

Slaves of Starbucks *by Don Grigware*

Satire bites big, bold and brilliant in Canadian playwright Peter Aterman's *Slaves of Starbucks*, currently playing Mondays at the American Renegade Theatre.

Starbucks consists of a dozen or so historically funny vignettes portraying the ruination of mankind by corporate America. One very fine actor, David Beckett, within the space of one-hour, circles the globe, very adroitly taking on a multitude of international characters and accents.

Aterman grabs his audience right at the top with the off-the-wall verbal antics of a KLM pilot that invites his passengers to partake of drugs, sex, and if so inclined, a variety of suicidal aids while in flight. For our meek listener, who cannot believe what he is hearing, it is a shock a second and as many belly laughs for us. On to Roma, and my favorite funny vignette in which an Italian tour guide suffers through the questions of a group of idiotic American tourists who would rather have lunch or see the Eiffel Tower than the frescos of St. Peter's Basilica. Tortured by stupidity, he turns to prayer to find the way to cope with these pizza-loving monsters. In a much more serious vein, an injured American seeks help in a mall and meets only uncaring vendors whose greedy one-track minds leave him desperately alone and unattended for.

Sound familiar? When was the last time you chose not to become involved or lend a hand because it interrupted your daily materialistic rituals? Sad, but true.

Starbucks (directed with even rhythms by Chip Chalmers) remains consistently topical throughout. A lecturer pinpoints questionable aspects of the comicstrip Archie, emphasizing how the quaint behavior of Jughead should be viewed as deviant and dangerous to our existence. Does it bring to mind Mr. Bush and his infantile stand on the perils of same-sex marriage? What about the deaths of so many American soldiers on the beaches of Normandy and how our country glorified heroism? Is there any difference with all the current slaughter in Iraq? Mr. Aterman is rightfully cynical about American ideals. See this show, enjoy its irreverent humor and Mr. Beckett's skilled performance, but, for Pete's sake, do not take it lightly!! Five stars. *See listing.*



David Beckett