

"Blend Noam Chomsky, Lenny Bruce, and Terrence McKenna and you get Alan Clements, the most spiritually astute humorist in America today." Jon Woodhouse, Entertainment writer, Maui News

Alan Clements Uncensored Spiritually Incorrect

FRIDAY MAY 25 – 7:30 PM ONE SHOW ONLY

THE BYRON THEATRE, Byron Bay

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OR PHONE the Box Office: 6685 6807

Byron Theatre, 69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay

Byron Theatre box office open 10 am-1:30 pm Monday – Friday

BB: Painter, journalist, yoga practitioner, former Buddhist monk, freedom fighter, world traveler, and spoken-word artist is quite a resume. Who is Alan Clements?

AC: I see myself as a seeker of truth and justice and a dharma artist. Born in Boston, I dropped out of the University of Virginia due to existential despair. From there, my partner and I ventured overland from Europe to India looking for answers. Eventually I found myself in Burma where I ordained as a Buddhist monk and spent the better part of a decade practicing insight meditation, until I was thrown out by the dictatorship, with no reason given.

Thrust back into a world I once rejected, I found salvation in supporting the voiceless – displaced peoples and refugees in areas of extreme conflict and war, mainly in Burma - through books, films, talks, media interviews and the spoken word. It has been a complex journey, from the sacredness of monastic silence deep into the dark heart of evil. My show irreverently and comedically explores that harrowing heart-opening journey.

BB: Can you tell us about your organization ‘World Dharma?’

AC: World Dharma was founded in 1995, based on perceptions forged during the final year of war in the former Yugoslavia. World Dharma is the trans-spiritual, trans-religious practice of shared freedom, environmental sanity and global human rights. In our work, we seek to raise awareness of the insanity of totalitarianism and plight of prisoners of conscience, worldwide. My show supports the World Dharma vision.

BB: You have said that spiritual seekers often lack levity. Why?

AC: For example, I've never seen anyone who finds it funny while purging after drinking Ayahuasca. On the other hand, after a few minutes of meditation when someone farts in the meditation hall almost everyone loses it with laughter. Why a fart triggers an existential release and drinking a brewed root curls you up into a fetal position, thinking you are near death, is a mystery. Strange how different forms of awakening cultivate different states of mind. Perhaps Picasso had the answer when he said it took him a lifetime to paint like a child. Maybe it is a worthy question to ask ourselves: Does our spirituality make us serious and sick or playful and childlike.

BB: Who are your spiritual influences?

AC: My Buddhist teachers, the Burmese monks Mahasi Sayadaw and U Pandita, who were the early founders of the modern day mindfulness meditation movement, showed me the way to stop

running and to face myself with courage, heart and honesty. I also had the good fortune to co-author a book of conversations with Burma's Nobel Peace Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, titled *The Voice of Hope*. Having spent nearly 17 years in detention as a prisoner of conscience, she showed me through example the power of love and compassion – the beauty of caring for others as family. Then, we have my 11 year old daughter, Sahra Bella, the love of my life. She continually reveals the importance of keeping it real, or as Walt Whitman said so beautifully, “Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.” And there's my Mom and Dad. Both of whom passed away last year. Before my Mom died she said, “Alan, express your love openly - each and every way, now, not tomorrow.”

BB: What are your top three tips for the modern yogi?

AC: One: Freedom is the oxygen of civilized existence, it is the most precious thing in the world, even more than happiness. Take away someone's freedom and they suffer the greatest loss. Two: To know your own mind is the most important task of your life. Three: Bob Marley said it best, “None but ourselves can free our minds.” And not to forget: Be the freedom that you seek. In other words, stop forgetting to live.

BB: Can you tell us about your upcoming show, ‘Spiritually Incorrect?’

AC: Who we are as humans has both fascinated and terrified me for as long as I can remember. Based on the theme of a Dostoevsky line that essential states, *Beauty is mysterious as well as terrible; right and wrong, good and bad, love and hate – all of life's dualities – are fighting there and the battlefield is the human heart*, my show explores 'what it means to engage the epic battle of being, human.' And according to critics, they have described my performances as “existentially cathartic,” “enthraling and hallucinogenic”, “a brilliant deconstruction of spiritual and cultural propaganda that addresses head-on the insanity of war, climate change and the commercialization of consciousness.” Hope to see you!

BB: Why do you use satire to communicate your message?

AC: As a species we have been taken hostage by the dogma of capitalism – a self-referencing suicidal behavior that is also driving almost every other species into extinction. For me, satire employs humor, irony, and exaggeration as a means of exposing our hubris and blind spots as a species, and as individuals within modern society. By doing so, it is my hope that my shows ignite the passion to improve our humanity and in so doing, perhaps save our precious planet for a few more generations to come.

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