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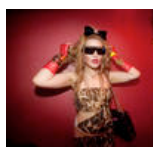
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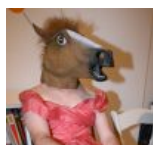
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by Roy Edroso (11:24AM 08/24)

Somebody Got Murdered: Off-Duty Bouncer Slain in the East Village

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Sound of the City

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Theater

Three Days at the New York International Fringe Festival

By Alexis Soloski

Tuesday, August 18th 2009 at 2:09pm

Nancy Keystone

On the third day of the 13th annual New York International Fringe Festival, at approximately 7:50 in the evening, I saw God. A pleasantly secular young woman, I am not typically given to religious hallucinations, but there He was. Perhaps my vision owed to my seeing 11 Fringe shows in three days. Perhaps it stemmed from the extreme heat outdoors and the forceful air-conditioning inside. Perhaps a suspect chicken sandwich bore the blame. Yet I think it owed to attending Michael Schlitt's *Jesus Ride*, an amusing solo show concerning the film career of Our Lord Jr. While musing on matters of faith and discussing how he abetted one of the worst Jesus films ever made (the Trinity Broadcasting Network's *The Revolutionary*), Schlitt screens clips and stills from a score of Son flicks—everything from *The Greatest Story Ever Told* to *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter* to *The Passion*.



A brief history of the celluloid savior: *Jesus Ride*

Details:

New York International Fringe Festival
Various locations
[Fringenyc.org](#)

Was God watching this year's Fringe? In its opening weekend, the festival trundled along without apparent divine assistance, offering scores of shows in 18 venues. (Though all of the venues are climate-controlled, this did not seem to chill out the venue directors, many of whom hovered near hysteria.) The Creator might approve of the festival's bevy of religious-themed pieces: *Jesus Ride*, *Sunday Best*, *Dante's Divina Commedia*, *American Jataka Tales*, *Inferno: The New Rock Musical*, *For the Love of Christ!*, etc. He might also smile on the many shows exploring our nation under God: *Abraham Lincoln's Big, Gay Dance Party*; *Candide Americana*; *George and Laura Bush Perform . . . Our Favorite Sitcom Episodes*; *Victoria & Frederick for President*. Mostly, though, the Fringe encompasses its typical unholy jumble: confessional narratives, [Shakespeare](#) revivals, plays adapted from highly questionable source material (*Tearoom Tango*, *Porn Rock: The Musical*, *The Secret of Our Souls—A Kabalistic Love Story*). Of the shows I saw, a few were dreadful, several were enjoyable, and many were merely tedious.

My personal Fringe began on a low note (set to a groovy beat) with *Willy Nilly*, a musical comedy penned by downtown icon and occasional *Voice* contributor Trav S.D. The author and modern vaudevillian has written various comical romps, but *Willy Nilly* proves an unfortunate and frequently nude departure. A send-up of tribal-love rock musicals and a goof on [Charles Manson](#), it stars an intensely uncharismatic actor as the captivating cult leader and various nubile young women as his acolytes. Lighting and sound problems plagued the production; various crashes occurred backstage; the loud band rendered most of the lyrics unintelligible—and those that could be deciphered did not impress. "Oh, well," murmured a colleague, "maybe there will be more toplessness." Then he was clocked in the head with a beach ball.

No toplessness occurs in the slightly more demure high school musical *Vote!* This show centers on a student council election, but ends before announcing the results. The candidates: a

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 Screen: Jay-Z and Drake's "Off That"
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The Top 10 Records Sold This Month at Fat Beats on Sixth Avenue
 by Patrick Doyle
 (9:00AM 08/24)

La Daily Musto
 In Praise of Natalie Wood
 by Michael Musto
 (11:30AM 08/24)

How Not To Commit Murder
 by Michael Musto
 (9:00AM 08/24)

Fork in the Road
 The Brunch Report: Fatty Crab's Nasi Lemak
 by Sarah DiGregorio
 (12:29PM 08/24)

From Slave-Training Cages to Bacchanal Brunches
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All City
 Dick Chicken Has a Girlfriend
 by Camille Doderio
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Musicals

cheerleader who dreams of becoming a flight attendant, a Machiavellian nerd, and an African-American girl devoid of personality. (Perhaps the authors felt her race was a sufficient quirk. Yikes.) Songs included a number about the joys of mnemonic devices and "The D Gates," a rousing anthem in which the would-be stewardess invites a swain to fondle her breasts.


But, really, what's a Fringe show without some modicum of poor taste, as in the exceptionally stupid and very wonderful *I Can Has Cheezburger: The Music!* As a caption on the source site (icanhascheezburger.com) might read: "Dumb play: Ur doin' it right!" Insouciant, infantile, and uproarious, this tuner by Sauce and Co. tells of a cat who has his picture uploaded to the titular website and embarks on a heroic quest in search of that meaty, dairy-laden foodstuff. "I know what a cheeseburger tastes like," the feline Odysseus opines. "It tastes like my destiny." Silly ditties and ample screen grabs accompany his search. The villainous Mr. Wrong and Epic Fail attempt to foil it. Though the aisles at the Cherry Lane were too narrow to accommodate literal ROFL, several audience members attempted it.

No other show offered such gooey irreverence or a ballad like "Someone to Eat Cheese With." Yet a few of the festival's one-person plays passed the time pleasantly. Fringe co-founder **John Clancy** presents *The Event*, a meditation on the nature of theater performed by **Matt Oberg**. The show begins, "A man stands in a pool of light in front of a room of suddenly silent strangers." Since the show will be plotless, Oberg urges any unsatisfied spectators to depart. "You can leave, or you can stay," he says. "It's only an hour. It's not my fault." But those who persist can enjoy a clever retread of the *theatrum mundi* concept and Oberg's dead-on impression of the excitable, chain-smoking Clancy. A different, much wetter *theatrum* and *mundi* await audiences at *The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer*, **Tim Watts's** ocean-going puppet play. In a post-apocalyptic world, the elderly Alvin journeys under the sea in search of his dead wife's soul. The script does not avoid the twee, yet Watts, his puppets, his ukulele, and his lo-fi animations are simply sopping with charm.

Other solo shows might have benefited from Clancy's wit or Watts's ease and ingenuity. Both **Laura Canty-Samuel's** *Sunday Best*, a series of monologues interwoven with gospel songs, and **Jessica Manuel's** *The Antarctic Chronicles*, about her year on a polar base, star appealing, energetic woman. (They're possessed of either boundless natural vigor or an awesome methamphetamine source.) But each lady would have profited from an editor or co-writer to refine prose and tighten form. Similarly, *Dolls*—**Michael Phillis's** monologues about molded plastic toys—could have used more shaping. **Harley Newman's** *Dancing With Ghosts*, an amalgam of sideshow and shamanism, proved structurally sound, but for a man who has passed much of his career as a freakshow barker, Newman appeared reticent and somewhat uncomfortable onstage. One couldn't fault the script of *Dante's Divina Commedia*, which quotes directly from the *Inferno*, nor quibble with **Alessio Bordoni's** earnest performance, yet the ever-present scrim and lack of supertitles for the Italian *terza rima* rendered it wearying.

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