

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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***The StrangeDog Eat Dog and Pony Show, a festival of manic comedies, to Premiere in Maplewood.***

*Features plays written by Ben Clawson directed by Artem Yatsunov and Music by local bands Bern and the Brights and The MiCKS.*

What Exit? Theatre is pleased to present *The Strange Dog Eat Dog and Pony Show* a brand new evening of manic comedies by Ben Clawson as well as music by Bern and the Brights and The MiCKS. Shows are April 7, 8 and 9 at 8:00pm. The production is directed by Artem Yatsunov and produced by the StrangeDog Theatre company. Tickets are on sale now: \$20 general admission and \$15 for students. For tickets, visit [www.strangedogtheatre.com](http://www.strangedogtheatre.com) or call 201-500-SDOG(7364). Performances will take place at The Burgdorff Center for the Arts, 10 Durand Road in Maplewood, NJ.

An evening of plays, sketches, monologues, irreverent absurdities, profound social insights, and overall insanity, *The StrangeDog Eat Dog and Pony Show* hopes to prove live and in front of your eyes exactly what is funny about guillotines, the core principles of economics, invasive puppets, famous presidents, male impotence, prison, lethal linguistic misunderstandings, historically revered people with disabilities, the effects of rattlesnake venom on the human body, scary noises, excessive amounts of irresponsibly disposed of margarine, drowned pets and very lonely people.

"Ben Clawson is the brightest light of a new class of stellar artists springing from Montclair State University's exploding theater program," said David Winitsky, Artistic Director at What Exit. "With his StrangeDog mates he is not only making some of the most exciting plays out there, he's pointing the way back towards an old way of making theater: find a hall, put up some posters, sell some drinks, and get on with the entertainment."

The show features ten actors playing a whole host of characters inhabiting various eras of history and differing planes of reality. The fifteen plays that make up the evening occur in very separate worlds that are blurred together in a perverse blend of lost message, commercialism and dire situations foolishly devoid of their direness.

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**About the Title:** "*StrangeDog*" is a young theatre company/collective specializing in creating fresh and bold nights of story telling. 'Dog Eat Dog' is an idiom with the underlying supposition that the world is a harsh, competitive and selfish place. '*A Dog and Pony Show*' is a low class 19th century form of traveling entertainment. Put 'em all together and you're left with *The StrangeDog Eat Dog and Pony Show*, a fast paced and larger than life conglomerate of original plays, sketches, monologues and music.

**About the Playwright:** Ben Clawson received his B.F.A. in Theatre from Montclair State University in 2007. He is the author of numerous full length and one act plays which have had professional readings and productions in New York, N.J., Washington D.C. and New Orleans. His full-length plays include *Spilling Stuff and Breaking Things*, *Bootstraps*, *Omnivores*, and *The Blairsburg Family Picnic*. He has also written evenings of short comedies including *Things that Happen in Bars*, *New Tricks*, and *Attention Span of a Fly*, which reopened the historic Paramount Theater in Asbury Park in Summer 2007. He has been a national finalist for the American College Theater Festival's John Cauble One-Act Award, finalist for the Princess Grace Award in play-writing, and recipient of the Kennedy Center's David Mark Cohen award.

**About the Director:** Artem Yatsunov is a co-founding member of StrangeDog Theatre, with whom he's been directing for the past 2 years. Some of his past credits include: *subUrbia*, by Eric Bogosian (Jersey City Theatre Center); *Bootstraps* (Luna Stage); *Things That Happen in Bars* (Tierney's Upstairs) and *Omnivores* (world premiere; Playwrights Theatre) by Ben Clawson. Last March Artem staged a re-imagining of Shakespeare's *Richard III* for Alliance Rep. Theatre. He received a BFA in Acting from Montclair State University.

## Strange Dog Eat Dog and Pony Show, continued:

**About the Company:** StrangeDog has performed in cramped cafes, noisy bars, abandoned warehouses, crowded restaurants and also some well-known regional play-houses. They have developed a large repertoire of work over these past couple years – from a slew of carefully constructed evenings of short comedies on a common theme to premieres of full length plays. StrangeDog has been striving to bring their stories to both established theaters and their experienced theater goers, as well as exposing new audiences to our particular brand of comedy and biting drama in venues where they would expect it least...essentially, creating plays for people who mistakenly think they don't like plays.

### **Quotes:**

*"The fortunes of StrangeDog are on the rise..."*

- The New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/nyregion/22spotnj.html>

*"Starting a new theater company certainly isn't an easy proposition, so how is StrangeDog Theatre managing to make it look effortless?"*

– Peter Felicia, The Star Ledger

[http://www.nj.com/entertainment/arts/index.ssf/2008/08/youthful\\_writer\\_knows\\_how\\_to\\_p.html](http://www.nj.com/entertainment/arts/index.ssf/2008/08/youthful_writer_knows_how_to_p.html)

*"You can scarcely catch your breath. It is that funny."*

- Warren Levinson, Baristanet.com

<http://www.baristanet.com/2010/04/cavemen-live-theater-with-breaks-for-beer/>

*"Defined by a sense of joy and determination to continue producing new works."*

– The Montclair Times

<http://montclairtimes.com/NC/0/1654.html>

*"They have this great rock 'n' roll energy – very raw, very present."*

– Jon Pietrowski, Artistic Director, The Playwrights Theater of NJ

<http://nj.broadwayworld.com/article/>

[StrangeDog Theatre Presents WELL SEE TOMORROW at Playwrights Theatre 112627 201011 26](http://www.playwrightstheatre.org/2010/11/26/strangedog-theatre-presents-well-see-tomorrow-at-playwrights-theatre-112627-20101126)

## --- INTERVIEWS AND ADDITIONAL PHOTOS FURNISHED ON REQUEST ---

**Actors Include:** Scott Brieden, Scott Cagney, Joseph Drechsel, Tom Drummer, Daniel Egan, Dana Giampiccolo, Diana Limon, Annie Lutz and Brian Parks.

### **About the Musicians:**

**The MiCKS** emerged out of the great swamps and Passaic River with a visceral sound once described as "Nirvana meets Neil Young and Diamond." Something remarkable happens on-stage between the brothers, beyond drums and guitar, beyond themselves. They play without thought or discussion, performing with the transcendent energy and ease of children somersaulting over the backs of couches ripping air-guitar. With songs that awaken the weary and compel the wild at heart; with a sound both refreshing and nostalgic, The MiCKS are carving an unflinching musical foothold into an increasingly disposable world.

**Bern and The Brights** has opened for such notable artists as Butch Walker, Rhett Miller [of the Old 97s,] Nicole Atkins and the Black Sea, Living Colour, and Mike Doughty [of Soul Coughing]. They've toured the northeast coast and have graced the stages of some major venues including Webster Hall, Maxwell's, The Stone Pony, The Bitter End, Spike Hill, and Southpaw. The band is known for their evocative and energetic live show. With radiant chemistry and strong musicianship, they create an infectious, positive emotionality that takes over and transforms any room. Their fan base, playfully referred to as The Light Brigade, is ever-growing, and spans a broad range of people who connect with the band's organic and romantic sound. Their sound has been described as "effortless genre-bending," and they have been compared to stalwart artists such as R.E.M., Dave Matthews Band, Jeff Buckley, and Coldplay.