



The Passing Zone – *Edison Theatre Ovations! Series*

By Chuck Lavazze – aka The Doge of St Louis – 05.2005

So, you figure you're a pretty sophisticated person, right? You've seen the falling chandeliers, the on-stage helicopters, the Greek myths performed in a pool. Theatrically speaking, you've probably seen it all.

Ah, but have you seen two guys in lavender tights (one of whom also has a tutu) juggling live chain saws to "The Beautiful Blue Danube"? How about those same two guys (without the ballet outfits, of course) juggling scythes and flaming torches? For that matter, how about those same two guys juggling three volunteers from the audience?

No? Then you obviously weren't at this weekend's performances by Jon Wee and Owen Morse - collectively known as The Passing Zone - at Edison Theatre. The Passing Zone, for lack of a better term, is a comic juggling act, although that simple phrase hardly does the duo justice. In the course of two hours, Wee and Morse serve up a consistently entertaining stream of wise cracks, sight gags, pop culture send-ups and virtuoso juggling, resulting in an evening that manages to be both sophisticated and family friendly. It's similar to the sort of thing the Flying Karamazov Brothers have been doing for some years now, the major difference being that the Karamazovs are (as I recall) more scripted while Wee and Morse are more spontaneous. It's rather like the difference between a play and a stand-up comedy act.

That's not to say that The Passing Zone couldn't make it as a straight juggling act. Wee and Morse have an impressive array of moves and flashy stunts. Early in the show, for example, they do a series of passes with nine (count 'em, nine) clubs that is almost hypnotic in its complexity. Later, Morse balances on a teeterboard while Wee stands on his shoulders and both juggle flaming torches. There are also tricks with rings, a bowling ball, and even a trio of cheesy mail-order items: the Garden Weasel, The Club and a Chia pet. That last one involves Morse juggling all three while using an Original Thigh Master. Wee then jumps over Morse, grabs the items in mid air, and continues juggling them. Whether this will increase or decrease sales of The Club (to say nothing of the Thigh Master, which is exactly what one should say about it) is a question best left unanswered, I think.

By the time you read this, The Passing Zone may have already passed out of the St. Louis area - their final show is Saturday, May 7 [2005] at 8 PM - but you can keep up with their comings and goings and even watch a video of highlights from the show at The Passing Zone web site. The site is pretty media-heavy, though, so a broadband connection is strongly advised. If they come through town again, don't miss them - even if you have to juggle your schedule a bit to do so.