

'subUrbia' spotlights the parking lot cult

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Yeah...sex, drugs and alcohol!

Finally, a UNLV play with themes we can all enjoy. Ok, so maybe for some of you these words may conjure up a stinging sensation of pure sinfulness.

But, you mix these good ole' fashion values in with some philosophical/political ponderings, along with highly vulgar and sexual events and a heavy dose of melancholic rock n' roll and VIOLA — you have an exciting, roller coaster ride of a play entitled *subUrbia*, which was originally penned by Eric BoGosian.

The UNLV Theatre Department kicked off the fall season with last week's performance of the eye-opening, heart-thumping, brain-teasing, movie-turned-play, *subUrbia*, at the Paul Harris Theatre.

While the play has no real plot, it holds the audience captive through the entertaining ramblings of eight young adults who are just a couple of years out of high school. Each one is unique in character, with his or her own distorted view of life and struggles of day-to-day living.

All the while, the action takes place in the parking lot behind a 7-11 owned by Indian immigrants, Norman (Brian Anderson) and Pakeesa (Jamie Carvelli). The constant struggle between the youths and store owners invokes laughter as well as some seriously intense scenes.

"This world is f— up and no one cares," comments Jeff (John Lysaght) at the beginning of *subUrbia*. This simple state-



The stars of "subUrbia" lit up the stage at the Paul Harris Theatre Thursday through Sunday with a coming-of-age play about young adults spending time talking about life at the side of a convenience store.

ment echoes throughout the play as each of the youngsters encounters their own battle of misery alone, or deals with it through drugs and alcohol.

Jeff is an intellectual, open-minded kid who, unfortunately, lacks the courage to back up his incessant chatter about changing the world. All he can do is complain, while his actions are left unmotivated.

Sooze (Traci Allanson) is Jeff's girlfriend, whose main

goal is to get out of her cramped, depressing town and move to New York City to become a renowned artist. In her opening scene, she performs a hilariously interpretive piece revolving around the phrase, "F— all the men!"

Tim (Thomas Turner) is an ex-military man who comes back from his journey around the world as a bitter racist. His cut throat honesty makes you want to loathe him and like him all at once.

Bee-Bee (Jennifer Correlli), meanwhile, is a woman whose quiet and sensitive nature is later exposed to reveal a grim past of drug and alcohol abuse.

Moving along, Pony (Ernie Curcio), a rising rock star, is the only successful one out of this group of old friends who comes back to town to show off his new lifestyle and at the same time, be surrounded by "real" people.

His publicist, Erica (Lauren McCord), is an uptown broad

who sleeps with the lower class boys for fun. And lastly, there's Buff (Scott Johnson), a hilarious alcoholic druggie who lives for booze, weed and sex. His vulgar and repulsive nature keeps up the laughter and eventually brings a lighter side to this end of *subUrbia*.

Together, these young adults create an informal forum on an assortment of topics ranging from AIDS, family ideals, racism, dreams/future goals and the meaning of success.

All the while, no minority group was left untouched — gays, immigrants, women, religion and even dead people are the topics of endless jokes.

Although these are some serious topics to deal with, one thing is for sure: the awesomeness of these actors and actresses talents and abilities transported life into the words and passion to the scenes.

This was probably the best combination of an acting crew that UNLV Theatre has brought forth in a long while. From Buff's burping and barfing routines to Tim's furious bouts of anger, the audience received an up close and personal view into the lives of some heavy duty characters. And the background music, courtesy of punk bands such as *Nine Inch Nails*, *Tool* and *Marilyn Manson* lent a big hand in creating atmosphere and attitude in the play.

What else can be said about the movie-turned-play, *subUrbia*? It's a powerful comedy-drama that speaks on real issues in a brutally blunt and honest manner. If you didn't see it this time around, make sure you don't miss the next bus. This wild ride can really open your eyes to life outside your world.

subUrbian dreams come true for actor Scott Johnson

The Rebel Yell

The play *subUrbia*'s characters spend their days and nights attempting to fill the holes of their short lives with the help of sex, drugs, liquor, music and food. A couple of these youths even dare to dream of something else.

The play that examines the lives of a group of '90s slackers, packed houses from Aug. 27 to Aug. 31 at the Paul Harris Theatre.

Ironically, *subUrbia* comes to UNLV because of one of its theatre arts majors, Scott Johnson, dared to dream of being a part of something other than the planned university theatre season.

Weary from a day job and a long night at rehearsals, Johnson can be found sipping designer coffee across the street from UNLV at Cafe Roma. He is a self-described "Roma Rat."

Johnson says his dream started with a simple desire. "All I wanted," he explains, "was to play a character my own age, in a contemporary

play, about living and dealing with issues relevant to my generation. You know, people who talk and act like me."

After watching the movie *subUrbia* and learning Eric Bogosian wrote the original play, Johnson became determined to make this play a reality at UNLV.

"Bogosian's dialogue is honest and raw and he doesn't sugarcoat things," he said. "This s— happens, even if parents like to pretend it doesn't."

There was just one problem: Johnson is not a producer, director or promoter. After a year of enlisting the enthusiasm of other UNLV actors, Johnson finally approached the Chair of the Theatre Department Joe Aldridge. To Johnson's surprise, Aldridge encouraged him to head a student run production.



Scott Johnson clowns around during a break in rehearsals for "subUrbia," which had four performances at the Paul Harris Theatre Aug. 27-30.

"Here I was," Johnson says, "closer to my dream and still clueless."

Johnson eventually approached Linsey Hamilton, a playwright (*A Strange Growing Season*), a director (*Borrowed Parts*) and a former UNLV graduate student. He asked Hamilton to be *subUrbia*'s producer and director. Hamilton told him: "Tell you what kid, I'll

direct and teach you how to produce." That was music to Johnson's ears.

Johnson then talked about his work relationship with Hamilton. "She calls me 'Producer Boy'," he said. "Now everybody else does too."

"Linsey's got a kid around my age, but she's still searching, still asking questions and still getting pissed about the bulls—. Even though both Bogosian and Linsey are Baby Boomers, it's like their minds are middle aged, but their hearts are still 20 (years old). Their

mouths are still 20, too." As Johnson relayed this information, he chuckled over their penchant for using colorful language.

Asked what kind of people *subUrbia* would appeal to, Johnson said, "Well, it's not for little kids, that's for sure. One thing I've learned working on this show is that this play isn't just for my generation. The char-

acters are going through many of the same growing pains other generations have felt.

"The difference is nowadays it's easier to just freeze up and stay put while we shove TV and fast food and drugs down our gullets. Linsey says we keep consuming and never become satiated. We give up on significant dreams and futures, settling for junk. *subUrbia* could appeal to anyone living what Linsey calls the Cafeteria Lifestyle."

With the Department of Theatre's full support, Hamilton's directing and "Producer Boy" Scott Johnson as a slacker with dreams, *subUrbia* opened as a special pre-semester run of five performances. It was not a play for children or the faint of heart. This play contained mature themes, adult language, some nudity and violence.

But then again, it was Thompson's dream. And in the end, when his dream finally became a reality, a great piece of clever entertainment occurred at the Paul Harris Theatre.