

Opinion | BOOM X is a full-frontal attack on the senses

Don't miss BOOM X, it's exhilarating, thoughtful theatre that doesn't happen in Hamilton every day.

Updated Jan. 23, 2026 at 6:02 a.m. | Jan. 23, 2026 | 4 min read



Rick Miller in “BOOM X.” The man deals in theatrical magic, propelling us from our worrisome world of 2026 back to a fascinating mind-blowing past, Gary Smith writes.

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Don't even think about missing BOOM X.

If you love culture, music, and history that's reflected in the world of today, this one's for you.

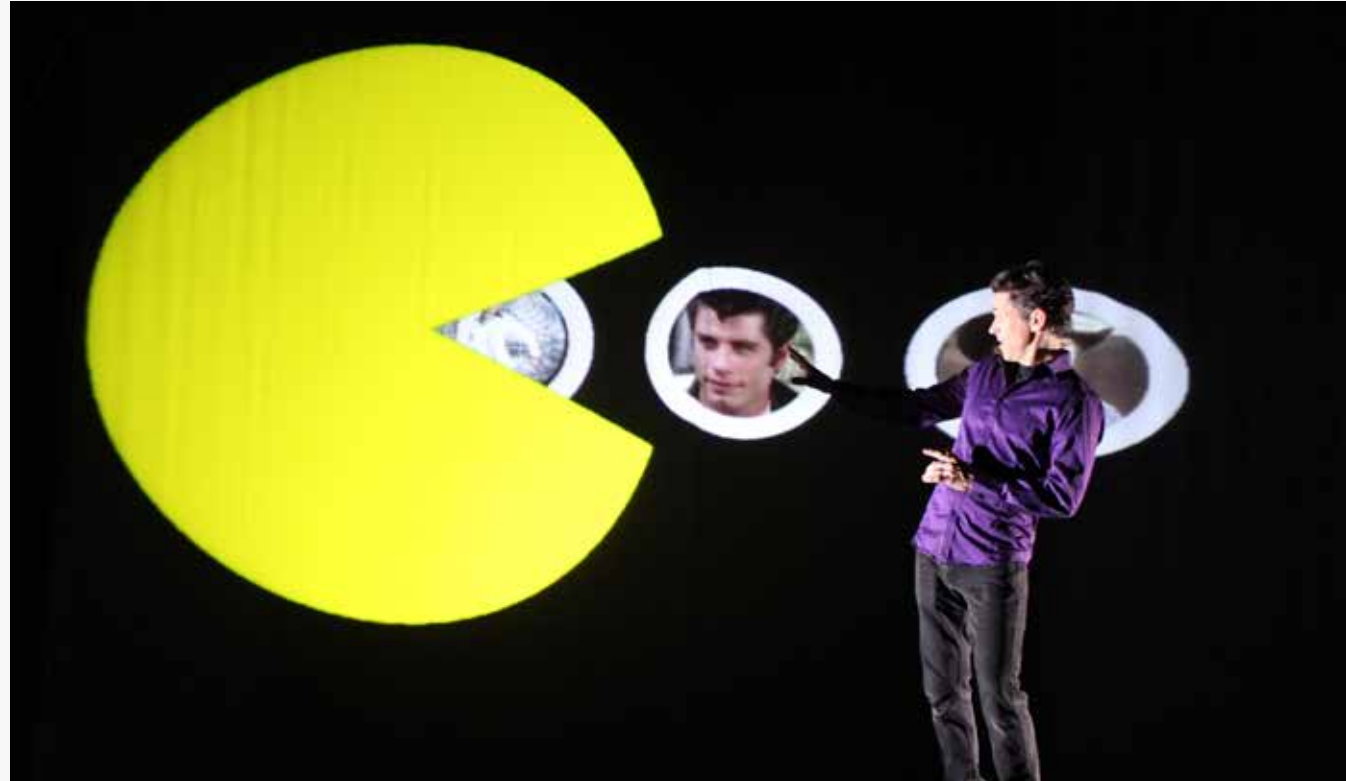
This dramatic one-man show is a red-hot firecracker of a production that will burn in your memory long after its stunning theatrical sparks have sputtered out.

A full-frontal attack on the senses, BOOM X requires you to catch the wave and keep up with the fertile mind of skilled actor, director and writer Rick Miller.

Miller is giving what is unquestionably a no holds barred performance at Theatre Aquarius that will have your mind racing.

The man deals in theatrical magic, propelling us from our worrisome world of 2026 back to a fascinating mind-blowing past.

We're confronted with the music, culture and political events that informed the minds of generation X, replete with all the angst that might suggest. And no, this is not nostalgic time travel. generation X didn't deal in nostalgia come to that. And no, you don't need to have loved the music of that tumultuous era of punk and disco to experience the rush you get from Miller's evocative trip.



Rick Miller in “BOOM X.” Sound, lights, costumes and stage management work together to help create this stage event, writes Gary Smith.

Photo: Craig Francis

It's a wild journey back to how it was, brought to life on the Aquarius stage with frames of film, the reverberation of songs and the fastest shedding of costumes since Tempest Storm played the Town Casino in Toronto.

Those musical moments range all the way from a shrieking Tina Turner wailing “Proud Mary” to the annoying simplicity of “Saturday Night Fever’s” “Stayin’ Alive.” No doubt those of you who loved them well will have to stop from whistling and singing along as we did back in the day. The music Miller remembers awakens memories for those of us who paid attention the first time around and just might make those who didn't wish they had.

It's hard, after all, to resist “Proud Mary,” a reminder of a time that was a lot more fun.

Snatches of so many songs remind us of a musical heritage that goes beyond the clichés of today. And Miller sings them with such force you wish he had time to sing a lot more of them.



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Irina Litvinenko

On a scrim behind him, headlines are projected like the running of ticker tape catching the headlines of the times, bombarding us with the good, the bad and the ugly.

There's Prince Charles marrying Diana, in what we thought was the ideal love match. Who knew? There's Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Pierre Trudeau, prescient voices some thought had the answers to world peace and prosperity.

And there are the horrors of the Kent State riots; a salvo shot made in the wake of what would be so many riots, protests and evil doings to come, and keep right on coming in 2026.

Projected images of the movers and shakers who made us laugh, cry and believe in sanity and goodness are recalled too in this rapid ride through history.

Have such moments been distanced and mellowed somewhat by time? Maybe. But alas, we live in a world that teeters on the edge of disaster with each new headline and newscast.

So, we leave the theatre wondering if history teaches us much? We have a capacity for forgetting where we've been in the race to get where we think we ought to be going.

At Aquarius these nights and for three matinees a week, one man is playing a hundred roles. But then he's not alone, is he? He's backed by a fabulous team. Sound, lights, costumes and stage management work together to help create this stage event. And they're all perfect.

Everything is engaging.

I suppose you could say this is history for those who hate history because it's distilled here as entertainment. It's like travelling through a time tunnel and being both caressed and bombarded by the past.

And all this, you understand, is wrapped up in a remarkable performance by Miller that reverberates with racing feral energy that makes you buy into the adventure.

When Miller leaves the stage after a busy two hours he's wiped, having reached some satisfying climax, having rolled everything into a high-powered performance that leaves him drained. In a sense he's taken his own personal journey to find out who he is. And if we're paying close attention we are, too.

I would have loved to see Miller's earlier BOOM show, the one that celebrated the 1960s, for me it would have held a sense of nostalgia I don't really feel about the 1980s. But I suppose each era has its fascination and hopefully there are plenty of generation X folks ready to relive their big moments sitting in a Theatre Aquarius seat. The rest of us will not be disappointed, however, because this entertainment, and it is unquestionably entertaining, is a remarkable theatre experience.

Miller is a consummate storyteller. He's warm, thoughtful and exuberant. He builds his performance here with almost reckless energy. He puts into perspective his feelings, concerns and hopes as he navigates the world of his youth. But he does more than that.

He helps us understand how the world changed while we were singing “Proud Mary.”

When we leave the theatre, elated and buoyed by the extent of the creative energy and artistic genius that we've just seen splayed out on the stage, are we left with feelings of comfort?

I think not, because when we open Monday's Spectator, or listen to the news on TV or radio, the scary things that define today will still be there to frighten us.

But we will know from seeing BOOM X, everything is transitory. The hope is, the human spirit will continue to find a way to survive. And there is, in this remarkable production, a sense that just maybe we will.

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