

**MUMP AND SMOOT**

**TENSE  
REVIEWS**



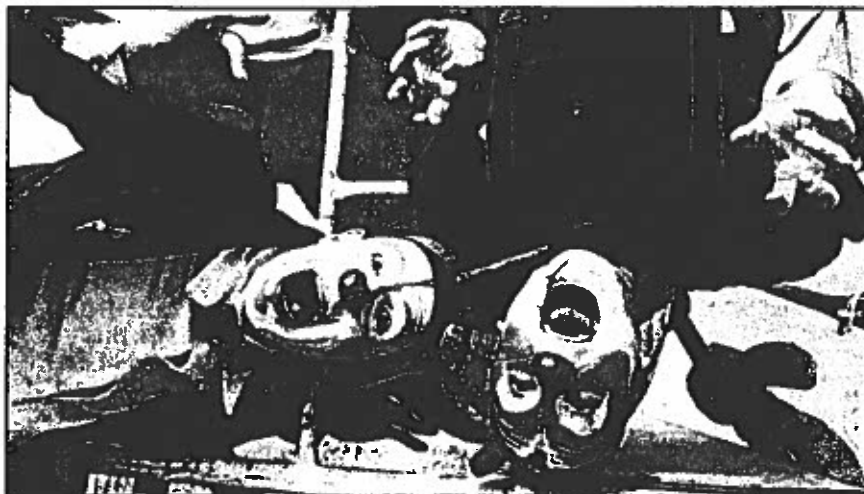
# What's On

EDITOR: Bob Remington, 429-5346

The Edmonton Journal

Friday, August 15, 1997

## THE HORROR CLOWNS ARE BACK!



Ed Kaiser, *The Journal*

Mump (Mike Kennard, left) and an upside-down Smoot (John Turner), a pair of perennial Fringe faves, appear in *Tense*, on Stage 3

## Tense times truly hilarious

### MUMP & SMOOT IN 'TENSE'

(Stage 3 — Arts Barns North)

★★★★ of five

“You know, everything else is downhill from here.” The regretful remark came from the woman next to me, settling into her seat for the debut performance of Mump and Smoot’s latest comedic foray into some highly twisted nightmares.

The meaning was clear. These nattering, nihilistic clowns of horror have been perennial hot tickets at The Fringe for very good reason. Absolutely original, reflexively creative, they engage even when they’re stumbling through an opening night minefield of staging and sound gaffes.

You can’t keep a good horror clown down. Folly and fumble are mere ingredients for spontaneous hilarity.

In *Tense*, Mump & Smoot (aka John Turner and Michael Kennard) embark on an apocalyptic camping

trip through their native Ummonian wilderness, a quest in search of fire, fish and their god UMMO. There are arcane rituals, a fearsome “Gollwiwa” with Ginsu teeth and some minor blood-letting, although the traditional Mump and Smoot gore is decidedly soft-pedalled in this still-emerging production.

“You will see new material, some of which will be ditched by tomorrow, as well as accidents (which we refer to as “gifts from the gods”) that will be incorporated forever,” director Karen Hines advises in notes circulated at Friday’s sold-out house.

The material and gifts served up by sweet submissive Smoot and grave and grumpy Mump, chattering in their oddly comprehensible gibberish, won the house over early and doubtless will continue to for the length of their run.

“The best one, the very first play,” my seatmate predicted.

She may be right.

— Richard Helm

C A N A D A ' S N A T I O N A L N E W S P A P E R

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Includes GST in Greater Toronto;  
other outside and in boxes

Toronto, Wednesday, July 2, 1997

Sun and cloud. Thun

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**FRINGE FESTIVAL** / *If golf is your bag, step up to this sort-of love story. If not, try Shakti, the tantrum dancer, or Mump and Smoot, the clowns of horror.*

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Mump and Smoot are back and as darkly funny as ever. Their personalities are unchanged — Mump (Michael Kennard) is the big bossy one in blue tights; Smoot (John Turner) is the small, whiny one in red shorts. Their language is still gibberish, with the odd word of English thrown in. But in their new show *Tense*, their tempers seem to be fraying. As they embark on a camping trip cum spiritual quest for their god Ummo, they are in a foul mood with each other, their complicated props, the audience (feeble participation) and the technician (slow on the cues).

The colourful tent and camping gear slow them down and the ending generatès into chaos, but Mump and Smoot never leave character. And it is those grumpy characters, so human in their inability to rise above petty differences and small setbacks, that make any Mump and Smoot show a treat. This Fringe show is billed as part of the clowns' development process, so no doubt a smoother and less improvised version will raise its ghoulish face soon.

*The Fringe continues at various locations in the Annex and on the University of Toronto campus until July 13. For tickets and a program call 534-5919.*

## ENTERTAIN

Sunday, July 6, 1997 Section C

# Mump and Smoot prove clowning's in the details

Improvisation turns canoe trip into comic highlight

BY SUSAN WALKER  
ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

*Tense* (\*\*\*): Thank Ummo. Mump and Smoot are back at the Fringe with a new show to remind us that when it comes to clowning, accept no substitutes for Michael Kennard and John Turner.

Engaging on a summer theme, the two embark on a canoe trip, steering a large nylon craft through the auditorium and onto the stage, slapping a few heads with paddles as they go by. Not too handily, they convert the canoe into a tent onstage.

It's not so much the aimless plot as the often-improvised interaction with the audience and the control room that makes Mump and Smoot's brand of clowning so funny. Accidents of timing become part of the comedy as the two antagonists, like enemies joined at the hip, battle on—fighting off a bear, invoking the aid of the supreme Ummo (played by third man Rick "unst) and generally floun-

## Fringe Festival

dering about in the wilderness. With even fewer props than usual, Mump and Smoot show that the essence of clowning is not broad strokes but minimal gestures. The next performance of *Tense* is tonight at 9.30 in the Robert Gill Theatre.

E6 THE TORONTO STAR Monday, July 14,

## Fringe v

BY GEOFF CHAPMAN  
DRAMA CRITIC

It keeps on growing and growing and growing.

But, unlike the battery bunny, the 9th annual Toronto Fringe Theatre Festival that wound up last night with a huge bash at Lee's Palace after 83 companies mounted 500 performances, is looking to get bigger rather than just pound away next year.

This year, attendance was confidently expected to be up 15 per cent, to 35,000, with advance ticket sales up 200 per cent over 1996. Saturday set a box office record, with \$18,500 paid to performers, who get all box office revenues, at \$8 a head. "We've just been blown away," says producer Nancy Webster.

The biggest draws were Yodellers, *Muscle Memories*, *Mump & Smoot In "Tense,"* *The Death Of General Wolfe*, *Doris Lives!* "Que Sera, Sera," *Growl Sweetly*, *Check Out Times*, *The Tragical History Of*



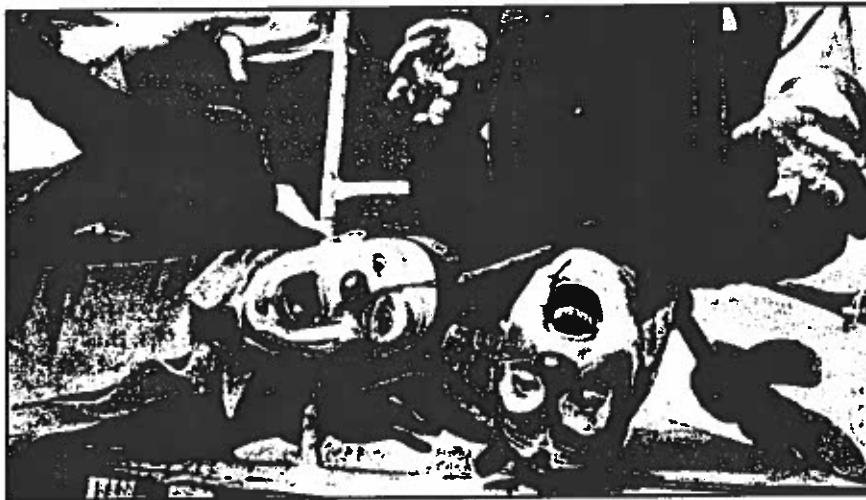
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