

'Weekend Comedy' lacks in the laugh department

"Weekend Comedy" continues at The Purple Rose Theatre Company's Garage Theatre in Chelsea through August 20. Call (313) 476-7902 for tickets.

BY DAWN NEEDHAM
SPECIAL WRITER

One of the worst things a comedy can do is forget its primary goal — to make people laugh — and insert drama into the plot or, even worse, attempt to impart a message.

Unfortunately, "Weekend Comedy," the latest production of The Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea, falls into both of these traps. The comedic plot is not remarkably original, but it holds promise: Two couples have mistakenly rented the same remote vacation cabin for Memorial Day weekend. The first couple we meet, long-married middle-aged

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REVIEW

Through a fairly implausible sequence of events, both couples agree to share the cabin for the weekend. Frank immediately reverts Tony's money, looks and youth, and goes the younger Frank and Peggy, are escaping suburbia (Frank is doing so reluctantly, and Peggy hopes to renew the spark into their marriage.) Things are off to a promising start for those two when they are surprised by the arrival of Tony and Jill, young, affluent and celebrating their third year of living together.

man into a foot race, a comparison of their salaries and, ultimately, a recital by each man of the other's flaws. Attempts by Frank to one-up Tony and Tony revealing his own successes promise humor, but ultimately fail to deliver.

The actors do decent jobs with the material they're given, but their characters are too under-developed to become really interesting. Peter Bellanca (a Detroit attorney offstage) does a good job as the grumpy Frank. His resentment of Tony is largely due to his own dismay at growing old, and this provides some of the laughs in the play. "I hate young people!"

he chants, marching on top of a table.

Carolyn Younger, as Peggy, isn't given the opportunity to present more to her character than the long-suffering, suburban housewife. Several of her funny comments get swallowed by another character's line. She joins Jill and Tony in poking fun at Frank, which could be funny but instead comes off as mean. Jill (Eden Cooper Stage) has even less personality, existing only to support Tony (John Lepard) and ultimately provide the drama that really drags the plot down. She is given a few good lines ("He had a terrible childhood," she explains of Tony. "His parents gave him everything.") but her adulation of Tony doesn't properly pave the way for her demands in the second act.

Lepard does well as the spoiled

Tony, but unfortunately the authors decided he needed to be reformed at the end of the play. He also is given the task of putting into words what the actors should do silently, which is telling us exactly what Frank's problem is in the most cliché way possible.

The best performance in

"Weekend Comedy" came from David Vandervliet, who got more laughs and applause during his hammy set changes than the rest of the play. If that character is just a bit more amusing touches had been carried to the rest of the play, "Weekend Comedy" would have actually been a comedy.

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