



**S**taggering toward  
The Journey Home

**AMERICA**

***Nina Metz – Chicago Tribune, published February 5, 2004***

A man and his journey: In terms of storytelling, that's as basic as things get. As a current stage production shows, few genres manage to feel both epic and deeply personal.

The journey Rik Reppe describes in "Staggering Towards America" is a literal one. Two months after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the Los Angeles-based management consultant closed up shop and drove his truck cross-country to visit the crash sites in Washington, D.C., New York and Pennsylvania.

Despite what he calls his "unemployed early 1970s biker mechanic" look, Reppe has an approachable demeanor and it's easy to picture him engaging in the random, pickup conversations that he recounts in this 90-minute monologue.

Reppe may try too hard to link the stories to an overriding, what-does-it-mean-to-be-American theme. He doesn't need to. Individually, the conversations are fascinating snapshots of the American psyche. Just outside Gary, Ind., Reppe stumbles into a truck stop karaoke party. "That's the kind of John Wayne-sized American weird I live for," he says, and you can't help but nod in agreement.

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***Kim Wilson - Chicago Reader, published Jan. 23, 2004***

In this one-man show, scruffy, affable Rik Reppe shares recollections of a road trip he took after September 11, 2001, hoping to reconnect with America. It turns out his path was marked by the kindness and simple patriotism of strangers: old Armenians banging a table at McDonald's to punctuate their feelings about freedom, a white Christian Republican southerner who forgot his bigotry to honor a soldier, a wheelchair-bound black woman who introduced Reppe to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis.

It's unfortunate that the piece revolves around 9/11: between CNN, songs, and coffee-table books, we've been inundated with reflections on that event. However, Reppe shares lessons that transcend it--for example, his discovery that the antidote to alienation is getting involved. Another gift is the reminder that, although it sometimes feels like America is homogenizing into a shell of strip malls and subdivisions inhabited by TV zombies, the country remains a rich tapestry of characters, ideas, and bizarre places--like a truck stop in Gary, Indiana, that hosted Christmas-carol karaoke one morning. Some will find Reppe's roller coaster of cranky, comical, poignant moments maudlin; others who enjoy real-world slices of Americana or share his need to reconnect may find comfort or even healing.

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***Kaley McKenna - AtTheTheatre.com, published January 20, 2004***

'Staggering Toward America' is a poignant one man show. Rik Reppe manages to captivate the audience with his stories of contemporary American folklore and bring them along as he recalls his journey across America. All Rik needed was a black barren stage, and a stool to occasionally sit upon. His energetic performance did the rest to set the scenes as he connected with the audience and let our own imagery take over as he weaved his tales of those he met while traveling. His smart humor and honest observations of human nature made us feel both laughter and great sadness.



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Rik set out on his journey right after September 11th and struck up conversations with people about 9/11 and their experiences, feelings, and thoughts in relation to that terrible time in our history. A self proclaimed cynic, he discovered that not only was community, patriotism, and honor still alive and well months after the tragedy, but it wasn't anymore dysfunctional than the average American family. One of those he met was a mother, an elder black woman in Memphis who helped to shed light into his plight of heart and mind with some words of wisdom, and he learned that any ordinary dude can truly make a difference. What may have started out as a self indulgent journey to find purpose, meaning, and sense of what's important, has turned into a wonderful stage production that addresses the same thoughts and feelings we all have had at one time or another.

This show asks some questions. What is America about? What are its citizens about? What am I as an individual about? In answer, I think Rik Reppe discovered the answer to a life lesson seemingly unknown to a a lot of people. That home is in the heart, mind, and soul and a person is home wherever they are. Unfortunately most people remain wherever they are as a person, searching, trying to get home. Thanks Rik for bringing us all closer to home. Rik once wondered what his Teddy bear was. Maybe the answer is this play.