

“Smoke & Mirrors” Offers Plenty of Welcome Twists

by Linda Weigel

The term smoke and mirrors describes something that leads you to believe it is true...when in actuality it is not. This Dunes Summer Theatre mystery-comedy conforms to that definition, leaving you guessing until the end. You think you have it all figured out and then, boom, wrong again.

Written in 1991 by Will Osbourne and Anthony Herrera, “Smoke & Mirrors” is set on an isolated island beach house owned by the state’s governor, Robert Tubbsman, and located off the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Hamilton Orr, a big time Hollywood producer-director, has rented the locale and brought along his wife, Barbara, screenwriter, Clark Robinson, and leading actor from his latest production, Derek Coburn.

Hamilton (Jeffrey Baumgartner, also directing) likes making all the major decisions. Hamilton is what you would imagine an insufferable, driven director would be, the actor playing him with high energy, always on the move and very manipulative.

Hamilton wants to get rid of Derek and will stop at nothing to do so. He wants a better actor, but is locked into an unbreakable contract. With the support of Clark (David Cowan), they plan to kill off Derek, making it look like suicide. Clark exudes the right touch of frustrated underling. His quirky need

to breathe deep to regain control adds comic relief, and his acquiescence to Hamilton’s ideas creates the right amount of tension combined with disgust for relinquishing his principles.

Barbara (Eileen Long) becomes the unwitting witness to Hamilton’s actions. She is a woman seemingly devoted to her husband and much smarter than he gives her credit. Long plays her with a lightness and exuberance of being, bringing a strong feminine touch. Derek (RJ Cecott) is significantly self-centered and seemingly not too bright. You immediately sympathize with Hamilton and Clark in their disdain for him and his demands.

The whole shebang comes apart through canny, golly-gee Sheriff LeRoy Lumpkin (Colin Bowles). The actor plays him as a bit of a country bumpkin, but you know his repeated “just one more question” is leading up to something big. Bowles is a delight, a growing thorn in the side of Hamilton and Barbara’s remaining time on the island, truly coming into his own in the final act.

This is a good mystery, with humorous dialogue, fleshed-out characters and a gleefully surprising ending.

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Pictured upper left, Fruit & Cheese Tray; upper right, Croissant Tray; lower left, Flavored Wings and lower right, our Shrimp Deluxe Tray.

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