

Skyline

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Despite flaws, 'Game' worth playing

By **SUE CANNON**
Correspondent

There are times when you want to be an active player in a game. In the case of "The Game" comedy revue, it's more fun to be a spectator.

Featuring Second City Training Center vets Debra Downing, Kristian Hammond and Rob Reese (who also directs), this long-form improv show pokes fun at medicine in a tumor-afflicted doctor sketch; political pigheadedness in a battle between the God of rubber bands and the God of staplers; and the odd relationship between country hicks and tabloid TV in an aliens-in-Indiana skit.

The interaction among the players is fine-tuned (they've been honing their craft together since last year's "Big Snaxx" at The Annoyance), but, ironically, the show's

Improv

"The Game"

- ▶ Through March 16
- ▶ 8 p.m. Saturday
- ▶ O Cafe Theatre
- ▶ 3343 N. Clark St.
- ▶ \$5
- ▶ (312) 506-8245

funniest moments come from their solo efforts.

Of particular note is Reese's ode to the imperiled bike messenger. As he rides a beat-up stationary bike on stage, he spews insults at "suits" before he runs them over, then outlines the royal treatment he deserves in the high-rise elevator. Reese doesn't miss a beat and barely needs to catch his breath as he

pedals furiously.

Downing's turn as a janitor who waxes philosophical about cable TV also is a highlight. Her delivery and timing are on, and when she tells the audience "the North American beaver episode changed my life," we believe her.

The trio's strongest combined effort comes when they portray a band intent on selling themselves as tortured artists. They've tried every poser image from inner-city rappers to El Mariachi singers, but decide they can best promote a Nirvana-esque album full of cliches from "Forrest Gump." "I feel the weight of my future addictions coming down heavily upon me," Reese quips.

The group maintains energy throughout, despite playing to a half-empty house. More blackouts and fewer pseudo-intellectual skits (forget the Egyptian slave and Scottish soap opera routines) would make for a more polished show.