

Reviews of two more plays in Guthrie's 'Singled Out' festival

By John Townsend

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Trista Baldwin's shattering one act, "American Sexy," which played the 2008 Minnesota Fringe Festival is another work that unsettles and disturbs. The New Theatre Group has developed the play somewhat since then in workshops and readings in Minneapolis and New York. We're taken on a road trip to the Grand Canyon en route to Las Vegas with two young men and two young women. Patrick Kozicky reprises his wrenching performance as Andy, a contemporary Calvinist type who cannot and will not separate sex from love. Though the playwright is far from being an ideological conservative, she has written Andy with empathy and seems to validate, to some degree at least, his repulsion towards sexual acts too easily entered into.

Though she is also far from being erotophobic, Baldwin is skeptical of such sexual ease, especially in our age of the internet and cameras, hidden and unhidden. Director Brian Balcom's three other actors -Darius Dotch, Ally Carey, Joanna Harmon- are newer to the script and their performances are just as unflinching as those at Fringe. They reveal characters who have become so objectifying and casual in their sexual expression that they've lost their connection to their own humanity, hence, the humanity of those they would bed. Both riveting productions I've seen of *American Sexy* hit deep-seated anxieties and fears about sexuality. However, I am now more curious about just who these four characters are and just how did they happen to come together? Therefore, if Baldwin were to write a prequel or an act preceding this one, odds are she could render a fascinating full-length play.

THEATER | Singled Out at the Guthrie: A tiny, classy little fringe festival

By [Jay Gabler](#), [TC Daily Planet](#)

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the [New Theatre Group](#)'s *American Sexy* (another 2008 revival) landed with a heavy thud, like a copy of *The Riverside Shakespeare* dropping in your lap. The characters are pot-smoking college students goofing around at a campsite, but the meticulousness of Trista Baldwin's dialogue and plotting are immediately, and persistently, evident. Three of the characters—Ally Carey's Jess, Darius Dotch's Darren, and Joanna Harmon's Lexi—are in a *No-Exit*-like lust triangle, and indeed it would be hell to spend eternity with the incredibly obnoxious Lexi. Her brash exterior is, natch, hiding a wounded interior; Jessica has a secret too, the revelation of which occurs like clockwork about ten minutes from the play's conclusion. There are a few very funny moments involving Patrick Kozicky's uptight character Andy, but Lexi and Jess start out talking like they're in *Girls Gone Wild* and end up sounding like they're in *Waiting for Godot*—neither of which, despite an up-to-moment plot device involving sexting, strike me as being particularly authentic. The strongest aspect of the production is the acting—particularly that of Harmon, who despite her character's implausible dialogue is supremely confident and completely riveting.