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TV Stars Roday, Weston, and Detmer Thrive on the LA Stage in EXTINCTION

by Amber Cassell



Long-time buddies since college, Max and Finn, meet in Atlantic City for their usual weekend getaway of drinking, drugs, and sex. Max (Michael Weston), armed with a large parcel of cocaine and a plush bank account is ready to get the party started. Finn (James Roday), now saddled with a slew of domestic responsibilities, is no longer along for the ride.

What follows in Gabe McKinley's *EXTINCTION*, presented by RED DOG SQUADRON, is a dissection of life's changes and the ability to evolve, where the two characters bounce back and forth between the lure of maturity and reckless abandonment. The show offers riotous laughs, hard-hitting truths, and a brutally riveting finale that literally takes your breath away.

Television regulars Roday and Weston come to life with stark realness and uninhibited flesh. Roday, star of USA's *Psych* is subtle, yet eerily dormant as the gradually-maturing Finn. Michael Weston, a current regular on Fox's *House*, gives a performance that is hilarious, brazenly cutting, and at times, unabashedly heartfelt. The skillful interplay between the two leads, the ease and fluid deceptiveness in which they argue and change positions, can be a shock to the system. By comparison, other cast members Amanda Detmer and Stephanie E. Frame are sadly underused.

New playwright Gabe McKinley's dialogue is a real crowd-pleasure. Fast-paced, contemporary, and deliciously cruel, his characters are young, yet remarkably beaten-down. Scenic designer Kurt Boetcher's set of adjoining hotel rooms, one in full-view, the other in shadow, is the perfect compliment to the juxtaposition of the two central characters. And director Wayne Kasserman paints a controlled, beautiful picture of the various courses and circumstances by which we must evolve, or face extinction.

Extinction runs until December 13th at the Elephant Space, located at 6322 Santa Monica Blvd. in Hollywood, 90038. Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm, Sundays at 7pm. General admission tickets are \$18, \$15 for students (with valid ID) and seniors, and can be purchased by calling (323) 960-7784 or online at www.plays411.com/Extinction

Photo courtesy of Kurt Boetcher