

*Theater review: 'Selling Love' in Oxnard*

## **Bubbly 'Selling Love' is an easy sell at Elite**

By Rita Moran

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Playwright Logan Rica Smith has dipped into the frothy pool of small-time businesses and their often justified paranoia about corporate oversight and come up with “Selling Love,” tagged by Elite Theatre Company as “a cleansing romantic comedy.” That description owes a lot to the business in question: Right Bright Soap.

Right Bright’s local boss, Mr. Mac Ryan, runs the office in a squeaky clean, if somewhat skewed, style. He’s quick to cite rote dictums or turn to examples from a parallel world —

dance steps or old Westerns — when he's at a loss for an original thought. That's usually the case, which doesn't soothe the scene when word arrives that a corporate "fixer" is coming to town to shape up Right Bright.

Mac is just one of the distinctly silly characters Rica Smith has created. His sidekick, or shadow, is Kelly, who has learned to get so into Mac's modus operandi that he can fill in the foolish words when Mac hits a dry spot. The rest of the office is occupied by the giddily aggressive Sheila, the tense newcomer Laurie and the nearly normal guy, Roberts. It's a neat set up for disaster when the corporate scorcher arrives.

Director Andrew James adds initial pep to the proceedings with a crew of Right Bright folks in tidy black and yellow uniforms dancing around the stage as they make the office absolutely spick-and-span. Other soap-tuned music floats through during scene changes, with "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" one of the oldies-but-goodies.

But it's the actors who grasp their roles with gusto that make the show as funny as can be. Cecil Sutton is Mac, the button-down leader who goes into full desperation mode as the office prepares for the arrival of corporate clout. Travis Winterstein is the perfect foil as Kelly, the amenable right-hand guy so good at that job that he almost forgets he also has a brain. Lindsey Newell plays Sheila with alacrity and brimming energy as she teases, vamps and dominates her way toward the top of the sales force. Allison Chase Williams is the frightened new hire who nonetheless projects intelligence and warmth, especially toward Roberts, the most normal of the bunch, given a nice-guy validity by Nathan Paul. Rounding out the cast are a nicely flustered Roger Krevenas as Jack and Sindy McKay as the decisive Ms.

Youngman (alternating in the role on the final weekend will be Akira Dann and Heather Linkletter).

There are some very amusing plot twists that seasoned playgoers might guess early on, but they're presented with plenty of comic flair that keeps the laughs coming. The "romantic" part of the comedy is gracefully worked out, though it's hard not to wonder how the dreamy lovers, one who's always wanted to be a painter, the other yearning to be a writer, will survive outside the practical world of soap.

"Selling Love," to Elite's credit in seeking out new material, is being given its "world" premiere presentation on the company's new Channel Islands stage.

### **'Selling love'**

Logan Rica Smith's new comedy will be performed through Sept. 29 at Elite Theatre Company, 2731 S. Victoria Ave., Oxnard. Performances are at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$18 general admission, \$15 for students and seniors. Call 483-5118 or visit <http://www.elitetheatre.org>.

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