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The Electric Chair

When you see Victor Argo in **The Electric Chair: A Comic's Nightmare**, you'll immediately recognize his distinctive mug from appearances in a half-dozen different cops-and-robbers movies. Before his passing, in 2004, Argo also appeared in such notable non-genre films as **Taxi Driver, The Rose, New York Stories, The Last Temptation of Christ, Shadows and Fog, True Romance** and **Coyote Ugly**.

More an off-off-Broadway conceit than a full-blown play or movie, **Electric Chair** allowed Argo to take center stage as an aging standup comic whose flashes of brilliance are camouflaged by stale gags and insult comedy. There's even a drummer behind the comedian, punctuating punchlines with rimshots, and a heckler encouraging him to strap himself into the electric chair, which magically appearances on stage between jokes. Mark Eisenstein's piece is making some kind of statement, although I'd only be guessing if I said it had something to do with the life-and-death struggle experienced by any performer who dares speak his mind every night before an audience of alcoholics.

There's also a bizarre series of dream sequences shot in beach community nearly abandoned for the winter. Argo's performance, though, is pretty terrific. The DVD set arrives with some scene-setters and other pieces by Eisenstein.

- Gary Dretzka