

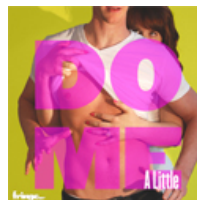
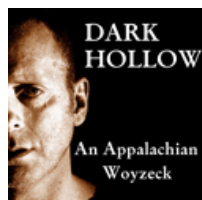
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## Animals

nytheatre.com review

reviewed by Jo Ann Rosen · August 14, 2012

In *Animals*, Sam Byron neatly captures the gravitational pull of old dynamics when his characters meet for a high school reunion after nearly five years. This play is bold and bawdy even as it reveals a little sadness in each of its characters.

Robby, who moved away, returns, because he is curious about the reunion. His girlfriend has left him after a three-year relationship. The hurt is still fresh. Drew, heading to medical school in the fall, both fears and looks forward to seeing Megan, one of high school's popular girls, at the reunion. Not too long ago, they ran into one another and had a serious moment. Motor-mouth Royce, stuck in time, lives at home, and is still so consumed by sex that he has become impotent. Still radiant in all her blondness, Lisa confesses to the ease that popularity provides for the privileged. "High School made sense. It's the rest of it that's fucked up. It seemed important at the time, anyway. The classes, the clubs. The Natural Order of High School. It made me happy." Lisa peaked in high school, and is hosting the reunion to get another taste of happiness.

At the start of the play, the three men, losers in high school obsessed with scoring with the girls, reunite at the old ravine before the party starts. Sky Seals plays Royce with nervous, maniacal precision. He paces the ravine, drinking and ranting about sex like an adolescent, goading his friends to reveal their conquests as the two others sit by guardedly – reluctant to challenge Royce, who, even with his pumped-up adrenaline, cannot earn a spot on any woman's radar. Seals is unrelenting and he nails his character's frustration and his manipulative influence. It is clear that both Robby and Drew have secrets or, at least, concerns. We might hear them, if only Royce would stop talking. Brilliantly, Byron stalls, and reveals this information during quieter moments. Leif Steinert makes an attractive Robby. He fills his character with appropriately awkward moments, the most revealing being a lesson offered by Lisa. Jeffrey Adams gives Drew an unsettled demeanor – always preoccupied or anxious. At the reunion, the somewhat seasoned Megan says to Drew in referring to their previous encounter, "That was an away game, you know? And now we're back on home turf." This raises the stakes and Adams instills Drew with an extra shot of testosterone. The way each of the men handle women informs their long-term friendship with each other. The strains show.

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INFO ABOUT *Animals*

*Animals* is a play about a group of twenty-somethings kicking around their suburban hometown. Some got out, some stayed, and some were held captive, but they must all confront the unexpected violence that

lives inside them.

**Venue:** Kraine Theatre, 85 East 4th Street

**Prices:** \$15.00 - \$18.00

**Performance Dates:** August 14, 2012 - August 23, 2012

**Box Office/Info:** 866-468-7619

**Producer:** Wide Eyed Productions

**Author:** Sam Byron

**Director:** Kristin Skye Hoffmann

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The characters Megan and Lisa are also best friends. Played with swagger and womanly manipulation, Jenna D'Angelo and Sarah Jadin, respectively, capture the complexities of their roles. Jadin uses her hair as a seductive prop, and infuses her character with confidence and knowing. This is what her character is good at. D'Angelo's Megan displays arrogance and sadness mixed with a little wistfulness. She likes Drew.

Under the precise direction of Kristin Skye Hoffmann, *Animals*, with its clever dialog and crisp pace, scores high on the FringeNYC scale.

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