

# Whiskey, attitude bring nonstop laughs to 'Hate'

By Amy Stumpf, *Nashville City Paper*  
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There's a wonderful moment early in Tennessee Repertory Theatre's current production of *I Hate Hamlet* in which the ghost of John Barrymore tries to convince his protégé—a mediocre television actor named Andrew—to tackle the über-role of Hamlet.

Apparently stuck in some sort of purgatory, Barrymore explains that he cannot leave until Andrew fulfills the role. With a heavy sigh and a knowing look at the audience, he laments that he's doomed to spend all eternity “with (gasp) a television actor.”

Of course, the audience is in on the joke. Barrymore is played by none other than Lane Davies—best known as Mason Capwell from NBC's *Santa Barbara*. But Davies is also an accomplished Shakespearean actor who injects a welcome sense of bravado and energy into this decidedly silly play.

But why does Andrew hate Hamlet? Chalk it up to good, old-fashioned feelings of inadequacy. After all, his television series has been cancelled and his Ophelia-like girlfriend refuses to sleep with him. Besides, Andrew is not sure he has the acting chops to tackle Shakespeare—a form of theater that his TV producer friend refers to as “algebra on stage.”

Watching Andrew wrestle with his conscience is entertaining enough, as playwright Paul Rudnick pokes fun at everything from New York realtors to Hollywood's superficial mindset. But once Barrymore takes the stage—decked out in full Shakespearean attire and armed with plenty of whiskey and attitude—the laughs are almost nonstop.

Davies is perfectly cast as Barrymore, working the crowd with his oh-so-grand gestures and pompous wit. One particularly satisfying scene has Barrymore teaching his student the proper way to take a bow—an absolutely shameless display that draws big laughs from the audience.

Davies is joined by a solid cast, including Eric Pasto-Crosby in his Tennessee Repertory debut as Andrew. And Ruth Cordell is priceless as his chain-smoking agent, with deadpan delivery and a flawless accent.

Some characters—including Andrew's new-age realtor and doe-eyed girlfriend—are a bit flat, but Nashville favorites Rona Carter and Marin Miller do an admirable job. And the always-versatile Henry Haggard is the walking definition of a Hollywood weasel, with all the sincerity of a used-car salesman.

Resident Scenic Designer Gary Hoff has outdone himself, creating a remarkable Gothic apartment fit for a king. It may not be Shakespeare, but if you're looking an evening of light-hearted entertainment, you're sure to love *I Hate Hamlet*.