

Program: The Ms. Biz - KFOX
Film: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?
Reviewer: Judy Odette
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Running time: 2 min. 15 sec.

The Back Alley Theater, which is less than a 1/2 block from the Burbank exit of the San Diego freeway, is one of my favorite little theaters because they have consistently good shows and the theater is so intimate, there is not a bad seat in the house. Their current production is a gentle spoof by Donald Margulies called, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

The action takes place in a middle class Jewish household in New York City, at the end of the family's traditional mourning period of one week after the death of Shirley, the 40ish year old mother who met an untimely death in a Chinese restaurant after choking on some Moo Shiu pork. Her seventeen year old son, Artie, exceptionally well portrayed by Jamie Stern, is very unhappy and impatient with the all the traditional rituals, and doesn't seem too terribly upset by his mother's death. But his father, the bereaved husband, is carrying on something awful about the loss of his wonderful bundle of happiness, Shirley. His mother tells him he's still young yet and should go to Hawaii to meet another woman, his father is a budding Alzheimer victim and he sleeps through most everything, while his spinster sister, Ceil, is fussing to clean up so she can be on time for her blind date. The house is in great disarray because just before Shirley died, they received a delivery of new living room furniture and the place is piled up with the old and the new, with no room to walk. The husband, Mort, refuses to throw anything out of because it all reminds him of Shirley.

Some of the dialogue is very funny like when Mamma asks Ceil who she is going out with. "So what do you know about the date you are having tonight?", says Mamma. "Spoke to him on the phone." says Ceil. "So?" says Mamma. "He speaks English!" snaps Ceil.

The apartment is an absolute mess, but because the deceased Shirley hadn't finished decorating and liked everything immaculate and in its proper place, she comes back just to set the place in order.

Although it is a light and humorous play, Shirley's character is just a little too perfect and reminds me of a middle-aged Tinkerbell. However, the humor is good, the acting is excellent and the set designer deserves special credit for creating a middle class New York apartment that looks too authentic to be a stage set.

On the Odette meter, with four being best, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? deserves three applauds for an enjoyable night at the theater.

This is your very favorite reviewer, Judy Odette, thanking you for listening.