

Daniel Buckley performance artist bio

Dubbed “*the clown prince of performance art*” in Tucson, Arizona, Daniel Buckley has been creating mischievous fun for southwestern audiences since the 1980s.

Never quite content to be simply a composer or serious musical performer, Buckley created a series of memorable personas to underscore the joy of making art at all levels.

As Blind Lemon Pledge, Buckley was the first public performer at Tucson’s venerable Club Congress in 1985. Termed a “transcendental lounge act,” Buckley played Casio keyboard arpeggios under rambling narratives plucked from newspaper and tabloid headlines, surreal dreams, and conversations with a two-year-old child. Occasionally a bit of slide banjo and ALWAYS the accompaniment of his animated sidekick – The Lovely Miss Pearl Drops (painter Rosemary Geseck) – added to the festive chaos of BLP, who played clubs and art galleries around Arizona during the decade.

Buckley donned bib overalls, the upper half of a set of tuxedo tails, and wore boxer shorts on the outside for his character Lonesome Jack Underpants in the early 1990s. It was easy to see why Jack was lonesome.

Lonesome Jack Underpants was most famous for the slide banjo fable “*Home Boy’s Chicken Foot Blues*,” the comic story about a young African man with a live chicken growing from his foot, who wins the heart of a beautiful maiden. In it the wise man tells him, “Home Boy, Home Boy, Home Boy, why must you pace that chicken foot so? Don’t you know that you have the luxury of wearing your chicken foot on the outside, while most of us must wear our chicken foot where it is considerably less comfortable.”

In the mid-1980s Buckley teamed up with actor/performance artist Paul Fisher as Giggles and Squirm – undersea whores from Atlantis. Performed in full drag with no thought of male grooming whatsoever, the pair added to the look with bathing caps adorned with plastic lobsters, swim fins and inflatable children’s waist floats. Their improvised television interviews were hilarious, while their featured performance as part of the University of Arizona’s Summer Arts Series climaxed with an interpretive dance to Donovan’s “*Atlantis*.”

Throughout the 1980s Buckley did appearances under his own name as well, performing his “*Ritual of Solitude*” and various other solo works. He was a staple at the Club Congress from its opening in 2005 through his appointment as music critic for the Tucson Citizen in 1987.

Buckley’s 1987 opera “*West]*” was another branch of his performance art style. Scored for toys, vocal quartet and a small ensemble of electric and acoustic classical

instruments, the chamber opera explored the stereotypical west as seen through bad TV and worse movies.

In 1987 Buckley formed The Little Dinks with Imo Baird and Craig Zingg. The most wildly popular of all of his performance art creations, the trio performed stylized parodies of popular song, along with serious and comedic originals. Among the crowd pleasers were Dink covers of *"Ring of Fire"* (with STRONG Scottish accents), *"Whole Lotta Love"* (for baritone ukulele, alto saxophone and concertina) and the encore hit, *"Strangers in the Fucking Night."*

Another hit for the group was *"Velvis"* – America's foremost velvet Elvis impersonator.

In 1992 the Little Dinks ran collectively for the office of president of the United States, promising round the clock presidential service through three eight-hour shifts. The trio, which chose the Ghost of Elvis as its running mate (to secure the southern vote), promised to bother the American people as little as possible during the campaign. It made but one public appearance during the run for the White House and was ultimately defeated by Bill Clinton. The group disbanded in 1996, its members wishing to pursue apolitical lives of quiet desperation, their final performance at the Temple of Music and Art titled *"The Live Sex Show."*

Buckley resurrected Blind Lemon Pledge and the Little Dinks for the Club Congress 25th anniversary celebration in October 2010, which also saw the released of the Dinks' debut CD, *"Negligible Chub."* Buckley also curated that evening of Arizona performance art, which included performances by Joanna Frueh, Jennifer Urso, Denise Uyehara, Laura Milkins, Jeff Falk, Annie Lopez, Colleena Candelabra, Paul Fisher and Dennis Williams.