



**THE WRITE STUFF:** (from left) Alice Playten, Peter Scolari & Bob Ari add depth to the thin material in *It Must Be Him*, about a struggling screenwriter. Photo: Carol Rosegg

## *Theater Review*

# **Ambitious *It Must Be Him* struggles to get laughs**

***It Must Be Him***

**Written by Kenny Solms**

**Directed by Daniel Kutner**

**Through September 26, 2010**

**Peter Jay Sharp Theater**

**416 West 42nd Street**

**(212-279-4200), [www.itmustbehimtheplay.com](http://www.itmustbehimtheplay.com)**

**By David NouNou**

Peter Scolari, Liz Torres, Alice Playten, Jonathan C. Kaplan, and Stephanie D’Abruzzo are all accomplished actors who have either been Tony or Emmy nominated in the past—and are trying their hardest to sell this comedy that really isn’t that funny. Like *Viagara Falls*, which opened earlier this summer, it has a germ of an idea that may have been very funny and daring as a skit on the “Carol Burnett Show” in 1970, but now seems dated and struggling for laughs.

Set in Los Angeles, Louie (Scolari) is awakened by his devoted housekeeper, Ana, (Liz Torres), clutching an Emmy Award that he won 18 years earlier for writing, to inform him that his garbage disposal is not working as well as other kitchen appliances. Louie hasn’t written anything successful in 18 years and his life is unraveling very quickly. He is obsessed in his pursuit of a 20-something boy toy, Scott (Patrick Cummings). He is further vexed throughout the day by his long-suffering manager/agent Ross (John Treacy Egan), who wants him to make re-writes on his current screenplay. He is visited by his dead parents Rose (Playten) and Leo (Bob Ari), as well as his straight brother Mark (Kaplan), and former girlfriend, Joan (D’Abruzzo), and various other characters who will appear in his screenplay, and then reappear in a tasteless, homoerotic musical. This may all seem convoluted, but it is really not. It only takes 75 minutes to perform.

Peter Scolari is a talented man and does his utmost to give his character credence, but to no avail. Earlier this season he was in the undistinguished comedy, *White’s Lies*. He deserves material more worthy of his talents. Liz Torres crams in every cliché as the smart-mouthed Hispanic housekeeper, thick accent and all. She makes Shelley Morrison’s Rosario on TV’s “Will and Grace” appear like a Bryn Mawr grad. Only Alice Playten, as Louie’s mother, gives a solid performance, because her part was written as a real person and not a caricature. Bob Ari’s performance as Lou, the father, was an homage to Lou Jacobi. Had Mr. Jacobi still been alive, he would have played the part. It is a shame that the talents of such distinguished performers as well as the talents of Jonathan C. Kaplan, Stephanie D’Abuzzo and John Treacy Egan were not put to better use. They are thwarted by the material and lackluster direction from Daniel Kutner.

Yes, the title *It Must Be Him* does refer to the classic Vikki Carr hit of the same name,

and the track is played at points throughout the play, but it is yet another pointless reminder of the past, with no real connection to the present. The show is certainly ambitious, with some great actors trying desperately to extract humor from a paper-thin plot that ultimately goes nowhere.

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