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MAGAZINE

ARTS + CULTURE

REVIEW: You've not seen anything like *BOOM X*

By Meredith MacLeod / Jan 26, 2026

I have absolutely never before seen anything like *BOOM X*, the one-man show written, directed and performed by Rick Miller now on stage at Theatre Aquarius.

In fact, it's somewhat hard to describe. It's not a play and it's not a concert. *BOOM X* is part generational jukebox, part autobiography, part history class, and utterly fascinating.

It's the story of Generation X on fast forward, told in moments big and small, themes both frivolous and deadly serious, and through universal experiences and entirely personal ones.

Imagine flipping through a high-tech (and high-speed) scrapbook of your life, with a musical soundtrack, videos, scrolling headlines, and family home movies.

BOOM X starts at Woodstock in 1969 and, two hours later, it has zoomed through to 1995. The years fly by faster than a weekend in July.

Along the way, the kaleidoscope that is *BOOM X* has tackled disco, punk rock and New Wave, seminal moments from movies and TV, lots of national and international political moments, technology breakthroughs, riots, wars, Moon landings, the AIDS crisis, and Apartheid.

Miller voices 100 characters in *BOOM X* and sings 28 songs. He even includes a few references to Hamilton, including Teenage Head and Pierre Elliott Trudeau visiting the city for its 125th birthday in 1971.

This show is the middle of a trilogy, just like Gen X is sandwiched between two demographic behemoths. *BOOM* tells the story of Miller's parents' baby boom generation. And *BOOM YZ* documents his daughters' defining Millennial era.



Rick Miller as Kurt Cobain in *BOOM X*. Photo (and above): Craig Francis

Miller's singing chops and prowess with impressions are fully realized in *BOOM X*.

Miller goes behind a scrim to perform – everyone from Tina Turner to Burton Cummings to Kurt Cobain and Gord Downie – while headlines tick by. Then a second later, he's providing the voices for TV shows, movies, news reels, and commercials. Blink and he's out front voicing interviews with four Gen X subjects who have played big roles in his life.

(I won't give away who they are because it's satisfying to let Miller reveal that during the show.)

Their stories of growing up Gen X are interwoven with his own tale – his upbringing in Montreal, his obsession with the ill-fated Expos, the divorce of his parents, and his mother's disappointment with

his decision to pursue theatre after earning a masters degree in architecture.

BOOM X delivers laugh-out-loud silliness and show-stopping moments of tragedy, like the Ecole Polytechnique massacre, and the Challenger space shuttle explosion. His show tracks social progress but also rampant racism, sexism and homophobia of the era.

Where it could simply be a dazzling multimedia tour of an era, it takes on gravitas as Miller reflects on his discovery of the oppression of Indigenous people in Canada, his white male privilege and the effects of authoritarianism, unchecked capitalism and corporate greed, all themes that strongly resonate today.

Miller's show will touch on things that changed your life and others that you haven't thought about in decades. It's hard not to sing along and Miller satisfies that urge with a two-minute, name-that-singer singalong of 1984's biggest tunes to end the first half.

The confounding and enduring power of Gen X-era marketing is on full display. The opening night audience sang along to a long-gone Coke commercial. And every person around me knew the script to that "Hey Mikey, he likes it" Life commercial that hasn't aired in 40 years.

BOOM X is fun but thoughtful, it's nostalgic but fully illustrates Mark Twain's adage that "history doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes."

In a talkback session immediately after the show during which Miller sat cross-legged on the stage, a young woman in the audience said she came to the show worried that the "world has never been more shit" than it is right now.

"This show taught me that things have always been shit," she said.

That's a weirdly optimistic thought in these crazy times: No matter how much we screw things up, we always manage to get through and move forward.

Miller's *BOOM* shows are a reminder that we are all the products of our experiences, both individual and collective. There is something powerful about sitting in a theatre full of people who were also shaped by those

shared defining moments, especially as the years

whiz by.

Of course, the downfall of *BOOM X*, (and any other artistic endeavour, really) is that those who aren't Gen X or don't share Miller's racial, socio-economic or geographic worldview just might not get it.

But *BOOM X* made this Gen Xer proud. I know you will marvel at Miller's storytelling, which comes at breakneck speed but never without clarity, not to mention his exuberant energy, incredible quick-change skills, and how he hits that high note in A-ha's "Take on Me."

This show is simply a wonder.

BOOM X covers the years 1970 to 1995. Photo: Irina Litvinenko

