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## Arts & Entertainment

### Stage Review: 'Happy' rants full of art

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By Christopher Rawson, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

*You've seen the over-used picture postcard views fade away as the gritty haze rolls in and you try to make out the dim image of the mountains you saw yesterday, just after the flash floods and hurricane-force santa ana devil winds swept the garbage out for a few hours ...*

"Happy to be Here!" is the title, and it calls itself "digitally enhanced rock 'n' roll theatre," which is just about right. I'd call it a music/video/rant/comedy.

The pervading mode is ironic dyspepsia, but lit with the love of creation. Wordman/actor Randy Kovitz rants, riffs, comments, sings and re-tells seductive and/or satiric dreams, while musician Paul Bernstein plays guitar and synthesizer (I guess) and orchestrates the large-screen video accompaniment.

The title image superimposes "Happy to be Here!" on a rear-view mirror showing a cop car, lights flashing -- so you know it's ironic. And from the words, you know "here" is L.A.:

*... you've seen studio heads spontaneously combust and housewives that can bench 450, coyotes with diversified portfolios and toddlers wearing chain mail. you've seen giant redwoods with their own attorneys and full-sized replicas of the pyramids of giza made entirely of cheese whiz and beluga caviar. ... you've seen the tides run red from catastrophic tabasco spills and you've seen beached giant squid ticketed by the coast guard ...*

As text, "Happy to be Here" joins Nathanael West, Raymond Chandler and the other satirists of California dreaming. These quotations come from an impressive spoken-word rant/song that feels like its centerpiece. But on the page, it lacks the dimensionality of the music (Kovitz also plays drums) and the video counterpoint and intervention, enhanced with additional graphics.

It's only 60 minutes long and fits nicely into the Bricolage space at 937 Liberty, Downtown, where the audience sits at long tables with libations available.

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#### 'Happy to be Here'



- **Where:** Lies Like Truth Productions at Bricolage, 937 Liberty Ave., Downtown.
  - **When:** Through Nov. 17. Fri.-Sat. 8 p.m. (no performance Nov. 2).
  - **Tickets:** donations at door; 213-422-7587.
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*... and the ghosts. they're everywhere. the ghost of your lost initiative, sitting next to you at the counter at norms, having a grilled cheese and a sprite. the ghost of your lost youth playing on the jungle gym at mcdonalds. the ghosts of your competitive edge, standing three deep at the bar in the burgundy room some lonely, drunken night. the ghost of your driving ambition riding shotgun in your sweltering junker as you wait in rush-hour traffic with the over-achieving ghost of your inner monologue blasting criticism out of your car radio. the ghost of lost love lying peacefully next to you in the middle of a long, sleepless night ...*

Of course "here" is not just L.A. but also here, because here it is. Kovitz has been here for two years, returned after a long slog through those western canyons to the city where he trained back in the '70s. He's busy acting, directing fight scenes (a specialty) and creating theater. Clearly he's a writer, too.

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