

The Day After: What were they thinking?

By Catherine Wilson

The life of a reviewer is never easy, what with deadlines, angry editors, and even angrier recipients of criticism. But nothing is worse than this unprepared, slapped-together production known as “**The Day After**” (now performing at **Improv Olympic** in Hollywood), which clearly assimilated nothing from the inspiring & heart-stirring 1983 TV miniseries of the same name.

This 30-minute one-act play, featuring three men (**Michael Bellavia**, **Ernie Brandon**, and **Scott Rose**), invites the audience to see an evening of so-called “theatre.” However, from the very inception of the show, it is painfully & shamefully obvious that nothing has been prepared at all!

Shocked, confused, and cheated, the audience watched in dismay as the performers actually had the gall to ask the audience for help in creating the show. They literally stood onstage and asked the dumbfounded audience for a suggestion as to what the show should be about. It was absolutely embarrassing.

This coming from three men who are supposedly alumni of the renowned Improv Olympic training center. This reviewer urges Improv Olympic to check the credentials of these supposed graduates.

After 4 seconds of unbearable silence, this reviewer finally yelled out “The White House” just to get the ball rolling.

But the horror had just begun. There was not one prop used in the entire show (save for two unstable chairs), so we were forced to watch an evening of excessive pantomiming as the performers created an imaginary location and expected us to wholeheartedly accept it.

Not a single costume was provided, not a scrap of professional wardrobe. This reviewer was wholly humiliated to watch a man in shorts pretend to be the President.

And lest I forget, there was no makeup nor set design nor musical score either.

The suggestion was woven & entangled into a series of scenes with a handful of key characters, all of which were interwoven into a broader storyline. But the performers had the audacity to think that they were pulling the wool over the audience’s eyes by each pretending to play multiple characters throughout the show. At one point, Brandon walked off stage right as an elderly woman only to come back on stage left as an eager young chicken farmer who had lost his federal subsidy. Bellavia and Rose pretended as if he really was a chicken farmer, but it didn’t fool the audience for a moment. We all knew that he was the exact same guy who played the old woman just a few moments earlier.

Perhaps these performers should take their cue from the delightful fare we’ve come to know and love from the bright performers in “Happy



Scott Rose, Michael Bellavia, and Ernie Brandon -- all pointing to a chair as empty as their show.

Time Rainbow Bunny Squad,” a show with 11 live actors—plenty of humans to go around for a plethora of endearing characters.

It was painfully clear that the performers in “The Day After” could only maintain interest in a few broad themes at a time, by stretching those themes to fill 30 minutes and implying that the audience should think deeper about those very themes. Excuse me, but we all do enough thinking in our day jobs—we don’t need to do it when we’re going to the theatre to be entertained.

Finally, mercifully, this insult came to an end. And as the audience politely cheered, roared, and hooted, this reviewer took it upon herself to take courage and speak out against this swindling, this hate-crime of a performance, on behalf of her fellow audience members. Smashing my \$2 Pabst Blue Ribbon against a table (the cost of which was insulting in itself, insinuating that my salary isn’t high enough to pay for more expensive drinks), I waved the jagged end menacingly at the pallid actors, demanding everyone’s money back.

Surprisingly, some friends of the performers must have been in the

audience, because I was pushed by an angry group of young artsy types onto Hollywood Blvd. I owe a special thanks to Dirk the homeless guy who escorted me to my vehicle.

The following morning, this reviewer made her way to The Hollywood Reporter office, where she began this missive to put an end to the rampant unprofessionalism and carpet-baggery of these 3 performers.

No one should be allowed to charge \$5 for an unwritten, unrehearsed, unproduced play.

And if you see Michael Bellavia, Ernie Brandon, or Scott Rose, stay far away. Very far away.

The Day After

Sunday, April 11th, 10:30 pm
Sunday, April 25th, 10:30 pm
Sunday, May 2nd, 10:00 pm
Sunday, May 16th, 10:00 pm
Sunday, May 30th, 10:00 pm

Improv Olympic
6366 Hollywood Blvd.
(323) 962-7560
www.iowest.com
\$5 admission