

## Legit Review

### Money Shot

(5th Floor @ The Alexandria Hotel, 47 seats; \$20 top)

A Dead Art Form Theater and Wavecrest Prods. presentation of a play in two acts by Daniel Keleher. Directed by Justin Huen. Sets, lighting, costumes and sound by Huen. Stage manager, Ricki McKissock. Opened Oct. 18, 2008. Reviewed Nov. 2. Runs through Nov. 23. Running time: 2 HOURS. Marty ..... Shawn Colten  
Bean ..... James Jordan  
The Cunt ..... Kahlil Joseph  
George ..... Gregory Myhre  
Tiffany ..... Danielle See  
Lance ..... Dante Walker

By BOB VERINI

Statistics differ, but it's estimated one in every eight websites features pornography. Just under 50% of all Internet users have browsed it, and X-

rated content annually grosses \$6 billion in the U.S. alone — figures surely justifying the sex industry as a worthy source of theatrical investigation. "Money Shot," Daniel Keleher's obnoxious and offensive but scabrously funny new play, concerns smutmeisters and the ties that bind them.

The newly constituted Dead Art Form Theater, aptly abbreviated DAFT, has realistically decorated a third-floor loft in downtown's once palatial Alexandria Hotel as a crummy San Fernando Valley apartment. Here a motley quartet of amateur sex performers squat, boast about their conquests and create content for their website — and any resemblance to any other startup venture in pursuit of the American dream is most assuredly intentional.



Shawn Colten, James Jordan and Gregory Myhre star as amateur pornographers in Daniel Keleher's "Money Shot."

George (Gregory Myhre) is the brains of the outfit (not much competition there) who riles everyone up, while muscled-up Lance (Dante Walker) writes poetry and calms

things down. Pretty-boy college kid Bean (James Jordan) quotes Emerson and Sun Tzu between rounds of violent videogames; his main job is to keep an eye on George's brother

Marty (Shawn Cohen), the team's most anatomically gifted performer when not suffering heroin-based hallucinations.

These guys wrestle and hug and nip each other endlessly like cats in a sack. They also talk — man, do they talk: a blue streak of violent reminiscences of animal killing and virgin deflowering, with enough misogynist invective to make Neil LaBute's work, at its cruelest, seem like a Lifetime original movie.

As Keleher raises the offensiveness bar ever higher, we groan and gag but never stop laughing, so naturally do the guys bat around the nasty conversational ball.

Today's fun and games end early, because caretaker Bean has messed up and allowed Marty to get into the team's stash. Punishment, George reasons, is to cast the coed Bean bagged last night in their next pic.

Yet opportunity is knocking, because Tiffany (a piquant Danielle See) is pure gold, beautiful and voluptuous. This, George realizes, could really be their money shot: With dazzling Tiffany in the cast, their site will easily get the 40,000 hits needed to qualify to join the "Bang Brothers" porn syndicate. Could they be headed for the big time at last?

Keleher has plenty on his mind here, including society's malevolent objectification of women and mankind's endless eagerness to inflict greater pain on itself. Yet "Money Shot" is at its most effective in highlighting the interpersonal dynamic of a fractious band of brothers, largely because of its flawless ensemble work. (The core of DAFT trained together as UCLA MFAs, and you can sense the well-rehearsed bonds among them.)

As modulated by helmer-designer Justin Huen, dialogue overlaps and interrupts to create the illusion of real life overheard. Explosions always threaten from a cast in constant motion, especially from Myhre's George, a fascinating sociopath most dangerous when he's most friendly, and from Kahlil Joseph as the industry's preeminent videographer in a hilarious sendup of every egotistical auteur who ever pulled a hissy fit on set.

Keleher doesn't fully redeem the promise of his electrifying first act. Though he includes some neat twists in the tale, its arc is telegraphed almost from the opening scene. Not all the characters are satisfyingly resolved in the rushed final moments, and a series of pat solo monologues for Tiffany, spelling out meaning, fall flat. (They seem included mostly to compensate the actress for the indignities she otherwise suffers.)

Still, at their not inconsiderable best, the DAFT crew are already showing signs of the ensemble muscle and thematic ambition that characterized Chicago's Stepwolf Theater at its inception. Future work, if carried out with the confidence of "Money Shot," could make them a force to be reckoned with.

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