

OUTSIDER LOOKING IN

JEREMY EICHENBAUM'S JOURNEY
BACK TO 'LAND, MY LAND'

That video artist and photographer Jeremy Eichenbaum (icanbomb.com) is immensely talented is clear just seconds into pieces like the disorienting *Transparent Traveler* (following an invisible man on a looped walk across a freeway overpass), the simultaneously amusing and heartbreaking *Sugar Land* (in which Eichenbaum tosses everything from shopping carts to soccer balls to animal carcasses to pillows into a riverbed) and the brilliant stop-motion works *Laundry Cycles* (which reconstructs a night at a laundromat in a mashed-up masterpiece of images and sounds) and *BMC Inc.* (a fascinating look at one salesman's day spent making copies and phone calls at the office—including the memorable sound bite "The more nos you get the closer you are to a yes").

But after a few years spent observing his native Southern California surroundings, Eichenbaum—a CSULB BFA graduate in photography—uprooted and headed to a place that is perhaps even more personal: Israel, where his Zionist grandparents moved from Czechoslovakia "to escape Nazi Germany," Eichenbaum explains. There, he attended the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) art program, seeking to challenge himself in a foreign environment. "It was slow-building at first," Eichenbaum says of what he accomplished during his six-month stay, which wrapped up at the end of August. "I knew I was going there to make artwork, but I didn't know what I would make. I didn't want to think of something in California and then go make it in Israel."

The culmination—or what approaches a culmination of Eichenbaum's time abroad—is "Land, My Land: Made in Israel," which will include around 20 Polaroids and at least three videos, including the title piece, which Eichenbaum says he began taping in March but didn't begin to edit until July—because he didn't know how to finish it.

"I wanted to see what I would produce in a new environment—if I would be focusing on the same issues," he says. "I think this new work has more substance. Before, it was about how I fit into the environment—more somebody who was exploring their environment from within and trying to make sense of it. But when I went to Israel I was exploring it from an outsider's perspective. It's [also] my personal relationship to the history of the country . . . I wanted to go and make artwork on a personal level. Now that I've made it, it's time to share it, and to see what people say." **ELLEN GRILEY**

LAND, MY LAND: MADE IN ISRAEL BY JEREMY EICHENBAUM PORTER GALLERY · 805 E SEVENTH ST · LONG BEACH 90813
OPENS FRI · RECEPTION FRI 7PM-1AM · BY APPOINTMENT THROUGH JAN 8 **PORTER.NIGHTSWEATPHOTO.COM**



Arts



JAMMED TO HELL

'IT'S A STEVIE WONDERFUL LIFE!' FUNKS UP CHRISTMAS
BY STACY DAVIES

ONCE AGAIN, THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON us, and that means every stage in town will be filled with mean old shysters who reevaluate their lives for fear of leaving behind a bad legacy, sugar-coated ballets of sword-laden mice trying to murder oversized wooden toys or, um, glorious Christmas pageants in which live animals leave presents right there on the stage for you.

But for those who prefer their winter wonderland to come with some frostbite and their silver bells to occasionally clang off-key, an evening of twisting a traditional holiday tale into demented, surly knots is the perfect stocking-stuffer. Enter the LA-based Troubadour Theater Co.

The brainchild of Artistic Director Matt Walker and Executive Director Mike Sulprizio (and later, Producing Director Beth Kennedy), the Troubies (as they're affectionately known) began mixing it up over

15 years ago with Shakespearean parodies set to pop/rock tunage—*Twelfth Dog Night*, *Oth-E-L-O* and *Fleetwood MacBeth*, to name but a few. On their home turf at Burbank's Falcon Theatre, the troupe also sails into other warped waters, wiping out family fare in *Alice in One-Hit Wonderland* (Parts One and Two—which eventually reveal that Alice was not some little English schoolgirl but our own beloved Alice Brady, housekeeper extraordinaire)—and *Frosty the Snowmanilow*. But their current show, *It's a Stevie Wonderful Life!*, is a tour de force, a spectacle of wit and slapstick realized to the funk jams of the child prodigy from Detroit. And it has to be seen to be believed.

The tale is the same: good old George Bailey is once again tied to Bedford Falls by that pesky old Building and Loan, tries to out-foil smarmy Mr. Potter, tries not to fall for sweet Mary Hatch—and when it all comes crashing down, considers ending his life.

This time around, however, George (Walker)—sporting an afro that grows as time progresses—sings about his town in "Living for the City," his love for Mary (as he chews on her face) in "My Cherie Amour," the white-bread attendees at the school dance in "Ebony and Ivory" (which is appropriately re-titled "Ivory and Ivory"), and about his longing for the courage to jump in "You Haven't Done Nothin'," all ac-

companied by a full band and clever, story-progressing lyrics. All the characters get a tune or two—George's mother (a fantastic Lisa Valenzuela) belts out "Send One Your Love" and hands George some condoms before he goes over to woo Mary (Erin Matthews), and Violet (Jen Seifert) struts her slut with "Part-Time Lover." Angel Second Class Clarence (Rick Batalla) is a vato with a heart of gold who funks around to "Superstition" as black-lit/day-glo angels turn the stage into a metaphysical montage of what might have been had George Bailey never been born.

In between songs the gags are plentiful, and jabs are hurled at all things proper: the economy, the bail-out, all politicians of recent note, obsessive consumer gadgetry and even dead pop stars (sorry, Jacko).

The evening is a battering ram of belly-busters, and audience members are not just spectators but also participants. If, for example, you walk in late, be prepared to be humiliated, as the show stops and the cast serenades you with Carly Simon's lesser-known hit "You're So Late"; and if you fall asleep or your cell phone goes off, heaven help you. It's a farce for the ages brought to you by a theater company that should be worshipped, if not canonized. But don't forget to also thank the baby Jesus. This year, he really is giving us something we need for Christmas: a good laugh.

IT'S A STEVIE WONDERFUL LIFE! THE CARPENTER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER · 6200 ATHERTON ST · LONG BEACH 90815 · 562.985.7000
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