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Bert V.Royal on *Dog Sees God*

January 5, 2009

Bert V.Royal's *Dog Sees God* is returning to the region later this month, following Vertigo Productions' UK Premiere of the play at Taurus.



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The plot of the play follows characters based on those in the Charles Schultz Peanuts and Snoopy comics/ cartoons. This time round, things are slightly more darker than you remember. Royal's version features drug use, suicide, eating disorders, teen violence, rebellion and sexual identity collide and careen toward an ending that's both haunting and hopeful.

We caught up with Bert from his Los Angeles home to find out more about this fascinating premise for a play and the great man, himself.

Place Of Birth

Denver, CO - although I spent most of my childhood in Northeast Florida.

Lives Now In

Los Angeles, CA - for two and a half years.

When did you first realise that you wanted to write?

I've always wanted to write, but never really thought I was any good at it. Not until *Dog Sees God* was performed, did I consider myself a writer.

On your report card, your elementary school teachers wrote: "Bert is an acquired taste." (Beats being mainstream?) Would you say this is still the case?

I guess it would depend on who you ask. I was a very odd kid. I would convince my classmates to go Christmas caroling with me... in Spring. I was just plain strange. I've probably become a little more mainstream, but I've been known to participate in some pretty odd behavior these days, as well.

What was the last great thing you saw on stage and why?

I took a trip to NYC earlier this year and saw [August: Osage County](#), which was incredible. Drop everything you're doing and go see it now. I also saw a fantastic production of a play called *US Drag* that Trip Cullman directed.

And the first?

I think my love of theatre can be traced back to a production of *Into the Woods* I saw when I was eleven or twelve. I came out of the theater, fully satisfied and with a clear direction that the theatre is where I wanted to be. And imagine my excitement when I was told that there was a second act!

Favourite books?

Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*, Joyce Maynard's *To Die For*, and Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

***Dog Sees God* has a fascinating concept as many of us have grown up on Peanuts and Snoopy. Where**

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did the idea come from?

I wanted to write a teenage story where we had some background as to who these kids were and, truth be told - when I wrote it, I was feeling pretty down in the dumps a la a certain blockhead. The Peanuts was the ultimate in angst. But, of course, teenagers are far more angst ridden than grade school children and the idea of having these kids dealing with things far greater than kites getting stuck in trees was very funny to me.

The comic strip has a faithful following and its characters are brand images. How has the Charles Schultz company reacted?

They haven't. Because the piece is a parody and was never meant to be portrayed as a sequel, I think it's important that people realize that NO-ONE could ever continue the legacy that Mr. Schulz began. This is just a modern reimagining by a fan.

How do you think UK audiences will react to the play?

I've become a HUGE fan of *Skins* as I believe it to be the most accurate depiction of teen life ever. I'm hoping that audiences will connect with DSG as they have with that. Because over here, we have *Gossip Girl* and *90210*, which couldn't be any further from the truth. I have adored getting to know the folks at Vertigo and I think that they totally "get" the play. It should be a blast!

Can you tell us anything about the proposed plans to bring the play to the big screen?

I wish there was more to tell, other than the fact that I've written the screenplay and we're hoping to get it made as soon as possible. I LOVE the screenplay. *Dog Sees God* was my first real attempt at writing and I feel like I've gotten a lot better since then, so revisiting it was loads of fun and I think it's got a lot more layers to it now.

What are you working on at the moment/future plans?

I have a movie in the pipeline. It's a raunchy teen sex comedy version of *The Scarlet Letter* called 'Easy A' that is supposed to start shooting this Spring. (It's a lot more tasteful than it sounds.) I'm having a ball with it. I love the director, I love the producer, I love the studio. So, I'm really excited about that. I'm also desperate to do a musical, so I'm always looking for that.

Can you sum up why WOS visitors should see *Dog Sees God*?

Hmmmm. Maybe because seeing kids whose lives are more fucked up than your own can be cathartic? No, I would go because Karl Burge, Adele Stanhope and Craig Hepworth are amazingly talented and they are daring to push the envelope. Bring your envelope to the theater and they will push it for you.

Bert V.Royal was talking to Glenn Meads

Dog Sees God runs at [the Lowry Studio](#) from Thurs 22 - Sat 24 Jan.

For more details, [click here](#).

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