwest. These guys, in my opinion, are the best funksters of all time. Their "Saturday Night Live" LP is one of the most danceable, beat-crazy albums to come out in years.

Trouble Funk also will be featured in an upcoming film, "Good To Go," which

probably will never make it to Lincoln, but we can always hope.

And let's not forget the original funkmaster, the man who really started it all, James Brown and his Famous Flames. Brown has been on the comeback for years. Maybe he'll finally get here. It was his funky sweat that inspired the whole movement.

And don't count Dr. Funkenstein, George Clinton, out. He's still out there shining the funk on everyone, helping produce Fishbone and the Chili Peppers, working with Thomas Dolby on his latest albums and even helping score the "Howard The Duck" soundtrack.

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So you want to be a moviestar, huh? Well, the Lincoln Community Playhouse is the place for you!

Beginning this week, the Playhouse, located at 2500 S. 56th St., is offering a wide array of courses for children and adults. The classes are supported in part by the Nebraska Arts Council and will apply to anyone with an interest in the theatre.

Children's classes include: Introduction to Theatre, Advanced Theatre, (which includes workshops at a local TV station and a performance demonstration at conclusion of course), Other classes for children include, Script Writing, Pre-School Creative Dramatics, Creative Move-

ment and Juggling.

Beginning Saturday, Adult Acting for Beginners will commence. This 10-week course will focus on the Stanislavski system of acting and will start with work on silent monologues and move into two- and three-person scenes.

A six week Stage Make-up course also is offered for the beginner, this is a hands-on study of basic stage make-up application. Materials are included in the course fee.

A \$5 discount is given to all 1986-87 Theatre Arts for Youth season members. To register or for additional information on classes, contact the Playhouse, 489-9608.

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