

Laser Beak Man @ La Boite Theatre Review

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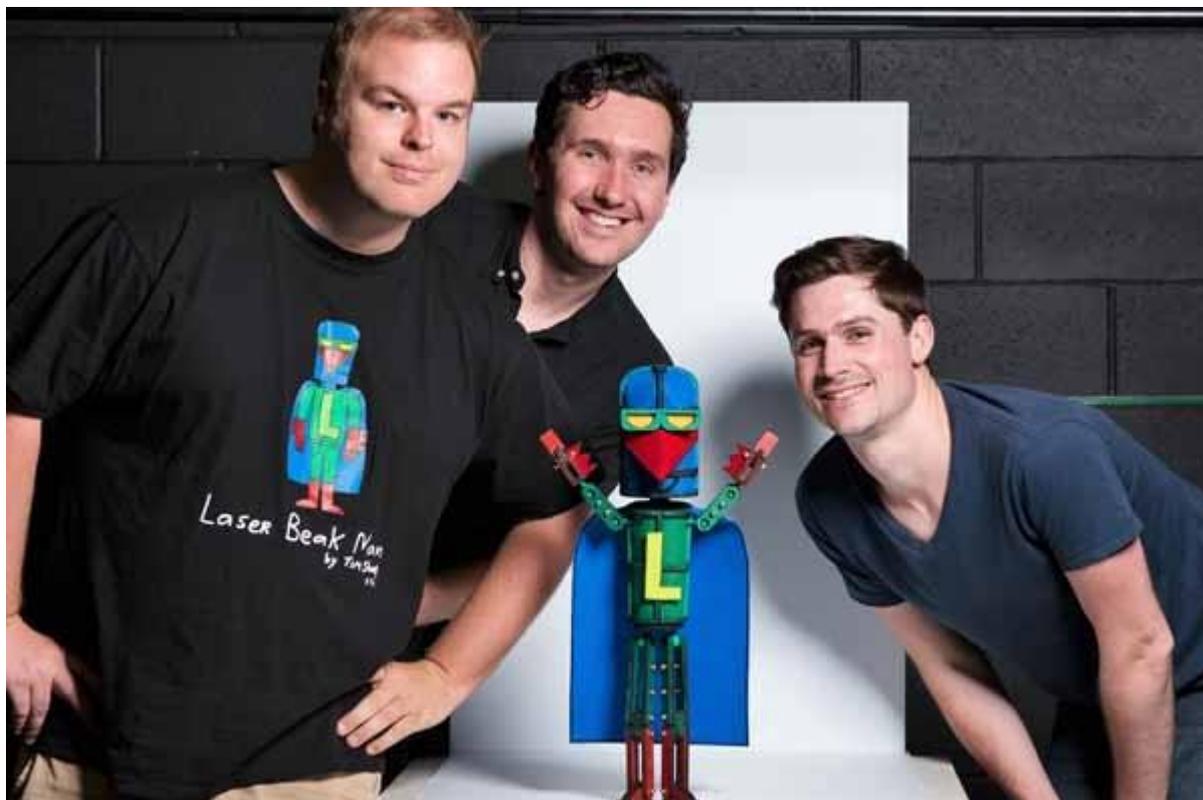


Image © Dylan Evans

Fresh from New York, David Morton and Nicholas Paine of Dead Puppet Society delivered their most ambitious production to date with their eye-popping, technically brilliant show 'Laser Beak Man'.

Opening at La Boite as part of the Brisbane Festival, 'Laser Beak Man' has been four years in the making and is jam packed with the trademark visual puns and offbeat humour of Queensland artist Tim Sharp, whose colourful art is the catalyst for this truly imaginative and ground breaking show.

In this mesmerising 90-minute production, Laser Beak Man and his fellow super heroes are brought to life by seven puppeteers (four from New York and three from Australia) who weave their magic on stage, manipulating 40 plus puppets including several fully functional 3D versions.

This is not puppetry as you may know it, but a large scale theatrical production from the creative minds of Dead Puppet Society (DPS) and the technical vision of John Oxlade, whose set design is simply stunning. This is a show that thinks big and fills the stage using activated scenery and large-scale animations by Justin Harrison ('The Wider Earth') all of which are created using Tim's original artworks.

In another first for DPS, the show features two Air Orbs – controllable floating Helium

drones which appear from the wings and whizz around the theatre. Technically, this is a very slick production with the puppeteers also doubling up as actors, while the massive wide screen animations bring an almost psychedelic effect to this already mind-bending work.

Based on Sharp's vibrant characters the Laser Beak Man story is simple enough. In a nutshell, Laser Beak Man lives in the most beautiful city in the world – Power City where he works tirelessly to keep it clean. Drawing energy from the underground Magna Crystals that power the City, his beak has the ability to shoot lasers that turn bad to good.

Everything is fine until Laser Beak Man's estranged childhood friend Peter Bartman steals the Magna Crystals [using the Thriller Driller] and robs LBM of his super powers.

Clearly, Laser Beak Man must find a way to stop Bartman from destroying his hometown.

While 'Laser Beak Man' is essentially a classic story of good overcoming evil it is more importantly a story of love, equality and the power of inclusion and DPS have carefully woven these subtle messages into the fabric of the storyline.

On stage the often frenetic action is underpinned by Sam Cromack's [Ball Park Music] melodic, hook-laden score which is performed live on stage by Cromack and his BPM bandmates Dean Hanson, Daniel Hanson, and Luke Moseley. Having a live band in a theatre is always a risky proposition but in this instance the balance was close to perfect.

'Laser Beak Man' is truly innovative theatre and unlike anything you'll have seen before. It is charming, funny, visually compelling and technically jaw-dropping. Yet its greatest achievement is conveying without speech the character of Laser Beak Man who is mute.

Interestingly, in a case of art imitating life, Tim who was diagnosed with autism at age three and was never expected to speak is now a highly sought-after public speaker while his alter-ego and good friend Laser Beak Man remains silent.

Through this heart-felt and moving production, Laser Beak Man has finally found his voice and the world is a better place for it.

★★★★★