

REVIEWS

The Godfadda WORKOUT

Created by Seth Isler and Susan Jane Sullivan

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The Godfadda WORKOUT

Created by *Seth Isler and Susan Jane Sullivan*

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT SLAYS THE PRESS DURING ITS SUMMER RESIDENCE AT BALLY'S ATLANTIC CITY

One-man show of the American film classic THE GODFATHER, draws rave reviews from Atlantic City and Philadelphia Press.



Imagine one very obsessed man stepping through the proverbial looking glass of life and emerging inside Francis Ford Coppola's mob masterpiece where his every word and action sub-reference his favorite movie. To regain his (questionable) sanity he forms a pack with the (recurring) voice of Don Corleone who challenges him to single handedly act out all the major scenes from the *The Godfather* (though it must be to the Don's satisfaction) thus earning his restoration to his so-called normal life. But things don't always go according to plan. The actor magically portrays 37 characters in this athletic tour-de-force, reminding audiences of the classic film's actors (**Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, James Caan, Diane Keaton and many more**) straight out of their iconic *Godfather* scenes. *The Godfadda Workout* creates the fantastic illusion that you too have stepped inside the mafia cult classic.

The award-winning comedy has been viewed at the HBO Comedy Festival where it was hailed as "...the Show to See". Shortly after the terrific HBO success, *The Godfadda Workout* opened Off-Broadway where it exploded as a knock out hit drawing rave reviews from the country's toughest critics and forcing Seth Isler and Susan Jane Sullivan to expand the show's content. After a triumphant run, the mafia movie spin-off traveled west with performances in Las Vegas at the Golden Nugget Hotel, the Pico Playhouse in Century City and a special engagement at the Norris Center for the Performing Arts in Palos Verdes, CA. During the recent summer 2010 engagement at Bally's Casino in Atlantic City, *The Godfadda Workout* received standing ovations every night and spectacular reviews from all the attending press – newspaper, web, video, radio and NBC TV Entertainment. The show has taken on the characteristics of many great cult classics with audiences returning over and over (often dressing in mob style).

CRITICS QUOTES:

Atlantic City Press: *"The Godfadda Workout is hands-down the most clever, interesting [show] to hit town this summer."*

Courier Post: *"Atlantic City's must-see show of the summer is a blood spurting, [sweaty] comedy that will forever change the way people view the iconic, film classic, The Godfather"*

David Spatz - NBC News: *"The Godfadda Workout is the most unique and original show to hit Atlantic City in years"*

The Philadelphia Post: *"The Godfadda Workout doesn't push the envelope of entertainment in Atlantic City, it sends a hail of Tommy-Gun bullets through it."*

The Philadelphia Inquirer (Philly.com Gaming Traveler): *"...The Godfather with a comedic spin ...he moves ingeniously."*

The Atlantic City Weekly: *"...One-man parody of the classic film presents an offer of laughter you can't refuse"*

At The Shore: *"...A one of a kind show that should leave the audience in stitches"*

Regis Philbin - Regis & Kelly: *"...Ingeniously staged! A whole lot of fun."*

Ann Curry - The Today Show: *"Bravo! Bravo! Fabulous!"*

The New York Times: *"A Tour-De-Farce. Genuinely Crowd-Pleasing, 'Family' Entertainment."*

The Wall Street Journal: *"Physical daring and pinpoint comic timing! 80 minutes of inspired slapstick!"*

Richmond Shepard - Performing Arts Insider: *"...Magnetic, unceasingly fascinating — an all too rare quality."*

Neil Rosen - WABC Radio: *"Sensational! Absolutely hilarious! 4 out of 4 apples!"*

WOR Radio: *"A scream! Utter madness! 80 minutes of fun!"*

Newsday: *"...Therapy for Godfather Junkies."*

The Los Angeles Times: *"Mad Brilliance and Daring ...An Offer You Can't Refuse." "Screamingly Funny!"*

The Daily Breeze: *"By the show's climax, you likely will be exhausted...from laughing."*

The LA Weekly: *"It was riotously funny when I reviewed it years ago. It's twice as funny now!"*

Goldstar Events (Roar Winner): *"Incredibly Brilliant Theatre" "Pure Genius!"*

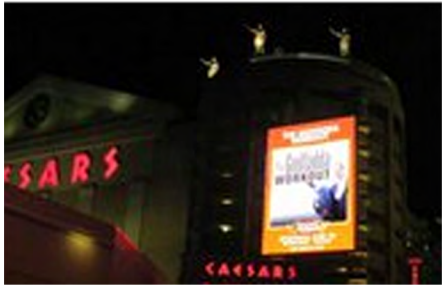
Coast to coast, fans have followed this unique saga across the country and continue to come back for more. Read further for many more sensational accolades.

For information and availability schedule of this "...genuinely crowd-pleasing 'family' entertainment", please visit www.godfaddaworkout.com or contact:

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Atlantic City Signage



'The Godfadda Workout'

The chance to see one-man show is an offer any fan of the classic Francis Ford Coppola film can't refuse

By **SCOTT CRONICK**
Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — "The Godfadda Workout" is hands down the most clever, interesting revue show to hit town this summer...

"The Godfadda Workout" is aptly named because one actor receives a remarkable exercise routine by performing scenes by himself from "The Godfather."

Star Seth Isler, who rotates performances with Ed Kershen and Vincent Giovanni, not only knows at least

Review

'The Godfadda Workout'

8 p.m. Wednesdays to Sundays to Sept. 5 at Bally's Atlantic City's Palace Theater. Tickets, priced at \$25, are available at Ticketmaster, Bally's box office or pressofatlanticcity.com/tickets

90 minutes worth of scenes — verbatim — but he knows where every character sits or stands and every movement each character makes.

Isler jumps and slides over desks and bars, runs from chair to chair, refusing to recite a single line of the film's dialogue unless he's in the exact position of the character. Wigs pop out of the rafters when he performs female characters' lines. Hands emerge from tables offering props. Other hands emerge from the background to put on costumes. Isler even serves as his own translator, offering English cue cards for the audience when he speaks Italian.

It's quite a sight to see — and hear, of course. All of it is done in a farcical manner as Isler injects jokes throughout the dialogue with perfect comic timing to keep the audience on its toes.

But if you have never seen "The Godfather," the absurdity of Isler's athleticism and manic pace may wear thin. Even if you have seen "The Godfather" once or twice, the jokes may be too inside. This show is aimed at "The Godfather" fanatic, the annoying guy at parties who makes references to the film to prove how many times he's seen it. This is not for the casual "Godfather" viewer; you have to love it!

The premise of the show is Isler is that annoying guy. He can't get the film's banter out of his head. In fact, he hears The Godfather himself, Don Vito Corleone, speaking to him. So the Don — who can be heard over the theater's sound system — makes him an offer he can't refuse. If Isler plays out the scenes from the movie one more time, he's out.

"No more voices, no more sub-references, no more Sollozzo tricks," Isler says.

The show begins as the movie does when Bonasera approaches Don Corleone on the day of his daughter's wedding as the Don pets his (puppet) cat. Even if Bonasera has two words of dialogue, Isler is jumping over the desk, resulting in some funny moments, including Don Corleone stepping on his cat.

Isler jumps and slides over desks and bars, runs from chair to chair, refusing to recite a single line of the film's dialogue unless he's in the exact position of the character. Wigs pop out of the rafters when he performs female characters' lines. Hands emerge from tables offering props. Other hands

emerge from the background to put on costumes. Isler even serves as his own translator, offering English cue cards for the audience when he speaks Italian.



Press photos by Tom Briglia

Seth Isler performs the opening scene of 'The Godfather' as Don Vito Corleone (played by Marlon Brando) in the one-man show 'The Godfadda Workout' at Bally's Atlantic City. During the course of the show, Isler portrays 37 characters from the classic Mafia film.

Other memorable scenes include Tom Hagen and Jack Woltz at the long dinner table arguing about Johnny Fontane, Luca Brasi getting strangled, the restaurant scene where Michael Corleone assassinates Capt. McCluskey and Virgil "The Turk" Sollozzo, and the garden finale. Even the bespectacled Mo Green gets shot in the eye, complete with exaggerated blood squirting.

Isler does a remarkable job of going in and out of the different characters, taking on their vocal tones and physical traits. He excels as Sonny, Michael and Don Corleone, while his Tom Hagen and Luca Brasi need some work. He's a thrill to watch as he tackles 37 characters with amazing precision and humor.

Although I am sure Isler's understudies can certainly handle the show well, I recommend seeing Isler perform on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. After all, Isler also co-created the show with Susan Sullivan.

"The Godfadda Workout" offers a fun, inexpensive, one-man theatrical experience that is highly recommended if you're the kind of person who can't channel surf past "The Godfather's" endless cable viewings.

Contact Scott Cronick:
609-272-7017
SCronick@pressofac.com



Isler as Virgil 'The Turk' Sollozzo (played by Al Lettieri) as he is about to strangle bodyguard Luca Brasi.



Isler as Michael Corleone (played by Al Pacino) in the wedding scene after he returns home from the war.



Isler as Santino 'Sonny' Corleone (played by James Caan) in the war room meeting.



Isler as Don Vito Corleone (played by Brando) dying in the garden of an apparent heart attack.

COURIER-POST

July 30, 2010

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DIVERSIONS | CASINO BEAT

'The Godfadda Workout' mines cinematic classic for laughs

By **DAVID J. SPATZ**
For The Courier-Post

Atlantic City's must-see show of the summer is a blood-sputtering, toilet-splashing comedy that will forever change the way people view the iconic film classic "The Godfather."

"The Godfadda Workout," which is playing at the Palace Theater at Bally's Atlantic City through Sept. 5, is a unique presentation.

Simply put, "The Godfadda Workout" is a condensed version of the film acted out by one performer who plays more than three dozen roles and literally leaps, dives, races and vaults from one character to the next and from one scene to another.

Fifteen years ago, Seth Isler, a character actor who's worked steadily in television and film since the early 1980s, turned his obsession with "The Godfather" into a tour de farce with the help of co-creator Susan Sullivan.

Together, they've crafted a quirky, slapstick comedy that takes its dialogue directly from the screenplay, which Isler occasionally punches up with some well-timed ad-libs.

"We've got a lot of elements of Buster Keaton, Sid Caesar and Dick Van Dyke in the show, because they were all broad physical performers," Sullivan says. Unless you're very familiar with "The Godfather" — meaning you've seen it more than a couple of times — you'll probably find "The Godfadda Workout" an exercise in tedium.

But if you are one of those folks who knows the dialogue by heart — and there's a sizable sub-culture of "Godfather" aficio-



Photo provided

Seth Isler takes on every role in the classic film 'The Godfather' at Bally's.

nados who do — then you'll be laughing out loud and even predicting some of the props and sight gags that Isler and Sullivan throw into the show for even more comic relief. The show is so physically demanding that Isler alternates the role with actors Ed Kershner and Vincent Giovanni.

"This show has the potential for injury," Isler says on stage as he pushes himself through a series of pre-show warm-up exercises.

He isn't kidding. In the opening scene, when Bonasera asks Don Vito Corleone for a favor, Isler, 51, nimbly vaults over a desk at least a half-dozen times or more to deliver each

character's lines.

By the end of the show — 90 minutes and 37 characters later — Isler is soaked in perspiration. The show is as much aerobic exercise as it is acting.

"We tried to keep it as close to the (film) as possible, even in the way the (characters) are positioned, the way they sit, the way they stand," Isler adds. He attempts to deliver the lines in the character's voice. He studied the speech patterns of the film's principal actors for months and tries to nail each of the voices.

He won't call his performances impressions, but he does succeed in approximating the voices of Don

Corleone (played by Marlon Brando), Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), Tom Hagen (Robert Duvall) and others.

Isler doesn't let a little thing like gender get in the way. When a scene includes Kay Adams (Diane Keaton), Isler lapses into a slight falsetto and completes the illusion when a woman's wig drops from above the stage and settles on his head.

Throughout the show, Isler receives support from the Bally's tech crew — whom he refers to as "The Goombas" — who assist him on stage with costume changes and dozens of props. They're so involved in the show that the crew

actually takes a bow with Isler at the show's end.

The show, tied together with a thin story line about a guy so obsessed with "The Godfather" that he's constantly hearing the voice of Don Corleone, is pure comedy, although the audience is sometimes confused as to whether or not to laugh.

Isler seems to know where those moments are, and if there's any uncertainty on the part of the audience, he ends it with a sight gag. In the bathroom scene just before a cop and a rival mobster get whacked in a restaurant, Isler — as Michael Corleone — milks it for laughs when he pulls a small horse head out from behind the toilet tank where a gun is concealed, then steps into the toilet and then leaves the restroom with a long strip of toilet paper clinging to his wet shoe.

During the baptism scene for Michael's nephew, the prop baby urinates on the priest. And during scenes where a character speaks Italian, Isler produces a series of cue cards with the English translation.

Isler keeps the audience on its toes by tossing in a little cinematic anachronism when Don Corleone says, as an aside, "I could have been a contender," a line straight out of Brando's performance in "On the Waterfront." "The Godfadda Workout" is at Bally's Atlantic City Wednesday through Sunday at 8 p.m., through Sept. 5. Tickets are \$25, available through ticketmaster.com or (800) 736-1420. ■■■

Atlantic City Weekly®

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE JERSEY SHORE

JULY 8 - 14, 2010

• FEATURE

The Godfather's Biggest Fan

Seth Isler's amusing one-man parody of the classic movie presents an offer of laughter you can't refuse

WE'VE ALL HAD MOVIES that stayed with us for years and even decades.

The Godfadda Workout is a show for anyone who has ever stood in front of the mirror and said, "Are you talkin' to me?"

Actor Seth Isler, collaborating with his co-creator Susan Jane Sullivan, turned his obsession with *The Godfather* into a one-man show that recreates numerous key scenes from the legendary movie, with added physical comedy bits. As for the "Workout" portion of the title, Isler is the one getting the workout by leaping over desks, sliding across a table and doing other energetic bits of physical busi-

"A man can never be a real man unless he has memorized 'The Godfather.'"

ness as he parades around the stage to play the numerous characters he creates — Brando's Godfather, Robert Duvall's Tom, James Caan's Sonny, Al Pacino's Michael and even Diane Keaton's Kay.

The premise of the show is that Isler has lost many of his friends and ruined romantic relationships because of his obsession with *The Godfather*. He talks to the Godfather (a voice from the sky),



Isler in action

PHOTO BY TOM BRIGLIA

who suggests that in order to exorcise his obsession, Isler should do a series of scenes from the movie. When he is done, his obsession will be cured.

This is the premise that gives Isler the opportunity to have a blast doing his impressive vocal impressions of the cast and his crazy physical actions. And, although he has the only speaking role, it should be noted that the stagehands bring their own comedy style to the changing of the set pieces and as behind-the-scenes assistants. This one-man show takes more than one person

to pull it off successfully.

The Godfadda Workout will entertain all the obsessive movie fans out there who are guilty of creating movie scenes in the privacy of their own homes. Isler has taken his own obsession to the stage of Bally's Palace Theater this summer. ■

By Lori Hoffman

'The Godfadda Workout'

When: Now to Sept. 5, Wed.-Sun. 8pm

Where: Bally's Palace Theater, A.C.

How Much: \$25

From the Freeway to the Stage

When he isn't recreating *The Godfather* onstage, Seth Isler is an actor (*Bones*, *Cold Case*, *Medium*, *E.R.*) and a producer of documentaries. He has produced many History Channel, MSNBC and A&E specials, biographies and series, including the award-winning *The Unfinished Civil War*, and A&E's *Biography of David Ben-Gurion*, both of which he also narrated. *The Godfadda Workout* has received numerous awards, and has been produced Off-Broadway, in Las Vegas, Los Angeles and at the HBO Comedy Festival in Aspen, Colo., before landing at Bally's this summer.

Isler explains that, "My philosophy of life is that a man can never be a real man unless he has memorized *The Godfather*. I watched that movie a million times and then one day I went driving in L.A. on the 405 freeway and I started reciting the dialogue. Of course no one was looking at me because that is pretty normal behavior for the L.A. freeway." Later Isler met Susan Sullivan at an acting workshop and she helped shape his vision into the finished show. "We went to junk yards, thrift yards ... the show has a homemade feel to it. You're supposed to see all the gags, all the strings. It is supposed to be this obsessed guy who built this set in his dad's garage." Isler also admits that he never expected this gig to linger for 14 years. "Just when I thought I was out ... this has been an absolutely amazing time for us. We just keep coming back to this because we get so much joy out of doing it." — LH

Craig Ferguson just wants us all to laugh and have a good time

by Ed Condran

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Casino Notes:

Summer's the season for shows in A.C.



By Chuck Darrow

THERE USED to be a time when extended-run presentations were the year-round norm in Atlantic City. Regardless of season, you could find a handful of production shows - lavish song-and-dance presentations, vaudeville-like variety programs, truncated versions of Broadway hits, magic exhibitions - that would be in residence from two weeks to three months. But for the past several years (and with the exception of Tropicana Casino and Resort, which still stages production shows on a 12-month basis), the casinos have designated summer as the time for such programming. And by this time next week, six - count 'em - six presentations will have opened, providing visitors everything from the traditional to the never-before-seen-in-AyCee. *Read more:*

http://www.philly.com/dailynews/columnists/chuck_darrow/20100625_CasiNotes__Summer_s_the_season_for_shows_in_A_C_.html#ixzz1096liFYN

The Godfaddah Workout (Wednesday through Sept. 5):

... *"The Godfaddah Workout"* doesn't push the envelope of Atlantic City entertainment, it sends a hail of tommy gun bullets through it. Los Angeles-based actor Seth Isler recreates numerous scenes from *"The Godfather,"* portraying 37 characters all by himself. He mixes in a stream of wisecracks with which he comments on his performance, and acrobatic feats, all of which add up to - a singular 90 minutes of entertainment.

Bally's Atlantic City, Boardwalk at Park Place,
 8 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday (Palace Theater), \$25.
 800-736-1420 | www.ticketmaster.com.

Show House • 'Knight and Day' • Festival Fever • Pearl Street

'The Godfadda Workout' at Bally's

WHAT IS IT: "The Godfadda Workout" is a one-man show created by Seth Isler and Susan Jane Sullivan. The show was featured at the HBO Comedy Festival in Aspen, Colo., where it was a huge hit. Afterwards, the show opened Off-Broadway at the American Palace Theatre, where it drew rave reviews. The show has since gone across the country, selling out shows at every stop. The New York Times described it as "A Tour-De-Farce. Genuinely crowd-pleasing, family entertainment."

WHAT TO EXPECT: The premise of "The Godfadda Workout" is an obsessed man living his life through the characters and dialogue from Francis Ford Coppola's classic mafia film "The Godfather." Thirty-seven characters are per-



'The Godfadda Workout'

AT THE SHORE

formed throughout the show, including a cat. The opening scene shows the main character making a deal with the Don to perform the entire film solo in order to go back to living a normal life, free at last from his obsession. "The Godfadda Workout" is a one-of-a-kind show that should leave the audience in stitches.

WEBSITE:
www.godfaddaworkout.com



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Richmond Shepard

Performing Arts Insider, and Lively-Arts.com

The Godfadda Workout brings a new star performer to New York. Okay, he's 43 and has been a performer for many years, but he's new to us. Seth Isler is an actor, comedian, impressionist, flexible in body and character, with great charm and athleticism. He gives us an amazing variety of vocal and body attitudes as he captures and satirizes all the major characters in the movie "The Godfather." It's not only a brilliantly performed tour-de-force stunt, it's so well produced and directed by Susan Jane Sullivan, with props, set pieces, an almost chorus of six stagehands, and lighting, that even though one man is playing all the characters, it has the feel and dimension of a full stage production, with many people, many settings. As Isler performs the familiar scenes, both realistically and slightly askew, he is truly funny, and dead-on in his comedy impressions. And, he's magnetic, unceasingly fascinating — an all too rare quality. At the end, I wanted to see him do "Godfather II" and maybe even "III." Or anything else. *What a performer!*

Richmond Shepard is one individual who can truly be called multi-talented. He is one of America's most brilliant mimes, having toured the world with his one-man show. He has played in every major city in the United States and was a fixture for years at "The Ice House" in Pasadena, California. He has produced shows in New York City, most notably, The Lenny Bruce Revue and was the creator of the improvisational comedy troupe, "Noo Yawk Tawk", which became the proving ground for many up-and-coming young stars. Some of the performers who started out in the troupe include, Debra Wilson from "MADtv" (1995), Stan Taffel, three-time Emmy Award Winner for The News In Revue, and Doug Katsaros, composer for "The Tick" (1994), among other works. He has appeared on numerous television shows including a hilarious turn as a french mime whose act is nearly destroyed by Dick Van Dyke on his last comedy television sitcom in the 1990's, "The Van Dyke Show" (1990). He resides in New York City but still comes out to the West Coast to appear with his daughter, Vonda Shepard, on "Ally McBeal" (1997).

Tuesday, September 06, 2005

'GODFADDA WORKOUT' A PASSIONATE TRIBUTE TO 'GODFATHER'.

One-man show inspired by the Oscar-winning movie is an 80-minute exercise in physicality and parody that is not to be missed.

By Jeff Favre

"The Godfadda Workout" is more than a one-man show. It's a show that only one man could do.

That man is Seth Isler, and for more than a decade he has performed this comical homage to Francis Ford Coppola's Oscar-winning movie "The Godfather" around the country.

Isler has landed at the Century City Playhouse for a few weeks. Anyone who has missed this 80-minute exercise in physicality and parody should not ignore this chance to see it, because you never know when he will let this obsession sleep with the fishes.

And once Isler stops doing this show, it's likely no one will ever attempt to fill his shoes.

Those who saw "The Godfadda Workout" in its early incarnations will notice several alterations and additions. Most of the changes were not needed. Some, such as the name change from "The Godfather Workout," and replacing the movie soundtrack with one that sounds similar are -- one guesses -- due to pressure from Paramount, which owns the movie.

But Paramount should celebrate this show, because it's hard to watch Isler's passion for "The Godfather" and not want to run out and rent or buy the DVD.

What Isler does is recreate key scenes from the movie. He plays every role in each scene, and he gets from one place on stage to another by vaulting over desks, sliding across tables and hopping over chairs.

After a voice-over explaining how Isler's fascination for the movie grew into this show, a dim light reveals the actor as he flawlessly recites the opening monologue of the undertaker Bonasera asking the Godfather (Marlon Brando) for a favor.

As soon as the monologue ends, Isler, like a gymnast, vaults over a desk and lands in a stuffed chair, looking and sounding exactly like Brando.

For a dozen scenes, the agile actor delivers remarkable impersonations of Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, James Caan, and a large group of co-stars from the movie. The dialogue remains, for the most part, faithful to the original. But Isler, who created the show with his director, Susan Jane Sullivan, sneaks in a few comic asides.

The sight gags are more than Isler's acrobatics. He shovels a huge plate of spaghetti into his mouth. He chases a dinner plate across a table. And he turns a cat puppet into one of the funniest props in recent memory.

The "Workout" now comes with a framing device. Isler, as himself, has a running conversation with the ghost of the Godfather, who promises to rid him of the obsession if he acts out the movie one last time.

Though it's a one-man show, Isler couldn't succeed without a group of stagehands dressed as gangsters, who change the set for each scene. The show's one drawback is the lengthy black-outs, but they are necessary to move in the specially designed furniture and other props. To their credit, the stagehands try to "move with style."

By the show's climax, you likely will be exhausted from watching Isler, and from laughing. This may not be the play for those who don't like "The Godfather," but fans of the movie likely will want to see it more than once.

Jeff Favre is a freelance entertainment writer based in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles Times

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

Just when Seth Isler gives up, "The Godfadda Workout" audience frenzy pulls him back in. Since 1996, actor-writer Isler has expanded his personal obsession with "The Godfather" into a singular display of amazing stamina and ample hilarity. Following a hit Off-Broadway run, Isler returns to the Century City Playhouse in this one-man exorcism of Francis Ford Coppola's movie.

Subtitled "A Parody in 12 Rounds," "Godfadda Workout" was inspired by Isler's need to erase Coppola's film from his daily repertoire, after a 1984 revival cinema screening left him spouting scenes and characters 24/7. To halt this, Isler bargains with the unseen spirit of Don Corleone and bounds across the movie. At close, Isler has conquered his fixation and imperiled our kidneys by doing so.

Staged by Susan Jane Sullivan as a blend of "Your Show of Shows" and a gonzo industrial, "Godfadda Workout" pulls its slender premise past vaudeville into theater of the ridiculous. Many jokes require familiarity with the movie, yet the slapstick force that Isler, backed by invaluable fedora-topped stagehands, displays throughout is self-explanatory.

Brian King's original music riffs on Nino Rota, and Bill Kickbush's lighting scores many hits. ... it's a screamingly funny showcase.

More than just "Godfather" fans may find it an offer they can't refuse.

-- David C. Nichols

***"The Godfadda Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds".
Century City Playhouse, 10508 W. Pico Blvd.
8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 7 p.m. Sundays. \$30.
(310) 204-4440. Running time: 1 hour, 30 minutes***

NEW RECOMMENDED!**THE GODFADDA WORKOUT: A Parody in 12 Rounds**

Seth Isler is back with his mirthful send-up of Francis Ford Coppola's gangster chronicle. It was riotously good fun when I reviewed it years ago, and it's twice as funny now. What transpires onstage resembles something made for a cartoon. Isler hops around the stage like Yosemite Sam in overdrive, jumping over tables and desks while he does spot-on imitations of James Caan, Robert Duvall, Al Pacino, Diane Keaton and a host of other characters, as he parodies the more memorable scenes from the movie. The man's athleticism, comedic talents and energy are amazing, and this rendition features loads of hilarious new material and some outrageously funny props that Isler and his co-producer, creator and director Susan Jane Sullivan, make skilled use of. And Isler gets plenty of help from his able-bodied "goombah squad," who perform various onstage tasks throughout.

Sadly, Isler announced at the end of the show that the suits at Paramount Pictures, who produced The Godfather trilogy, are intending to shut the show down. Do parodies now violate copyright protection? Let's hope not. Stay tuned.

Century City Playhouse, 10508 W. Pico Blvd.;

Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.; thru October 8. (310) 204-4440.

Written 08/11/2005 (Lovell Estell III)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

March 27, 2002

In another era, Seth Isler would be the toast of television, a Sid Caesar or Carol Burnett who matches physical daring and pinpoint comic timing with the ability to write his own material. Instead, the balding fortysomething actor is best known not for his comic and acrobatic skills but for his credits as a producer of cable TV documentaries and for being the narrator of the award-winning "The Unfinished Civil War." But this is about to change. Mr. Isler's one-man show, "The Godfadda Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds," is a hoot and a half.

With the help of director Susan Jane Sullivan, five fedora wearing stage hands, a stuffed hobby-horse head and the audience's shared affection for "The Godfather," Mr. Isler literally leaps into a host of parts from the movie, vaulting across tables, sliding along cables, scarfing down Chinese food and sucking up spaghetti in a desperate attempt to please an unseen Godfather (whose voice seems to emanate from that other kind of underworld) and thus free himself from a two-decade obsession with the 30-year-old film.

It's 80 minutes of inspired slapstick silliness and good-natured, prop-propelled fun delivered at a breakneck pace by the indefatigable Mr. Isler. And if laughs burn calories, the audience gets a workout, too.



One Busy Guy Makes a Whole Mob Scene

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

As gangland get-togethers go, this one is pretty thorough. Don Vito Corleone is there, and so are his sons Sonny and Michael and his consigliere, Tom Hagen. Likewise the faithful Luca Brasi, the treacherous Barzini and the ambitious Sollozzo. Michael's girlfriend, Kay Adams, puts in an appearance, and so do the crooked police captain, McCluskey; various heads of underworld families; Jack Woltz, the angry Hollywood producer who doesn't want to do the don a favor; the bespectacled Moe Green, who didn't want to sell the Corleones his Las Vegas hotel; and the priest who baptizes Michael's godson.

Among the props are a horse's head, a pistol hidden behind an overhead toilet tank, a large plate of spaghetti, lots of Chinese-food containers and the rows of tomato plants where Vito Corleone's life comes to an end while he plays with his grandson.

No, this isn't a review of a 30th-anniversary screening of the Academy Award-winning Francis Ford Coppola film based on Mario Puzo's best-selling novel "The Godfather." It's a very brief description of "The Godfadduh Workout," the one-man show at the American Place Theater that reduces the epic film to the kind of absurdity once practiced by people like Sid Caesar, Carl Reiner, Howard Morris and Imogene Coca.

Oh, sure, there are a few fedora-wearing, T-shirted and suspended so-called goombahs who do yeoman service in changing the scenery and providing the props. But Seth Isler, who conceived this tour de farce and plays all its roles, is the lunatic whirlwind behind all the strenuous parody.

Directed by Susan Jane Sullivan, "The Godfadduh Workout" may be essentially a one-joke exercise and its pretext as flimsy as a strand of angel-hair pasta, but this unsophisticated, 90-minute intermissionless comedy delivers sufficient invention, acrobatics and madcap mob humor to send a lot of "Godfather" fans home happy.

This show, as the advertising business likes to say, is "The Godfather" as you've never seen it."

Mr. Isler, changing expressions, clothes and voices, truly tosses himself into multiple portrayals that evoke the film performances of peo-



Joan Marcus

Seth Isler in his one-man show, "The Godfadduh Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds."

THE GODFADDAH WORKOUT A Parody in 12 Rounds

Created and performed by Seth Isler; produced and directed by Susan Jane Sullivan; original incidental music composed by Brian King; lighting by Rob Williams and Jack Mehler; production managers, Lankey & Limey Ltd.; associate producer, Saul Isler; general manager, Richards/Climan Inc. Presented by East of Doheny Ltd., in association with Woody Fraser Productions. At the American Place Theater, 111 West 46th Street, Manhattan.

ple like Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, James Caan, Robert Duvall and Diane Keaton. As the entire cast, Mr. Isler leaps across desks, slides along tables on which the food zips from end to end on a wire, throws himself from chair to chair delivering reactions, works both sides of a bar and switches sexes as wigs, hats and dresses bedeck him.

He has Don Corleone's expressive mouth, McCluskey's hoarse voice, Jack Woltz's roaring rage, the priest's Latin drone and Kay's shrillness. Mr. Isler even becomes both killer and victims in the memorable restaurant scene in which Michael Corleone wreaks deadly vengeance on Sollozzo and McCluskey after the attempt on Vito Corleone's life.

The restaurant scene, with the gun hidden over the toilet, a heaping plate of spaghetti on the table, wires

binding Michael's broken jaw and the conversation in Italian between him and Sollozzo (with sometimes mischievous simultaneous translation via placards on the table) is one of the hilarious highlights of Mr. Isler's slapstick saga.

Though not every episode from the film turns up in "The Godfadduh Workout," Mr. Isler has retained many of the best: the introduction of the don as he hears an appeal for justice in his home while the wedding proceeds outside; the uniformed Michael's retelling to Kay of the offer-he-couldn't-refuse story; and Luca's death by garroting while a knife pins his hand to the bar. (Remember, Mr. Isler is playing all the roles.)

Not overlooked either are Tom Hagen's dinner with the Hollywood producer, Sonny's flamboyant death by machine gun at the causeway toll booth, Barzini's Mafia summit meeting and the climactic baptism, at which the priest intones the ritual while Michael's forces are settling all family business with a series of rub-outs from New York to Las Vegas.

How did things come this far?

Mr. Isler explains at the outset that one day in 1984 a young man revisited "The Godfather" and became obsessed with the film, spouting its dialogue, ruining relationships and otherwise losing a normal life. Now, at 42, he wants to exorcise those voices, and he appeals to the don (a recorded voice) to free him. The don agrees that if he plays the scenes from the film to his liking, he will be released from his obsession.

This pact serves as the show's flimsy launching pad, and the conclusion is similarly weak. But in between, "The Godfadduh Workout" achieves genuinely crowd-pleasing moments of what can only be called family entertainment.

Newsday

By John Anderson

May 12, 2002

Working Out A 'Godfadda' Obsession

Me and a frienda mine, we used to have dis thing, by which when either of us got a little, shall we say, outta hand, the otha' one would straighten 'im out. "He might not even be in the car, Sonny!" we'd say, thus rendering the offending party momentarily mute.

Watch enough movies, and the dialogue starts popping up in your everyday conversation.

"We'll always have Paris."

"I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

"Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

The line at the top, of course, is from "The Godfather," spoken by Tom Hagen during one of Santino Corleone's characteristically impossible moments.

And as we stand on the threshold of a summer ripe with the latest installments of movie franchises custom-made for the obsessive-compulsive - "Star Wars," "Austin Powers," "Men in Black," movies whose words have become/are becoming part of the vernacular - youse still gotta face da fact that "The Godfather," second perhaps only to "Casablanca," is the most quotable movie around. ("Leave the gun. Take the cannolis.")

You won't get an argument from Seth Isler. He spends eight shows a week performing the entire movie by himself at Manhattan's American Place Theater (46th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues).

In Isler's "The Godfadda Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds," the actor comes out hat in hand, asks the Don's indulgence regarding the outrage committed against his daughter, then vaults over

the desk, pets his cat (OK, a hand puppet) and mutters, "Buona sera ...buona sera ..." Later, he's shot on the causeway, has to strangle himself in a bar while playing Bruno Tattaglia and Luca Brasi, and finally acts out the entire climactic baptism montage. He makes the rest of us "Godfather" nuts seem like the amateurs we are.

It all began in the mid-'90s, Isler said. "I walked into a revival house in L.A. - it's in the show's narration: 'A young actor with too much time on his hands, sitting around the house checking the phone for a dial tone' - and I walked in and watched the movie for the umpteenth time, and it just hit me like a shot. I got so obsessed with that one scene where Sonny's arguing with Tom about what to do with Sollozzo, and Michael says, 'I'll kill 'em both.' We call it the war room scene. Anyway, I walked out of that theater and got in my car and as anyone in L.A. will tell you, you're on the 405 freeway, it goes nowhere at 4 o'clock. And there I am, alone, in a time before cell phones, reciting all the dialogue. 'Not this time, concigliere! You give 'em one message ...' " and people next to me were driving by and seeing me arguing with myself. And it was pretty weird.

"So I thought, 'What if a guy got so obsessed with that movie that the only way he could get over it was to act out the entire movie all by himself?'"

Isler started to develop a piece that included most of the movie, at least up to the tomato plants scene, and performed it at a little workshop over a bowling alley next to Jerry's Deli. "I would do this show, and every night I'd come down and half my audience was eating corned beef and the other half was on lanes six and seven. We were the cultural hub of L.A. They'd all wave to me before they'd roll another ball."

Between frames, he met his current director, Susan Jane Sullivan, who asked him what he wanted to do with the show. "I said I wanted to do the entire 'Godfather' in 20 minutes and call it the 'Godfadda Workout.'" To her credit, Sullivan didn't call the police. Or Capt. McCluskey. She helped him get the show into a state where HBO saw it and scheduled it to open the Aspen Comedy Festival in 1997 and which has evolved dramatically, up to and including its run at the American Place.

"I had faith they'd come and find me," he said of his audiences, the fanatics worshipping at the stage of the megafanatic. "I hear them in the audience with their dates, explaining things. Like why I'm strangling myself. 'Well, you see dear, it's a trap for Luca Brasi ...'"

He's had more than his share of repeat customers, of course, because - please excuse us - he made them an offer they couldn't refuse: "The Godfadda Workout" is therapy for "Godfather" junkies and provides solace for people who, as Isler explained it, "never had a 12-step program."

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MICHAEL KILIAN

For Isler, 'Godfather' is personal business

NEW YORK — Everyone has a dream. Ernest Shackleton wanted to go to the South Pole. Al Gore wanted to become president. Pamela Anderson may very well have wanted to become a great actress.

Seth Isler is one of the lucky few who has actually been able to realize his dream.

After 20 years as a TV and movie actor, and three years as the History Channel's leading producer of Civil War documentaries, Isler has finally achieved his life's desire of playing all the major characters from the movie "The Godfather" — live, onstage and on Broadway.

"This is my life's work," he said, over a bowl of oatmeal at Harry's restaurant on 42nd Street the other morning. "This is something I kind of want to set aside."

Getting into character

You must understand that we're not talking mere mimicry here. In his one-man show, "The Godfadda Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds" — now playing at the American Place Theatre — Isler doesn't just stand there like Rich Little, simply trying to *sound* like Don Vito Corleone, Michael Corleone, Tom Hagen, Peter Clemenza, Carlo Rizzi, Sal Tessio, Virgil "the Turk" Sollozzo and vividly remembered others.

He re-creates 12 actual entire scenes from the movie, playing all the characters. And how does he manage that?

Gymnastics. For example, Isler re-enacts the scene where the Cappello Whose Daughter Was Wronged comes to Don Corleone to ask for justice by literally vaulting over Don Corleone's desk.

The verisimilitude has its limits. Instead of a real cat, Isler's Don Corleone strokes a black cat hand puppet. And the horse's head looks

like it once belonged on a stick with a wheel on the end.

Otherwise, it's the real deal — right down to the look of Isler's tux. His performance is presented as a sort of show within a show, employing the context of a man who is not only obsessed with "The Godfather" but who is trying to work this obsession out of his system.

A long career

This pretty much describes Seth Isler. A native of Cleveland, he came to New York at age 19 to study acting, did so for three years, and then moved to Los Angeles to find work, making a career of doing guest shots on TV shows such as "St. Elsewhere," "T.J. Hooker," "Hunter," "Matlock," and "NYPD Blue" and taking smaller parts in films such as "The Chamber" and "Last Man Standing."

For the last three years, he's been producing documentaries for the History Channel and A&E Biography, including one on the Persian Gulf War.

But all the while, he's been doing "The Godfather."

"I loved the voices of those characters, and those great actors," he said. "All the guys in that movie were the reason I became an actor. It just clicked with me that, by playing each guy, I could create the illusion of all of them talking to one another. I used to do this obsessively in my car."

"I'd be stuck on Interstate 405," he explained, "the worst freeway in the world. I would just go on and on with these voices. I would have these fights in my car. People would think I was nuts. It was strange and inspiring to me, because I could create those moments. I walked around for probably 10 years with that one little [Mafia war room] scene in

my pocket."

Not content with performing for his fellow motorists, he began doing his routine for friends, and then for a comedy club and in small theaters.

"I started to get more elaborate with it," he said. "I'd set down chairs. I'd run to the other chair and I'd play that guy, and I'd run to this chair and play the guy answering him. It got a lot of laughs. I would play it as straight and as dramatically as it's portrayed in the film, which is the essence of what our show became — to re-create these scenes as truthfully as I could. From there the comedy could go anywhere."

A cult following

In 1995, he was performing in a 99-seat house called Theatre East above a Studio City bowling alley. Susan Sullivan, one of the honchos of the place, suggested he develop it into something more substantial.

"We spent the next two years on it," he said. "I would create scenes and she would work with me. They got crazier and crazier. Things would come out of the ceiling to help me. Guns would be tossed on stage."

His show began to develop an L.A. cult following.

"It was almost like "The Rocky Horror Show,"" he said.

"People would come to our show eight and nine times. They'd have these 'Godfather' parties, where they'd play the movie, let everyone get up to speed, get their friends who hadn't seen the movie, and then go to the theater. One night we had the entire district attorney's office of the Van Nuys courthouse come in trench coats and fedoras. Those guys came back three or four times. We thought we were



Seth Isler is a one-man wonder in "The Godfadda Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds" at New York's American Place Theatre.

going to have a six-week run in L.A., but the people just kept coming."

He was hoping for more.

"Our ultimate goal, our dream, was to get it to New York," he said. One night, entertainment impresario Norman Lear was in the L.A. audience, and — presto! — this week Isler opened on Broadway.

"There are legions of 'Godfather' freaks out there," he said.

"There is no 'Godfather' convention. You don't go out to the Anaheim Convention Center with all the Trekkies. There's no place for those guys to go. I knew that if I adhered to every last detail of that film, those guys would come."

REBUILDING THE TRIBE

Indians stress importance of this week's draft. CI



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SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2002

Taking one for the Godfather

Obsessed with film, Heights man goes off-Broadway, then to bed

TONY BROWN
Plain Dealer Theater Critic

NEW YORK — Make fun of the Mafia in this town and you might wind up with a broken leg. All Seth Isler got was a cracked rib.

Since March, the Cleveland Heights native has been performing "The Godfaddah Workout,"

in which he portrays all the characters, from Luca Brazzi to Kay Adams, in a one-man off-Broadway spoof of "The Godfather."

The marathon effort, the result of an obsession with the 1972 Francis Ford Coppola movie that has haunted the 43-year-old Isler since he was a teenager, earned him a "tour de farce" New York

Times review. And because he vaults back and forth over a desk, playing both Vito Corleone and an undertaker, and dances around with his foot in a toilet looking for a handgun taped behind the tank — and does so seven times a week — it has also earned Isler a broken rib.

SEE ISLER | A17

The Plain Dealer | Sunday, June 2, 2002

ISLER

FROM A1

Heights man takes Godfather off-Broadway

So despite good notices and strong ticket sales — some people even show up dressed as mobsters and yell lines from the movie, "Rocky Horror"-style — the show will close after today for six weeks so Isler can recover. He plans to reopen the show in July.

"I have to train for this, like a fighter," said Isler, who played catcher for the Cleveland Heights High School baseball team. "I have a personal trainer, do a 400-meter run four days a week. I don't smoke, I don't drink and I don't do drugs."

Isler (rhymes with "Chrysler") has dreamed of being a movie Mafioso since he was a kid.

"I'm Jewish, but I have a theory: All Jews wish they were Italian," Isler said. "In fact, some think they are."

The obsession lay dormant for years. In the meantime, Isler left athletics for a theater career, beginning at the Jewish Community Center in Cleveland Heights and continuing at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York and then in Los Angeles.

Isler settled in Santa Monica ("the closest thing L.A. has to Cleveland Heights"), where he was a "working-class actor," performing in plays and roles on "NYPD Blue," "Friends" and "The Drew Carey Show."

Then Isler saw "The Godfather" for "about the 15th time." Something snapped.

"I'd get stuck in traffic on the 405 and I'd recite the whole scene, and other drivers would be staring at me," Isler said.

The compulsion found a creative outlet in 1987, when Isler leapt to the stage of the old Cleveland Comedy Club on a whim during a contest and performed the scene cold. He won second prize for the night.

In 1995, Isler signed on two collaborators, director Susan Jane Sullivan and his father, Saul Isler, who had also moved to Southern California and helped



JOAN MARCUS

Seth Isler appears as Don Vito Corleone, and every other character, in his one-man show, "The Godfaddah Workout."

"I'm Jewish, but I have a theory: All Jews wish they were Italian. In fact, some think they are."

Seth Isler

his son find and build the show's many props. (Seth's mom, Marilyn Bernard, the sane family member, lives in Lyndhurst).

Together, the three began to build the show, which Isler performed off and on for the next few years in Los Angeles.

Isler eventually quit all his other acting gigs and began producing documentaries for A&E, MSNBC and The History Channel. On the job, he had opportunities to meet "Godfather" actors James Caan (played Sonny Corleone) and Robert Duvall (was Tom Hagen).

"When I told James Caan about the show, he said, 'You do what?'"

Isler did a 90-second outtake on a "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" episode at which Coppola was a guest, and actor

Danny Aiello (Tony Rosato in "Godfather: Part II") attended a backers' audition in New York.

The big break came when "All in the Family" creator Norman Lear saw the show "and grabbed me before I could even get off the stage," Isler said. "He asked what I wanted to do with it. And I said take it to New York, because New York is 'Godfather' country."

Lear, it turned out, was on the board of the American Place Theatre, a 299-seat off-Broadway house in Midtown Manhattan. The show, which now has 12 scenes, had a New York home.

Until today, that is. Isler had been feeling some pain for a couple of weeks, but kept at it. It got worse. Earlier this week, a doctor diagnosed a fractured rib. Isler left for Los Angeles. Understudy Ed Kersten has been carrying on for him.

If he had collapsed in the middle of a show, Isler said, "The Godfaddah Workout" probably would have gone on.

"The whole thing is built so that any mistakes will just look like part of the show," he explained.

"If I died on stage, the audience would probably just follow me to the ER."

Contact Tony Brown at: tbrown@ohland.com 716.990.4101

THE 'GODFADDA WORKOUT': AN OFFERING YOU CAN'T REFUSE

"Here's looking at you kid." "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn." "I coulda been a contenduh." I've said 'em all. You probably have too. But while the more senior readers of this column know, not only which movies they come from, but also who said them and under what circumstances, few among the younger generation are aware that they're from



On Broadway
Barbara Mehlman

"Casablanca," "Gone with the Wind," and "On the Waterfront," respectively.

Since the beginning of talkies more than 75 years ago, thousands of commercially produced feature films have appeared on movie screens in the U.S., but only a handful have become part of American iconography.

These three are among he honored. But for Seth Isler, the only film that matters is "The Godfather."

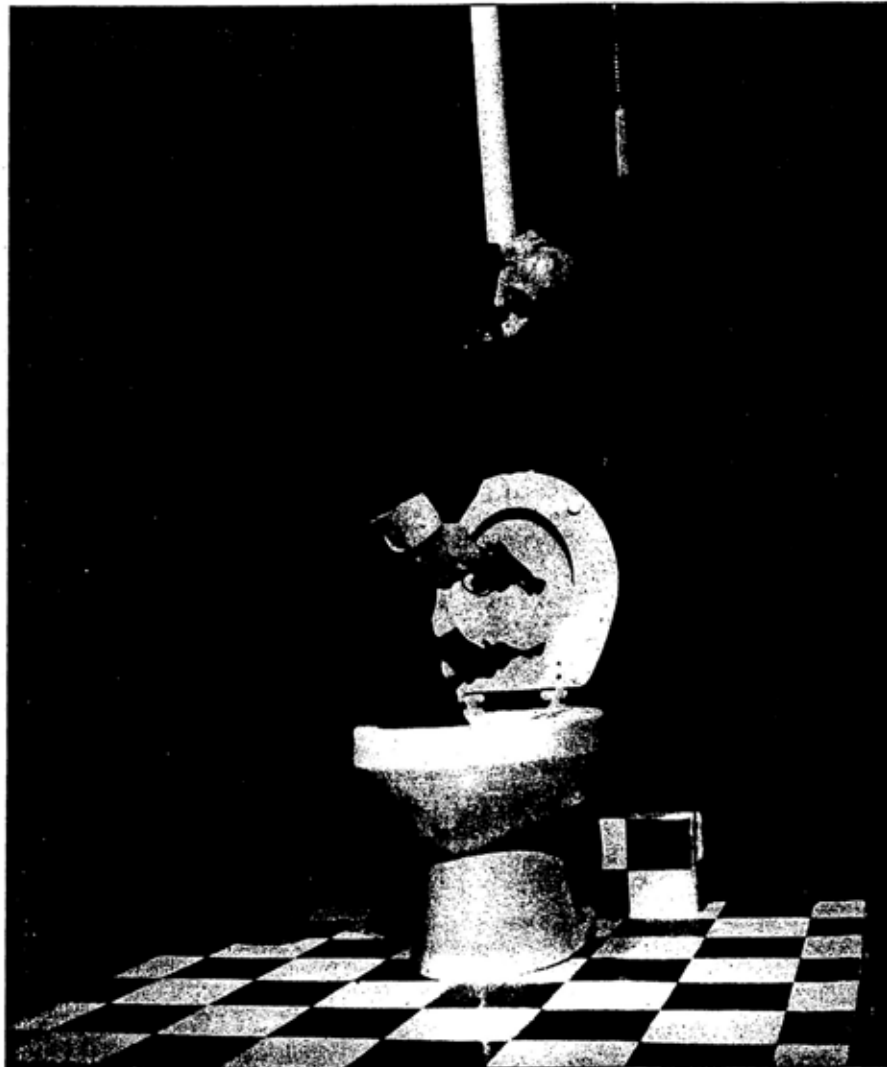
Isler became so obsessed with the film after seeing it in a revival house in Los Angeles, that he was driven to distraction. He'd neglect his work, repeat the dialogue in his sleep and act out scenes in public, all of which caused him to lose 37 friends, disconcert people in bank lines and worry his dentist.

A cathartic solution was clearly in order, so Isler went to Don Corleone himself for advice, and the great Don made him a bargain he couldn't refuse: he'll release Isler on his obsession provided he act out the entire film. The result is "The Godfadda Workout," a one-man show that is hilarious and original, full of surprises at every machine gun blast.

This little off-Broadway show whose ord-of-mouth is getting louder and more insistent, is a sharply observant parody of a great movie, with Isler playing Michael, Muv, Tom, Fredo, Luca Brasi, Kay, Connie, Emerza, the Don — even Moe Greene. And the title suggests, he gets quite a workout. With five fedora-clad "family members" rving as stage hands, sets and props get oved around with perfect precision as Isler es through all the famous scenes, including the baptism/massacre montage. With rector Susan Jane Sullivan, he has ingeously figured out how to overcome all the stacles of trying to play all the parts. He is sprayed with bullets through a revolving or, tries to strangle himself, moves his dinner plate from one end of the banquet table the other, uses a disembodied pair of nds to hold his coat, and has stage hands rve as plants.

It takes a rare talent to accomplish a feat ch as "Godfadda Workout," and Isler is just ch a talent. Working on all sides of the creve process, he has appeared on stage in eral plays in Los Angeles, done stand-up comedy clubs, and produced documentaries for The History Channel, A&E twork, and MSNBC.

So you shouldn't miss this play. Now, I n't hold a gun to your head, and you won't ep with the fishes, but "The Godfadda rkout: A Parody in 12 Rounds," its full e, is an offer you shouldn't refuse. See it ere it closes on July 7.



Seth Isler
in "The
Godfadda
Workout:
A Parody
in 12
Rounds."

Performances

Monday, Wednesday to Friday at 8 p.m.; Saturday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Not Tuesdays. Through July 7. For tickets, call (212) 239-6200 or (800) 432-7250. Cost: \$50. Student rush: \$20.

Theater

The not-for-profit, 340-seat American Place Theatre was founded in 1963 with Myma Loy and Tennessee Williams as two of its original Board members. The theater could use some sprucing up but is, on the whole, comfortable with ample legroom and roomy seats. It is completely inaccessible to physically handicapped people.

Stage Scorecard

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
(out of 5)

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT
The American Place Theatre, 111
W. 46th St., between 6th and 7th
Avenues



Browse Events



Most Popular Events For Los Angeles

What fun! Pure genius. Seth Isler left me spent (and he was shvitzing pretty good himself). In all seriousness, it was a delightful evening that kept me laughing the whole time. I can't wait to go see it again. —Candy Shulman

September 14th, 2005

Roar of the Crowd - Los Angeles

By Jim McCarthy

If someone's ever told you not to take sides against the family again, ever, then you're either hanging out with a fan of The Godfather or you're in the actual mafia and are one misstep away from being killed by that fat Clemenza. I sincerely hope it's the former.

In either case, you probably know at least one person who says things like, "that guy looks like Don Fanucci in '2.'" It's understood, of course, that "2" is The Godfather Part II. In dealing with this person, I strongly recommend that you avoid mentioning The Godfather Part III and never, ever refer to said film as "3."

It doesn't take a wiseguy, though, to love this week's winner on 1044 reviews:

The Godfadda Workout playing at the Century City Playhouse in Century City.

It's a one-man parody of The Godfather that recreates the famous scenes and lines and has traveled from LA to off-Broadway, to Vegas and is back for its swan song. Akiva Potok calls it **"incredibly entertaining and brilliantly funny theatre."** Candy Shulman says it's **"pure genius."** Robert Welsh claims that **"you become a goombah in no time at all."** Watch out for that. Cynthia Abrams feels the need to tell us the show is **"an offer you can't refuse,"** and Greg Abrams suggests that **"people watch the movie again before seeing the play."**

Goldstar Events members gave The Godfadda Workout 3.5 out of 4.

Whether you think Luca Brasi sleeps at home with Mrs. Brasi or you know the awful truth, you'll have a great time. This week, the Roar says you should never take sides against great live entertainment again, ever.

Jim McCarthy, CEO of Goldstar Events, read 1044 comments about 188 shows this week submitted by Goldstar members.

JPost.com » Living » Entertainment
» Article

Nov. 7, 2005 6:40 | Updated Nov. 7, 2005 7:23

The Godfather Fanatic

By KELLY HARTOG



We all know what it's like to have obsessions. Many of us spend years in therapy trying to sublimate them. But instead of paying someone a small fortune to talk through his obsession, actor Seth Isler decided to indulge his.

It all began back in 1984 when the now 45-year-old Isler saw a movie that changed his life. That movie was *The Godfather*. Isler found himself transfixed, and began regurgitating the dialogue ad nauseam.

"I knew there were legions of people out there who had the same reaction [to the film]," says Isler in his dressing room an hour before the curtain rises on a Los Angeles performance. "Everyone knows that every guy loves *The Godfather*... there are metaphors for life that are scattered throughout that film."

Perhaps, but not every guy then decides to turn their obsession into a one-man comedy show.

In *"The Godfadda Workout: A Parody in 12 Rounds,"* Isler takes 12 scenes from the original film, playing each and every character himself. It's a marvel to watch as Isler leaps, slithers, slides, and jack-knives across the stage, switching from character to character, channeling everyone

from Robert Duvall, James Caan, Marlon Brando, Al Pacino and even Diane Keaton. Isler brilliantly affects their nuances, speech patterns and physical quirks, prancing around the stage for 90 minutes without pausing for breath.

"The comedy," he reveals, "is in moving from one character to another. I thought 'how would Dick Van Dyke, Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin get from one end of a desk to another?' So I vaulted the desk and said, 'That works.'"

To train for his grueling gymnastic feats, Isler worked with a track and field coach. "He trained me like a triathlete," says Isler. "The key to the play is that the audience has to see sweat, but they cannot see you out of breath."

The premise of the show is based on Isler's own obsession in which he has a (recorded) conversation with "The Don" who promises Isler he will rid him of his obsession if he acts out certain scenes from the show to the Don's satisfaction. And so *"The Godfadda Workout"* was born.

Back in 1984, Isler was performing one scene at various comedy shows and clubs. But it was only when he met up with producer/director Susan Jane Sullivan in 1995 that the show eventually took off.

"This show has gone beyond our wildest imagination," Isler boasts. As he states in the show's program notes, "When we finally opened (in a small theater in Los Angeles)...we knew that there were *Godfather* fanatics out there, but we never knew for sure if they would find us. Not only did they find us, they kept coming back again and again (one night the entire Van Nuys District Attorney's office came in trench coats and Fedora hats).

Yet it wasn't always smooth

sailing. Isler and Sullivan toiled away for six years with the show in small venues, with their ultimate dream of opening in New York, Off-Broadway. They received a huge boost when HBO asked them to open the comedy festival in 1997, but Off-Broadway was still a pipe dream.

"To perform Off-Broadway is really an acknowledgement of your work," says Isler. "It's like the Promised Land."

And in fact, Isler credits some part of *The Godfadda Workout's* New York debut to the "Promised Land".

Isler, who is also a television producer, was in Israel in 2000, filming a documentary about Masada. "My mother, father and other people gave me stacks of notes to put in the Kotel when I went," Isler recalls.

"I'd never been to the Wall," he continues. "And when you stand there, something happens to you. It's so powerful. So I put this prayer in the Wall together with a copy of our program from the show asking God if He could get our show to New York - I'm sure God got a kick out of that - and less than a year later we were there.

So how does a nice Jewish boy from Cleveland Heights (an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood) Ohio, land up playing Italian mobsters?

"Our neighborhood was very close to the Italian neighborhood," Isler recalls. "As I grew older and learned to shoot pool I started hanging out at unsavory places, and met a lot of the Italian kids."

And there was "something" about them. "They had an edge, they were very colorful and cool, and I wanted to emulate that. And when I saw *The Godfather* that just kind of iced it for me."

Plus, he adds, he believes it's every Jewish kid's fantasy to be Italian for 10 minutes and, "What's more glamorous than being a gangster?"

Big stars of the original movie have already seen - and admired - Isler's performances.

Mo Green, Abe Vigoda, Johnny Fontaine, Al Pacino, Bruno Kirby, James Caan and Robert Duvaal have all either seen the show or a tape of it.

"I was also invited to perform part of the show for [Francis Ford] Copolla on the Conan O'Brien Show, as a surprise for him on the 25th Anniversary of *The Godfather*."

So what did Copolla think?

"He really laughed!"

Now, after 10 years of doing *"The Godfadda Workout,"* Isler admits he's finally over his obsession. "I got over it a long time ago," he laughs. But he still loves doing the show, which is constantly evolving. "I'll do this show when I'm 85 in a walker in Miami on a shuffleboard court," he promises.

While it is a one-man show, there are enormous sets, props, and seven stage hands that manipulate the scenery and furniture seamlessly. "It's really a mini-circus," says Isler. "We were even asked to take the show to Bombay, because physical comedy resonates in any language and everybody knows this movie."

Isler hopes that maybe the show could make its way to Israel as part of the Israel Festival. He also has dreams of possibly franchising the show. "All you need is an obsessed actor thinking he can play all these parts and then doing it," says Isler. "And that's the show in essence."