

TimeOut London
By Rachel Hallburton
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10 Days on Earth
Rating: ★★★★★☆☆

Hair sprouting upwards as if it's been given the mother-of-all electric shocks, goat-bearded, and in a blue and white suit that makes him resemble a walking deck-chair, Lloyd is definitely one of the most idiosyncratic characters in '10 Days on Earth'. A homeless man who empowers himself through the delusion that he is God, he rains down insults on the human race: 'I gave you my only begotten son, and you created... plastic!'

Such scorn at life's more synthetic aspects might be more impressive if Lloyd himself weren't a puppet. Yet his superior brand of insanity marks him out as part of the great Ronnie Burkett tradition, which allows puppets to walk the mean streets of the soul.

With cheekbones as sculpted as their creator's, and sinuous jointed bodies, Canadian Burkett's creations have ranged from drag queens to fascists: here the story centres around Darrel, a simple, 50-year-old man, who continues his life as if it were normal after his mother dies in her sleep.

Burkett moves in the shadows above the elaborate wooden set, bringing a subtle delight to the way a puppet performs a tiny action - such as walking down the stairs - at the same time as he builds the story of Darrel's strange yet beguiling emotional life. Darrel's tragic-comic story's interspersed with episodes from his favourite children book - featuring Honey Dog and Little Burp - an element which would be far more enchanting if there were less of it.

Ultimately, it's the acid rather than the saccharine which gives this show charm. Engagingly weird and attractively perverse, it's largely alternative in the best sense.