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'Hollow Men' fill a TV humor void

By STEFAN KOSKI
The Tattoo

Ever since "Saturday Night Live" premiered on NBC in 1975, a host of other sketch comedy shows have been launched with mixed success. The most notable of these include Fox's "Mad TV" and Canada's "The Kids in the Hall."

Comedy Central has introduced many of these sketch comedy rivals, including the short-lived "Ben Stiller Show" and the now very popular "Chappelle's Show." But Comedy Central is seeking to take the center stage of sketch comedy again, this time with its new series "The Hollow Men," which premiered last month.

"The Hollow Men" themselves consist of David Armand, Nick Tanner, Rupert Russell, and Sam Spedding.

All four are English born and, despite what might be inferred by the occasional lowbrow humor of the show, are all professional actors and college grads of Cambridge, the University of London, and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. They are accomplished playwrights and occasional writers for such British newspapers as The Guardian and The Observer.

They've also worked as writers and actors on a number of different British TV and radio shows. It is only now that they are starting to have a major American audience with their own American television show.

The show's setup echoes that of "Kids in the Hall" - some of the only obvious differences are the nationalities and the fact that there are only four of them, not five. Comedy Central's website (www.comedycentral.com) itself bills "The Hollow Men" as being "In the tradition of 'Monty Python' and 'The Kids in the Hall'" and as, "four guys who revel in the inappropriate, occasionally wear dresses and are redefining absurdity with their rapid-fire bits."

After having seen the show, this seems to be a fairly accurate description. Every skit in the show - each lasting several minutes at most, 12 in all - involves lightening wit and completely unexpected circumstances.

The four may be at their high school reunion, reminiscing about the good old days. Problem is that no one seems to remember anyone's name from such days (with the exception of the guy who had the reputation of being able to pee over 10 feet). Or they might be at a scientific convention where one of the esteemed colleagues giving a presentation has taken all of his grant money and spent it on a lavish vacation. The dialogue clips along at a brisk pace, and wastes no time getting to the punchlines.

While the material is occasionally risqué in a truly unapologetic fashion, it does not, like "Mad TV" before it, go over the line in resorting to shock tactics to get a laugh. The humor is genuinely clever and most often takes the viewer completely by surprise.

"The Hollow Men" are also masters of irony and the twist ending. None of the jokes or punchlines are predictable, and the material is fresh in a way that keeps the audience's attention.

A perfect example of this was a recent skit where three of the Hollow Men are in a space capsule revolving around the moon. By radio communication to Mission Control they manage to fake their own moon landing so that they can stay in their shuttle to drink beer and eat pizza.

All is going well until one of them slips and mentions that aliens have taken hold of their shuttle. NASA, not wanting to take any risks, aborts the mission and pushes a button that causes the capsule to self-destruct. An assistant then approaches the director of Mission Control (the fourth Hollow Man) and asks, "What are we going to tell the media?"

Very calmly and nonchalantly, the director replies, "We'll just tell them they got lost. What the hell do I care?" At this point the camera zooms out to reveal that the 20 or so people at Mission Control are doing nothing more than drinking beer and eating pizza. The gag hits hard and fast, and the amused audience barely knows what's hit them.

"The Hollow Men" shows a lot of promise. With quick banter and uncertain conclusions, the sketches manage to entertain on every level, even though the nature of the jokes can sometimes be crude and unsettling. If they can keep their material fresh and consistently funny, they'll certainly have a one-up over more recent episodes of sketch comedy superstar "Saturday Night Live."

Fans of "The Kids In The Hall" and Monty Python (not to mention the likes of Dave Chappelle) are in for a treat in the form of "The Hollow Men." Comedy Central's website concludes by saying, "Tune in for nudist-powered car engines, chronic Marlon Brando impersonators, vag badgers and much, much more!"

For the record, you do not want to know what a "vag badger" is.

Remember to see this film thriller

By MONICA GLEBERMAN
The Tattoo

I promise I won't forget how amazing this movie was. When I first saw the trailers for "The Forgotten," I was pretty impressed with the storyline.

A grieving mother, Telly Paretta, played by Julianne Moore, is constantly struggling to cope with the loss of her 8-year-old son. She is stunned when her psychiatrist tells her that she has created eight years of memories of a son she never had.

She begins to think she has gone crazy until, she meets a fellow patient who has a similar experience. Moore then makes it her life goal to prove that not only is she not crazy, but she will find her son.

Within the first 10 minutes, I think Telly is crazy, but a few minutes later I change my mind. This constant back and forth as to what's going on, who I think is behind it, and what I think is coming up was plaguing me throughout this movie. I felt like I was on a roller coaster that never ended.

This movie has you constantly guessing and wondering. You think you have it all figured out and then something like a man being sucked into space happens and everything changes. "The Forgotten" is full of twists and turns, with unexpected car accidents, unusual people, constant lies, and many people forgetting information. It's a movie that keeps you on your toes.

If you're looking for a film that will at times make you jump, but isn't too scary, this is one for you. This movie, recently released on DVD, was one of the best thrillers I have seen in a long time.

On the tube

Iraq War protesters feel lucky

By STEVEN DUREL
The Tattoo

Amidst the ocean of green hats and balloons of St. Patrick's Day in Hartford last month, there were also banners and cries of discontent.

Gathering around the state Capitol, dozens of dissatisfied protesters marked the second anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in the middle of Connecticut's St. Patrick's revelry.

"They deserve to say their piece, too," said the green-clad Derek MacDonald, age 41.

"We were warmly welcomed by the people of Hartford," said protester Tom Barnicle, 23, a Central Connecticut State

University senior involved with the Progressive Student Alliance.

Marching in front of the Capitol at noon, the demonstrators chanted and carried signs condemning the invasion.

Rallying together an hour later, the protesters denounced the war, making reference to the more than 100,000 lives lost in the past two years. They also cited the fact that Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction and criticized the Bush Administration's foreign policy, calling it paranoid and delusional.

The Hartford rallies were not the only ones held that weekend. There were anti-war protests in major cities around

the world, many calling for a timetable for the removal of American troops from Iraq, a nation which now possesses its own multi-ethnic government and military. Many Coalition countries, most notably Spain, have removed their forces from Iraq and others, like Italy and the Ukraine, have recently made requests to leave the area within the next year.

On the campus of the University of Connecticut in Storrs, protesters decided to spend the entire week outside, sleeping in tents and rallying together around a large "Peace in Iraq" banner.

Like the Hartford protesters, the *Tent People*, as they became known, were given free clothing

and food from various organizations. The Tent People even entertained local religious leaders who stopped by to let the protesters know that their efforts were much appreciated.

Despite the overall sense of solidarity among the anniversary demonstrations, the protesters themselves seemed less than optimistic about how the American invasion of Iraq will be remembered by history.

"I think that people won't really remember the specifics of the Iraq War in the long run," Barnicle said. "People will probably forget that we went about bringing democracy to Iraq in the absolute worst possible and [most] undemocratic way."

Paying respects to Arthur Miller

By ZACH BROKENROPE
The Tattoo

Dear Mr. Miller, I once read that the written word can surpass all boundaries. Now, I don't know if that's exactly true, but it is with this frame of mind that I begin this letter. I hope you're able to read this, Mr. Miller; wherever you are; whether it be the golden gates of heaven or the fiery pit of hell; or anything in between.

Curtain call Arthur Miller 1915-2005

I was not your average kid growing up, Mr. Miller. By the fifth grade I had read most of the classics of American litera-

ture. The Great Gatsby, Animal Farm, 1984, and The Lord of the Flies had all been the fairytales that tucked me into bed at night. I absorbed the written word with enthusiasm, eager and wanting to understand the world through the experiences of others.

The library had become my escape, my passageway into the real world; no matter how cliché that sounds, it's true.

One Saturday I wandered the aisles of the library, my hands grazing the spines of the books, some old and dusty, their covers brown with gold lettering and yellowed pages; others new with pages crisp and unread.

My tradition was to walk through the aisles, touching the books until I had the feeling in my heart that the book I was touching was right; and was perfect for me at that time. This method had never proven wrong and had taken me on numerous journeys of the imagination.

That particular Saturday it

was taking me longer then usual to find the book that



Tattoo photo

Playwright Arthur Miller signs copies of his play "Broken Glass" at Atticus Bookstore in New Haven in March 1994. Miller, who lived in Roxbury, Conn., died Feb. 10 at the age of 89.

spoke to me. That was until I walked down the M aisle. Halfway through I felt it, that sensation of adventure waiting for me between the pages of a book.

I pulled the book blindly from the shelf and glanced at the cover. "Death Of a Salesman," it read in large, gold letters. The book itself was small and thin, yellowed by years of sitting on the shelf.

I had the rest of the afternoon free, so I sat down right there and began the story. Within five minutes I was entranced, and finished the play during the next hour.

In that short time I was changed. The play taught me more about real people and real life than any other work of fiction could do.

In a way I believed the story was real and the characters lived and breathed like I did.

So for that I say thank you, Mr. Miller; thank you for showing me reality, for showing me life.

Zach Brokenrope

A new view on Van Gogh's life

By JULIA COCCA
The Tattoo

We've all heard the stories of Van Gogh, especially the famous ear tale.

We've seen the paintings time and time again. For most of us, I would imagine, his most famous painting, "Starry Night," is permanently etched into our minds.

And now the Thomaston Opera House has given us another chance to experience the life of Vincent Van Gogh, with its one-man show "Vincent," written by Leonard Nimoy (or Mr. Spock, if you wish.)

The cast consists of Paul Revaz, playing the role of Vincent's younger brother, Theo.

It took some coaxing to get me to go to see it on its final day at the opera house. Although I do love Van Gogh, sitting through an hour and 45 minutes of one man standing on a stage talking did not sound compelling.

The fact that I was, by far, the youngest person there did not make the situation any more promising.

The modest set consisted of two screens at the back of the stage, a desk, an easel and a bureau.

As the play begins, we see Theo enter the room, just after the burial of his brother Vincent.

Throughout the play, Theo finds comfort in the audience, using it as friends to whom he can vent the feelings he was not able to show at the funeral.

Using the real letters of Vincent Van Gogh to Theo, and a slide-by-slide timeline of Vincent's work, the audience is exposed to the art of Van Gogh on a personal level: a way to see him as a lover, and not just the man who cut off his ear and was put in the psy-

lum. As Theo vented his emotions, he looked back on the letters of his brother and read what Vincent had written.

But he did not play the role of Theo reading Vincent's letters. Instead, he became Van Gogh himself, as he wrote these letters to his brother, showing all the joy and all the pain that went with his words.

In this way, the audience witnesses Vincent's beginnings, the

Theater review: *Vincent*

way we never see him depicted, as a young man in love with life who hopes to spread his joy among others through his good works.

As Theo reads on, we see Vincent's life grow dimmer and drearier, until finally we reach the asylum days.

And we all know how the play will end. I had seen the paintings; I had heard the stories; but until I saw this play, I never knew Vincent.

Director John Long adapted this play to the small stage with magnificent skill, making the audience feel like family and making Theo our own brother.

The play was forceful, morose and even humorous at times, as Theo read through the letters and told us the tales.

It was compelling, something that I never thought a one-man show could ever be.

When the lights turned on, and the single actor exited, I wanted to find my new friend Theo, and cry with him for the loss of our brother, because now, I know Vincent.

Tattoo writers and cartoonist nab awards

SPRINGFIELD, MASS. — Seven writers for *The Tattoo* captured awards last month in the annual Scholastic Press Forum contest at American International College.

All of the first place winners were Bristol Eastern High School students: seniors Katie Jordan and Joe Keo, along with junior Kate Haire.

Jordan also won the first-ever Professor

Melvin Williams Award given to an outstanding high school writer.

Honorable mentions winners included students from Ireland, Canada and Minnesota as well as Eric Simmons, a senior at Eastern who recently moved to Florida.

Teague Neal, a 17-year-old from Oakville, Ontario, won an honorable mention for his news story about the Second Harvest food program in Toronto.

Tattoo writer Marese Heffernan, 13, of Ireland captured an honorable mention in the columns category for a piece she wrote called, "Teachers make or break us."

Minha Lee of Minnesota took an honorable mention in the first-person category for a piece called, "My freshman love affair with The Wall" that ran in *The Tattoo's* annual *Insider's Guide to High School* last fall.

Keo won a first place in the cartoons category for a "Daily Sketch" he drew about airport insecurity.

Jordan and Haire shared a first-place award in the opinion category for a humorous piece about high-school gym class that ran last



Tattoo photo

Katie Jordan and Joe Keo contemplate life at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme last November.



Kate Haire

that had come to Simsbury. An accompanying personal account of what it meant to her got an honorable mention in the first-person essays competition.

All of the winning stories, as well as more than 100 full issues of *The Tattoo* dating back to 1994, are available on its popular web site at www.readthetattoo.com.

The Tattoo is always looking for talented teens anywhere in the world with an interest in journalism, photography or cartooning. *The Tattoo* is all-volunteer and it is free to join.

Bristol Press reporters Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus donate their time to serve as advisors of the organization. Its local staff meets weekly at the *Press*.

WWW.READTHETATTOO.COM

The best teen journalism in the world. For questions, comments or to join, contact advisors Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus at 523-9632.