

# The Gazette

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## Please forgive us, Lord, for we have Fringed

### RELIGION IS THIS YEAR'S TREND

#### Jesus in Montana squeezes humour out of, among other things, killing your children

GAËTAN L. CHARLEBOIS  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Trends always emerge at each Fringe. One year you get the raunchy titles and the nudity, the next you get a lot of gay and lesbian subject matter. This year's trend is religion and God, if only in the titles: Pentecostal Wisconsin (Venue 2); In Jim's Image (previously reviewed, Venue 3); It's OK, Jesus Will Forgive Us (Venue 4); For the Love of God (Venue 11); Nuns' Farts (previously reviewed, and now closed); In the Beginning: A Short Piece on Life and Death (Off-Venue C). Now let us hold hands and sway, because I got completely Godsmacked – so to speak – by yet another work following the trend of Fringe 2006:

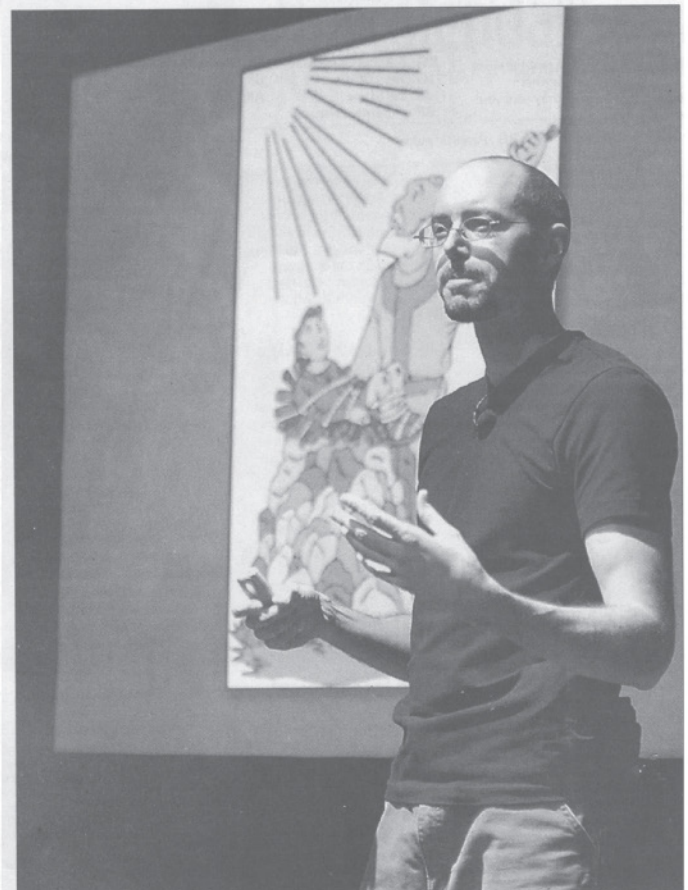
#### **Jesus in Montana: Adventures in a Doomsday Cult ★★★★★**

Nothing prepared me for the sheer joy and awe I felt all the way through Barry Smith's monologue (with film and slides) about his journey to find the Saviour in Montana. Smith insists it's a true story, but even if it's not, it's a phenomenally urgent one. Smith, a humour columnist in Aspen, Colo., starts his tale of faith gone weird from his fire-and-brimstone childhood. He illustrates the effect it had on him with his reaction to the Biblical story of Abraham – the man who was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac until, at the last moment, God stopped Abraham's hand. Smith rejoins wryly: "Abe! You

got punk'd!" And that isn't even the punchline of the tale. Indeed, there isn't a moment during the hour when Smith looks at his spiritual journey with anything but a scintillating sense of humour, a magnificent turn of phrase and a way with a punchline that is jaw-dropping. How he gets to Montana is half the blissful fun (there are stop-offs at the Paul McCartney-is-dead conspiracy and in hitchhiker hell). However, when Smith arrives at the self-professed Jesus's house, I had a real revelation: For the first time, I truly understood how smart people end up in cults. And then my eyes were opened wider: This is a devastatingly significant work and I must spread the word. That I laughed – and laughed hard – all the way to that epiphany makes this Fringe a total success for me. You must see Jesus in Montana. **Venue 3: Tonight, 8:45; tomorrow, 2:45 p.m.; Sunday, 5:30 p.m.**

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FRINGE FESTIVAL



PHOTOS: FRINGE FESTIVAL

Humour columnist Barry Smith's monologue Jesus in Montana is full of jaw-dropping punchlines.

