

LAWEEKLY

Aug. 5, 2011

TWEAKED



This undistinguished melodrama about junkies trying to break their habit gets a boost from several capable performances. Directed by Sean Riley, Paul Shoulberg's script revolves around roommates Charlotte (Isidora Goreshter) and Maddy (Robin Schultz), both addicted to crystal meth. Charlotte, a poet, frequents coffee houses where eventually she meets Lance (Jake Dahm), a good guy who falls for her and manages to overcome her jittery reticence. Maddy has it tougher; she's barred from seeing her young daughter by the child's father Kyle (James Tyler Johnson), a buttoned up Jesus fanatic whose air of calm righteousness masks rage and a desire to control. The other two men in their lives are their ultra strung-out pal Grogan (Shawn-Caulin Young) and their supplier Trey (Brent Harvey) a macho low-life. The play is least interesting at the start, as the performers, not quite convincingly, depict their addiction and the physical changes they undergo struggling through withdrawal. It grows more involving as the story expands and other relationships develop. Both Dahm and Johnson deliver assured performances - the former as a straight arrow and Johnson in the more complex role of a twisted puritan who fails to salve his anger with faith. Young also has a good scene as a guilt-ridden meth freak at the end of his rope, and Goreshter, after a shaky start, lands on track. Production resources are unfortunately limited at this workshop venue, making some of the staging less effective than it might have been otherwise. Meta Theater, 7801 Melrose Ave., L.A.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m. through Aug. 21 (323) 960-7773 plays411.com/tweaked. (Deborah Klugman)