

Cozy Mamet

David Mamet's *Speed-The-Plow* gets an intimate production from debuting companies By GLENN SUMI

SPEED-THE-PLOW by David Mamet, directed by Andrew Lamb, with Joseph Cochrane, Ben Hunter and Paula Schultz. Presented by IAAN Entertainment and Springboard Productions at Artword Alternative (75 Portland). Runs to October 30, Thursday-Saturday 8 pm, matinee Sunday 2:30 pm. \$12, stu \$10. 416-458-0059. Rating: **NNN**

IT MUST BE TEMPTING WHEN DIRECTING David Mamet's plays to push the snappy, gunfire dialogue way over the top. But up-and-coming director Andrew Lamb resists that urge and wisely underplays things in this clear and intimate production of *Speed-The-Plow*, a promising debut by two young companies, IAAN Entertainment and Springboard Productions.

Mamet's satirical look at the movie industry centres on what happens when the recently promoted film producer Bobby Gould (Joseph Cochrane) and his ass-kissing colleague Charlie Fox (Ben Hunter) get a chance to produce what seems like a guaranteed blockbuster. The two self-professed whores have a meeting with a higher-up the next morning, but in the meantime there's young temp secretary Karen (Paula Schultz), a looker with a brain who causes a rift between the two men personally, professionally

and – eventually – morally.

As in many of Mamet's plays and films, none of the characters is particularly likeable, and yet you admire and even like them despite their flaws. They're survivors who use words to fight for what they want, even when they're not sure if they and their motives are – as one character in the play puts it – "pure."

While it's pretty hard to surprise us these days with satire about Tinseltown, some of Mamet's choice zingers (the play was written in 1988) still sting, and Lamb directs his actors so they take their time developing the plot and revealing the characters.

Cochrane initially has some difficulty getting his mouth around the language, but he grows more confident over the course of the show. He's believable in his nervous fumbblings with Karen and almost sympathetic in his eventual existential breakdown. Hunter, meanwhile, is all arrogant obsequiousness in the first act, simmering and exploding with rage in the second. Schultz has an open, unpretentious air as Karen, the play's most ambiguous and mysterious character.

The small Artword Alternative theatre provides a suitable, intimate space for this modest but entertaining production. ©

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DAVID MAMET'S

SPEED – THE – PLOW

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Hollywood. The land of powerful decision makers in the motion picture industry. In *Speed The Plow*, desperation and delusion lead to manipulation and objectification in order to greenlight a film.

Our producers, Fox and Gould, are self proclaimed whores in the business who thrive on money and power. Unfortunately they didn't plan on the sexy temporary broad, Karen, who's covering for Gould's secretary.

Hopes shared, dreams crushed and being frightened. Who will rise together and who will be left out in the cold?

Hey, it's just business.

Andrew Lamb