

Open Circle Theatre is offering an interesting discussion on women with their most recent showing of Clare McIntyre's *Low Level Panic*. Ms. McIntyre's play focuses on three very different women and how they view their bodies and define themselves through society's harsh and warped lens. The piece has some very funny moments and some disturbingly on target views on how one can be a victim to popular culture.

In the Playbill Café's tiny blackbox space, director Suzanne Richard creates a claustrophobic environment where the women and the audience feel trapped. Klyph Stanford's set is like a shadowbox picture frame wallpapered by magazine pages which feature images of scantily clad women posing alluringly. The effect is that the roommates never escape the haunting sense that they will never measure up to the airbrushed, altered pictures that surround them at every layer of their modern day existences. Ironically, they themselves apply the same sort of impossible perfection to the men that they meet and lust after.

Selene Faer, Jessica Lynn Rodriguez and K. Clare Johnson each pull out the pathos and the humor in the writing. The play was written in the 1980's and set in England. Open Circle has moved the location to America and changed some of the dialogue to reflect the American meanings of the British terms. Sadly, it's all still too relevant twenty years later as women, men, girls and boys continually place their inner value on their outer looks, physiques and youthfulness.

*Low Level Panic* runs to November 29th. Open Circle Theatre, by the way, is the only theatre in town which is devoted to incorporating individuals with disabilities into every level of a production. They add to the diversity of Washington's cultural landscape and, perhaps more importantly, provide another viewpoint from which to see the world around us. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased by going to <http://www.opencircletheatre.org> or calling 1-800-494-8497.

<http://www.curtainup.com/dcnewandnoteworthy.html>