

Theater

Place:

Hollywood

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LOOT AT THEATRE EAST. The setup is familiar – a bank heist gone awry – but the humor and cultural satire still surprise and delight with mordant wit almost forty years after Joe Orton wrote *Loot*. The play takes place in one continuous time span in the living room of a middle-class British home, in which two young men, Hal and Dennis, scheme to escape with the loot of the title. Opportunity presents itself in the form of Hal's dead mother, the space inside her casket, and Hal's "terrifying detachment" from any emotional concerns about using the casket for transport while the corpse suffers various indignities.

Hal and his father play out a Henry IV/Prince Hal relationship with a Falstaff figure in the picture. His father respects and tries to project authority and propriety. Hal has fallen in with the merry, pleasure-seeking thief Dennis; Hal just wants to sleep with Dennis and escape to the Continent with the money. Hal's only virtue is his involuntarily honest responses to questions, which, in the play's satire, causes most of his problems. But instead of the return of the prodigal son, corruption wins out through the assistance of the venal investigator Truscott.

Almost every line in the play is a "line." Many are hysterical. Some a bit dated. When Fay, the blond murderess, achieves a miraculous release from an accusation of killing Hal's mother, Hal remarks that "God is a gentleman, he prefers blonds." The line is very funny, but was probably even funnier when "gentleman prefer blonds" was an *au courant* phrase.

The actors are top-notch and enthusiastic, enriching the satire by creating real people from the characters. Like Falstaff, Dennis may be the most desirable role, and Nero Smeraldo perfectly embodies the libertine, who wants to marry Fay because marriage is the only thing he's not yet tried. Sile Bermingham shines playing all of Fay's facets – seemingly devout but amoral, a murderous caregiver, married but unfaithful, attractive and stalking.

See this terrific and very entertaining revival at [Theatre East](#), 6760 Lexington Ave., Hollywood. Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 p.m., Sundays at 7:00 p.m., through October 2, 2005. 323-957-5782

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