



Excal's Roberta DiMaio captured the incredible costumes made for Vanier College's acclaimed production of Medea which ended last week. The entire cast performed the play on stilts

Gay Brits show how, don't ask why

By STEPHANIE GROSS

Pornography: A Spectacle
Poor Alex Theatre
until Feb. 24

If you do a play about pornography, you have to be careful, no matter which way the audience swings. Prudishness is not the issue here, the issue is "morality." It concerns the existence of violence in sexual relationships and what it does to the humans involved.

The three Britons who are performing their play by and for gays in Toronto this month, call their show: *Pornography: A Spectacle*. The play certainly explores how pornography is a part of gay life (straight as well) but it takes a turn for the worse and leaves one with the same question that one has before seeing the play: why do people hurt each other?

Theatricaly, *Pornography* is more than adequate. The structure is 'contemp' with the collage effect—a mixture of monologues, and dialogues. There's just the right amount of humor, anger, despair and insight, but it falls intentionally a little short in the category of love. For the message behind the play is the fine line between pornography and love.

One man dances seductively in a G-string describing his body in the third person, pornographic style: "hot stuff, big prick," while the other man strips down as if he were getting ready to sleep, describing his body in an honest way: "these are my arms, I have a small and narrow chest." The G-string is 'what you want' while the naked, ordinary man is 'what you get.' The three men obviously know the psychology behind pornography—at least to a point. Where it gets obscured is when the element of violence is added in. It is here where the ground should be tread with caution.

The play seems to be moving towards the realization that love is perhaps a better choice than pornographic fantasies but it changes its course when each of the three men talk about a personal, sexual experience. One man tells the audience about the sex he had with his lover in Britain before coming to Toronto. In detail he describes "fist-fucking," breast clamps and pouring hot wax all over his lover's body. Another man describes how he decided to live out a fantasy of making it with a skin head. He played the role of slave and got beat up and urinated on. These true stories were far more pornographic than any of the descriptions in the first part of the play. And it was after telling these stories that the men lay down—as if to sleep—one by one to explain the final words of the play: "I want."

The men display a more than admirable amount of energy and courage in their performances. Their honest must be well noted. But their message is an acceptance of the worst kind of pornography. They explain the role playing of 'slave' and 'bully' but they do not question it. They show the influences of sexual repression in the social field and of violence in the media but by not realizing how this affects their own sexuality, they avoid a true exploration of their desires and fantasies.

The performers say how hard it is to love and they show how little they know about what they really want. A trembling finger is pointed at pornography for the cause of this lack of closeness and understanding but it does not come across as sincere, especially after the men describe their own sexual acceptance of violence.

The play is gutsy and it tries to grapple with a complex issue. It is certainly entertaining and thought-provoking. It displays all the right psychic and emotional elements but it falls short in its final judgement. *Pornography* says, 'I want,' but it fails to ask 'why?'

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