

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
DAILY BRUIN

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Quirky theater hits the spot

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Who says socks are just for wearing on your feet?

More creative types know they can easily be turned into puppets and oven mitts. Even Britney Spears knows that a cut-up athletic sock makes a fashionable arm accessory. Now a theater company has made projectile sock balls part of its latest show.

Part of the city-wide Edge of the World Theater Festival is "Easy Targets," presented by the innovative troupe Burglars of Hamm. Seeing a play has never been so much fun.

In six individual monologues, the members of "Easy Targets" pay a mocking tribute to one-person shows, but the best part is that the audience can purchase sock balls or T-shirt "bombs" and throw them at the actors as they see fit.

Who hasn't sat through a play once and gotten the itching urge to throw a shoe or any other nearby object and take out the thespian on stage?

This company of six actors takes solo performance, a genre notoriously filled with actors who take themselves too seriously, and shamelessly revels in their own cheesiness, of course with the intent of making people throw stuff at them.

Each troupe member directs, writes and performs one of the six monologues showcased and amazingly, none of them miss the mark. While the essence of the fun is throwing socks at the actors, the performances would be hilarious on their own.

The first solo "All About Me" shows Selina Woolery Smith as the quintessential drama queen. She humorously morphs from character to character, brazenly declaring her theatrical genius.

"(Screw) Stanislavsky, Hagen can bite my ass ... I am ice, I am fire ... I am e.e. cummings. (Screw) punctuation, I am the punctuation! ... I am an actress!" Woolery Smith says at the end, standing with her arms spread to the sky, which of course the audience took as an invitation for bombardment.

"An Evening With Abraham Lincoln," performed by Todd Merrill, captures the tedium of sitting through those seemingly endless historical soliloquies. The actor wore Abe's signature tall hat, which the audience diligently, but unsuccessfully, tried to knock right off his head. Merrill's finesse as an actor was demonstrated by his ability to remain unfazed by the objects being vehemently hurled at his head. When one projectile nailed him in the eye, he smoothly incorporated it into his sketch, "My eye is even starting to tear up thinking about ol' ma," Merrill said while rubbing his afflicted eye.

The most brash, memorable, sock ball-eliciting skit of the evening was "Hi, Dad, I'm gay." It pokes fun at the hackneyed, angst-filled pieces about coming to terms with one's sexual identity. Hilariously written by Woolery Smith and performed by Jon Beauregard, the character strips down to his true identity – and his tighty-whiteys – as he recounts his first same-sex experience, groping himself all the while. The minute the actor began stripping down to his bare essentials, balls were flying – sock balls, of course. But the audience members absolutely loved it, giving one another high-fives when they nailed him where it counts.

Part of the troupe's ingenuity comes from this type of willingness to push the envelope of humor and to make fun of things that we sometimes want to ridicule, but are held back by political correctness or basic human ethics.

In "All About Me," Woolery Smith does an impression of her mentally challenged 11-year-old brother who was killed by a pack of wild dogs. "Yes I Can, Sir!" is the horribly offensive punny title of the one-woman show about cancer survivors. "'What'd I Say?': a Field Guide to the Female of the Species" makes brash misogynistic jokes. Sure, the humor's irreverent, offensive, politically incorrect, but it's funny as hell.

Probably the weakest scene of the show was a clown's mime performance. Victor Ortado played the part effortlessly, but the absence of the Burglars' comical words made the sketch somewhat lacking. Coulrophobics, however, (those afraid of clowns) will find the sock-ball abuse cathartic at least.

The Burglars of Hamm's "Easy Targets" is ingenious. Not only does the audience have a wonderful time, the troupe makes a load of money off of the purchased projectiles. The socks are four for a buck and three dollars for a T-shirt bomb, and people were loading up on the ammo by the armfuls.

"Easy Targets" is only scheduled to run through next Sunday, but with so many people who love to abuse actors out there, rumor has it that the show will be staged again.

But just in case, don't miss it in its last weekend. This show is fun, it's hilarious, it's a chance to get back at all the bad theater you've had to endure. So bring a few bucks and take your best shot.

"Easy Targets" is at the Actor's Lab Theatre at 1514 N. Gardner in Los Angeles through Oct. 20. Tickets are \$15 or \$5 with an EdgeFest passport. Prices include a starting cache of ammo. Call (323) 769-6334 for reservations or visit www.burglarsofhamm.com.