

ENTERTAINMENT

Slow pace flaws 'True West'

By David Bates
Emerald Contributor

One of Sam Shepard's most popular plays, "True West," is playing at the University's Arena Theatre, and as a whole, it is annoyingly average.

Ideally, Shepard's modern rendition of the story of Cain and Abel should be a theatrical fastball thrown with a slight curve. Director Andrew DeRycke has thrown a nice curve, but his arm is weak.

"True West" recounts the story of two brothers who are as sincere about getting to know each other as they are afraid to do so. Austin (Trev Broudy) is a screenwriter whose work on a script is interrupted by his brother Lee (Barry Shaw), a drifter. The conflict arises when Lee threatens Austin's deal with Hollywood producer Saul Kimmer (Bill Douglas), who abandons Austin's "simple romance" story to produce Lee's "realistic" story about the West.

The play can be enjoyed on several levels. Thematically, Shepard explores myth and reality and makes distinctions between the two. The play is rich in symbolism, with recurring motifs like crickets, car keys, and pit bulls. In a more comic mode, Saul the producer is a bitter commentary on the dependence of artists on Hollywood's aristocracy.

But as pure entertainment, "True West"

drags its feet. The slow pace is sometimes helped by Shaw's standout performance as the violent Lee, but even he lingers over too many of his lines. Shaw is agile in a difficult role, and his false charm, which is almost more convincing than his anger, easily matches Saul's charisma.

Douglas' Saul is enigmatic and refreshing. Wearing a black pinstripe suit and a tantalizing smile, Saul resembles a cross between a mafia hood and a conservative pimp.

Broudy's disappointing performance often slows "True West" to a near halt. Obviously a lesser actor than his male counterparts, Broudy is rarely satisfying as the civilized Austin; he spends most of his time trying to catch up with Shaw and Douglas.

This doesn't mean "True West" isn't fun. While it's often too slow, it isn't boring. The pace quickens in a few scenes that have Austin and Lee arguing about what constitutes realism as they write Lee's inane story about "two lame-brains chasing each other across the desert."

For Lee, realism is expressed best in a B-grade western about a man who dies for the love of his horse. Austin's reality is "driving the freeway, watching color TV, and shopping in Safeway." By the play's end, Shepard has trashed the American Dream as thoroughly as the brothers trash their mother's house. The ending may irritate some, but that's Shepard at his best. However, it's only mediocre University Theatre.

THURSDAY
6:00 AM - The Morning Stretch
6:30 AM - Cartoons - 1 1/2 Hrs.
 (Teddy Ruxpin, Heathcliff, Beverly Hills Teens)
10:00 AM - Movie "Trouble Comes to Town"
7:00 PM - Bustin' Loose
7:30 PM - Small Wonder
8:00 PM - Movie "Hard Hat & Legs"

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Dance '88

Pictured above, from left to right, are Jodi Milleson, Tim Ryan and Wendy Ruble, three of more than 30 students who will be featured in the Department of Dance's winter concert tonight at 8 p.m. as well as Friday and Saturday.

Dance '88 also will be staged Jan. 28-30 at 8 p.m. with a 2:30 p.m. matinee Jan. 30. Tickets are \$5.50 for general admission and \$3.50 for University students.

The concert includes six works choreographed by University dance faculty members and guest choreographer Fred Strickler. The concert has been described by artistic director Janet Descutner as "innovative visual feasts of kinetic energy."

Photo by Bill Haines

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 Mark Alan (Acoustic Guitar & Vocals)

M • O • N • D • A • Y • S
 Kevin Joyce (Piano Solo)

T • U • E • S • D • A • Y • S
 Kevin Joyce (Piano Solo)

W • E • D • N • E • S • D • A • Y • S
 Barbara Dzuro and Barry Deister (Piano & Saxophone)

T • H • U • R • S • D • A • Y • S
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