



## Theater review

### Extinction

Drugs, booze and gambling in Atlantic City.

[Cherry Lane Theatre](#). By Gabe McKinley. Dir. Wayne Kasserman. With James Roday, Michael Weston. 1hr 30mins. No intermission. [Buy Tickets](#)

The spirits of Kenneth Lonergan and Adam Rapp hover precariously over *Extinction*, Gabe McKinley's play about two bad-boy college buddies crashing into adulthood. We've been on this alcohol-fueled, drug-induced journey before, but McKinley freshens it with ribald comedy and cunning one-liners ("It's like a Jay McInerney novel exploded in here"). Perhaps that's why a late-inning shift to the raw side feels like a wrong turn, one forced by a playwright's hand instead of a character's choice.

Imported from Los Angeles, Wayne Kasserman's high-velocity production clips along buoyantly thanks to the effervescent chemistry and talent of Michael Weston and James Roday (whose costar on TV's *Psych*, Dulé Hill, is a producer). Conflict arises on an annual bacchanal to Atlantic City between Max (Weston) and Finn (Roday). The former still wants to party like it's 1995, but the latter insists that he's grown up and into a relationship with a woman he has no intention of cheating on. (Steven C. Kemp's cleverly conceived set allows us to see through a hotel room to the poster-filled dorm of their past.)

As they drink, snort coke and hook up with an attractive pair of struggling casino employees willing to prostitute themselves (astutely played by Amanda Detmer and Stefanie E. Frame), congenial roughhousing fades and the friends grapple with the power dynamics of money and male friendship. Although McKinley doesn't sustain the tension all the way, he does deliver effective portraits of four painfully vulnerable people trying to be something they're not.

—Diane Snyder