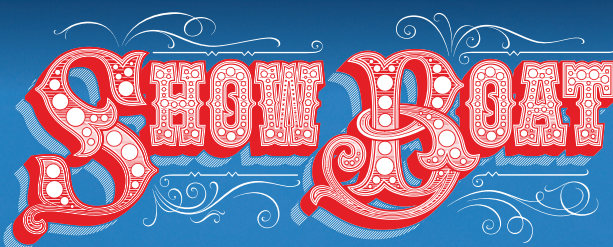


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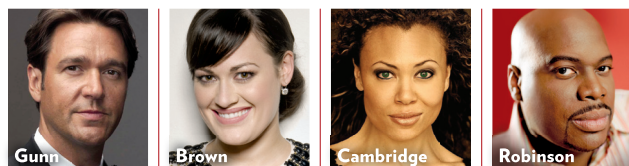


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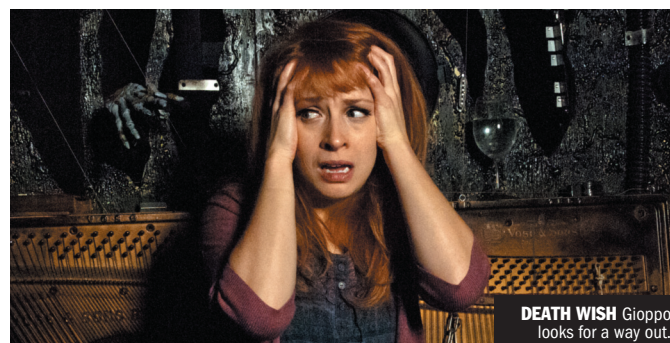
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Theater



DEATH WISH Gioppo looks for a way out.

Kill Me



WildClaw Theatre (see Fringe & storefront). By Scott T. Barsotti. Dir. Jeff Christian. With Sasha Gioppo, Casey Cunningham, Michaela Petro. 1hr 10mins; no intermission.

When Cam (Sasha Gioppo) awakes from a coma after surviving a car accident, she tells her girlfriend Grace (Michaela Petro) and her sister Wendy (Casey Cunningham) that she believes she spent the week she was unconscious in hell. What's more, the formerly fragile woman is now convinced she *can't* die—a hypothesis she proceeds to test, much to Grace and Wendy's horror, by jumping out of third-story windows and drinking antifreeze.

Scott T. Barsotti's new one-act splits first-person narration between Wendy, a psychologist who thinks Cam resents her protectiveness, and Grace, who harbors guilt over her belief that the car accident was her fault. Barsotti also includes four other characters: Cam's demons, named Paranoia, Dread, Angst and Despair. Intriguingly, the playwright leaves it an open question whether or not these four horsemen of mental illness are the actual, supernatural demons Cam believes them to be; their effect on the three women's lives is horrid regardless. If the script peters out abruptly to an unsatisfying *Twilight Zone* conclusion, Jeff Christian's atmospheric staging features strong acting as well as creepastic use of a repurposed piano soundboard. —Kris Vire

Dating Walter Dante



Raven Theatre (see Resident companies). By Jon Steinhagen. Dir. Cody Estle. With Kristin Collins, Jason Huysman, Antoine Pierre Whitfield. 1hr 25mins; no intermission.

Following in Rob Lowe's footsteps, Jon Steinhagen takes the Drew Peterson saga as inspiration for his new comedy-drama. Is it a love story? A ghost story? A mystery? Well, it depends whom you talk to. To Laura Bakersfield (Kristin Collins), Walter's latest girlfriend, it's a love story; to the detective on his tail (an excellent Antoine Pierre Whitfield), it's a mystery. To the rest of us, it quickly becomes clear that Steinhagen hasn't figured it out. *Dating* wants to be a comedy and a tragedy, a ghost tale and a romance; in the end, this lackluster look at the women who date Walter Dante fails on all counts.

As Laura, Collins offers such a nuanced and complicated portrayal of a woman in love that it may be hard to refute her testimony. Yes, love is an enigma, a kind of madness. Still, Laura is much too smart to date a suspected



WIN, LOSE OR DREW Collins, left, ponders a future with Huysman.

serial killer; it's impossible to believe she might be one of Peterson's—that is, Dante's—desperate, deluded women. Moreover, nothing much seems compelling about Dante himself (Jason Huysman); he's hardly poetic (I hoped the name meant something beyond the obvious). Steinhagen seems to want us to care about him, at least a little bit, but we have little reason.

It's to Steinhagen's credit that his interest seems to be in the complexities of female desire; why, indeed, do so many women delude themselves in love? Yet his pursuit of this question falls flat, particularly as the script turns toward sitcomish dialogue and short scenes and monologues that stall the play's movement. —Suzanne Scanlon

PHOTOS: TOP, COURTESY OF WILDCLOW THEATRE; BOTTOM, DEAN LA PRAIRIE