

Audience reviews
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(kitties = stars)

Sexy sad

by John Heimbuch Follow this reviewer

Rating 5 kitties

This beautiful new script by Trista Baldwin meanders thoughtfully through the American landscape, both figuratively and literally, examining what it means to self-identify as a sexual creature in American society while using the backdrop (or groundcloth as the case might be) of the Grand Canyon to echo that vast emptiness that the play's four characters feel.

The ensemble was perfect, with an honest and subtle acting style that perfectly captured the tone of post-adolescent sexuality - not quite mature, not quite confident, not quite certain - but very well-played. Rose Le Tran definitely proved the driving force in this drama, while the other three reacted to her complicated and sometime awkward advances with playfulness, acquiesce, or outright stoniness.

A friend I saw this with compared it to a very well-made independent film; and I see the connection. The story doesn't depend on major action, or complicated plot, but rests instead on skillfully subtext-laden dialogue, sexual identity, internal debate, and personal demons. Overall the results are fascinating to watch.

It is not a fast-paced show, and as such fell a bit behind other Fringe shows in terms of buzz, but it is a beautiful, well-acted, well-directed piece that was very much at home in the intimate venue of the Rarig Arena.

Uncomfortably fascinating

by Amy Rummenie Follow this reviewer

Rating 4 kitties

I want to say that the ladies were superficial, but I want to be clear that I mean it in the most complimentary way possible. It was incredible to watch as they tried to cover the most vulnerable and intelligent parts of themselves in a veneer of socially-expected sexuality. Their frenetic energy is balanced out by the boys- acting simultaneously as voyeur and censor, they brought out the very personal and unanswerable questions of what people truly seek in relationships versus what they project. Take a dinner break after this one to mull it over.

the voices rang true

by Fringivitis Vulgaris

Rating 4 kitties

These are young actors in a story about young people in a hypersexed culture. The story isn't inherently complex, but the relationships and betrayals are very twisty.

Very Sexy. Very American.

by Cody Stewart

Rating 4 kitties

This play deals with four college aged characters on their trip to Vegas. The one act takes place in the midst of the Grand Canyon where some shocking revelations take place. Baldwin's dialogue felt forced in some places, but I was not sure if it was the actor's or the playwright's fault. The play was racy, hyper-sexualized, yet did build nicely into the climax. I felt that the character of Andy being an "unknown" could have fit in more naturally somehow. Some of the textual images were great and some were lost on me, but over all they were still thought provoking. I give these actors mad props for being part of the New Theater Group and "baring their souls" in helping to create this work. I was engaged the whole time. Balcom's staging worked well in the arena. Four out of Five.

very enjoyable!

by Courtney Miner

Rating 4 kitties

This cast of actors was extremely focused, committed and believable. I was thoroughly impressed with the production in that capacity. I also enjoyed the script, but it felt a little disjointed. I can't put my finger on it, but something was missing. Overall, very good show. Particularly outstanding was Patrick Kozicky as Andy...a great example of an actor with great balance. He doesn't try too hard, he's not acting for the audience's reaction and that's very nice to see.

The Best They Could

by Timothy Meyer

Rating 3 kitties

Overall, it was enjoyable. The acting is very good, all four cast members deliver amazingly believable performances and go beyond the text. The script is good, if dense. The dialogue flows and lends itself to the scene, but at the end of the day, it left me wondering what Baldwin was really trying to say. While a theme emerged, it appeared to be weighed down by strange twists and melodrama. Plus, the Beckett-esque ending took me for a loop.

Again, talented if uninspired production. Worth your time.

Amazing. Amazing. Amazing.

by Gus Rholl

Rating 5 kitties

I'm a huge fan of Trista Baldwin. I'm a huge fan of Brian Balcom. I'm a huge fan of the New Theatre Group. And I'm a new fan of this script / show. Everything about this show moved me to the core. The acting was above anything I've seen at the fringe this year. Especially of note are Natalie Remus and Patrick Kozicky. They play a level of depression that is so real, it's uncomfortable. Not to say the rest of cast isn't great. This show, as a whole just works. It's a breath of fresh air for the Fringe Festival.

Acting is iffy. Play is great.

by Kim Lee

Rating 5 kitties

First I have to disagree with all these people who say the acting is so great in this show. It's hit and miss, and sometimes just plain grating. There are some good acting moments, the white guy, he's good, but sum is greater than the parts in this one. The show OVERALL IS DAMN GOOD so the sloppy acting doesn't mess it up too bad. The words and action just kinda snake into you and then slam. This play really got under my skin. If you're weirded out by Calhoun Square on a Saturday night, you should SEE THIS SHOW. It humanizes people we (I) want to dismiss and trends in our f-d up society that we (I) want to ignore. But we can't. Did I tell you to see this show? And there are some good acting moments. The more I talk about it the more I think this show is about something VERY IMPORTANT. Just, yeah, go see it.

Valley Girls at the Grand Canyon

by Chuck Beeson

Rating 4 kitties

I have been anticipating when I'd get a chance to see Trista Baldwin's play American Sexy. Wednesday night at 8:30 I got my chance. We are first introduced to a squirrely, Valley Girl-esque character (Rose Le Tran) munching chips and looking out over the Grand Canyon. She parades around the stage and lets the audience know you're in for a whole night of my whiny, spoiled brat voice. Her cohort (played by Natalie Remus) is not much better. She looks at the Grand Canyon and says it looks fake. Oh boy. Justin Jenkins comes in and gives us a breath of fresh air (normalcy) and the math geek (Patrick Kozicky) really grounds the play with his sincerity of feelings for the squirrely chip-munching girl we first see on stage.

I think the playwright either wants to show us people that are REALLY LIKE THIS, or she KNOWS people like this. I don't know. The characters certainly are real, and the acting is great and the relationships believable, but DO WE CARE about these people? I could have walked out of the theater and not felt hurt.

There is a scene in the middle that uses very crude sexual language and a scene with a toy that the two women perform for the men that is supposed to turn them on. It's like the male sexual urge is being put on a shock platform and either the playwright is taking target practice at men or is further exploring the shallowness of these characters (save one, the math geek).

This might be a better play only if we cared about these characters more. Because everything else was done to perfection on the stage we really believed we were at the Grand Canyon and the sound bites and actors brought us there. I just wished I cared about them more.

A play with Potential

by dixie treichel

Rating 3 kitties

A play with potential. The first 40 minutes are mostly vacuous garble not quite making the build up that was possible. The last 15 minutes had some substance. How does a playwright portray vacuous characters without creating a vacuous play? I wanted to see the meanness developed throughout the play in the character played by Rose Le Tran. She was key to the twist but spent too much time in half wit mode as did Natalie Remus' character. Good acting by all and great potential.

American Sexy

by Jeannine Coulombe

Rating 4 kitties

This is a disturbing play. It's supposed to be disturbing. And the most disturbing thing would be if you were not disturbed. I didn't like these characters much, perhaps because their behavior was recognizable. And I had a hard time watching them and there were times when I was most uncomfortable. THANK GOD! If theatre doesn't make you squirm a bit in your seat and sometimes have you looking for the exit, it's not doing its job. This play delivers! In all ways theatre is suppose to deliver--it made you feel something and it made you think. If that's what you want (and you should) GO SEE THIS PLAY!

fantastic acting, mediocre structure

by Rubenstein, Madison E

Rating 3 kitties

I thought that the acting was excellent, but that the show itself lacked direction. Most of the time I was confused as to the point of the story and the internal struggle within each character. Each actor did, however, excel in their rolls. The actors are what drove the show.

Necessary viewing**by Hae Ryun Boo****Rating 5 kitties**

One of the best shows I've seen at the Fringe--smart, bracingly funny, and disturbing script; strong ensemble cast; and solid direction. For those who've said they wanted to care more about the characters, I suggest that that's part of the point--as a society, we need to care about these characters, because they are our daughters, sons, students, and neighbors. This show asks us to look beyond the shallow facades to the hurt souls underneath, revealing a similiary damaged society that informs them.

Hmmm**by Liz Floyd****Rating 2 kitties**

Good acting. A better description of what I was going to see and possibly I would not have gone.

Deny the urge to look away**by Asya Mikhailenko****Rating 4 kitties**

As is apparent from the reviews, this show gives you something to think about. What I love most about New Theatre Group productions is that they always manages to make me forget I am in a theater watching performers and places me in an organic moment. This stuff doesn't give you an "aha" moment you can pin to your Fringe button, but it's intelligent, daring work, nonetheless.

This is good**by Beth Wasserstein****Rating 5 kitties**

More than I expected from a Fringe show, in terms of things to think about afterwards. I love that it doesn't solve everything or judge the characters, even as it paints a picture of recognizably unpleasant people. Girls in trouble...

BEST SHOW I'LL SEE AT THE FRINGE**by Brandon Sommers****Rating 5 kitties**

This show is exactly what I want out of the fringe. The script was outstanding, the actors were very committed and wonderful to watch. Many times throughout the play even when we were supposed to feel maybe sad or very suspenful like what's gonna happen next, I was just smiling cause the actors did such a great job, and I just loved what this show was. It definitely hit some good deeper thoughts about the conflicts between the characters. They use the space beautifully...constantly being staged in ways where everyone in the audience gets a turn to see the actors. A small little production with AMAZING acomplishments. Thank you to everyone involved in American sexy.

High-fiber Fringe brain food**by Florence Brammer****Rating 5 kitties**

There's lots to think and talk about after seeing this well-written, well-directed, well-performed and well-staged -- but hard-to-digest and demanding -- hour. A courageous choice for a Fringe entry. Kudos!

Painfully Honest

by Justin Bacon

Rating 4 kitties

American Sexy is a powerful piece that looks with painful honesty at the kind of vapid, super-sexualized youth culture that seems to be spreading its wings of ignorance. It can be wickedly funny... but for those who have seen their peers or their children trapped in this destructive cycle it can be bone-chilling, as well.

What makes the show work is seeing the inner struggle each character has with the nagging hope that they can be something more... but are struck down by the anti-intellectual mockery of the circle of "friends" they have surrounded themselves with (mockery which they, themselves, participate in as a member of the mob). The show's only flaw is that the script seems to fall short of making you care enough about any of the characters to make you care whether or not they succeed in their struggle to make themselves better people. This shortcoming in the writing (which is otherwise sharp and witty) is at least partly mended by the stirringly passionate performance of Natalie Remus: When she's left standing on the bench, Ms. Remus -- through her sheer talent -- makes you care... and, in that moment, sells the entire soul of the play.

Made me squirm

by Mo Perry

Rating 5 kitties

This show made me really uncomfortable. Which is good. It says something true and sad about what it is to be a young woman (and man) in today's culture of hyper-projection of image, short attention spans, brief celebrity, and sexuality as female power. There were a few moments that had me squirming in my seat with sheer discomfort from the degradation the female characters were willingly submitting themselves to, all the time mistaking it for getting the upper hand over the boys. This is a disturbing but profoundly insightful look at the clash between inner lives and the need to feel validated by others' desire by any means necessary. The actors are brave, and I applaud their fearless tackling of such difficult material. The New Theatre Group has completed a trifecta of awesome Fringe shows with American Sexy. Check it out.

American Awesome!

by Ben Thietje

Rating 4 kitties

Loved it! Period. The script was awesome, the direction solid, the acting well-done. One kitty left behind because I wanted nudity...but I realize that I can't have it all.

Not So Sexy

by Kale Ganann

Rating 3 kitties

I'm conflicted about this one. This play crosses broad swaths of emotional territory in a very short time, leaving us mystified as to exactly what was being driven to.

It's not poorly acted, with the four cast members all well cast and playing their characters to the hilt. It's not poorly written, with multiple levels of reads and meaning. And I don't think it was poorly directed, as the cast members seem to understand what they were going for.

What it is, is dense. It's nigh impenetrable, but it does succeed on one level brilliantly.

My wife and I are still discussing it and probably will be for some time. So, if you're looking for conversation fodder, you can certainly do worse.

Juicy meaty

by Dana Florence

Rating 4 kitties

Saw the opening afternoon of this one and have to rate it hot because it actually gave me (gasp) a lot to think about! The actors are young and the characters seem laughable sometimes - at first - but it all blows up in this awesome way as things get unexpectedly moving - and the show doesn't tell you what to think. Yay!

American the numb

by Dan Hollinger

Rating 5 kitties

Great show. American the numb and dumb?, holy s***t. Made me think of 1st Avenue, some college girls night out. Good social commentary, decent acting. Rock on director Brian.

Great acting, but...

by Kelly Brogan

Rating 1 kitty

I was disappointed to spend an hour of my day with annoying high school girls. That said, the acting was well done-the actors were very committed to their character's. They also worked their awkward stage beautifully. But I simply didn't care at all for the characters, and while there was opportunity for crisis/growth-there simply wasn't any.

giving brain

by Mike Rasmussen

Rating 5 kitties

I ended up liking this show a lot, even though I saw it at 1:00 with not enough coffee in me. I don't know if I fully understand the ending but it made me feel a little sick and like my mind was messed with. Sweet. And now I know what "giving brain" means. lol

ready to feel uncomfortable?

by julie fossell

Rating 4 kitties

This show struck a cord with me and I really connected with the characters. I didn't really get the ending but I thought it was a well written play--a little on the sombre side for me--but well written and well performed. Good theater!