

Megacosm



SCIENCE FRICTION
Grimm, left, shows
McCarthy his work.



A Red Orchid Theatre (see Resident companies). By Brett Neveu. Dir. Dado. With Larry Grimm, Danny McCarthy, David Steiger, Eden Strong. 1hr 30mins; no intermission.

Protests rage outside the cold corporate setting of Brett Neveu's dystopian new comedy. What the crowds—the "tightshirts," as agitated industrialist Britt (Danny McCarthy) calls them—are protesting is as much a mystery at first as is the nature of Britt's industry. Chris (Larry Grimm), an inventor—he prefers *creator*—has arrived to pitch Britt on his new brainchild, a product he claims will change our very perception of life. But Britt's a bit distracted by both the

tightshirts outside and a brewing rebellion within the company's walls.

Neveu shows off a giddy facility with Orwellian doublespeak; Chris's description of his creation as "what the Hindis call *zindagi*" becomes a meaningless mantra, while Britt blithely rattles off a product's potential side effects that include "lung needles" and "cranial spotting." Grimm and especially McCarthy ace the playwright's verbal acrobatics, with David Steiger and Eden Strong providing able support as corporate minions who add to the mystery. Neveu's plot deflates in the final third; questions raised about corporate greed, creative control and bioethics are left hanging while convoluted threads are perfunctorily tied up. The world he's created is an entertaining one, but he needs to find a better way to end it.—*Kris Vire*

Blizzard '67



Chicago Dramatists (see Resident companies). By Jon Steinhagen. Dir. Russ Tutterow. With John Gawlik, Andy Hager, Andy Lutz, Stephen Spencer. 2hrs 20mins; one intermission.

The Chicago weather conditions of January 1967, as described at the opening of Jon Steinhagen's funny and affecting new play, were extreme even for our climatologically challenging city, going from an unseasonably warm 65 degrees on January 24 to a 23-inch snowfall two days later. Yet Steinhagen's play—for all the historical fact and Chicago flavor woven throughout and the archival footage of Mayor Daley the first addressing his subjects—isn't a documentary. *Blizzard '67* tracks four west suburban businessmen who share a daily carpool into the city. The snowstorm is a backdrop for a portrait of these four guys navigating manhood at a volatile time when society's definition of the word seemed as slippery as a slushy sidewalk.

The four actors—John Gawlik as an increasingly problem drinker, Andy



CAR TROUBLE
Blizzard's men dive
into the pool.

Hager as a morose family man, Stephen Spencer as the smug single and Andy Lutz as the youngster whose greatest ambition is an office with a window, or at least an office—are marvelous, sharing group narration that switches seamlessly between first- and third-person. Director Russ Tutterow and his cast quickly establish the group dynamic—so quickly, in fact, that they highlight the major flaw of Steinhagen's script: its length. Particularly in the first act, leading up to the blizzard that strands the guys in their car and sets off the life-changing events, the play can feel sluggish and repetitive. If Steinhagen shovels away a few extra inches, he'll have a cooler comedy.—*Kris Vire*

PHOTOS: TOP, MICHAEL BROSILOW; BOTTOM, JEFF PINES

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