

# Little Guys and Baby Dolls

College Station Teen Advisory Board presents 'Murder at the Bluenote,' a murder-mystery dinner play penned by A&M students

By RHONDA REINHART  
Staff writer

Gangsters, gamblers and a corrupt district attorney may not sound like the cast of a comedy, but when these villains are played by seventh- and eighth-graders, there are sure to be tears in the eyes of the audience — tears of laughter that is. "Murder at the Bluenote" is a murder-mystery dinner play written by two Texas A&M senior theater arts majors, Dan Grimm and Guillermo "Billy" De Leon. The play is set in the 1930s at a speakeasy called the Bluenote, and the action ensues when a murder is committed at the club.

Grimm, a member of the Aggie Players, said the play is an improvisational comedy. "It's a comedy in that the kids are playing adult characters," he said. "For kids, they did really excellent scenes. They did things you wouldn't expect to see kids do in scenes." Grimm said the play incorporates a lot of physical comedy, including having a girl un-

der five feet tall play a gangster's bodyguard. The play is improvisational in that the playwrights let the cast members develop their own characters. Grimm said the cast does not have specific lines to say, only specific information to give.

"Sometimes they'll say the lines we've written," he said. "Sometimes they'll embellish." The cast's improv skills become a key aspect at the conclusion of the play, which is left to the discretion of the audience. The audience votes on who it thinks the killer is. Then, depending on the audience's decision, the killer confesses and explains his/her motives.

DeLeon, president of Aggie Players, said he has enjoyed working with the junior high school students. "They have a lot of talent,"

he said. "It's just a matter of building their confidence so that they can perform onstage without being afraid."

DeLeon said the great thing about working with kids is that they have great imaginations.

"If you give them a little suggestion, they take that so far," he said. "If you tell them to become light and bouncy like a butterfly,

they become a butterfly." "Murder at the Bluenote" is scheduled to be presented on Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. at the Brazos Center. The students rehearse four days a week, and at performance time, they will have worked on the play for six weeks.

DeLeon said people may be surprised by how mature the students are acting. The play is being presented by College Station's Teen Advisory Board (TAB), a committee made up of 50 students in grades 7-12.

Jenny Foster, assistant youth programs coordinator for College Station and a senior journalism major, said the city tries to develop programs based on the students' suggestions, which is how "Murder at the Bluenote" was born.

A seventh-grader who is a member of TAB suggested a murder-mystery dinner play, so Foster contacted Grimm and DeLeon, and the play was on its way.

Foster said the city tries to provide something positive for the students to do.

"Through this play, a lot of them have blossomed," she said. "They've interacted with each other and become more self-confident. A lot of them are very talented. Some have little or no theater experience. Maybe through this, we're opening a door for them."

Grimm said he and DeLeon got involved with the play because it was something sim-



ROBERT MCKAY/THE BATTALION  
Michelle Milburn, Haley Waltman, Kelly Logan and Kerri Barnes, all local junior high school students will perform "Murder at the Bluenote" Dec. 2 at the Brazos Center.

ple they wanted to do for the kids. Besides writing the play, they are also directing it and making the sets, all on a volunteer basis.

"We're doing this because we like to promote theater around town," he said. "That's the goal of Aggie Players"

## Latest Mortal Kombat does not live up to energy of predecessor

### Movie Review

*Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*  
Starring Robin Shou and James Remar  
Directed by John R. Leonetti  
★ (out of five)  
Playing at Hollywood 16

Never before has a film been so geared to attention deficit 12-year-olds as *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*.

The sequel to the unlikely 1995 hit based on the video game, takes all the fluffy charm of the first film and throws it in the toilet.

The plot, a very generous description, has the warriors from the first film, Lieo Kanji (Robin Shou), Sonja Blade (Sandra Hess), Rayden (James Remar), Kitana (Talisa Soto) and Jax (Lynn Williams), fighting to save Earth from the evil forces of Shao Kahn (Brian Thompson).

*Mortal Kombat's* "acting" is among the worst seen in modern movies. It makes most late-night TV movies look like *Ghandi*. The actors mostly sleepwalk through their roles like a mime on downers.

The worst performance has to be Remar as Ray-

den. With his blond buzzcut and velvet vest, Remar looks like the star of a German porn film. On top of it all, he reads his lines with a soft lilting tone, like he is doing voice-overs for a Calgon commercial.

Shou, as Lieo Kanji, is supposed to be the hero, yet audiences will not want follow him to a free buffet, much less into battle.

Soto and Hess are nothing more than window dressing. Hess' character development consists of mud wrestling with another woman.

Williams, as Jax, looks like the only actor who might have made his way into an acting class. But, over acting is not good acting.

If a movie's strengths are not in the acting or writing, a nice blend of action and special effects might have redeemed it.

Unfortunately, the action and special effects in *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation* are so cheesy the movie could have been subtitled Wisconsin. The film's effects look as if they were rejected by the Power Rangers TV show.

Most of the sets have a first-grade, non-toxic glue and cardboard look to them. The costumes look as if they were lifted from K-Mart's Halloween section.

The fights scenes do not have half as much thrill as the first movie. Many of the scenes look as if they were choreographed by toddlers.

The movie is a stinker, not even its target market will find it redeeming. The video game has better effects and acting. It is also a heck of a lot easier to sit through for 90 minutes.

—By Travis Irby

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