



La MaMa Experimental Theater Club ~ 74A East Fourth Street ~ New York, NY 10003
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**RETURN ENGAGEMENT FOR "TARGET AUDIENCE (THE CODE OF THE WESTERN)"
BY JIM NEU, DIRECTED BY KEITH McDERMOTT.**

Cowboy star power is elucidated in an elliptical multimedia presentation with spurs on.

May 13 to 23

La MaMa E.T.C. (First Floor Theater), 74A East Fourth Street

Presented by La MaMa E.T.C.

Th-Sat at 8:00 pm, Sun at 2:30 pm and 8:00 pm, \$15/tdf

Box office (212) 475-7710. Runs 1 hour. Online ticketing available at www.lamama.org.

Reviewers are invited to all performances.

NEW YORK, April 8 -- To share one of its 2003-4 season's most successful productions with a wider audience, La MaMa will bring back "**Target Audience (The Code of the Western)**" by playwright/performer **Jim Neu** from **May 13 to 23** in its First Floor Theater. Originally mounted by The Club at La MaMa September 18-28, 2003, the hour-long, dry, wry, circumlocutory play tells the story of the West as it's never been told before. **Keith McDermott** directs; music is by **Harry Mann**.

Jim Neu plays Dr. James Thorne, a guest speaker at the Saddleholster Film Festival, where die-hard fans come to see old B-westerns one more time. Dr. Thorne is a professor of "Situology," a new science that studies the interface between the factual and the fictional. The Doctor begins in the days when the Wild West was simultaneously current events and a new entertainment form--the first pop culture. As the events faded, the entertainment form continued to thrive, affecting behavior on both sides of the reality frontier. Dr. Thorne's deep affection for his subject shows the charm of unconditional cowboy love, as well as the potential menace.

Visual aids, made up of period stills and film clips, highlight the major players, both real and imaginary (from Wild Bill Hickok and Jesse James to John Wayne and Ronald Reagan). The multimedia portion of the show culminates with excerpts from Hollywood's "Outlaws of the Desert" (1941), in which The Wild West meets the Middle East.

Dr. Thorne is occasionally joined by his guitar-playing research assistant, Ashley Nevada (**Deborah Auer**). They perform songs that amplify key scenes of the evening. **Bill Rice** makes a special appearance as Harley Baker, the host of the Saddleholster Film Festival.

The Village Voice (Tom Sellar) distilled Neu's message, writing "Producers and writers arrived to claim the frontier not long after the settlers did, inventing irresistible historical icons and legends for America with ever loosening ties to historical fact. The result: a nation that absorbs its history through B movies now happily inhabits 'islands of enriched reality.' 'A lot of what we went through never actually happened,' he observes, but 'it's hard to deny the evidence of your senses.'" Time Out (Simonson) added, "when the speech closes with a clip from the ludicrous and unnerving "Outlaws of the Desert," in which scenes of American gunslingers battling Arabs on dunes play like a Bush-family home movie, you have to admit the man has a solid point."

American Theater Web (Andy Propst) added, "From a historical perspective, Neu's creation is fascinating to hear. His presence and delivery is so sure that one accepts the facts he presents and conclusions that he draws as *faits accomplis*. What's most intriguing about his presentation, which Keith McDermott has staged with quiet simplicity, is the range of thought that it provokes. As Neu discusses how fiction can be packaged into fact, one can't help but think about

the existence or lack thereof of 'weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq. Is our war an example of situology at work? Beyond this, Neu's piece raises issues about 'reality' programming on television and 'fictional' television such as 'Law and Order' where the show's tag line is 'Ripped from the headlines.' Since seeing the piece, which runs sadly through Sunday only, I have found myself returning to the concept repeatedly and even watching the news in a slightly different (even more jaded and cynical) way. For a theater piece that lasts only an hour, this impact is extraordinary."

Time Out (Robert Simonson) wrote, "Jim Neu...may be the most unfairly uncelebrated of downtown auteurs. Neu is as adept at twisting language and meaning as Mac Wellman, has been as artistically consistent as Richard Foreman and was cleaving his texts to disorienting songs long before Richard Maxwell was old enough to drink."

Director **Keith McDermott** has directed four previous plays by Jim Neu, most recently last season's "Kiss Shot." As an actor he's performed major roles on Broadway as well as in the avant garde work of Robert Wilson and others. As a director, he's staged both modern and classical plays.

Composer **Harry Mann** reveals his skill in a new genre with his music for the country-western songs in "Target Audience." Mann has written music for ten previous Neu plays. Video is by **Charles Dennis**, whose own performances mixing video and choreography have been presented extensively in New York and across the country. Sets are by **David Fritz**, who designed Neu's "Undercurrent Incorporated" at La MaMa in 2000. Costumes are by **Angela Wendt**, who designed Neu's "Kiss Shot" last season.

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CRITICS ARE INVITED to all performances.