

15 Nov 2004

Hurlyburly

"HURLYBURLY" RECIEVES STRONG PRODUCTION

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Nearly Naked Theatre, The Little Theatre at Phoenix Theatre
Phoenix, AZ

Chris Curcio's review of "Hurlyburly" was broadcast Nov. 15, 2004 on KBAQ 89.5 FM



"Hurlyburly" is both brilliant and confusing as it delivers a damning statement about relationships, the negative effects of mind-altering drugs, and how people who lack maturity struggle to find meaning in life. It's long and talky but playwright David Rabe writes theatrically interesting and witty dialogue that amuses as it indicts.

As theater, it won't be popular with many theatergoers. It questions accepted societal values like marriage and friendships while its characters use illegal substances to keep them safe from reality. It's scary and perplexing theater that receives a strong production by the Valley's leading alternative theater troupe, Nearly Naked

Theatre. Warning. It's loaded with explicit language so it's definitely for mature theatergoers.

Set in Hollywood, two casting directors and friends, Eddie and Mickey, share an apartment. Their lives are a mess. Both are divorced or separated with children. They are drug snorting, booze guzzling, pill-popping addicts who can't start a day without alteration by something. They're thinking is rarely clear and focused. They even share Darlene, who they treat as an object of instant pleasure. They've taken in Phil, a shallow, out-of-work actor whose violent rages caused his wife to throw him out. Another friend, hack screenwriter Artie arrives with Donna, a young woman he found living in an elevator. She moves in to provide sex. There's also Bonnie, a woman known for her sexual proclivities. It's a motley assortment of society rejects that squabble and threaten as they search unsuccessfully for life's meaning.

As staged by April Smith, the play has the dramatic urgency and intensity Rabe's script demands. These characters insult and cajole as they annihilate each other. Christian Miller is remarkably sharp tongued and focused as Eddie. Miller makes the necessary transitions to various states of inebriation convincingly as the drugs Eddie freely mixes take their toll on him. It's a masterful characterization fully realizing Eddie's shallowness as he searches for meaning by spouting complexities he doesn't understand.

Scott Dillon is more controlled and less fiery as Mickey. Steven J. Scally misses Phil's violent side in an amazingly tame performance, but Sandy Elias' fluttery and aimless Artie works perfectly. Kerry McCue's Darlene tries to help Eddie focus to no avail, while Terri Lee Soviero's Bonnie lacks all inhibitions. Rory Vandermark's aimlessness works fine for Donna, a wanderer with more focus than the guys around her.

"Hurlyburly" is unusual and challenging theater that captures the bitter confusion of life's drifters in a rewarding production. It plays through December 4. For tickets, call the Nearly Naked Theatre box office at 602-274-2432.

Grade: B