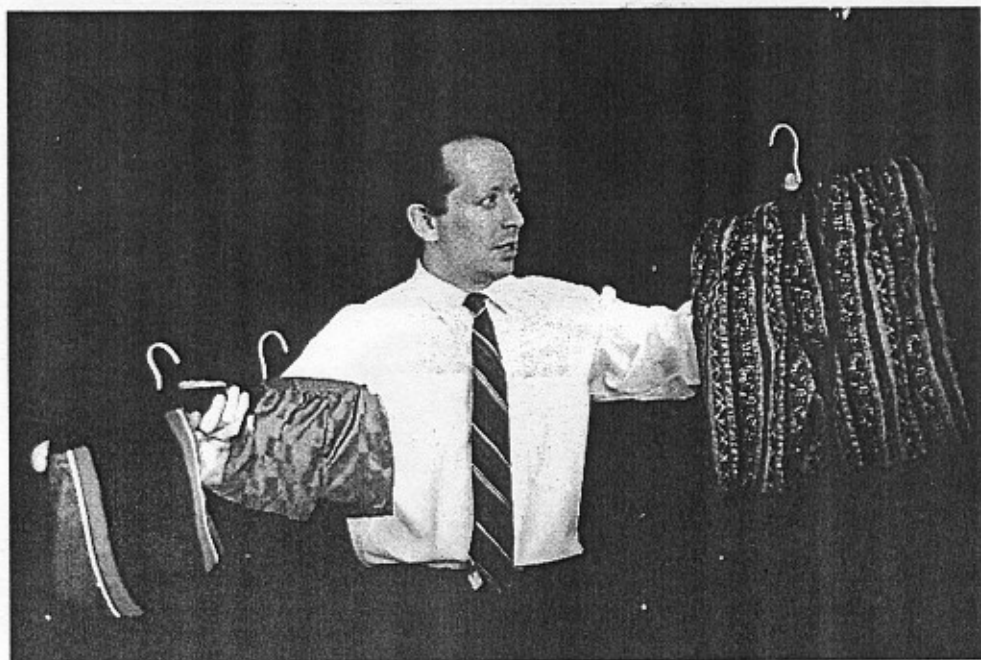


# THE SCOTSMAN



Peter Aterman slips into character in his wickedly satirical take on vapid Americana

## Knocking the slave nation

### Slaves of Starbucks

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COMEDY: Hill Street Theatre  
(venue 41)

AS THE audience files into the theatre, a drugged-out aeroplane pilot informs us there are designated bathrooms for heroin users, spliffs can be bought from duty-free and sex is actively encouraged for first-class ticket holders.

This is the first of Peter Aterman's many characters in *Slaves Of Starbucks*, a satirical and wickedly funny exploration of corporate America. It may be hysterical, but don't go expecting 80 minutes of stand-up; this is a series of a dozen or so vignettes, some of which are definitely no laughing matter.

For instance, "the man who doesn't like shopping malls" has a particularly good reason not to; he fell victim to a roving gang in a

mall who castrated him, leaving him bleeding on the floor. As he calmly tells of his futile attempts to get the various workers to call him an ambulance, eventually fainting from the pain and waking up after the mall had closed to find that the cleaners had simply mopped around him, the chill realisation that this kind of situation is not so far from the truth is enough to stop any laughter.

On a lighter note, the Italian tourist guide struggling to deal with the idiotic questions from his American guests ("No, you can't meet the Pope, I'm afraid ... no, not even if I tell the Vatican you've come all the way from Milwaukee") is absolute genius, as is the Wall Street trader who has hired a human-sacrificing Aztec priest to predict the markets.

Some of the sketches do miss the mark, however;

Celine Dion talking about how Hitler is the one person who inspired her above all others, or the man accosting two small boys in a hotel hot-tub to impress upon them the glory of the genome project could have been cut, with the bonus of making the show shorter and more consistent. Still, a couple of duds are forgivable when the rest is so good.

Aterman is a superb comic actor; not only is his delivery spot-on for each piece, ranging from completely deadpan to deliciously over-the-top, but his talent for accents is superb; German, Italian, Czechoslovakian, French-Canadian - he can do them all. And his impression of JFK is spookily accurate.

The vapidity of Americana has been done to death, but with *Slaves Of Starbucks* Aterman has managed to breathe life into the topic.

Kirsty Knaggs

Until 26 August