



By Joseph N. Feinstein

The newly-formed "Closet Space Theater" group came out of their closet on McCadden Place in Hollywood to give a fine performance of *Safety* by Chris Thorpe. In a space not much bigger than a closet, this talented group of four: John Montana, Katrina Lenk, Peggy Goss and Mac Brandt translated Thorpe's words with sensitivity, force, and meaning to a small, yet appreciative, audience who listened and reacted quite attentively.

The story is divided into thirteen scenes with a series of clicks (read rapid photo-taking sounds) announcing the end of each scene and the beginning of another. The tiny stage serves as three different locales: a London hotel room, the home of the protagonist and his wife, and a bombed-out house in a war-torn country. The set, created by Russ Borski, frames each scene beautifully.

Montana, Lenk *Photo by Ed Krieger*

Safety is about a man named Michael (Montana) whose major interest in life is photographing the dead bodies in the various wars that he covers for his wire service. His time away eats into his marital relationship with his wife, Susan (Goss), and their offstage little daughter. Two additional sub-plots concern his affair with Tanya (Lenk) and the entrance of Sean (Brandt) who saved Michael and Susan's daughter from drowning.

The acting is first-rate, the story is absorbing, and the dialogue is crisp and concise. Thorpe is an intelligent man who composed this piece with care. He communicates perfectly with his audience.

Some fine moments: After a five minute sarcastic monologue with Michael, Susan says: "We don't much talk anymore!" Susan to Michael in describing their disintegrating marriage: "I used to worry about your being killed; now I worry I may have to talk with you on the phone!" Michael to Sean while describing his deeply conflicted feelings: "The picture of my daughter drowning could have been my crowning achievement in photography! That's why I couldn't save her."

Pay close attention to all the small nuances in the dialogue. Director Peter Forster is a master at creating these for his actors. Credit Michael Cooper for fine sound design in helping create just the right mood with his effective music, bombs, bullets, and the sounds of war.

John Montana is both the producer and the lead in this impressive play. It was my first experience seeing him act. His list of credits includes theater in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, as well as many film and TV projects.

Safety will run until February 18, 2007 on Thursday through Saturday @ 8:00 p.m. and Sunday @ 2:00 p.m. It's one you should see, for it is eighty-five minutes of raw, effective theater!

Safety @ The McCadden Theatre 1157 N. McCadden Place Hollywood 90038 (1 block North of Santa Monica; 1 block East of Highland) Reservations: 818-780-0661 Tickets \$15 - \$20