



## **"RECOMMENDED"**

March 13, 2003

### LATINOLOGUES

By Amy Schaumburg

Operating as a showcase platform for local Latino talent, writer-director Rick Najera's collection of monologues explores various aspects of the "Latino experience." Broadly drawn characters include the frazzled border patrolman, Buford Gomez (Najera), whose job consists of "putting the baton to Juan"; Mr. "El Macho" Alejandro, a humble busboy (Rene Lavan) who is the quintessential Latin lover; and a UCLA student (Paul Saucido) attempting to rally reluctant troops to the Chicano cause. The most unforgettable characters within the nine solo pieces are Najera's oddball movie executive, a self-proclaimed born-again Latino currently championing the cause of Spanish-speaking writers, and the wickedly superb Amanda Gunderson as Miss East L.A., who's more than a little reluctant to relinquish her year as the reigning barrio beauty queen. The majority of the evening is packed with Najera's witty observations and eccentric but compelling characterizations that are seamlessly linked. And when there is the anomalous break toward the overly sentimental, a uniformly solid cast easily overcomes the short stray. Coronet Theater, 366 N. La Cienega Blvd., W. Hlywd.; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; thru May 3. (310) 657-7377. Written 3/13/03 (Amy Schaumburg)