

CULTURE » STAGE

Ctrl.-Alt.-Delete

What could have been a great send-up of Silicon Valley culture falls flat

By Michael Scott Moore
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Comments 1

James Carpenter plays the megalomaniacal guru of a venture capital fund in what should be, but isn't, an excellent satire of Silicon Valley. It should be excellent because it stars James Carpenter, and because the playwright, Anthony Clarvoe, knows how start-ups rose and "cratered" in the late 20th century. (The show's subtitle is "A History Play: 1998-2000.") But it leans on old conventions: Clarvoe has done nothing but move a Hollywood satire a few hundred miles north, stereotypes intact. Instead of a Hollywood columnist we have Toria Bruno, TV tech reporter, always angling for the inside scoop; instead of a hot young starlet we have Marie, the smart but mentally unstable young hipster who plays men like a game of Doom. In place of the aspiring actor we have Eddie Fisker, a "kid with a gizmo," eager but insecure; and where the studio head should be there's Gus Belmont, Carpenter's cowboy-booted, black-clad venture guru. The kid with a gizmo joins Belmont's cultish circle of money and management people and finds himself forced to quit, or restart, his firm. ("Ctrl.-Alt.-Delete" is the combination of keys needed to force a PC to restart.) The title is clever, but also redolent of trendy, already-aging jokes. Except for some good performances -- by Carpenter, Betsy Brandt as Marie, and Rob Nagle as Tom Xerox®, the sales guy -- *Ctrl.-Alt.-Delete* is as predictable and outworn as it sounds.

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San Jose Repertory Theater, 101 Paseo de San Antonio (between Second and Third streets), San Jose

Through Nov. 18

Tickets are \$20-44

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