



Endoftheworld Lovesong

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Jason S. Grossman · September 10, 2008

A love story on the eve of the destruction. An ingenious premise is deftly explored in Matthew Stephen Smith's new play *Endoftheworld Lovesong*.

Here is a great big bold play squeezed into the modest-sized Flea Theatre. Told with deliciously twisted humor, modest yet highly effective special effects, and one hauntingly familiar theme song, this production succeeds on numerous levels.

Another work week begins in a windowless underground construction office in Los Angeles in the not-so-distant future. Disillusioned June and her coworkers casually brace themselves for yet another earthquake. Early morning talk radio spews out the latest statistics: soaring temperatures, escalating unemployment, overflowing garbage.

June is having personal problems: her mother has committed suicide and June has just attempted to take her own life.

In a clever bit of irony that permeates the mood of the play, the subject of June's panic attacks is more sensitive than the alarming suicide rate or the burgeoning continent-sized garbage mass in the middle of the ocean.

Coworker Carlo also has problems: he is a single parent trying to move on after his wife's death. Anna, the office manager, is fretting about keeping the office team together. Just another day at the office.

But June has a crush.

There's just something about Alan, an accountant. He's a little too sensitive and cerebral for a construction office. June daydreams about being with him. Thankfully, Alan likes her, too, and they go out on a date. Will their love affair survive as the Earth dies? The dystopian setting and lethargic supporting characters create an intriguing backdrop to the blossoming relationship between our heroes.

The artistic team behind this production, led by director Jeremy Bloom, have created a disturbing world barely distinguished (if at all!) from our own. In a time of escalating fuel prices, evaporating natural resources, and global climate change concerns, this play is essential viewing.

What might be most disquieting in Smith's script is the apathy of the general population in the face of impending doom. Or is it somehow oddly comforting to see that in a time of a decaying civilization, pettiness and gossip are still the norm in the typical workplace? When our days are truly numbered, the mundane day-to-day minutiae must continue. Our problems at home are just a little bit bigger.

There are brilliant elements at work: June and Alan flirting while discussing the telltale signs of the looming apocalypse; a debate on the telephone between Carlo and his son on whether to tape "America's Next Top Model"; a tender kiss of June's still fresh suicide scars.

VENUE

Flea

CAST

Raniah Al-Sayed,
Amanda Duarte, Ben
Masur, Jeremy
Wimmer, Jimmy
Maize, Chelsea
O'Connor

AUTHOR

Matthew Stephen
Smith

DIRECTOR

Jeremy Bloom

SETS

Stephanie Tucci

LIGHTING

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew

COSTUMES

Evan Prizant

SOUND

Andrew Plourde

PRODUCING COMPANY

The Flea Theater and
Northwestern
University

Rarely have I seen such an exquisite balance of reality and surrealism in one production. The claustrophobic setting is juxtaposed splendidly with the surreal moments of narration by the radio deejays.

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew has created an excellent lighting design versatile enough to effectively simulate various internal and external settings (including an earthquake). Andrew Plourde's sound superbly recreates elements of city life.

The cast is outstanding. Amanda Duarte is alternately despondent, melancholy, disengaged, and blissful as June. Ben Masur masterfully exemplifies the nice-guy coworker, and Jeremy Wimmer is terrific as the sweet outcast Alan.

What will we do when the end is near? Will we hide our heads in the sand and blindly ignore the obvious signs? Will we look to each other in some vague collective denial? Will we self medicate? Will we look for love?

Throughout the play, June is haunted by an unfinished melody in her head—just as this play will long resonate after viewing.

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