

San Francisco

Closure, misery, comedy, and Budweiser

11/13/08—*Jessica Kelmon commiserates with Off-Broadway comedy on the rocks, showing at Off-Market Theater through Sunday, November 16.*

Need closure? If misery loves company, comedic debut ***on the rocks*** provides it for every sap, player, and deserter who's ever had a relationship go bad. In short, everyone. Four actors tell a stilted story of love and remorse reminiscent of Rob Lowe and Demi Moore's '80s flick ***About Last Night***, with a splash of Off-Broadway sensation ***I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*** (sans singing, of course) mixed in. Through storytelling, flashbacks, and reveries, multiple stories of love and loss devolve. The half-met goal is laughter: first at the individual scenes, but eventually at yourself.

Characters Greg and David would never be friends. Loneliness—and about a dozen drinks each—help the unlikely misfits share their stories of love. They pontificate as only the drunk and forlorn can. Across the stage, equally unlikely friends Rene and Mia dish gossip—and a fair amount of judgment—over tea, overanalyzing as only Oprah lovers can.

While the play may not break new ground, it so perfectly fits its black box venue that it's worth catching. Black box theater became all the rage in the '60s, as a result of actors and directors seeking "true" performance. This type of theater is known for its minimally adorned, muted black walls in a setting meant to highlight characters, storyline, and delivery rather than props and sets. With more emphasis on players than plot, ***on the rocks*** openly embraces its intimate setting in a way that feels true to the genre's experimental origins.

After its debut run in New York City, ***on the rocks*** hits Studio250 @ Off-Market Theater Thursday through Sunday. Saturday night is almost sold out. Director and longtime Broadway actor Craig Ricks (*Cats*, *Carousel*) says the next, albeit unlikely, stop is *Oklahoma*. With aspirations beyond its small start, and fresh off a "Best Audience" award in NYC's Greenwich Village-based theater festival, ***on the rocks*** has big ambition and perhaps the chops to grow. Indeed, one of the few props is a blinking neon beer sign (appropriate, as it's set half in a bar), and it's provided by sponsor Budweiser, along with free beers with the actors and playwrights at the end. If the play hits home as designed, you'll need that drink.

Studio 250 @ Off-Market Theaters, 965 Mission St., 800-838-3006, \$18 in advance, \$20 at the door.

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