

[Back to Ray Luo's Reviews](#)

Extinction



If the survival of the human species depended on continuing philandering taking place in seedy Atlantic City hotel rooms by coke-drugged weekend warriors, then we may well be better off telling more lies. In Gabe McKinley's new play, "Extinction" produced by Red Dog Squadron, survival is one of the excuses given for activities normally deemed to be hurtful, but shhhh, don't tell the animals that.

"Extinction" centers on a traveling drug salesman named Max (Michael Weston) who invites his best friend from college out to the casinos intent on, quite simply, getting laid. That best friend Finn (James Roday) is an aspiring teacher who works at Columbia College library who recently got married to a Susan who may or may not have been previously involved with Max. While snorkeling cocaine, Max promises Finn that this will be the most fun they've ever had, despite the recent death of his own mother. After winning a lot of money at craps, Max comes home with a mother working as a hostess, Missy (Amanda Detmer). Missy brings her friend Victoria (Stefanie E. Frame), a newbie to the hustling business. While Finn tries to shake himself loose of Max's influence by remaining sober and abstinent, Victoria remains aloof while trying to get her job done before taking home some much needed money.

Weston's experience in "Scrubs" certainly shows in this play, but his comedic performance is more than just a few one-liners. He brings a self-righteousness with him while espousing the theory for why he likes to bang women. Apparently, it's to perpetuate the human species. But it's more than just taking cocaine, winning money, and playing with women for Max, who also has feelings for Finn. When it's revealed that Finn just got married, and Max was not invited to the wedding, Max takes Finn's phone and leaves the hotel room, intent on calling Susan to clear up the reason why Finn is at Atlantic City. Weston's methods may be as simple as stretching his underwear while putting on deodorant, but his jokes are given with a cynical air and we get the sense that Weston is playing a character he knows all too well, personally or otherwise.

Despite Weston's controlling influence, Roday still seems to be the focus of the play. Finn is a good natured bookish character looking to change his partying ways. First, it was settling down with a good woman, having a baby, and abandoning his former substance abuse habits with Max. Next it is refusing the money (\$10,000) offered by Max to resuscitate his financial life and refusing to sleep with the prostitute Victoria. Yet Roday does a great job of showing that all is not well behind the supposed strong Finn. His downcast mannerisms and mock heroism indicate to us that beneath the facade of reform lies a desire to follow Max. At one point, Finn asks if the great man is the one who goes conquering the world or the one that refuses to partake in it. He is still absorbed in his bookish knowledge, but has no real idea about how to deal with his life, and when Max springs a surprise in revenge, he loses his guard.

Detmer and Frame play sympathetic characters caught up in the twist and turns of the virulent Max against the regretful Finn. On one hand, Max goes to Atlantic City to screw women just after his mom's death. On the other, Finn phones his wife regarding the money problem, and tries to shield her away from Max, who has

never lied to him. The two diametrically opposed attitudes collide in attempting to assert its own philosophy. At the end though, one of those ideas of life will become extinct.

"Extinction" is showing at Elephant Space, in Hollywood, California until December 13, 2009.
Online www.plays411.com/Extinction

Other reviews of the same show:

MR Hunter