



Meet the Band

The Renaldo The Ensemble/TheatreThe production of *Radio Purgatory*.

IS THE RENALDO THE ENSEMBLE A ROCK BAND OR A THEATRE COLLECTIVE?

Is it an ensemble of musicians who act? Or actors who write music?

Whatever you want to call it, this genre-defying crew can be seen twice a month, when the members of the production company **TheaterThe** perform as a six-piece rock band called **The Renaldo The Ensemble** at the **Living Room**, a cozy live music venue in New York City. In 2009, the group released a full-length album entitled *Why Are You?* This Oct. 7, the same sextet begins a month-long run of *Radio Purgatory*, an original mixed-media performance piece, at the experimental theatre space **Dixon Place**.

The band consistently performs in character; the onstage interactions during its concerts allude to the deeper back-story that unravels in *Radio Purgatory*. Founding member, playwright, band frontman and actor Aldo Perez says of his numerous roles, “I don’t make a distinction. What I do on stage as a musician is enact little scenarios. So, it’s theatre in that sense.” Director Barry Goldman, who has collaborated with TRTE on shaping *Radio Purgatory*, explains that the songs inspired much of the story. “The music is the thing,” he says, “and the theatre becomes a tool to take it further.”

With that approach, TRTE has allowed the piece to evolve organically over the last year. The result is a seamless merging of styles and media that includes slapstick sight gags, original songs, a film noir-inspired collage of sound clips and parodied movie scenes, and a fractured pulp-fiction plot about the existential predicament of one Dick Flavor, private detective. In structure and in tone, the show is absurdist—in the most comedic sense of the word.

So it seems TRTE is *both* a rock band and a theatre company. Member and full-time producer Jenny Lee Mitchell—whose background includes classical singing, commedia dell’arte and successfully “relearning” the clarinet for TRTE—mentions, with a laugh, that fans have found a succinct nickname for the collective: “The The’s.” —Linda Leseman