

Chicago Theatre Addict

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The Adventures of Nervous-Boy: A Penny Dreadful @ Gorilla Tango

THE ADVENTURES OF NERVOUS-BOY

Last night I ventured to Bucktown for the latest installment of [Gorilla Tango Theatre](#)'s experimental theatre series: *The Adventures of Nervous Boy: A Penny Dreadful*. This brisk 55-minute one act explores the soulless, shallow existence of modern society through the eyes of Nervous-Boy (Nicholas Caesar) — an unemployed, emotionally-detached single man living in a post 9/11, Bush-era Manhattan. I caught the closing performance.

In his vignette-heavy script, James Comtois has Nervous-Boy encounter various acrid and satirical situations — from attending an avant garde theater performance to dating a self-absorbed actress to smoking pot with his good friend Satan. Nearly every scene involves the ingesting of some sort of chemical, be it alcohol, caffeine or pot, providing an escape mechanism from Nervous-Boy's rancid environs.

Nervous Boy tries to establish a connection with the world around him, but it's a world in which he's unable (or unwilling?) to relate to, and seemingly, little to no desire to connect with. The paradox is that his only means of survival is to partake in the corporate game as a freelance graphic designer to sustain his life in pricey Manhattan.

For such a short, intimate play, Comtois' script calls for a relatively large cast of nine, and director Jamie DesRocher has assembled a great group of young actors, particularly Scott Cupper as the douchey Grog, Jaimelyn Gray as the vapid Stripper and Amy Whittenberger's scene-stealing Skank.

As hinted at in the title, the subject matter takes a sharp turn to the macabre in its final moments, and this cast handles the shift in tone well. However, I was left a little hazy as to Comtois' message: was this all a nightmare, a satirical profile of a serial killer, a cautionary tale as to how society can poison a seemingly harmless being, or a metaphor for something else? Or all of the above?

That said, I always enjoy a well acted and deftly directed evening of new work — particularly when it's something interesting and eye-opening (and brief!).

Gorilla Tango Theatre's increasingly popular venue provides a series of widely electric performances. As their web site states, "If it's live and will fit on our stage, you could see it at GTT!" Check out their show schedule [here](#) for more information.

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