



BRING
GREAT DESIGN
OUTDOORS



Room&Board
HOME FURNISHINGS

<http://www.calendarlive.com/stage/cl-et-bug4may04.0,423850.story?coll=cl-stage>

THEATER REVIEW

Letts' 'Bug' will bother you, and that's the point

By F. Kathleen Foley
Special to The Times

May 4, 2007

Whatever your ultimate take is on Tracy Letts' "Bug," the 2004 off-Broadway hit now in its Los Angeles premiere at the Coast, you are certain to ponder the play long after the final curtain.

Not for the squeamish, "Bug" is part sci-fi, part "Lower Depths," a grim, gritty, surprisingly funny portrait of paranoiac down-and-outers involved in what may or may not be a massive government conspiracy. Boozy, coked-out Agnes (Amy Landecker), a lonely loser with a drug habit, makes her home in a seedy Oklahoma motel room — a setting depressingly realized in Robert G. Smith's scenic design, which bespeaks a lifetime of lowered expectations. The prevalent squalor is echoed in Lindsay Jones' brilliant sound design.

Persistently bedeviled by her brutal ex-con husband (Andrew Hawkes), Agnes has few friends besides her lesbian co-worker R.C. (Laura Niemi). Still haunted by a loss that has never been resolved, Agnes becomes embroiled with Peter (Andrew Elvis Miller), a mysterious stranger who soon gets under her skin.

Are Peter's rantings about the ravenous "aphids" he insists are proliferating all around them those of a lunatic? Or does he know something we don't? Rife with blood, nudity and creepy-crawlies, Letts' alternately gross and enigmatic piece will leave you scratching your head — quite literally — as you cast about for answers.

From an evocative character study, "Bug" detours into a simplistically lurid ending that seems a bit manipulative. However, whatever its limitations, the play provides plenty of rich material for an absolutely superb cast, which includes Rob Nagle as a psychiatrist who may have a shocking hidden agenda. Under the shrewdly subtle tutelage of director Scott Cummins, the actors render their characters without a hint of artifice. To the trailer born, these human throwbacks are as fascinating as they are terrifying. You will be unable to look away — guaranteed.

*

'Bug'

Where: Coast Playhouse, 8325 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood

When: 8 p.m. Thursdays to Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays

Ends: June 3

Price: \$34.95

Contact: (866) 811-4111, www.buginla.com

Running time: 2 hours

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.

TMSReprints
Article licensing and reprint options