

THEATER REVIEW | TOO MUCH CHRISTMAS 2007

Jolly cast makes most of spotty s

By Michael Grossberg
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Too much or not enough? Theatergoers seeking holiday-themed fun might question *Too Much Christmas 2007*, an erratic but energetic collection of comic sketches.

Like the two previous editions of the MadLab Theatre holiday show, this one injects too much gimmickry into a short evening. And given all the energy and good cheer onstage, the sketches don't generate enough humor; many elicit smiles but little laughter.

Then again, the smaller-than-usual opening-night audience Thursday didn't help. Comedy needs a crowd.

Among the gimmicks recycled from previous editions: Each sketch title has two versions performed by competing teams, with the order of sketches determined by numbers called out first (or loudest) by the audience.

The evening also has a race-against-the-clock deadline: Some sketches won't be performed, but MadLab hopes that the curious will return to see more.

The troupe has added a few more gimmicky twists, including rival co-hosts and teams of elves and reindeer who struggle with their differences at the North Pole.

The one-act begins promisingly with a short, animated North Pole film whose MadLab voice-overs introduce the tensions between the different species of Santa's helpers.

Most sketches are brief — which is OK for a one-joke



In the MadLab Theatre holiday show, from left: Misti Stewart, Peter Graybeal and Amanda Howell

payoff. Yet some don't end as emphatically as they should.

Writers Warren Johnson, Simon Dowd, Chris Lane and the cast and crew spend a lot of effort satirizing stereotypes, from racial to sexual.

Like the old TV series *Laugh-In*, MadLab aims shots

at everything and anything: pop culture, religion, politics, lustful sexuality, North Pole mythology and central Ohio. Even theater critics get skewered.

The show, suggested for adult audiences because of profanity, also injects more

► MadLab
Too Much Christmas
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madlab.n

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Q&A | CHRISTINA APPLEGATE

Actress finds fun in characters

By Chuck Barney
CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Christina Applegate, the



A: It's a
blast. I've
never gotten
to play a

Bundy and the former Sam
would get along?

A: Oh, the old Sam would
chew Kelly up and spit her