

Reviews

FROM BROADWAY TO THE WEST END TO YOUR
HOMETOWN

Review: "Forever Bound" at the Atwater Village Theatre

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- *Chief Los Angeles Theatre Critic*



EMILY GOSS AND FRENCH STEWART IN FOREVER-BOUND
PHOTO BY KATHY FLYNN

The name of the show *Forever Bound* has so many innuendos, starting with the program featuring a large cockroach bound by tape. The opening of *Forever Bound* begins with a lovely redhead girl Miranda (Emily Goss) walking slowly with vacant eyes, while holding a gas mask. Is she “Forever Bound” to believe that her world is about to end? Playwright Steve Apostolina’s literary comedy turns into a chilling thriller, with a surprising moral twist.

In Apostolina’s notes, the character Edmund played by the talented French Stewart (3rd Rock from the Sun, The Middle, Mom, Secrets and Lies) was created from experiences in his own life. As a boy, Apostolina grew up in a household where he went to a bookstore every Sunday and was allowed to purchase any book he wanted, as long as he read it. Later he sold his old books to a local bookstore to help make his rent. Working as an actor/playwright/director, he turned his love for reading into becoming an amateur book scout.

In the play, Edmund is a book scout desperate to be a graphic novelist while trying to avoid bankruptcy. Costume designer Joanie Coyote dresses him in a Batman robe, enhancing his quirky, childlike and a bit of a recluse character. He seems to be “Forever Bound” to his apartment. We watch while he sits in his modest living room decorated by scenic designer Pete Hickok, among boxes “Forever Bound” books, a bookshelf, two plastic milk crates with a board on top as a table, and cockroaches taped in random order on the wall that are “Forever Bound.” Edmund can barely afford to eat and hates how AMAZON is taking away his business.

Next is a scene change with the help of lighting designer Bosco Flanagan, as we see Miranda with Thomas played by Rob Nagle. In a creepy way, it reminds me a little bit of George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, as a well dressed older gentleman urges Miranda to hauntingly repeat literary lines from Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities* and other great novels. Soon we observe Thomas as controlling, powerful and disturbingly creating Miranda’s #MeToo story. The writing and Ann Hearn Tobolowsky direction adds authenticity and weaves texture to this story.

Next, we meet Edmund's one and only friend Shep (Apostolina). He's a book scout too and when an opportunity arises to make a lot of money, Shep encourages Edmund to help him in a criminal caper. Edmund is not a thief and isn't willing to commit a felony, even if it is a way out of poverty.

A humbling moment is when Edmund holds a "Mattress Sale" directional sign as a last attempt for a steady paycheck. When he's had enough, he tells Shep "You win, what do we have to do?" Together they are "Forever Bound" in a risky scheme that goes shockingly awry. Now both Edmund and Shep have to do the right thing, even if that means it will change their life forever. Without giving too much more of the plot away, we meet Miranda again "Forever Bound" to all three men.

In the end, we learn who is the ultimate "Forever Bound". It's one of those productions where you sit at the edge of your seat and will not only dissect the plot in the car ride home but for days afterward. This show is a winner!

Forever Bound runs May 11 through June 16, with performances on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m.; and Mondays at 8 p.m. Two preview performances are set for Wednesday, May 9 and Thursday, May 10, both at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$35 on Fridays and Saturdays (except opening night, Friday, May 11 which is \$45 and includes a post-show reception with the cast), \$30 on Sundays, and \$25 on Mondays. Preview performances are \$15. Atwater Village Theatre is located at 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles, CA 90039. On-site parking is free. For reservations and information, call (323) 960-4429 or go to www.plays411.com/foreverbound.
