



VIEWS OF MINNEAPOLIS:
(Above, from left) Guthrie Theater; Minneapolis Sculpture Garden; a closer look at *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen (Below) Minneapolis skyline



FRANKLY FRANKEN



Comedian, actor and politician Al Franken waxes poetic on his hometown of Minneapolis.

With his trademark glasses, scrunched eyebrows and woeful look, Grammy Award-winning comedian, actor and author Al Franken is perhaps best known for his nearly 20-year stint on “Saturday Night Live.” You may also know him as host of the Air America talk radio program, “The Al Franken Show.”

Now running for Senate in his home state of Minnesota, Franken took time out on the campaign trail to answer a

few questions—with his famous dry, slightly cynical sense of humor. (The occasional Swedish accent came out, too.) Franken sounded off on what makes Minneapolis a great place to visit, eat, work and, well, buy warm jackets.

You’ve spent a lot of time in entertainment-centric cities like New York City and Los Angeles. Why did you return to Minneapolis?

“I grew up in St. Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis, and ended up in New York because of ‘Saturday Night Live.’ I think that people who move to New York make an unconscious choice...

Guthrie Exterior: Sally Wagner; Spoonbridge and Cherry: Walker Art Center (1985–1988 aluminum, stainless steel, paint; 354 x 618 x 162 in./Collection Walker Art Center, Gift of Frederick R. Weisman in honor of his parents, William and Mary Weisman, 1988 © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen); Minneapolis Skyline: Walter Bilkow/JAI/Corbis

either they become New Yorkers or they become more of where they came from. I just considered myself a Minnesotan living in New York.”

What's the biggest misconception about Minneapolis?

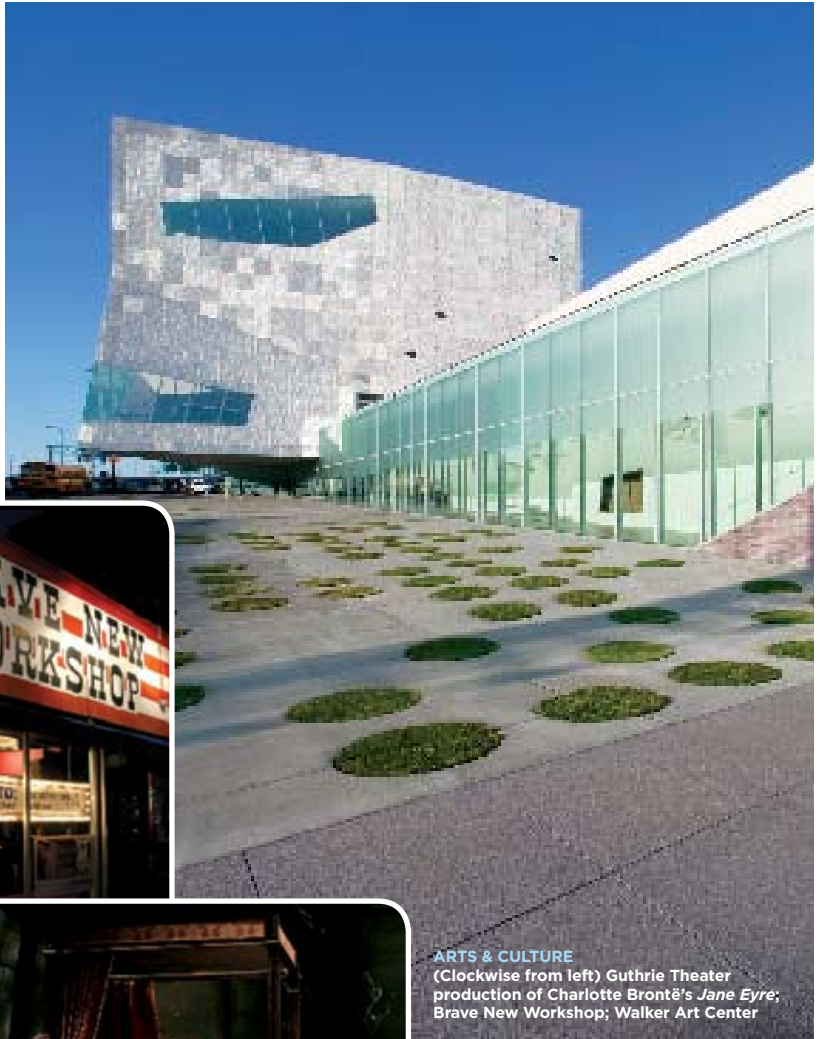
“A lot of people think Minneapolis is cold in the winter and that the people here are very, very friendly. Not true... no, wait. Totally true.”

What are a few things every visitor to Minneapolis should do?

“Everybody should make sure that they walk or bike around one of our beautiful lakes... in the spring, summer or fall. In the winter, I'd visit the **Guthrie Theater** (www.guthrietheater.org; 612-377-2224) or the **Walker Art Center** (www.walkerart.org; 612-375-7600). If you like improvisational comedy, there's the **Brave New Workshop** (www.bravenewworkshop.org; 612-332-6620) on Hennepin Avenue. That's where I got my start. Another great thing to do is rent a canoe at Lake Calhoun and paddle into Lake of the Isles. Again, not so much in the winter, when the lakes are frozen... The main thing I would recommend for tourists who come here? Spend a tremendous amount of money.”

All jokes about lutefisk aside, are there any “can't-miss” Minnesota foods?

“When I think of Minnesota, I think walleye and I think wild rice. Franni and I go to this chain called the **Green Mill Restaurant and Bar** (www.greenmill.com; 612-374-2131) and get the KaBeeLo Lodge Walleye with wild rice. It's very important that people eat what we call mahnomen, which is genetically authentic wild lake rice, as opposed to that paddy rice that people often buy in stores. There's a place near my house called **Hell's Kitchen** (www.hellskitcheninc.com; 612-332-



ARTS & CULTURE
(Clockwise from left) Guthrie Theater production of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; Brave New Workshop; Walker Art Center

4700), which has this breakfast dish they call 'Mahnomin Porridge.' It's a combination of mahnomen, blueberries, cranberries, hazelnuts, cream and maple syrup. I have to get

it every time I go there for breakfast, which is ridiculously often.”

The Twin Cities are home to corporations like 3M and retail giant Target. Is Minnesota friendly for businesses?

“Absolutely. Minnesota has always had a very well-educated workforce and an incredibly high quality of life, so it's no surprise that corporations find Minnesota a very hospitable place to call home. A classmate of mine at Harvard, who is an incredibly brilliant guy, went to Yale medical school and got a big job in California at Stanford. Then he went to Boston for an even bigger job. When his kids were still fairly young, he got an offer from Medtronic, a cutting-edge medical technology company in Minneapolis that invented the stents that keep [people] alive. Anyway, my friend and his wife looked at the schools, saw the quality of life and, like so many top executives who have moved here, are just thrilled they did. Minnesota is a great place for employers and a great place to make a life. It is, however, very cold in the winter... no getting around that.”

So, is there really such a thing as a Minnesotan accent?

“Ya.”