



FLYING HIGH
Off the turnbuckles
at Turner Hall.

Mucho Crazy

The wacky performers of Mondo Lucha reinvent the variety show.

BY JENNA KASHOU

“So how do you want me to pull your pants down?” We are backstage just before the Mondo Lucha show at Turner Hall, and some performers are lounging about, listening to music, drinking PBR or trimming their mustaches. Others, like the two wrestlers discussing their fanciful moves, are seriously planning their fanciful moves.

Inspired by the style of Mexican wrestlers, and perhaps even the Jack Black film *Nacho Libre*, Mondo Lucha is a two-hour variety show of sorts, a wacky, adrenaline-filled sensory explosion. Think *Rocky Horror Picture Show* meets Cirque de Soleil. One performer dubs it “athletic theater,” and the show is dominated by entertaining, choreographed wrestling matches between up to eight masked and costumed contestants at once. Sandwiched between the 15-minute “matches” may be a live rock song or two and even a burlesque-style striptease. Lighting and music help create the various changes in mood.

“These individuals can digest and perform a pretty intricate set of situations to tell the story,” gushes Andy Gorzalski, the show’s co-creator. “They are genius entertainers.”

As with old-fashioned WWE-style wrestling, “There is always one good guy and one bad guy,” Gorzalski notes. “We always try to achieve a solid narrative structure, many times with ongoing rivalries.” A whole lexicon of moves – brainbuster,

chokeslam, Boston crab, half-Nelson, sharp-shooter, aerial moonsault – dominates the dialogue among wrestlers and fans.

Gorzalski, who works with a Milwaukee ad agency, and Jay Gilkay, who is studying elementary education, created Mondo Lucha in 2008. It’s taken Turner by storm, running about twice a year, and it even headlined Chicago’s Congress Theater in 2010 for a Cinco de Mayo spectacular. They get constant inquiries from other Midwestern cities – the only similar show is Lucha VaVOOM out of Los Angeles. Gilkay says they’re one big show away from turning a profit.

Behind the mask of each performer can be anyone (“One of the biggest guys with us is actually a chemist Monday through Friday,” Gorzalski says), but the characters win over the audience. El Chivas Blanco, a gay goat adorned with a neon pink tutu; Clownvis Presley, a clown/Elvis hybrid; and Shockwave the Robot are audience favorites. Shockwave’s disjointed robotic dance moves were a hit during a recent match. He ultimately played possum, faking a technical malfunction to bring his opponent closer, and then threw down a signature move to claim victory.

“It’s like Spider-Man violence. It’s supernatural and not really scary,” Gorzalski says. The irony is that the audience knows it’s artificial. “Yet people get all wrapped up in it on a primal level.” ■

THE WILD SIDE

Mark Goff’s classic shot of Lou Reed captured an era. And then captured Reed’s fancy.

by Erin Vollmer

IT WAS Halloween 1974 at the old Milwaukee Auditorium. Performing that night was Lou Reed, perhaps best known then for his single “Walk on the Wild Side.” Some-time photographer Mark Goff was a big fan, “especially from [his earlier days with] the Velvet Underground.” The show was “quite a scene, lots of stoned people in costumes,” Goff recalls. In the midst of this chaos, he captured Reed, then 32, in an edgy, bare-chested pose (below). Of the “hundreds of photos” Goff took of musicians in the ‘60s and ‘70s (many for the long-defunct *Bugle American*), he considers Reed’s one of his best.

Fast-forward to 2011. Goff works in public relations. Daughter Allison is a research biologist in New York City, and she finds herself at a Thanksgiving dinner where Lou Reed’s assistant is in attendance. She shows him her dad’s online gallery, and he, in turn, sends the Reed photo to the man himself. Reed’s reported response was, “MY GOD,” but he liked it so much, he requested a print. Goff obliged and also sent another copy for Reed to sign and send back. The photo now hangs framed in Reed’s New York office. ■

