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Theater: John Leguizamo Klowns Around

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GHETTO KLOWN *** out of **** LYCEUM THEATRE

If you've ever seen [John Leguizamo's](#) one-man shows, you probably walked away with one burning question. Why isn't this talented, sexy, funny, charming, magnetic guy a bigger star? Or at least on *Dancing With The Stars*? (Every show features a healthy dose of Leguizamo as a dancing fool.)

He gives the answer in the enjoyable new show, *Ghetto Klown*. Previous shows -- *Mambo Mouth*, *Spic-O-Rama*, *Freak*, and *Sexaholic...A Love Story* -- showed us Leguizamo's childhood, his family and friends, his world. *Ghetto Klown* certainly includes plenty of return visits

from his family and friends (and making peace with his father). But it's essentially his creative biography. We watch Leguizamo goofing around on the streets and getting arrested when he commandeers a subway train PA system to do a stand-up routine. A wise school-teacher sends him to acting class and before you know it, Leguizamo is studying under Lee Strasberg.

The heart of the show is Leguizamo's up-and-down love affair with acting as he struggles to turn minor bit parts into something interesting and maybe graduate from drug dealer to an actual character. He gets all Method-y on the set of *Miami Vice*, butts heads with Steven Seagal and Kurt Russell on *Executive Decision* and in the funniest moment drives Al Pacino nuts during *Carlito's Way*. This clip about the show has a few choice curse words and is NSFW.

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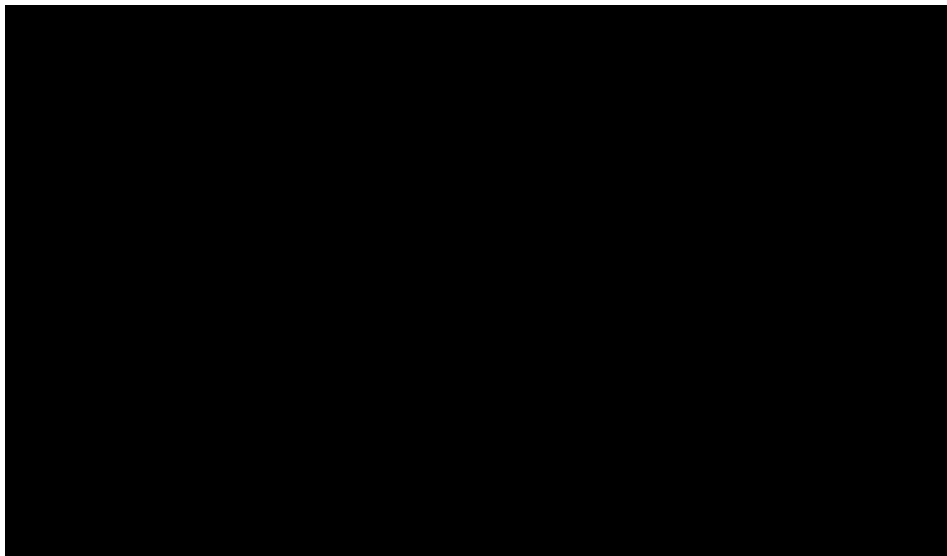
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All of Leguizamo's characters are presented with affection, even a best buddy who breaks with him after 30 years of friendship over business. The same is true for the stars Leguizamo skewers. Certainly Seagal won't be pleased. But when smoking pot with Kurt Russell or getting into a tussle with Patrick Swayze on *To Wong Foo...*, Leguizamo invariably takes himself to task more than anyone else and often let's them share advice he would be smart to take. Sensitive celebrities might take offense, but that would be their mistake. Fans of Leguizamo will enjoy hearing the latest chapter of his life, especially one that fills in the blanks on his career and doesn't mine the same territory he'd probably exhausted by the time of *Sexaholic*. Newcomers can get a good introduction, though the show doesn't bite as deeply as his best work.

So why isn't Leguizamo a bigger star? Lots of reasons. It was hard to get interesting roles as a Latino (he was always going up against Jimmy Smits, Benicio Del Toro and a handful of others). Leguizamo took a long time to learn how to work the system to improve his part without annoying others. He had authority issues (thanks Dad) that made him butt heads rather than being smart. And he had a lot of growing up to do.

The show ends with Leguizamo in a strong relationship (not to mention with a painfully funny phone sex anecdote) and a new revelation. His one-man shows always seemed like a refuge, something he would turn to when he became frustrated with the lack of success in movies or TV. But the light bulb has gone off for him: with his particular gifts, live theater isn't just an escape, a release from the grind of his "real" career as a movie star. On stage, sharing his life? That's exactly where **John Leguizamo** belongs.

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- Ghetto Klown ***
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Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of *Showbiz Sandbox*, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit [Michael Giltz at his website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also available for free on iTunes. Link to him on [Netflix](#) and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

Note: Michael Giltz was provided with tickets to the show with the understanding that he would be writing a review.

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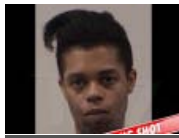


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