

# **THE GW HATCHET – A STUDENT NEWSPAPER**

## **"Get Your War On" delivers belly-laughs and biting wit**

**Jeffrey Parker\_Arts Editor**

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"A couple days after 9/11, I thought, 'Oh God, I guess I have to start engaging with the world,'" David Rees said. The creator of "Get Your War On," the popular Web-comic turned play now being put on by Rude Mechs at Woolly Mammoth, Rees became a news junkie, subscribing to periodicals of every political hue to try to make sense of what happened to the world after the attack on his adopted hometown of New York. What he found didn't please him, and he channeled his rage in to a comic strip featuring foul-mouthed office workers talking politics on the phone, saying things like "When [Henry Kissinger] signs a U.S. government paycheck, does he use a ballpoint pen, or the bloody, severed limb of an East Timorese child?" The theater production translates the strip expertly to stage, in all its one-dimensional ("visually and ideologically," quips Rees) glory.

The set is rudimentary, featuring five desks, each with a projector pointed at a giant screen behind the makeshift office environment. The actors used these projectors to display their comic strip analogues (non-descript people on telephones that the strip creator got from a public domain clipart database). Dates were also displayed, indicating what day the strip ran and what took place (which proves handy for checking particularly funny quotes after the show - the script is taken pretty much directly from the strip, found at [www.getyourwaron.com](http://www.getyourwaron.com)). This strategy served another, slightly more depressing purpose - as the days rolled by, ad nauseum, the audience was forced to recognize just how long everything has been going on.

Most of "Get Your War On" operates in this style, with the entire production, minus some impressive lighting, coming across like a particularly well-done civics project by a sarcastic group of high school students. A few moments break this shoestring mood - one sequence features a stirring rendition of David Bowie's "Life on Mars," and at one point a man dressed as North Korea runs across the

stage, begging for attention - but for the most part, everything is simple, which serves the show well, as the real attraction here is the dialogue.

The show peaks when actor and voiceover artist Jason Liebrecht works himself into a lather of righteous indignation when someone refers to him as an East Coast elitist for mocking our commander-in-chief, summoning up the rage of anyone who's been called unpatriotic for not having a big enough American flag magnet on the back of their car (which is probably a hybrid, anyway, and driving a vehicle with good fuel economy is letting the terrorists win) and finally culminating in one of the best lines of the comic strip: "If 'elitist' just means 'not the dumbest motherfucker in the room,' I'll be an elitist!"

The audience burst into applause.

This, paradoxically, is the play's only problem. Its ability to enrapture the true believer also translates to an inability to reach anyone else. This show is hilarious, it's insightful and it provided one of the best nights I've had this year, but it's not going to change any minds, because it's not going to get anyone in the door who doesn't already hate Bush and listen to NPR. Can you imagine the average person from Rees' home state of North Carolina responding well to this exchange:

-If you could say one thing to God right now, what would it be?

- I think I would say, "Thank you, God, for your healing gift of religion." What about you?

- I'd say "God, I regret to inform you that U.S. policy now dictates that we bomb the fuck out of You up in Heaven."

- Oh! I'd also say, "Monotheistic religion has always brought out the best in us humans; thank you so much for the idea of a vengeful supernatural entity who rewards people in the afterlife! That shit makes a lot of sense!"

Yeah, me neither.

In the end, however, that's not what "Get Your War On" is about. A giant middle finger to decorum, this production is about catharsis. Rees talked after the show about growing up Episcopalian from North Carolina, so one can certainly sympathize with the impulse to lash out at those who enable evil to be done in our name, as he probably didn't get a whole lot of support growing up. There's

certainly a place for bridge-building and understanding, but there's also a time to get the biggest bullhorn you can find to scream into the darkness.

"Get Your War On" is playing at the Woolly Mammoth Theater through this week only, closing Oct. 14. Tickets can be purchased via phone or through their website at [www.woollymammoth.net](http://www.woollymammoth.net). Check out the website for ticket information, time and dates.

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