

## TBS Just For Laughs: Robert Smigel Brings Bozo Circus Parody to Chicago

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 18, 2009 - 7:05pm

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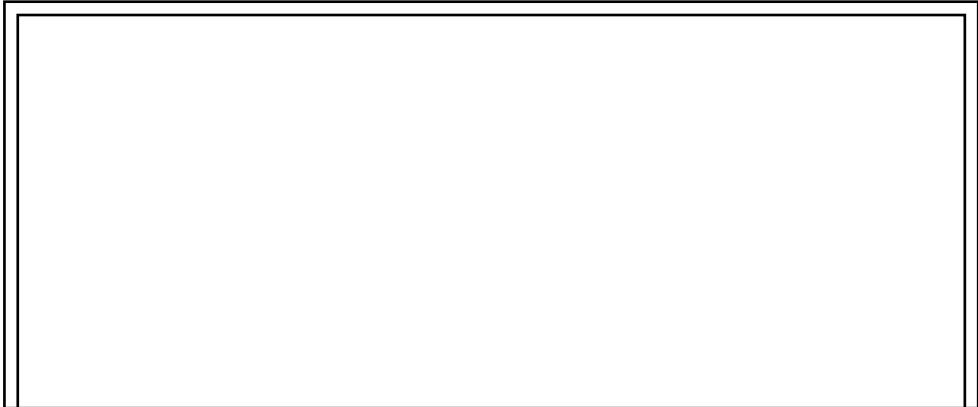
CHICAGO – Wednesday, June 17th, marked the beginning of Superstation TBS “Just for Laughs” festival in Chicago and it kicked off with the comic genius of Robert Smigel, best known now as Triumph the Insult Comic Dog.

Smigel’s early career took a turn through Chicago in the mid-1980’s, and when he joined Saturday Night Live as a writer/performer in 1985 he helped develop the now iconic “Da Bears” sketch, where he played Superfan Carl Wollarski.



During his Chicago days, he also became fascinated with WGN’s legendary “Bozo’s Circus” starring Bob Bell as Bozo The Clown. Years later, when he was developing programming on Comedy Central’s “TV Funhouse”, he and his Chicago native partner Dino Stamatopoulos filmed “The Unaired Bozo Circus Parody” with “Prozo” the Clown, a dead-on spoof of the familiar eccentricities of that one-of-a-kind Chicago kid’s show.

Just for Laughs sponsored the Smigel and Stamatopoulos event at the Lakeshore Theater in Chicago to present the never-seen pilot, and Smigel touched upon other aspects of his fruitful career, including the “TV Funhouse” cartoons on Saturday Night Live and a special guest appearance of Triumph the Insult Comic Dog.





Bob Bell as Bozo the Clown on 'Bozo's Circus'  
*Photo credit: WGN-TV*

"I wanted to do the Bozo parody as close to the real thing [Bob Bell] as possible," Smigel said in the Q&A after showing the pilot. "I didn't want to do the angry clown thing."

In comparison, Smigel showed a clip from the original Bozo's Circus, and the subsequent parody was so much like it, that it was hard almost to distinguish the two. While the original Bozo did a "Three Bears" sketch, Prozo and company did a pie-throwing takeoff of the Israeli-Arab summit.

Next up was Saturday Night Live's "TV Funhouse" cartoons, which Smigel has produced for close to ten years. Controversial airings included "Conspiracy Theory Rocks", a takeoff on the popular "Schoolhouse Rocks", but regarding the corporate ownership of TV networks. It aired once on SNL, and it was removed from the reruns.

"Don Ohlmeyer, who was running NBC at the time, recognized it as parody, but he also wanted me to change it a bit, since it referred too much to General Electric [NBC's parent company]," Smigel recalled. "Their reason for pulling it was they thought it wasn't funny."



Robert Smigel and Patrick McDonald, in Chicago on June 17, 2009  
*Photo credit: Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com*

A TV Funhouse cartoon of Michael Jackson, prompted this response from the singer.

"Jackson's lawyers contacted Saturday Night Live with a 'ceast and desist' on Monday morning," Smigel said. "Their opinion was he had been cleared of the charges involving underage kids."

The highlight of the night came at the end, when Smigel's most famous character, Triumph the Insult Comic Dog, popped (or should it be pooped) through a makeshift puppet stage. The resultant sketch was made more hilarious by the constant technical problems, which inspired Triumph to say in frustration, "is there any bit that won't be ruined."

Triumph, through comedian Robert Smigel, loved coming back to Chicago, to quote "poop on it."

*TBS 'Just for Laughs' Chicago runs through June 21st, 2009. [Click here for tickets and details.](#) [13] Highlights of the 5-day event will air on*



*Superstation TBS from June 26-28.*



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