



# LA Theatre Review



Presents

## The HollywoodFRINGE Daily Rag

Day Ten

Saturday, June 26, 2010

### ***Fat, Bald & Loud at The Complex***

by Rachel Stoll~

Craig Shaynak's show *Fat, Bald & Loud* is a constantly changing show involving accents, props, and audience participation. Shaynak has multiple scenes and ideas within the show. Furthermore, this show is never the same twice. One night you may get Russian hookers and Chicago cab drivers; the next night you get Stalin jokes, and a lady worried about her coco puff hair. Audience participation does play a role in this show, which means that having an enthusiastic house is almost critical. Luckily our crowd was outgoing and having a good time, which added a lot of energy to the show in addition to Shaynak's well rehearsed voices and improvisation. Definitely a show that's worth seeing once, if not twice.

June 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26 at 11:00 PM

### ***Please Love Me at I.O. West***

by Freddy Puza~

Hundred of thousands of people move to Hollywood in search of their dreams to become rich and famous. It seems like every person you meet is either full of hope, living the dream or trying to pick up the pieces from their shattered desires. Henrietta is no stranger to this journey. In the hilarious one-woman show, *Please Love Me*, she chronicles her life-long journey of healing her past so she can move forward and fulfill her ambitions.

Henrietta begins with the story of her parents who were Holocaust survivors and what it's like to grow up in that type of household. She then goes to college, attends Woodstock, marries a Rabbi, works a few sex-related jobs, sees a therapist, many therapists, and sleeps with an ex-porn star who is a crack head. You know stuff that all your average 47 year-old woman from the Midwest do.

This was a story that Henrietta was meant to tell. It seemed

Everything Pertaining to Small Theatre in Los Angeles

to ooze from the depths of her life. She poured every ounce of energy into the performance and the audience was in tears from laughter. Her jokes were thoughtful and she didn't always go for the easy laugh. However, underneath all the humor was the touching story of a beautiful woman who just wanted to be loved and who was desperately trying to find meaning in a world that seemed to not have any.

*Please Love Me* played on June 18 and June 25 at 8 p.m.

### ***There is Truth, Love is Real at The Complex Theater***

by Tony Bartolone~

There is only one thing that can resuscitate theatre to the vibrant, lively art form it deserves to be, and this play has it. *There is Truth, Love is Real* is an energetic illustration of a man with a broken heart dealing with disillusionment, loneliness, and alienation from the rest of the world.

This is what theatre needs. This a rough around the edges, kinetically focused mess. It is art and MTV. Because the success of the play leans heavily on the music, I think Ben Gibbard (*The Postal Service*) deserves some of the credit (the only words heard are his lyrics). But all the theatrical elements (the choreography, the acting, the directing) made his album come to life in this dynamic portrait of lost love and found life. When the actors started lip-syncing, I thought it was silly, but as it went on I found myself exponentially engaged. Ultimately, this was a triumph of spirit with enough substance to make up for the unpolished presentation.

Let's face it, theatre audiences are dying and with them theatre dies too. And big-budget, bloated productions of fluff will not save it. The pulse of theatre beats underground in these rough, gritty performances of art.

The last show is Saturday, June 26 @7p.m.

### ***Existential Crises at Art|Works Theatre***

by Marcus Kaye~

See our coverage online at [www.LATheatreReview.com](http://www.LATheatreReview.com)

Billed as comedy that explores the ironic questions of existence, *Existential Crises*, featuring Second City alums Mike Cherry and Matt Peterson, gets it half right. While the show is indeed a comedy (and a funny one at that) it does very little to look beyond the surface of "existence."

Whether they're lying about their past lives, hanging out with an old friend from high school, or living in a world where horses and humans have switched to be master and pet respectively, Cherry and Peterson have the successful comedic ability to draw laughs from their audience. They are, in fact, funniest when they are playing versions of "themselves," as opposed to the half-baked characters they create.

While some sketches drag on too long, the bits as a whole are nicely written and showed Cherry and Peterson's comedic ranges. Particularly funny were pantomimes spoofing 90's action films and old Westerns. Audiences looking for deep meaning within their comedy should look elsewhere, but those simply looking for a few laughs should strongly consider *Existential Crises*.

*Existential Crises* plays June 19 & 20 at 9pm at i.O. West, June 25 at 10:30pm and June 26 at 8pm at Art|Works Theatre.

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### **Franz Kafka's *A Report to an Academy* at Hollywood Film and Acting Academy**

by Samantha Mehlinger~

*A Report to an Academy* is a successful adaptation of Franz Kafka's short story in that it effectively conveys its meaning and absurdity. Red (David Robinette) is an albino ape who has learned to emulate human behavior in order to avoid imprisonment. Under the eyes of his manager (Tom Draper) and the guitarist Subliminal Jim (Leon Khachooni), Red describes his journey. Occasionally he interjects some comedy routines to emphasize the fact that he is there under the restrictions of performance. This is his only "way out" of the cages of the zoo, but it is not at all akin to real freedom. He questions the existence of freedom itself.

Most of the acting was sincere and resonated with the audience. Occasionally, however, Robinette lost his intensity in key moments of reflection. Those moments where he kept his intensity, however, were enough to carry the performance. Perhaps the most entertaining performer was Khachooni, who played the silent guitarist with great humor.

The small setting allowed the audience to participate in a way that might not have been possible in a larger venue. The dim lighting and cozy living room atmosphere created by Lorrie Hullbrand worked brilliantly in that regard.

*A Report to an Academy* plays June 26 at 9 pm and June 27 at 2 pm.

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### ***Growing Up With Uncle Miltie* at Complex Theatres**

by Ashley Steed~

It is immediately clear that Patt Benson has been a performer her whole life. Her awareness and connection to the audience is unparalleled. Growing up in New York City, she was obsessed with the comedian and first television star Milton Berle, or Uncle Miltie as fans called him. Her obsession eventually led her to the funeral of Berle's mother. Sharing a moment that would last a lifetime, she becomes his protégée and enters show business – hoping to be just like Milton Berle.

Growing up with an abusive, alcoholic father, Berle became a kind of surrogate father figure to the young impressionable Benson. Somehow, Benson's fixation with the great comedian pushed her through the pain and into the limelight. From her mischievous and scheming kid who steals a cardboard cut out of Berle to the full grown woman who still hangs on his every word, Benson is not only inspired, but inspires. It's impossible not to smile as she watches Berle perform. Her sheer delight washes over the audience.

With pictures from Benson's life hanging from the ceiling, real audio clips of Berle performing, wonderful staging by Rich Embardo and Benson's pitch-perfect comedic timing, you're in for a lovely night of story telling. Although Milton Berle was way before my time, I couldn't help but get swept up in the nostalgia of it all.

Be sure to catch the final performance June 26 at 7:30 PM.

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### **State of Theatre in LA: Critic's Panel Discussion**

LATR invites you to join us for a FREE closing day panel discussion with fellow critics from the LA Theatre scene. Panel begins at 1pm at Fringe Central on June 27th. More info forthcoming - hope to see you there!