

Theater Review: Mary-Arrchie Co. Goes Out Passionately With ‘American Buffalo’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 11, 2016 - 5:41pm

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CHICAGO – The legacy of the classic Chicago storefront theater has been celebrated at the Mary-Arrchie Theater Company for over 30 years, so for their final piece of stage craft they’re going out with a proper and gritty production bang, “American Buffalo,” by David Mamet.



Play Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Set in Chicago in the bad old 1970s, the play has the feel of a storefront production, because it appropriately takes place inside a store. Playwright Mamet’s Chicago-accented take on losers looking for the big score is perfectly suited for Mary-Arrchie Founder Richard Cotovsky, and his stage cohorts Stephen Walker and Rudy Galvan. They take Mamet’s f**k-you-dialogue-rhythms and formulates a atmosphere of dread and sadness. The intimate setting lends an in-your-face experience, and is delivered with majesty by the three players.



Don (Richard Cotovsky, background) and Teach (Stephen Walker) in ‘American Buffalo’

Photo credit: MaryArrchie.com

Don (Richard Cotovsky) runs a resale shop in Chicago in the 1970s. It is a modest place, but one customer has the proprietor intrigued. He has purchased an old Buffalo nickel from the store, and he didn’t blink when the price was settled at 90 dollars. Don thinks this is an opportunity, and he comes up with a plan to steal back the coin from the purchaser – he even has his go-fer Bobby (Rudy Galvin) stake out the

man’s apartment. Back at the store there is Teach (Stephen Walker), Don’s poker playing buddy. He wants to get in on the robbery, but doesn’t want Bobby involved. All the desperation of these characters are focused on this one possible burglary, but nobody seems to have a clue.

The three actors are perfectly cast, each bringing the appropriate traits to this situation. This is emphasized in the sing-song dialogue that Mamet is famous for, and delivered in relevant bursts. Richard Cotovsky uses his hang-dog demeanor to perfection as Don, whose soft spot for Bobby is his Achilles Heel. Stephen Walker brings a middle aged hopelessness to Teach in his portrayal, and there is something lingering behind the tough-guy facade. And Rudy Galvin is a tic-filled Bobby, exposing an emotional wound that can’t be healed.

Seeing the three within the battlefield of a confined space is exciting theater. Apart from Don, both Bobby and Teach have very short fuses, and their explosions are bound for destruction. Mamet’s script also has some memorable offstage characters, the cheater-at-poker Fletcher, and some waitresses at a local diner who seem to have all their personalities figured out. The story is engrossing and sad, but rendered in this production with a firm grip on the narrative.



Don and Bobby (Rudy Galvin) Hatch a Plan in ‘American Buffalo’

Photo credit: MaryArrchie.com

Two other great elements are the direction by Carlo Lorenzo Garcia and the set design by John Holt. Holt utilizes the tight Angel Island theater space and manufactured a perfectly dilapidated resale shop – it practically can be smelled. It allows director Garcia to figuratively propel the actors into the audience, and the wall between the 1970s shop and the modern world collapses, which added another layer of mystique to the story of three souls bound together.

Not only is this production a trip into the circumstance of David Mamet, but it also expresses the promise of the storefront philosophy of the Mary-Arrchie company – establish the time and place, then get the actors who will encompass their parts and act the f**k out of it. The theater has made that contribution to Chicago culture for their entire existence, so it’s time for everyone to experience that one more lap behind the curtain, before it comes down in March.

[CLICK HERE](#) [20] for Part One of the Richard Cotovsky interview, where he talks about the final production of the Mary-Arrchie Co., “American Buffalo.”

[CLICK HERE](#) [21] for Part Two of the Richard Cotovsky interview, where he talks about the “Abbie Hoffman Died for Our Sins” Annual Theater Festival, and various production acts.

Mary-Arrchie Theatre Co. Presents Their Final Production, “American Buffalo” Thursday through Sunday now through March 6th, 2016, at Angel Island Theatre, 735 West Sheridan in Chicago. For more information, including purchasing tickets, [click here](#). [22] Featuring Richard Cotovsky, Stephen Walker and Rudy Galvin. Written by David Mamet. Directed by Carlo Lorenzo Garcia.



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Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 18 2024 - 10:30pm*):
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