

GO! EXTINCTION

Gabe McKinley's play starts out as a fast, funny, hip buddy comedy, but grows steadily darker. Fast-talking hedonist and prosperous businessman Max (Michael Weston) regards women as disposable and interchangeable, and has no use for marriage, monogamy or fidelity. His real connection is to his male buddies--including grad student Finn (James Roday). Max is fixated on their college days spent boozing, snorting, gambling and chasing girls, so he arranges a spectacular weekend with Finn in Atlantic City. Finn, however, has outgrown Max's kind of self-indulgence. When he reveals that he's married and expecting a child, Max sees it as a betrayal, and a dangerous threat to his own self-image. He cajoles, threatens, manipulates and bribes Finn into joining his revels, and brings in a couple of working girls (Amanda Detmer and Stefanie E. Frame) to spice things up. But enforced fun proves to be a kind of hell, leading to disillusion brutality and several kinds of extinction. Weston and Roday give finely etched and contrasting performances, and Wayne Kasserman directs with a skillful but unobtrusive hand this merciless evisceration of whatever it means to have character. Kurt Boetcher provides the clever, beautiful, black-and-white set. Elephant Space, 6322 Santa Monica Blvd.; Hollywood; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.; thru Dec. 13. (323) 960-7784 or <http://www.plays411.com/Extinction>.

Produced by RED DOG SQUADRON.

(Neal Weaver)