

## MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIAS

By Ron Hutchinson

Generic Theatre

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Nov. 16 - Dec. 19, 2007

For tickets and times call: 757) 441-2160

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

We are asked to believe that three men came up with a screenplay for "Gone with the Wind": in five days locked in David O. Selznick's office. Selznick, played as a southern gentleman by Mark Haynie, is joined by Casey Malone as Victor Fleming and Fran Peterson as Ben Hecht.

It's a rather outrageous premise even for Hollywood in the early 1940's. It becomes especially so in this production because the performers are de-energized. They lack the energy of intention which is to write a shootable script in five days. They move and talk at a leisurely pace most of the time. The playwright takes a lot of time to philosophize about the merit of movies, social issues, the missed potential of tinsel town to do good, the plight of Jews and other such verbiage.

Carol Wright doesn't keep them on track to accomplish their task. Rather she allows them lollygag around and comment on each and every line with mugging and much eye ball rolling. The play demands an intensity and urgency and natural character comedy that these gentlemen do not instinctively have. They try very hard to show us rather than do.

The most believable of the three is Mr. Peterson as Ben Hecht. He has moments where we believe that he is struggling to do something but again comments excessively on his feelings about what is happening. So does Mr. Malone as the director Victor Fleming. The reality of the situation is never realized. There are laughs when they play the characters of the story but they would be greater if there were some sense of truth and honesty. They fail to deal with the passage of time and the progressive exhaustion. The action pretty much stays on one level.

Director Wright has not helped the guys find what is important and what is throw away chatter. Underlying everything is the pressure of time which she ignores.

Hank Sparkes, as usual, makes the most from a limited budget in his set design.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.