

MAP Theatre's **SOFT CLICK OF A SWITCH** Brims With a Likable Creepiness by Jay Irwin, September 14

We've all had those fleeting thoughts in our heads every now and again of doing something completely outrageous like blowing something up or offing someone just because we don't like their face. We have right? No? Just me? Uh oh. Well anyway, MAP Theatre's latest offering of Carter W. Lewis' "Soft Click of a Switch" explores what happens when two loners give in to those impulses. The result is a darkly comic and fascinating look inside the minds of volatile yet sympathetic characters.

What starts off as a chance encounter in a bar soon develops into a dangerous bromance between Ed and Earl (Brandon Ryan and Mark Fullerton); two broken men who just want to feel something. Earl has a failed marriage and a gun in a bag and spends his time drinking to dull the pain. Ed is a slightly imbalanced dreamer who strives to be meaningful. And the two of them concoct a plan to create homemade bombs out of air conditioning parts and wage a war on empty parking lot photo kiosks in the night.

But even as these crimes are the focal point of the story, they only serve as a secondary element to the relationship between these two men. And what Lewis and director **Peggy Gannon** have brilliantly done is to take these damaged, slightly psychotic men and create anti-heroes out of them as we find ourselves hoping they succeed. Sure they're imbalanced and creepy but at the same time they're likable as we get a look into their vulnerabilities and show off the relationship of two men who truly need each other.

Fullerton delivers a quiet angst throughout the show with a wonderful kind of understated need. And this is the perfect counterpart to the manic, unbalanced nature put forth by Ryan. The two play off each other perfectly as a kind of sociopathic Abbott and Costello and deliver some incredibly meaty and engaging performances. And the thing I love about Ryan's performance is that even though he's portraying this in your face kind of madman, the performance is kind of effortless and never forced.

The ending of the piece may be up to interpretation (it's definitely a thinker), but what's not puzzling is that this is a stellar piece put forth by some very talented individuals who know what good storytelling is all about. And even though the subject matter may be dark and morose, you're bound to walk out with a smile as the evening is definitely a thrill ride of fun. I mean, who doesn't love exploding photo kiosks? What? Just me again? Crap!

MAP Theatre's "Soft Click of a Switch" performs at West of Lenin through September 28th. All tickets for "Soft Click of a Switch" are Pay-What-You-Can. More information and advance sales available through Brown Paper Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/427268> or call 1-800-838-3006.