

Wonderful Entertainment

Review: Pat Hazell lets the audience be a child again in 'The Wonder Bread Years' playing at the Hermosa Playhouse through March 20

review by Kent Stoddart

Pat Hazell has brought his insightful and hilarious show "The Wonder Bread Years" to the Hermosa Beach Playhouse through March 20. This one-man show should not be missed.

From his mock back porch, complete with toys, canned goods, clothesline and squeaky screen door, Hazell acts as a baby-boomer Peter Pan taking his audience back to their optimistic, forward-thinking youth. He uses the common mundane things from our childhood such as toys, food products, Saturday morning commercials, holidays and witty child comebacks as fairy dust to

tickle the audiences' innocent and naïve funny bone.

Hazell seamlessly transitions from the keen observer to a young boy who follows his dream over the rainbow. The foundation of Hazell's comedy rests on the juxtaposition of how adults view their life and how preadolescents interpret their reality. The adults are always looking back over their shoulder with regrets, and the youth is looking straight ahead with both hands on the wheel and the accelerator touching the floor.

Hazell's brand of comedy is reminiscent of Bill Cosby's early work. Both comedians realize that in our youth everything had a

touch of humor to it. Before the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune made us cynical and, at times, bitter, we laughed.

With an expressionless deadpan delivery, Hazell has the ability to coax that innocent organic laughter from the audience. He represents that insightful child in the neighborhood who could sum up a person or situation with the perfect pithy comment.

Like Cosby, Hazell's show is very clean; his show could follow "Sesame Street." As an audience member, one leaves Hazell's show with sore stomach muscles and an appreciation for being allowed to be a child one more time.



Pat Hazell in 'The Wonder Bread Years.'

(photo by Ed Krieger)