

'Wonderbread Years' speaks to kid in us all

Show takes a laugh down memory lane

By Breuse Hickman
FLORIDA TODAY

Pat Hazell qualifies as a baby boomer. But you don't have to be one to get his humor.

Gracefully walking the line between standup and theater, the former "Seinfeld" writer takes audiences on a journey back in time in his latest one-man touring show "The Wonderbread Years."

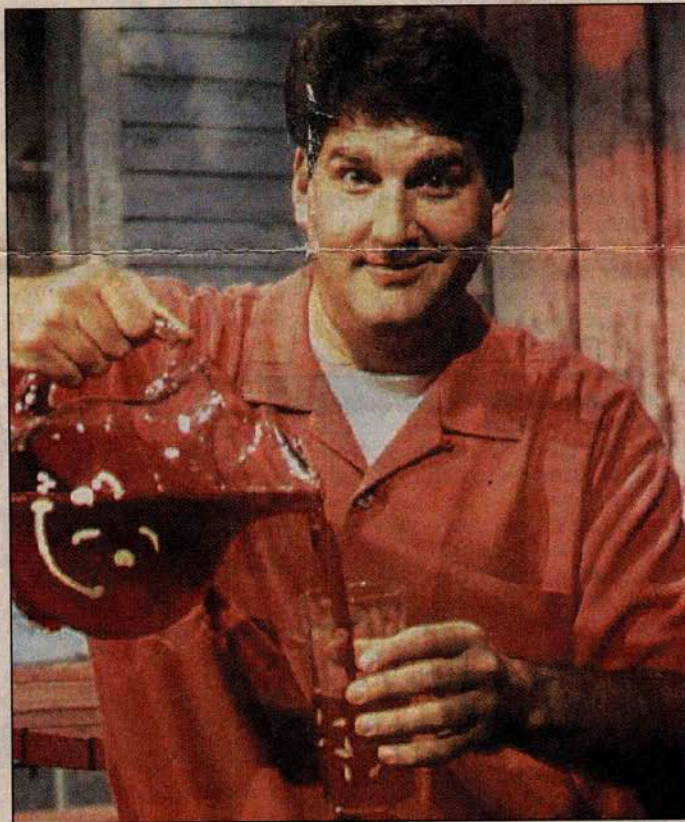
Granted, references to Etch-a-Sketch, green army men and fake wood paneling abound, but Hazell insists he's not just talking about his generation.

In the show, he never mentions his age or his hometown.

"It doesn't matter how old you are or where you grew up, you remember aspects of what I'm presenting," Hazell said by phone. "Things like trick-or-treating and having to sit at the kid's table at family functions, these are all common denominators people in any generation have no doubt experienced."

"The Wonderbread Years" boasts little plot. Instead, it relies on Hazell's brand of show-and-tell, which ultimately defines this piece as theater.

Hazell doesn't just recall his memories, he relives them, often taking on the role of a precocious eight-year-old boy.



Kool-Aid is another product that brings fond memories to Pat Hazell in his performance of "The Wonderbread Years."

Hazell maintains it's all scripted — save for a few improvisational moments that are often show highlights.

You might call his observations Seinfeldian. After all, Hazell's humor did lead him to sign on as a writer for early "Seinfeld" episodes.

"I had been opening for Seinfeld and he liked my sense of humor," he said. "I was used to working as a magician and juggler, but Jerry encouraged me to leave the props at home.

'You don't need this stuff,' he told me."

Stripping the props from his act helped Hazell hone his writing skills. But as he slowly discovered his own unique voice, props found their way back into his routines.

"It just amuses me to pick up a can of Manwich — that's part of who I am," he said.

Hazell always has preferred to work clean and "Wonderbread Years" is no exception. A

If you go

What: "The Wonderbread Years" starring Pat Hazell
When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 3 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday

Where: King Center for the Performing Arts, 3865 Wickham Road, Melbourne

Tickets: \$28 and \$30
Information: Call (321) 242-2219

Upcoming events

Highlights of what's ahead at the King Center:

- Sunday:** REO Speedwagon
- Feb. 2-3:** Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance
- Feb. 5:** Julio Iglesias
- Feb. 8:** Willie Nelson and Family
- Feb. 13:** Don Rickles and Tony Danza
- Feb. 19:** Itzhak Perlman and the Brevard Symphony Orchestra
- Feb. 22:** Michael Feinstein
- March 19:** An Evening with Goldie Hawn

certain reference to green M&Ms is about as risqué as it gets.

If he's accused of not being edgy enough, so be it, Hazell said. He's more concerned with the "take-home value" of his humor rather than shocking folks into fits of laughter.

"The ultimate goal is to unearth people's emotional touchstones," he said. "There's power in this journey."