

# arts & entertainment

## 'Hot L Baltimore'

### In the Bubble

Sunday, Oct. 16

Twisted Measure fall tour  
8 p.m.  
St. Martin-in-the-Fields,  
Philadelphia, PA  
\$5

Saturday, Oct. 22

Acapalooza  
2 p.m. in the Academic  
Pavilion Amphitheatre  
8 p.m. in Whitley  
Auditorium  
\$3 for one show, \$5 for  
both

Thursday, Oct. 27

An Umpire Conscience  
11 p.m.  
Hambone's

Monday, Oct. 31

Anonymous  
10:30 p.m.  
Lighthouse Tavern  
\$3 if 21, \$5 if under



Mary Austin Slate  
Reviewer

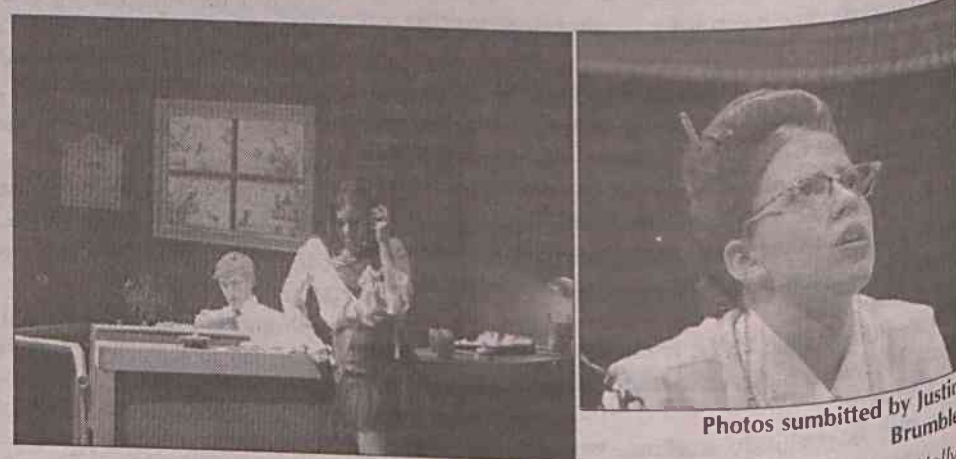
"Baltimore Vice," it could be called, the same old tale of hookers, hotels and hang-ups. "Hot L Baltimore," Lanford Wilson's off-Broadway smash detailing the daily ups and downs of the working class and working girls alike, was presented with humor by members of Elon's Department of Performing Arts this past weekend.

"Every city in America used to be one of the most beautiful cities in America," remarks the hotel's resident cynical prostitute, and Baltimore is no exception. The Hotel Baltimore, once a hotspot in the town's glory days, has gone the way of Day-Glo and disco by the early 70s. The image presented in the title sums it up: the 'E' on the hotel marquee is burned out, never to be replaced. The Hotel Baltimore is set to be demolished in a month, leaving its eccentric and eclectic array of occupants to find new residence.

Directed by senior Tabitha Tuttle, "Hot L Baltimore" was performed in the small Black Box Theatre in the Center for the Arts. In such theaters, the stage is on the same level as the audience, and the seating (usually folding chairs) surrounds the actors.

The purpose of a Black Box is to facilitate performances of more intimate, character-driven shows, and "Hot L Baltimore" certainly falls under this category. Wilson's play is full of characters from every walk of life, but never judges or preaches. Instead, he allows the interactions between the characters, some of them fully formed and some left unexplored, to speak for raw human emotions.

Three hookers reside at the Hotel Baltimore, each with her own distinct personality and style. All three actresses created colorful characters that were beyond the stereotypical depictions of prostitutes. Girl, played by Kate Hilliard, was the youthful and energetic heart of both the hotel and the show. Hilliard, who was almost frenetic at



Cast members of "Hot L Baltimore" include from left: Jason Briggs, Katie Hilliard and Holly Hansen. Photos submitted by Justin Brumble

times, had the most lines and the difficult task of portraying a character so flighty that she changes her name by the week (going from Billy Jean to Martha to Lilac Lavender). While sometimes the chosen postures were not in tune with the character, at other times Hilliard nailed her lines by using unaffected, relaxed movements and what seemed like natural enthusiasm and vitality.

Amanda Taylor was strong in the role of Suzy, the slightly spacey and often tipsy call girl with a heart of gold. Taylor was one of the performers who appeared to be most comfortable on stage.

Another such actor was Tara Sissom, who delivered the knockout performance of the night as April Green. Sissom's April was beyond confident, with the weathered laugh and knowing glance that can only come from years of cigarette smoking and sleepless nights with "a cross-section of America." Everything from the way Sissom walked in her revealing outfits to her smoky delivery contributed to her clearly-defined character.

Cary Mitchell was humorously believable as Mr. Morse, a crotchety, old tenant with a temper. College students often have a difficult time portraying elderly characters and either underplay the characteristics of old age or completely overshoot. Mitchell

avoided a clichéd performance through the use of exactly the right voice and mannerisms.

Other notable characters were played by Elyse Rodriguez and freshman Matt Amato. Some actors toed the line between characterization and overacting. One strong suit of the performers was carrying on dialogue while other characters were arguing, which made the atmosphere in the hotel feel hectic and unscripted.

The aging make-up was subtle and effective, necessary traits for the intimacy of a Black Box performance. The costumes, designed by Amanda Sox, were eye-catching and generally fit the time period. Shawn Richardson's set was sparse where it needed to be (the burned out candelabras), and was appropriately detailed with cobwebs, a messy front desk and a stairwell.

"You gotta be crazy, almost, to do anything good," cried one of the occupants of the Hotel Baltimore, and luckily the members of Elon's Department of Performing Arts seem to agree with this mantra. The first major show of the year featured some risk-taking performances, which can only mean good things for the upcoming season at Elon.

Contact Mary Austin Slate at [pendulum@elon.edu](mailto:pendulum@elon.edu) or 278-7247.