

Cameo's 'Love List' light, entertaining

Playwright could have done more.

BY MICHAEL E. BARRETT

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"The Love List," now playing at the Cameo Theatre, is about the perfect woman.

It all starts on the 50th birthday of Leon (Byrd Bonner), a lonely statistician. His friend Bill (Joel Crabtree), a married novelist with a wandering eye, encourages Leon to consult a Gypsy dating service called Get-a-Match. All he has to do is fill out a form listing the top 10 qualities he looks for in his ideal woman.

Soon after Leon picks 10 characteristics for his perfect match, Justine (Nikki Young) shows up at his door, pretending they have a longtime relationship. She shows all the qualities of Leon's love list, including a sense of humor, the willingness to leave him alone when he needs to work and the ability to be fascinated by statistical blather.

Justine also happens to be the name of a dead woman he loved years ago, and might also be an ironic reference to the Marquis de Sade's character of a perfect doormat. Leon



COURTESY JAMES TENINTY

Nikki Young (from left) plays a woman who embodies all of the traits on "The Love List" drawn up by a couple of love-horn guys (Byrd Bonner and Joel Crabtree) in the Cameo Theatre production.

assumes the new Justine as part of a game being played on him, and he goes along.

When Bill says he hasn't submitted the form yet and insists he knows nothing about Justine, it becomes clear something weird is happening, especially when she starts altering her personality at the stroke of an eraser on the list.

The beautiful, infinitely changeable Justine is clearly the best role because it covers the most ground while the guys jabber like guys. Young breezes across the stage, making the best of a part that's surprisingly underwritten for its magical potential.

The tone adopted in this production is a relatively low-key realism that encourages more chuckles than screams. One can imagine the thing being milked in a frantic, over-the-top manner, but Foster's script doesn't encourage that. It takes the guys almost forever to catch on, and then they accept the situation almost too easily without enough questions or experiments.

The program says Foster is Canada's most produced playwright. You may wish to take him aside and explain that he could have done much more with this premise, but if he's that successful he probably doesn't care.

Norm Foster's play belongs to a type of diversion usually called "cute," and that's accurate. Like a light "Twilight Zone" episode that somehow runs two hours, it doesn't have much to say that can't be tossed off in a few glib exchanges, and it chugs along smoothly to a punch line that's satisfying and allows everyone to move on and forget it.

"The Love List" can be seen at 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays through Nov. 27 at the Cameo Theatre, 1123 E. Commerce St. Tickets cost \$15-\$29. Call 210-212-5454 for reservations or visit cameo.com to buy tickets online.