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HIP-HOP THEATER ARTIST JOE HERNANDEZ-KOLSKI GEARS UP FOR WORLD PREMIERE OF INNOVATIVE NEW PRODUCTION, *awake*, IN LOS ANGELES

"Joe ain't afraid to be entertaining, in fact highly entertaining is what he is. Joe, I've noticed, likes to take chances and push the audience close to the edge."

-Marc Smith, Founder of the Slam Movement and Poetry Slam, Inc.

LOS ANGELES (July 10, 2011) Multifaceted actor/comedian/def poet and Emmy Award winner, **Joe Hernández-Kolski**, has been busy the past few weeks putting the finishing touches to his highly-anticipated new production, "**awake**," which will premiere on **July 29, 2011** at **Bootleg Theatre** in Los Angeles and run through August 20th. The show is the follow-up to Joe's critically-acclaimed production, "**You Wanna Piece of Me?**" -- a work that received a glowing review in *The New York Times*.

Joe has performed all over the country opening up for everyone from comedian Carlos Mencia to Grammy-winning artists like Ozomatli and legendary musician John Mellencamp. He has quickly established quite a reputation for himself among many influential circles. His previous works have received accolades from leaders in both entertainment and academia.

The Polish-Mexican Chicago native describes the new work as a "coming-of-middle-age story where I do my best to find the humor in tragedies we all inevitably face. Thanks to the dedicated work of my director, Benjamin Byron Davis, I think we've created a story that is incredibly revealing, funny and relatable." It's part spoken word poetry, part comedy, part dance and all very real. The work unfolds as Joe is thrown a proverbial curve ball when he learns his mother is sick and ultimately passes on. Armed with a lot of privileges and a TiVo remote, he must take the challenges that life throws at him and defeat the negative voices in his head. Now the question is, "How the heck does he do that?"

Joe believes in bridging communities...get him started about the hyphen in his name and he will talk for hours. "To me, the hyphen in my last name represents so much. When I was twenty and working at the White House, my boss said, 'Yeah, you're gonna have to change your last name. It's too long.' I was insecure about my background then. But instead of brushing my ethnicity under the rug, I chose to fully embrace it. It's been hard at times, but I love what it's taught me. I believe it's important to connect different elements," describes Joe.

Not only is Joe combining so many elements in his own hip-hop theater piece, but he is also bringing together the different elements that make up the **Bootleg Theater**. "They always have great bands in the front space produced by **The Fold**, one of the best booking agencies in LA, and then they have these amazing theatrical pieces produced by the Bootleg in the back space. I think connecting these worlds can be really special," says Joe. After Joe's opening night performance on **July 29th**, there will be a night of music that includes some of LA's hottest musicians including **Dez Hope** and **Tha Boogie**---who were recently chosen as one of the eight finalists in Rolling Stone Magazine's "Do You Wanna Be A Rock Star" contest.

The Princeton graduate's shows have often been described as part John Lequizado, part George Carlin, which he considers the highest of compliments. He recently received an LA Emmy Award for hosting/producing for Downbeat Showdown, a youth-oriented television competition show that brought together high school kids of all backgrounds. Theater credits include: *The Bomb-itty of Errors* (New Ambassadors, London), *Stones* (Kirk Douglas Theater), *Imaginary Invalid* (Long Beach Opera), *The Master & Margarita* (Zoo District), *Messy Utopia*

Be sure to check out the world premiere of **“awake”** on July 29, 2011 at the Bootleg Theatre located at 2220 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90057, (213) 389-3856.
<http://www.bootlegtheater.org/>

More on Joe Hernández-Kolski:

A two-time HBO Def Poet, Joe Hernández-Kolski is an Emmy Award-winning TV, stage and film actor/writer who is constantly in demand. He currently lives in Los Angeles. Born and raised in the city of Chicago, Joe began acting professionally as a child. He is a graduate of Princeton University with a BA in History with Certificates in the African-American Studies and Theatre and Dance programs. Joe is of Polish and Mexican descent. For detailed information on Joe Hernández-Kolski and “awake,” please visit www.pochojoe.com

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