

the village

VOICE

Coffee, Tea, or Bilk?

The not-so-subtle title *Slaves of Starbucks* gives a good hint to the tone of Peter Aterman's monologues on the corruption of Western society (Here). Though subtitled *A Requiem for the 20th Century*, there's more anger than sorrow on display, the dozen vignettes serving as 12 counts in an indictment against modernity.

America, no surprise, bears the brunt of writer-performer Aterman's satire, the nation painted—accurately—as international consumerist Moloch. (The Dutch, the Germans, and Aterman's fellow Canadians also get a few pokes.) The monologue setups run the gamut, from a Tourette's-like parody of JFK's "Ask Not" speech, to a mockery of American tourists eating their way through Italy, to a satire of a Wall Street firm that uses an Aztec priest to predict business trends. Some of Aterman's gags fall flat—his tour of CIA headquarters lands lamest—but others can be quite inspired, such as his slide show demonstrating how the *Archie* comic-book series is actually coded Nazi propaganda. The best monologue, titled "I Could Still Hear the Muzak Playing," is a marvelously deadpan story about a man being castrated by a gang in a shopping mall, followed by his unsuccessful effort to get medical assistance from the indifferent employees at Orange Julius and the Bombay Company.

Many of the pieces could be shortened, and their critiques made less obvious. Whatever the unevenness of his writing, though, Aterman is a fine performer. A versatile actor, he has a nicely controlled intensity, an asset that's especially appealing when mixed with the show's quieter moments of absurdity—his portrayal of a stoned, davening KLM jet is pleasingly ridiculous. Christopher Caines directs *Slaves of Starbucks* gracefully, but next time around should encourage Aterman to freshen his satiric blend. —Brian Parks/W