

Opinion | Hey boomer, are you ready for your close-up?

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Rick Miller in “BOOM X.” “If you blow people away with heart, humour and creativity, you keep theatre alive for generations to come,” Miller says.

Photo: Craig Francis



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“Entertaining audiences is crucial, even if you have other motivations designed to educate and enlighten. That’s why ‘BOOM X’ works.”



Rick Miller in “BOOM X.” “If you blow people away with heart, humour and creativity, you keep theatre alive for generations to come,” Miller says.

Photo: Irina Litvinenko

Rick Miller, creator, writer, director and star of “BOOM X,” is talking about his trilogy of intriguing, intergenerational shows that capture the music, politics and culture of the past.

“I challenge myself and my collaborators to make theatre that’s worth leaving home for, to create something unique that can’t be replicated on a screen. I wanted to create experiences where multiple generations of audience members can realize that we’re more similar than we are different, despite generational divides.

“If you blow people away with heart, humour and creativity, you keep theatre alive for generations to come.”

Miller’s trilogy of shows might be rooted in the past, but it has resonance for today.

“I’m not interested in the past unless it helps us live in the present moment,” Miller says. “In some ways, the entire trilogy documents 75 years of life on our planet — a ‘moment’ that’s worth examining together so we don’t throw away what actually worked well and kept us from blowing the planet up.”

Hamilton theatre audiences will remember that before the BOOM series, Miller appeared in a number of musical productions at Theatre Aquarius, including his performance as Jesus in “Jesus Christ Superstar” that received accolades. After that, Miller’s successful shows “MacHomer: The Simpsons Do Macbeth” and “Bigger Than Jesus” revealed his talent for solo performance and helped lead to BOOM.

“It was all about working on a concept that would allow me to sing songs that I love and to tie them together with history, culture and political events in a new theatrical form. ‘BOOM X’ has excerpts of 28 of my favourite songs from 1970 to 1995, so it almost feels like a musical, though it’s much more.”

Miller grew up in Montreal, where he says he tried to be a bridge builder between English and French culture, and where the music of his generation led to a lifelong love of performing.

“I studied architecture at McGill and when Robert Lepage came to speak to our class, my thesis became about his work and his poetic use of media and technology. I spent 10 years creating and touring with him, while also developing my solo shows,” he said.

“I guess I’ve never lost that childlike wonder of playing with toys, imagining immersive worlds and trying to recreate them for others.”

Miller performs his BOOM trilogy all over and works to make it fit the place where he’s appearing.

“We try to adapt parts of the show to reflect the context of where we are, whether it’s Hamilton, New York City, Châlons-en-Champagne, or Taichung. Usually that involves research and integration of information into the multimedia design of the show.”

Miller can perform the show in French or English, and sing its many different styles of music.

“Music is the beating heart that drives each BOOM Trilogy show. In ‘BOOM X,’ we cover the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, when there was an incredible explosion of musical styles. But it was also a polarizing time: you were punk or disco, not both.



Rick Miller in “BOOM X.” “If you blow people away with heart, humour and creativity, you keep theatre alive for generations to come,” Miller says. Photo: Trudie Lee