



NOT-SO-FUNNY 'PEOPLE': (left to right) Justin Bartha, Krysten Ritter, Anna Camp, and David Wilson Barnes. Photo: Joan Marcus



Theater Review

All New People:

Few laughs in 'Scrubs' star's tepid comedy

ALL NEW PEOPLE

Written by Zach Braff

Directed by Peter DuBois

Through August 14, 2011

Second Stage Theatre

305 West 43rd Street, (212-246-4422)

<http://www.2ST.com>

By David NouNou

What can one say about *All New People*, a supposed comedy that is poorly conceived, constructed, and presented? One in which the characters are haphazardly written and the dialogue and situation are or seem very contrived, and every fourth word starts with the letter "F" to get its laugh? Since this is a new work written by Zach Braff, the star of TV's "Scrubs," one could call it a bad episode of an unwatchable sitcom. However, with TV, you can either switch the channel or if the show is recorded on a DVR, you can fast forward it. No such luck here.

A show written by Zach Braff and starring Justin Bartha, one of the stars of the mega-hit movies *The Hangover* and this summer's *The Hangover II*, would seem like comedy heaven. Mr. Bartha, who debuted and was superb in last year's Broadway revival of *Lend Me A Tenor*, proved he had great stage presence and charm given the proper material with which to work. Mr. Bartha still has the charm and presence, but unfortunately has such paper-thin material with which to work. As the play opens, his character Charlie is about to commit suicide by hanging himself, but he does not know what to do with the cigarette butt he is smoking.

As Charlie is about to jump—Emma (Krysten Ritter), a real-estate broker who is showing the house Charlie is staying in—bursts upon the scene, thus preventing him from finishing the job. She is supposedly British and is here looking to eventually get married in order to be able to stay in America. She is high, so she rambles endlessly in the most grating, poorly done would-be English accent that makes Madonna’s infamous attempts at UK diction seem like the mother tongue of British nobility. The real puzzler here is if the playwright insists on having his leading lady be a British expatriate, why not hire an actress who can do a plausible accent? I am sure if a Brit sees this show, he or she might be so insulted that they might want to hang themselves.

Next enters Myron (David Wilson Barnes), the town fireman and a friend of Emma's. Actually on the side, he is also the town drug dealer and is in love with Emma, but the affections are not reciprocated in kind. It is never explained why, because not only is he the best-written character and possesses the best drugs, but also the most likable. However dubious the distinction, it can easily be said that Mr. Barnes is excellent and steals the show. This is actually meant as a compliment.

Thus further impeding Charlie's suicide, finally comes Kim (Anna Camp), a self-proclaimed escort; *not* a prostitute. Yes, the dumb blonde bimbo who aspires to be a singer. Ms. Camp is cute and much to her credit stays clear of being annoying. Ultimately, we learn that the three people who intrude on Charlie all possess a past secret that they divulge in order to cheer him up because the day he is committing suicide also happens to be his 35th birthday.

Credit must be given to Peter DuBois, the director. He miraculously keeps things moving when there is so little to move. Alexander Dodge provides a handsome set. The set also contains three clever and funny cameo videos courtesy of Kevin Conway, Tony Goldwyn, and S. Epatha Merkerson.

Published July 28, 2011

Reviewed at performance on July 27, 2011

Copyright © July 28, 2011, StageZine.com