

Style

C

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2007

5

Rock Radio's Hard Place In Washington

More Listeners Turn To Other Music and Modes

By PAUL FARHI
Washington Post Staff Writer

Long live rock?
The music is far from dead, but rock radio in Washington seems to be long past its heyday, and is trudging ungracefully into its sunset years.
Local rock stations have struggled to hang on to listeners, who are drifting away to other kinds of music and other ways of hearing rock, such as via the Internet, iPods, satellite radio and even cellphones. Once the preeminent sound on the airwaves, rock has been reduced to an increasingly smaller niche.

The latest sign of rock radio's increasing creakiness: the so-so reception for the re-styled WTGB (94.7 FM). With an eclectic playlist, WTGB calls itself "the Globe" and promotes eco-awareness alongside "classic" tunes by Tom Petty and more recent ones by the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The format, in-

See RADIO, C8, Col. 1

THE NEW SEASON

TV Preview

'Viva Laughlin': CBS Gambles On a Gimmick

By TOM SHALES
Washington Post Staff Writer

On the one hand, we need more TV shows that can make viewers' eyes pop and jaws drop — daring departures from the numbing norm, shows that aren't calculated copies of previous hits. Then again, as the old saying goes, be careful what you wish for, because you might get "Viva Laughlin," a dizzy loop-de-loop ride whose departures are so awkward and absurd that they make the norm look pretty darned good.

Chief among those dubious innovations: The characters on "Viva Laughlin" occasionally break into song and a minimalist kind of dance. The series isn't a musical in the traditional Rodgers-and-Hammerstein

See TV PREVIEW, C7, Col. 1

■ ALSO PREVIEWED: "Run Granny Run" on HBO | Television, C7

"They thought just because we're old enough to get Social Security that we lack both brains *and* backbone."



BY RICHARD A. LIPSKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Mona Shaw found just the tool to register her complaint about service, or lack thereof, at Comcast's Manassas office.

Taking A Whack Against Comcast

Mona Shaw Reached Her Breaking Point, Then for Her Hammer

By NEELY TUCKER
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sometimes truly American virtues arise in outlaws who — by dint of heroic but questionable endeavors — display the mettle of the national character.

For instance: The Dillinger Gang, robbing banks (and destroying mortgages) when banks were foreclosing on the poor. Stephanie St. Clair, matron of the numbers racket during the Harlem Renaissance, striking a (dubious) blow for both gender and racial equality. Junior Johnson bootlegging liquor during Prohibition (the benefits of which were self-evident).

Fear not, fellow Americans! In these dark days of war, pestilence and Paris Hilton, a new hero has arisen. She is none other than 75-year-old Mona "The Hammer" Shaw, who took the aforementioned implement to her local Comcast office in Manassas to settle a score, and boy, did she!

This was after the company had scheduled installation of its much ballyhooed "Triple Play" service, which combines phone, cable and Internet services, in Shaw's brick home in nearby Bristow. But Shaw said they failed to show up on the appointed day, Monday, Aug. 13. They came two days later but left with the job half done. On Friday morning, they cut off all service.

This was the company that has had consumer service problems serious enough to prompt the trade magazine Advertising Age to editorialize that Comcast and other cable providers

See HAMMER, C2, Col. 3

Theater

The Emperor Reigns Absolutely in 'Caligula'

By PETER MARKS
Washington Post Staff Writer

With a title like "Caligula," you're expecting heads to roll. The name of the third Roman emperor is synonymous with barking-mad depravity, of a magnitude that conjures wild acts of sadism and orgies of blood.

He might seem an odd choice of subject for the great 20th-century existential writer Albert Camus. But the surprise in Washington Shakespeare Company's pithy and vibrant revival of Camus' rarely seen 1945 drama is that rolling noggins aren't as pivotal to the experience as what is percolating so excitingly in Caligula's.

Camus' Caligula — played with sumptuous vitality by Alexander Strain — is not merely a monstrous psycho. (History re-



BY RAY GNEWEX — WASHINGTON SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Alexander Strain (with Kathleen Akerley) in Washington Shakespeare's revival.

See THEATER, C4, Col. 1

■ ALSO REVIEWED: "Tick, Tick . . . Boom!" at MetroStage; "Del Destierro . . ." at Gunston Arts Center | C5

A Job That's On the Line

Senator Takes a Stand To Bar Lobbyists From Hiring Place-Holders

By LIBBY COPELAND
Washington Post Staff Writer

Comes now the newbie, the freshman senator, the bean counter with a nose for following the money. And at the moment she's following it — not *big* money, not earmark money — down a marbled hallway on the Hill to the poor schlubs who are paid \$10 an hour to stand in line. In the morning, well-paid, sharp-suited lobbyists arrive and glide into the Senate hearing rooms, taking choice seats that the schlubs saved for them by waiting all night.

Money polluting the rivers of democracy once again!



BY LAUREN VICTORIA BURKE — ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seat savers mark their spots in line and in Capitol Hill hearings for paying lobbyists.

"I think it is offensive!" decries Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.). She stands yesterday in the corridor of the Russell Senate Office Building, and the poor schlubs, the line-standers, watch from a respectful distance as she threatens to legislate their jobs away.

"It's capitalism and democracy," one of them says. "What do you do?"

Somebody's got a demand, somebody's got a supply. This is how America works,

See LINE, C8, Col. 3



THE RELIABLE SOURCE

Kate Beckinsale Stars in the Not Judy Miller Story | C3

ARTS BEAT

John Lennon and Yoko Ono photos at Govinda Gallery | C5 »

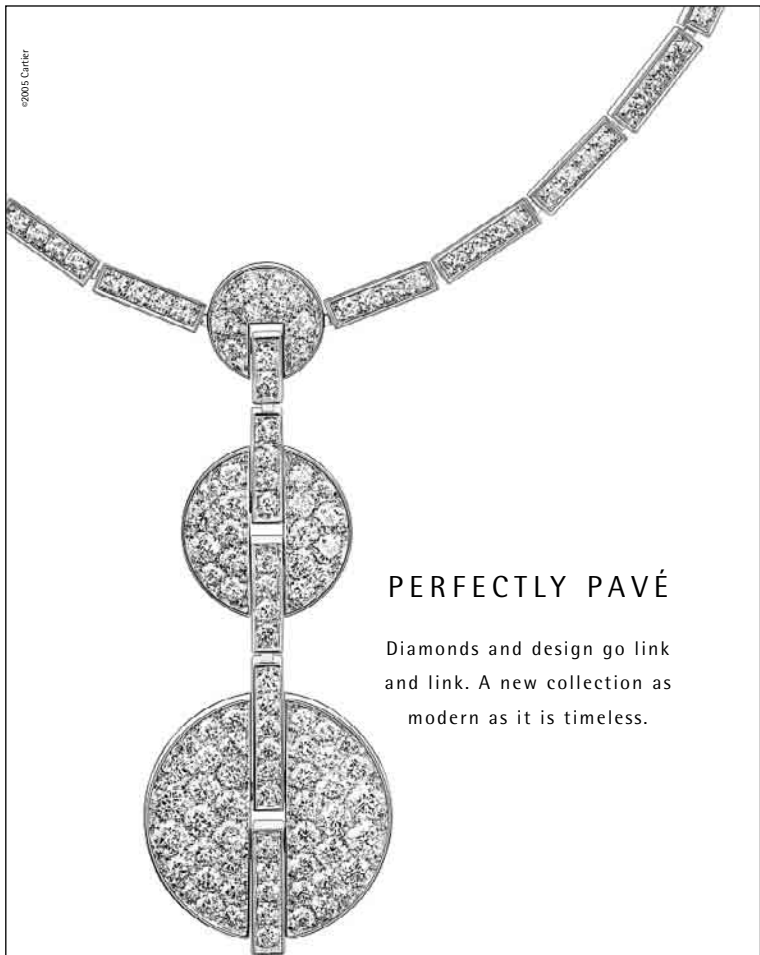
MUSIC

Experience Hendrix Tour opens with a sputter | C13

ON THE GO

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PHOTOS BY RICHARD A. LIPSKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Mona "The Hammer" Shaw, attention-getting tool of choice in hand, was arrested after smashing items in Comcast's Manassas office last August.

Hammering Home Complaints With Comcast

HAMMER, From C1

should spend less on advertising and more on customer service. And has spawned a blog called ComcastMustDie.com that's filled with posts from angry customers.

So on that Friday, Mona Shaw and her husband, Don, went to the local call center office to complain.

Let's pick it up, mid-action, according to Shaw:

Mona demands to speak to a manager. A customer service representative says someone will be right with them. Directs them to a bench, outside. (Remember, it's mid-August.) Mona and Don sit.

Tick, tick, tick, goes the clock. Sit, sit, sit, go Mona and Don.

For. Two. Hours.

And then — this is the best part — the customer rep leans out the door and says the manager has left for the day. Thanks for coming! Oh, the sputtering outrage!

The insulting idea that, as Shaw puts it, "they thought just because we're old enough to get Social Security that we lack both brains and backbone."

So, after stewing over it all weekend, on the following Monday, she went downstairs, got Don's claw hammer and said: "C'mon, honey, we're going to Comcast."

Did you try to stop her, Mr. Shaw?

"Oh no, no," he says.

Hammer time: Shaw storms in the company's office. BAM! She whacks the keyboard of the customer service rep. BAM! Down goes the monitor. BAM! She totals the telephone. People scatter, scream, cops show up and what does she do? POW! A parting shot to the phone! "They cuffed me right then," she says.

Her take on Comcast: "What a bunch of sub-moronic imbeciles."

Being a responsible newspaper, we must note that this is a misdemeanor, a crime, a completely inappro-

priate way of handling a business dispute.

Noted.

Who among us has not longed for a hammer in this age of incompetent "customer service representatives," of nimrods reading from a script at some 800-number location, of crumbs-in-their-beards plumbing installation people who tell you they'll grace you with their presence between 12 and 3, only never to show? And you'll call and call and finally some outsourced representative slings a dart at a calendar and tells you another guy will come back between 10 and 2 next Thursday? And when this guy comes, pants halfway down his behind, he'll tell you he brought the wrong part?

And there is nothing, nothing you can do.

Until there! On the horizon! It's Hammer Woman, avenger of oppressed cable subscribers everywhere! (Cue galloping "Lone Ranger" theme.)

"I scared the tar out of some people, at least," she says. "It had never occurred to me to take a hammer to a phone company before, but I was just so upset. . . . After I hit the keyboard, I turned to this blonde who had been there the previous Friday, the one who told me to wait for the manager, and I said, 'Now do I have your attention?'"

It wasn't all fun.

"My blood pressure went up around my ears. I started hyperventilating. They had to call the rescue squad and put me on a litter."

By the time it was over, she recalls, there

were an ambulance, two police cruisers and a sergeant's car in the parking lot. Shaw received a three-month suspended sentence for disorderly conduct, a \$345 fine in restitution and a year-long restraining order barring her from the Comcast office.

"Truly a unique and inappropriate situation," says Beth Bacha, a vice president for Comcast. She says company policy forbids disclosure of clients' records, but did say their files note that the service record wasn't exactly what Shaw has indicated. Besides, "nothing justifies this sort of dangerous behavior."

Bacha noted that Comcast has more than 25 million customers, the overwhelming majority of which are very satisfied with their service.

Manassas police spokesman Sgt. Tim Neumann says there have been other police calls to that Comcast office, but he doesn't know what prompted them.

Bob Garfield, who runs ComcastMustDie.com, wrote last week he was happy the site had become an outlet for "so much deep-seated rage," but hoped customers would "keep the hammer assaults down to a bare minimum."

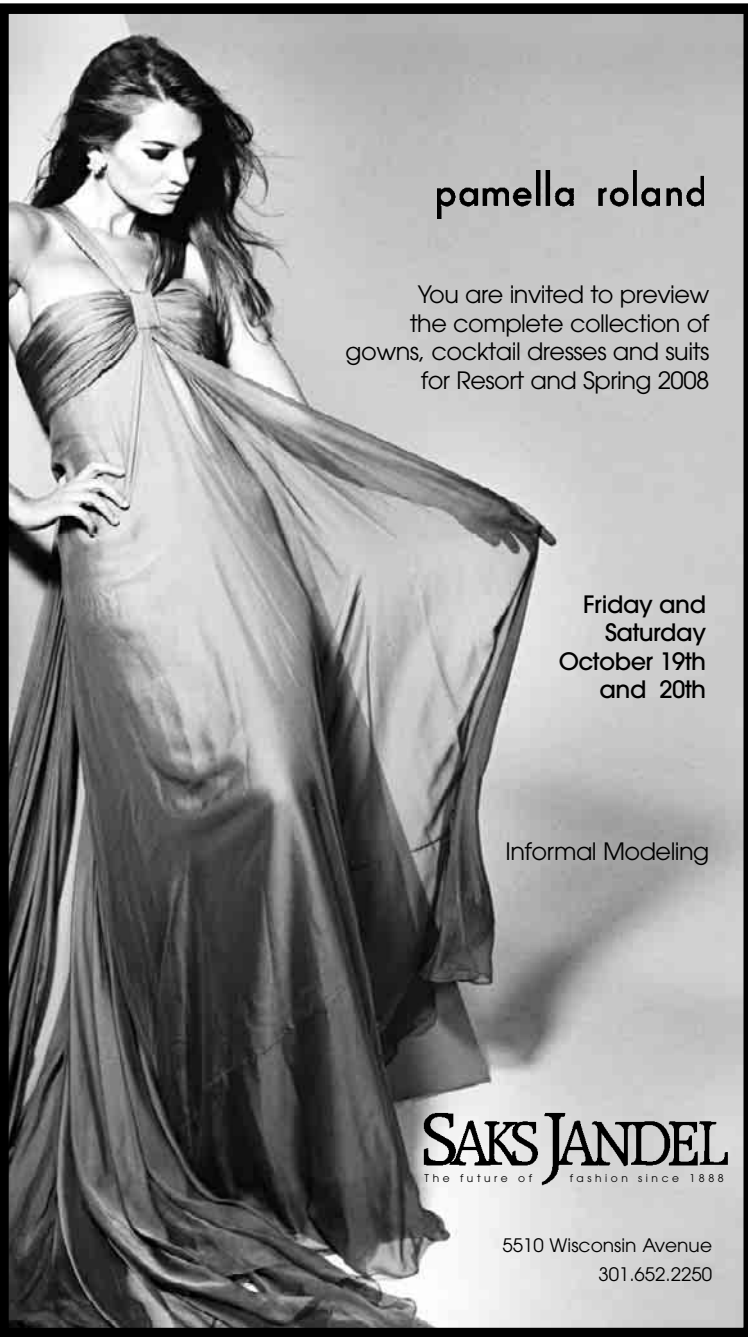
From what we can tell, Mona Shaw is not, actually, a raving lunatic armed with construction tools.

She is a nice lady who lives in a nice house. She and Don are both retired from the Air Force (she was a registered nurse). They have been married 45 years. She is secretary of the local AARP, secretary of a square-dancing club and takes in strays for the local animal shelter (they have seven dogs at the moment). She has a heart condition. She lifts weights at a local gym. The couple attend a Unitarian Universalist church.

Police gave her the hammer back, though she swears she's content to ride off into the sunset of True Crime Stories in America, never again to go Com-smash-tic on her local cable provider.

She does, however, finally, have phone service. On Verizon.





pamella roland

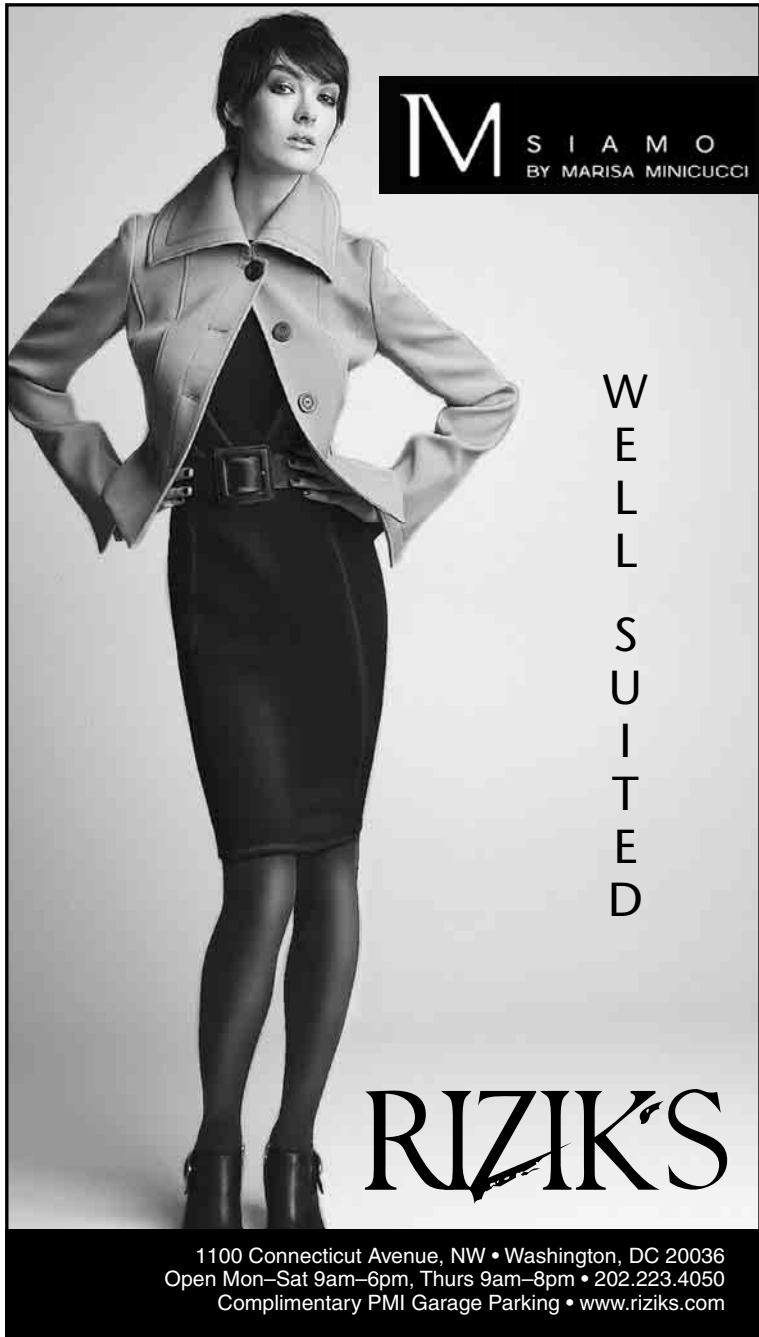
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