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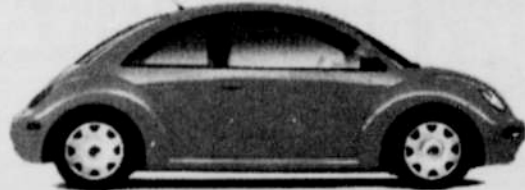
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Getting their act together

For two nights only, Miracle Theatre Group presents a sneak peek into its upcoming season when it offers workshop performances of Guillermo Reyes' new comedy *Men on the Verge 2 (The Self-Esteem Files)*. After each performance, audiences are invited to stick around to chat with playwright Reyes (visiting from Arizona's Borderlands Theatre), workshop director Stan Foote (artistic director of Oregon Children's Theatre) and Dan Ruiz (who will direct a full production in February).

Like Miracle's 1999 hit *Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown*, Reyes' new comedy introduces an array of gay Latino men confronting issues of identity, immigration status and low self-esteem through blind dates, same-sex weddings, gay-bashings and post-9/11 blues.



One of the many faces of Andres Alcalá in *Men on the Verge 2 (The Self-Esteem Files)*.

"Self-esteem is an issue for any culture," observes Reyes. "The queer element adds political obstacles to the character's quest, and then the Latino immigrant issue is caught up in yet another series of sociopolitical questions within the U.S. How can one become a well-adjusted member of society if society suspects you of being illegal and/or foreign, and then, on top of that, queer?"

While Miracle's mission is to examine diversity of Latino culture, the company is undoubtedly a friend of the sexual minorities community, too.

"We very much understand the struggles encountered by all marginalized groups trying every day to become a part of society's norm," explains Ruiz. "While we strive to respect and celebrate our differences, we also pursue each project in hope that our culture and rich history find common ground among our current diverse social ecology."

Drammy-winning actor Andres Alcalá (last seen in Profile's *The Lisbon Traviata* and Do Jump's *¡Entusiasmo!*) returns to portray this comic and colorful museum of characters on the brink of crisis, redemption and revelation.

"The thing that we are playing with now is the order of the pieces to see what kind of an arc we can create that works best for the play," says Alcalá. "I may have a script in front of me, but it will be used in places where we are still changing text and so forth.... This play, and the way that is structured within a museum, is like any piece of art: Everyone will see something different.... I personally know some of

DIVERSIONS

these individuals, and some of the portraits are people that I have had conversations with. Some of it takes place in Portland, [some in] Phoenix. I live here, Guillermo lives there. Are they us? Come and ask!"

Men 2 plays 8 p.m. July 15 and 16 at 525 S.E. Stark St. Tickets are \$5 at the door. For details call 503-236-7253 or visit www.milagro.org.

—Timothy Krause

The secret is out

Named after the Italian word for truffle, *Tartufi* is a three-piece explosion of beautiful harmonics, intelligent and complex songwriting, loops and double drum kit polyrhythmic insanity. Displaying a stylish blend of influences drawn from punk's 30-year journey across the Western world, *Tartufi* has carved out its sound somewhere between The Ex, Olympia's Two Ton Boa and the erstwhile D.C. band Shudder to Think, while giving the mix a coat of radio-friendly polish.

Formed in San Francisco in 2001, *Tartufi* amassed a strong local following as a result of its critically acclaimed self-released 2004 EP, *Westward Onward*. The disc caught the ear of *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*, which voted *Tartufi* one of the top 10 bands to break into the national scene in 2005.

Tartufi is on tour in support of its recently completed full-length debut, *So We Are Alive*. Recorded and produced by Tim Green of the Fucking Champs and Nation of Ulysses, the disc is an intense, unguarded display of complex yet catchy songwriting. *Tooth and Nail Online* calls the record "electric, explosive and refreshingly stripped down." *West Coast Performer* hails the new release, calling it a "10-song offering of tight and driving yet lovely and melodic pop."

Touring with *Tartufi* are *The Secrets of Family Happiness*, an instrumental trio known for its intricate, layered, hypnotic soundscapes. Mixing guitar loops recorded live onstage with overlapping guitar, bass and drum rhythms, it weaves melodies in and out of heavy, rich textures, creating mellow and ambient atmospheres.

In addition to writing original scores for the silent films of Maya Deren and Germaine Dulac, *The Secrets* often collaborate with Point Blank, a collective of women photographers, blending slides of landscapes, cityscapes, county fairs and people with the looped rhythms, melodies and noise. The band is busy writing songs for its second album, working on an original score for Gretchen Hildebran's new



The San Francisco Bay Guardian voted *Tartufi* one of the top 10 bands to break into the national scene.

documentary, *Out in the Heartland*, and playing shows throughout the West Coast.

Showtime is 9:30 p.m. July 21 at Mississippi Pizza Pub, 3552 N. Mississippi Ave. Cover is \$6.
—Jodi Darby

Temps and trannies

Portland Center Stage becomes a veritable greenhouse for theater through July 17 as writers, actors, directors and dramaturges converge to cultivate plays-in-progress.

Now in its seventh year, the *Just Add Water/West Festival* invites local and national talents to spend a week developing and presenting staged readings of plays that still need a nip here and a tuck there. Past success stories include Peter Gaitens' adaptation of *Flesh and Blood* by queer novelist Michael Cunningham. Later productions of the family saga won rave reviews at Portland Center Stage and at the New York Theatre Workshop in Manhattan.

In addition to the ticketed staged readings, this year's festival offers a series of free events. **Wade McCollum**—Mr. Sweet Transvestite himself—discusses his upcoming musical *One* in an event called Playwrights' Slam. There will also be a theater fair to spotlight Portland's theater community.

Two of the four plays taking a bow are by gay men. **Adam Bock's** *The Thugs* concerns seven temp workers who think someone may be killing them off one by one, while **Jordan Harrison's** *Act a Lady* portrays a group of Prohibition-era men who dress up like women for a play.



Lesbian choreographer Catherine Egan's company, *Eggshelled*, will present two pieces during *Charged: The Conduit Commission Project* July 28 to 30.