

LA Weekly Features Tennessee Performer Sarah Soda and the Live TikTok Character Sue Dillon

Feature Profiles the Performer Behind One of Live TikTok's Most Recognizable Characters, Her Improvisational Method, and What She Has Learned About Audiences

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, July 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- LA Weekly has published [a new feature on Sarah Soda](#), the Tennessee-based performer behind [Sue Dillon](#), a 69-year-old character Soda performs live four nights a week to an audience of more than [1.3 million followers](#). The publication describes the act as unscripted live prank calls, performed in real time in front of an audience that submits the targets through the chat, with no script and no representation. The article notes that Soda holds a doctorate in psychiatric-mental health nursing and operates independently, without an agent or manager of any kind.



Sarah Soda performs live as a 69-year-old chain-smoker four nights a week — no script, no representation.

“

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Sarah Soda

The publication opens the feature on something LA Weekly describes as strange even to the performer herself. "Sarah Soda has trouble remembering what she says on stream," the article writes. "Not in the way anyone loses the details of a long night — she means she watches the clips back later and doesn't recognize the person making them." Soda tells the publication: "It feels like watching someone else. I have a hard time recalling facts or lines from the call after it's over." According to the article, "for a few hours,

four nights a week, she hands the wheel to a 69-year-old woman who doesn't exist, and when she takes it back the road behind her is mostly dark."

LA Weekly spends much of the feature on what Soda calls "persona magic" — the practice of turning the conscious mind as low as it will go in order to perform the character live. Asked what it's like from the inside when a viewer types a name and a single line of setup into the chat and she has to produce a believable phone call in the seconds before dialing, Soda describes gathering the few facts that will make Sue Dillon believable to a stranger, and then trying to get out of her own way.



"I really have my best moments when I live in my subconscious as much as I can while I'm awake," she tells the publication. "I just let stuff flow, and there's no logic behind it besides just knowing the facts." According to the article, she called it a flow state, and then went further: "Sometimes I'm just as shocked by what I say as the audience is. Sometimes I feel like I'm dissociating."

The publication compares the state to what "a jazz player or an improviser will tell you about a good night, when the part of the brain that second-guesses goes quiet and something trained takes the controls." LA Weekly writes that almost nobody has treated what happens on a live prank stream as that kind of skill, "with that sort of cost," and that Soda has been building it for four years and still cannot fully account for it to herself.

The article reports that Soda originally made the calls with the camera off, which was faster and more efficient. Going live slowed her down and added the work of managing an audience on top of the act itself. She kept doing it anyway. The publication writes that part of the reason is business — the livestream is the advertising, the reach, and the paycheck. But the part LA Weekly lingers on is less transactional. Going live gave her a set, which gave the character a home, which let the lore grow. And the room gave her back something working alone had been "quietly draining." Soda tells the publication: "It can be very isolating doing most of my work from home. Getting to interact with the audience helps give me a great sense of community." The article writes that she isn't sure she would have lasted four years without the energy the crowd feeds back to her.

The feature then turns to what LA Weekly describes as the thing Soda understands about her audience "that the louder conversation keeps missing." According to the publication, not everyone in her chat is passing through — some viewers have been with her for years, and she knows them by their energy, the running jokes, and the moment one of them goes quiet. "People tend to bandwagon onto the mood present in the chat," Soda tells the publication, "and when the room has a positive and happy vibe, they feed off of that the same as I do." The article writes that the regulars set the temperature, keep the lore, and carry the running bits forward when

Soda is deep in a call. She sums it up directly: "The audience and the people building up the show are the same."

LA Weekly characterizes a Sue Dillon stream as closer to "a small theater company than a broadcast: a performer, a few dozen regulars, and a live chat, assembling a continuous show together in real time." The publication describes the regulars not as fans in the passive sense but as "closer to an uncredited ensemble — the show doesn't happen without them, and Sarah knows it, which is rarer than it should be."

The article turns to the broader conversation around parasocial relationships between online performers and their audiences, which the publication describes as shaped largely by celebrities at the top of the platform. LA Weekly writes that Soda doesn't withhold herself from the audience — Sue Dillon is fully available four nights a week — but she draws a sharp line between what she shares publicly and what she keeps private. "I only share stuff that I'm okay with people being in the middle of," Soda tells the publication, "very little of which stems from my personal life."

The feature examines the live-stream gift economy in some depth, which LA Weekly describes as "the part of live-streaming the celebrity-scale conversation never touches, because celebrities don't live inside it." According to the publication, most gifting is exactly what it looks like — appreciation. Sometimes it's a lever. "Some people who are manipulative will gift just so they feel like I owe them," Soda tells the publication. "Or they gift you expecting you to return the favor, and then when you don't do what they want, they try to drag your name and smear you." The article describes her response as "unfussy and total." She names the rules on stream, makes clear every gift is optional, and the moment a viewer tries to convert a gift into control, she tells LA Weekly, the conversation is over. "Anytime I feel like someone is trying to control my action or behavior, it's an automatic 'you're out.' I'm not that desperate for money or views to allow an unhealthy dynamic between me and a fan."

The publication closes on what LA Weekly writes Soda most wishes someone would ask about. The act splits her audience: half the room finds the calls funny, the other half thinks they're cruel, and the second half gets to her. "I really have pure intentions and would never want to hurt anyone," she tells the publication. The article reports that Soda grew up with low self-esteem, then built a career on a stage where thousands of strangers form opinions about her in real time. The obvious outcome, LA Weekly writes, would be that this breaks a person. Instead, the publication reports, "it did close to the opposite." Soda tells LA Weekly: "It's really strengthened how much weight I put on my own opinion of myself versus other people's. I feel way more confident and grounded."

The publication closes the feature by observing that the most useful working answers to the parasocial question may not be coming from the top of the platform at all. According to LA Weekly, they may be coming instead from a performer in Tennessee, four nights a week, in character as a 69-year-old who doesn't exist — "who got there not by holding the audience at

arm's length but by letting the right ones in close, and learning, slowly, to hold her own ground while they did."

The full profile, written by Daniel de Castellane, a contributing voice on arts, culture, and entertainment, is available now at LA Weekly: <https://www.laweekly.com/sue-dillon-doesnt-exist-her-regulars-keep-her-alive-anyway/>

Sarah Soda is a Tennessee-based performer and the creator of Sue Dillon, a live TikTok character she performs four nights a week to an audience of more than 1.3 million followers. The act consists of unscripted, audience-submitted prank calls performed in real time. Soda holds a doctorate in psychiatric-mental health nursing and operates independently, without agency or management representation.

Bookings and call requests: <https://suedillon.com/> Follow on TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@sarahsoda5>

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