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Entertainment :: Theatre

The Flick

by Daniel Scheffler

EDGE Contributor

Tuesday Mar 12, 2013

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Matthew Maher, Louisa Krause and Aaron Clifton Moten in Playwrights Horizons 'The Flick'

There is unfortunately a certain arrogance that often comes with being the bee's knees, the favorite, the teacher's pet, the hoo-hah and the flavor of the month. Sometimes this arrogance is intentional and other times, well, it is simply just unconscious or let's call it accidentally unconscious. In the case of "**The Flick**," an Annie Baker-Sam Gold distich currently running at Playwrights Horizon, this overweening is not completely clear.

The script, or non-writing if you will, is bordering on genius. It crafts a new way of seeing theatre, or again

non-theatre, where weary humdrum is so vanilla that even this so-called vanilla loses its flavor. But as the three hours become three hours, I question whether anyone has the right to keep anyone hostage for that long to make a point, albeit valid, that was made an hour into the play.

So yes, it's "weird" as the writer called it, but what is weird if only weird for weird's sake is the silences, the planned uncomfortable silences that only theatre can do so beautifully are there, but just too many of them? Oh, you should get one of those -- just one. But gluttonously, there were several and several too many. The seats emptied and the faces angered at intermission but prevailing was my brass ring.

The story itself follows three anti-heroes as they try to find a voice in the world, a voice away from the sound of their own masturbatory voices, that is. Sam (an outstanding performance by Matthew



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Maher) is one of the enterprisingly underfed employees at a non-digital movie house in Massachusetts.

His oversized gold employee shirt and seemingly unsatisfying job of mopping the floors and cleaning up the gunk and wreckage of humans is undisturbed as a newbie named Avery (played with gawk-finesse by Aaron Clifton Moten) joins him in their quest to clean the movie house, again. Their lives, as dull and depressing as they make it to be, is complicated by the uncomfortable and surprisingly conceited Rose (a spectacular performance by Louisa Krause) that bounces into the cinema as the reel-operating slacker at work.

Sam (an outstanding performance by Matthew Maher) is one of the enterprisingly underfed employees at a non-digital movie house in Massachusetts.

Of course an almost French cinematic threesome of love and lust is seething underneath the unexciting conversations about nothing really. Sam, so in love with Rose, Avery so the object of Rose's desire. But Avery's determination to maintain 35-millimeter film and the integrity of film as an art is what drives him to come to work every day (albeit that his father physically has to drive him to work).

Rose, mistaken for a lesbian, uses her power as the operator of this potent cinematic erection to seduce Avery into her tiny little cinematic room about the theatre where she gawks down at the poor sods cleaning all day.

Sam, of course out of town at the exact right time, misses the sexual misconduct and miscalculation of Rose towards Avery but soon finds out upon his return that his homies were less confidantes and more frenemies anyway. A softy by nature, Sam is crushed but cannot pull himself together enough to step up to some kind of throne and sheepishly admits his pathetic feelings for Rose, who relieves him with hardly any sympathy but rather a sorry-feeling.

Avery, the verging valiant one, after being blamed by the owner of the cinema of stealing money (a trick Sam and Rose were taught as an employee custom by their predecessors) leaves the cinema wearing a hipster Berlin t-shirt and rides off into the distance with his hubris and disdain. He leaves behind the one person he truly had as a friend, Sam. Rose, well I guess it doesn't matter what happens to Rose, as she was just the object of affection, a figurehead really. Sam's feelings are possibly only valid as feelings and not as truth seeking commanders.

The direction of the play used moments unnecessary to character development, speeding up of narrative for whatever other real purpose so it made the play feel clumsy as a whole. The actors, all three brilliant, ironically saved the play from just being another shiver of a flick.

"The Flick" runs through March 31 at the Playwrights Horizon, 416 West 42nd Street. For information or tickets, call 212-564-1235 or visit <http://www.playwrightshorizons.org>.



This particular body of work is based on traditional 18th- and 19th-century European portraiture of the landed gentry, but the artist gave the enterprise a significant twist and shout by adding the seasoning of contemporary youth and hip hop.



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By Jake Mulligan | Dec 31

For those with 'experimental' tastes - or simply those of you who want to see something really trippy, and don't mind ignoring a devastatingly dark subtext - you can't do much better than "Qatsi."



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