



'Bug' Skin Crawling Good Time

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by James Sims



Lost Angels Theatre Company has infested the Coast Playhouse with the disturbingly enjoyable *Bug*, an off-Broadway thriller making its Los Angeles debut.

After leaving the West Hollywood theatre following Friday's opening, I found myself longing to wash away the filthy sensation induced by this shock-fest production. And in *Bug*, shocks come in all shapes and sizes. There is a bit of everything for a deviant to revel in, from the full-frontal nudity to bloody violence and extreme paranoia.

To say *Bug* is a weird foray into abnormal theatre is an understatement, though with cult-like shows of the *Evil Dead the Musical* genre popping up recently, this Tracy Letts (*Killer Joe*) play fits nicely into that niche market. Though it borders on... rather is obscene, *Bug* finds a way to get under your skin and thrill just as easily as it disturbs.

Built around a schizophrenic AWOL soldier, Peter Evens (Andrew Elvis Miller), and a down on her luck Agnes White (Amy Landecker), *Bug* travels down the rabbit hole of insanity and mayhem. Depressive and foul mouthed, Agnes paces a seedy motel room as crank calls roll in driving her to chain smoke and drink away her troubles. What is assumed to be her recently released from prison ex-husband, Jerry Goss (Andrew Hawkes), the hang-ups shatter her nerves until best-friend and outspoken lesbian R.C. (Laura Niemi) crawls into the picture, with Peter tagging along.

First comes a bong-a-thon, then the requisite sex between Peter and Agnes, followed by an early morning intrusion by abusive Jerry (played ferociously well by Hawkes). The dark and wild ride these characters are about to take is not fully revealed during the first act, but once

put on the table, the willies quickly kick in.



Both Landecker and Miller deliver vulnerable performances, baring all on stage (as both spend a good portion of the show in the buff), showing how two lost souls can find solace in the company of an equally troublesome soul.

Though everyone appears to have a sordid past, Peter takes the cake as the most deranged of the bunch, having presumably escaped a military hospital, where he claims to have been tested like a guinea pig. Believing his body is infected with some sort of bugs, it is hard to determine if such delusions have come from an ill-fated Gulf War tour, or some predisposed mental instability.

Whatever the case, Peter pulls Agnes down with him, sucking her into his dizzying world, leading to quite an explosive end for the messed up lovebirds. But not before Peter slashes away his problems with a knife, as Dr. Sweet (Rob Nagle) tracks him down to

the roadside motel in hopes of returning the lunatic to a hospital.

Scott Cummins' direction has placed *Bug* in a dark light, fittingly of course, and along with a gruesome technical crew, this limited engagement is a must-see show, if only for the oddity of it all. Letts' book provides a fascinating look into the minds of many emotionally disturbed psyches, and creates a wild ride at the theatre.

Bug's design team includes [Robert Smith's](#) set design, Leigh Allen's lighting and sound by Lindsay Jones. Performances continue through June 3 at the Coast Playhouse. Tickets are \$34.95, and can be purchased at www.buqinla.com or by calling 866-811-4111. It should be noted that no one under the age of 14 is permitted in the theatre due to the production's nudity and violence.

Photos by David Elzer. Top: Andrew Elvis Miller and Amy Landecker; Bottom: (front row) Amy Landecker and Andrew Elvis Miller (back row) Andrew Hawkes, Rob Nagle and Laura Niemi.

James Sims is a freelance writer for The Hollywood Reporter. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he has been a part of the entertainment industry one way or another his entire life. He spent a couple years hosting a morning radio show in South Korea before returning to Los Angeles to pursue a career as an entertainment journalist. James worked for various radio stations around California as well as worked a short while with Entertainment Tonight/The Insider. An avid musical theatre enthusiast, he is constantly traveling to New York to stay caught up with the latest happenings on Broadway. His next goal, to prove to the world that Los Angeles really does have some "high culture" left through shedding light on some of its prime theatre happenings. Although he is still trying to decide if David Zippel's lyrics from "City of Angels" hold any truth, "L.A., truth to tell, is not much different than a pretty girl with the clap."