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Wednesday, June 25, 2008

# Mocking the Media

## Theater Review

By Russ Bickerstaff

Local sketch comedy group Broadminded launched its second show of the year this past weekend. Stacy Babl, Anne Graff LaDisa, Melissa Kingston and Megan McGee return in a show that mixes pre-recorded video segments with live performance. *Broadminded: Now In 3-D!* takes comedic aim at the mass media in more than a dozen different skits. The show's comedy is a slightly uneven mix of quality, but even though there are moments when the "broads" fail to be funny, they never fail to be fun.

Overall this is a very good show. There are only a couple of skits in the mix that are completely dead. Towards the end, for instance, the troupe takes on conservative cable news network Fox News in a bit called "Fair and Balanced." Making fun of Fox News is a tricky proposition—their programming is such a strong parody of itself that trying to exaggerate its juvenile brand of conservatism for the benefit of stage comedy comes off feeling a bit forced.

However, weak skits like "Fair and Balanced" and "I Love Indiana" (which features LaDisa as an extremely sweet but terminally unfunny nerd) are comfortably outnumbered by the funnier stuff. Some of the best moments involve individuals at odds with the forces of mass media. There's a sketch early on featuring Melissa Kingston as a camera personality trying to get a tearful reaction for a tissue commercial from a particularly emotionless Megan McGee. In another skit a TV interview with three Chinese girls ends with a savvy turnaround.

There are also a couple of recurring segments that carry the show quite well, for example parodies of yogurt commercial dialogues between two women. Oddly, the lampooned yogurt commercials show some of Broadminded's most interesting moments where they up addressing some pretty heavy emotional issues—everything from unrequited romantic love to the inner emptiness that comes from modern consumer culture. The recurring pre-recorded TV newsmagazine segments aren't as good, but the comedy is just as interesting. They cast a comic light on what happens when parents push their children too hard to achieve at everything from being a real estate agent to the antichrist. Still quite new to local theater, Broadminded continues to show a great deal of promise.

*Broadminded Now in 3-D!* runs through June 29 at the Alchemist Theatre.

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