



THEATER REVIEW | 'FUBAR'

Drugs and Lots of Dot-Com Dottiness in San Francisco

By ANDY WEBSTER
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The dot-com bubble — well, its splintered psyches — are the subject of the feverish “Fubar,” an engrossing evocation of a time (the turn of the millennium) and a place (San Francisco, awash in Web money, pharmaceutical acronyms and online sexual encounters).

Written by Karl Gajdusek, a San Francisco native, the play, for all its contrivances, rings true in feeling if not in plausibility. It probably helps that the director, Larissa Kokernot, once lived in the Bay Area herself. She nurtured this show in Washington with the Project Y Theater Company, which brings it to Manhattan as part of the 59E59 Theaters’ America Off Broadway series.

The title comes from an expression popular with American troops, loosely standing for “fouled up beyond all recognition,” and the plot nears that level of frenzy. Mary (Lisa Velten Smith) and David (Jerry Richardson) are moving into the home left by Mary’s mother, who killed herself after years of domestic abuse. Now Mary has been attacked, seemingly at random, on the street and is compulsively going to the gym to learn boxing from the gruff D C (Dan Patrick Brady).

David, who’s earning six figures in Internet pursuits, has habits of his own. An aspiring photographer, he falls under the spell of Richard (Ryan McCarthy), a philosophical writer and drug dealer, and his comely if flighty companion, Sylvia (Stephanie Szostak), who poses for David’s camera. Drugs are consumed, David is tempted, Mary’s anger rises, and a gun is found among the house’s boxed possessions, as the mood spirals into delirium. Thank goodness Mr. Gajdusek has a gift for the humorous moment.

The second act suffers from unlikely reversals and strained revelations, and yet the production pulses like an all-night Ecstasy-fueled rave, punctuated with techno-heavy sound design by Amit Prakash and arresting projections by Shawn E. Boyle. (One amusing highlight is a purple instant-message exchange between David and Sylvia, their words appearing on a wall as they heatedly pound them out on laptops.)

Ben Hagen’s lighting conjures nightclubs and Victorian interiors with dexterity, while the performers, especially Mr. Richardson and Ms. Szostak, commit themselves full-on.

Forget the plot twists and ponderous use of *Talking Heads*’ “Once in a Lifetime” as a recurrent anthem. “Fubar,” for all its hysteria, leaves you with a decent buzz.

“Fubar or Interesting, Incredible, Amazing, Fantastic” continues through Sunday at the 59E59 Theaters, 59 East 59th Street, Manhattan; (212) 279-4200, ticketcentral.com.

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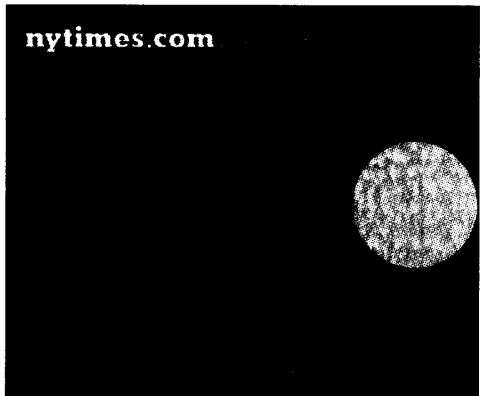
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