

# JOE PIAZZA

## Lord Buckley, Alive!

### HIPSTERS & FLIPSTERS YOUR LORD RETURNETH

Long before the swing craze had kids fitted out like ace-stamped studs in their retro suits and gassing up on martinis, there was Lord Buckley—America's original hipster prophet—who blazed a trail through the dark forest of the '50s out to the linguistic limits of what he termed "the hipsemantic." Like many a prophet before his time, Buckley died broke and under police harassment and, since his 1960 death in New York City, has remained little more than a cult figure. While Buckley's presence has been felt on recent albums by singer Mark Murphy and Kurt Elling, he's also been sighted in the flesh in his old environs. The actor Tom Calagna has been bringing Buckley to life in front of increasingly larger and appreciative audiences at various Greenwich Village cafés and theaters throughout the past year. Equipped like the Lord with a handlebar mustache, pith helmet, and faux-British accent—and backed by a tight bop combo called the Jazz Orchestra of the Royal Court, led by New York drummer, Joe Piazza—Calagna's most recent performance at the Westbeth Theatre displayed a full spectrum of Buckley's work, from the gospel-like preaching and transcendental digressions to the sardonic social critiques and bawdy narratives.

**jazziz February 1999**



*Joe Piazza, Music Director - Drummer*



*Tom Calagna as Lord Buckley*

**SOUND BYTES:** Tom Calagna will perform Lord Buckley's "hip semantic" monologues with a jazz quintet, led by drummer/musical director Joe Piazza, at New York's Westbeth Theater Center on Sept. 25. Buckley, who died in 1960, inspired the likes of Lenny Bruce and Bill Cosby with his word-twisting humor.

### DOWNBEAT October 1998

A lot of the fun is Calagna's interplay with the sharp jazz quartet led by drummer Joe Piazza. Jazz and poetry can be a dicey mix at best but this alchemy is a match made in Valhalla as sound and sensibility merge in rare harmony.

### Oliver Trager Buckley Biographer

The best usage of music with comedy I've ever heard!

### Jonathan Katz Dr. Katz, Comedy Central

**TOM CALAGNA:** Supported by Jazz Musicians of the Royal Court, Calagna has a weekly show devoted to the largely forgotten Lord Buckley, the hipster monologist whose cabaret card troubles finished off a barbaric law—he made a kind of mad narrative poetry out of beat slang and was often very funny.

### Gary Giddins, *The Village Voice* March 17, 1998