

## VAGRANT

### at the Electric Lodge

**G**uy Zimmerman's latest play resembles a dreamlike state, with characters and story lines that flow in and out of focus—disorienting and at-times confusing, posing many questions and answering few. That may sound unfulfilling to mainstream audiences, but it's also a funny and successful homage to the film noir genre. It's well acted and tightly directed by Zimmerman. And its running time of 80 minutes—with intermission—keeps the script's intentional repetition from becoming tiresome.

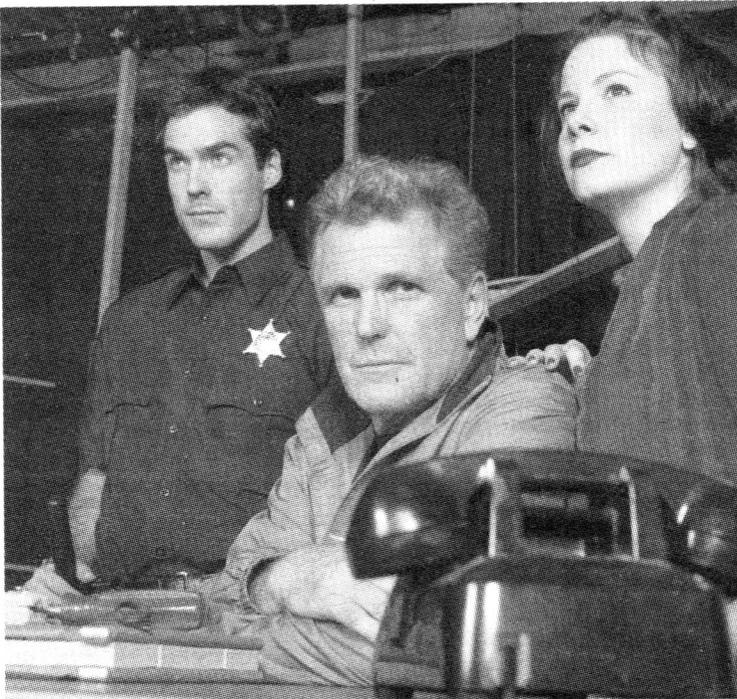
*Vagrant* is set in an appliance sales and repair shop in Los Angeles run by an angry man named Meyer (Christopher Allport). Larkin (Patrick Burleigh), a policeman, is questioning Meyer about a vagrant other officers removed from outside the shop because Meyer complained that the vagrant was causing problems. Larkin also speaks to Meyer's wife, Patty (Niamh McCormally), who appears to live in a back storage room and who has been distraught since the disappearance of the couple's daughter years earlier. The dialogue is sparse and darkly humorous. For example, Meyer describes Patty by saying, "Once she worms your way into your heart, you need an ax to hack her out."

The script wrestles with the idea of memory—the way humans relive moments, often tragic mistakes, until those moments take on lives of their own. Zimmerman has kept the action spare and the pace swift, befitting the noir genre. The performances border on melodrama. As Meyer, Allport appears on the verge of exploding. He shouts or growls most of his lines, and his expressions fluctuate between scowls and bewilderment. Burleigh uses piercing stares and a confident tone to make Larkin seem, at first, the stereotypical cop. Gradually his assuredness turns to confusion, which adds to the mystery surrounding his character. McCormally is eerie as the somber Patty. Her blank eyes and lyrical voice register as a woman who has lost her mind. A major contributor to the success of this production is sound designer Don Preston; foreboding music swells at the most tense moments, heightening the sense of danger. Everyone who sees *Vagrant* will likely have a unique take regarding the play's statement on humanity. And fodder for engaging post-performance debates is a sign that Zimmerman has done his job well.

Presented by Padua Playwrights Productions  
at the Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave.,  
Venice. Thu.-Sat. 8 p.m. Feb. 3-Mar. 4. (310)  
823-0710.

Reviewed by Jeff Favre

NEIL A. FRANCE



**One angry man: Patrick Burleigh, Christopher Allport, and Niamh McCormally in *Vagrant*.**