

Kill-or-Dies, The

Total Rating: ****

Previews: November 12, 2015

Opened: November 14, 2015

Ended: December 13, 2015

Country: USA

State: California

City: Los Angeles

Company/Producers:

Electric Footlights/Moving Arts

Theater Type: Regional

Theater: McCadden Place Theater

Theater Address: 1157 North McCadden Place

Phone: 323-465-1008

Website: movingarts.org

Running Time: 90 min

Genre: Dark Comedy

Author:

Meghan Brown

Director: Darin Anthony

Review:

Writing, acting and directing come together in dynamic fashion in the West Coast premiere of *The Kill-or-Dies*, Meghan Brown's ink-black comedy about four amoral scoundrels trying to outwit each other and lay claim to a pot of gold (a suitcase full of cocaine whose street value is worth about half a mil).

The play kicks off with a confrontation between Maggie (Megan Kathleen Duffy) and her oldest friend, Chelsea (Karina Wolfe), who is hiding out in her late grandmother's home after having committed a horrible crime elsewhere. The sweetly innocent-looking home with its humming-bird wallpaper (evocative set by Jeanine Ringer) provides the perfect counterpart to all the nasty and evil things that take place here.

Maggie, a hard-boiled, sharp-tongued beauty, is trying to do a number on Billy (Daniel Dorr), her drug-dealing boyfriend. Instead of acting simply as a courier for him, she has decided to sell the coke herself and abscond with the loot. Problem is, Billy sniffs out her con and shows up with a pistol-packing hood in tow, Lawrence (Rob Nagle), to take back what is rightfully his.

What follows is a series of cat-and-mouse games between Maggie and Billy as they duel verbally, psychologically and sexually with each other over the fate of the suitcase.

Caught up in this life-and-death struggle (which is also shot through with comedy) are the seemingly mousy and timid Chelsea and the blissfully thick-headed Lawrence. To give too much away would be wrong; suffice to say that the plot's twists and turns keep building in intensity, leading to a final scene which ends when one of the characters lands a surprising knock-out punch.

The Kill-or-Dies is a character-driven play, one whose success depends on the skill of its actors. Yes, the playwright has given the cast a lot of sardonic, snappy dialogue to speak, but it's really the splendid performances (and expert direction) that lift this production well above the ordinary.



Cast:

Karina Wolfe, Megan Kathleen Duffy, Daniel Dorr, Rob Nagle

Technical:

Stage Manager: Meg Elgaard; Fight Director: Kevin Moran; Sound: Luke Moyer. Costumes: Christine Cover Ferro. Effects: John Burton. Set: Jeanine Ringer.

Critic: Willard Manus

Date Reviewed: November 2015

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