

Focus Today

On hearing that the Burglars of Hamm are parodying a motivational seminar, you might expect a rollicking New Age satire. Despite the effectiveness of the bull's-eye lampoons, the elevator music and strategically clunky visuals, this is actually a blood-chilling outing that grapples head-on with the corporate dagger behind the cloak in a cost-cutting era. Thespians Rebecca Roman, Mad Dog and Ron Baxter (respectively Carolyn Almos, director Matt Almos and Albert Dayan) have been contracted by the Chief Executive Officer of struggling Ninetech Industries to motivate his employees, and the trio rips tendons straining to be hip. Dayan's wig, which makes him look like Barry Manilow, and director Almos' curly rug smack of a corporate climber circa 1972, while his shiny suit and white socks speak volumes. Their bubbly enthusiasm ("Yeah!") and high-fives are as obnoxious as most game shows. They play out scenarios to illustrate the sanctity of \$uccess, with euphemisms such as "vision" and "do it now." And their theatricality extends to a *Lord of the Rings* spinoff featuring Dayan as a medieval warrior in skirt and sword, decapitating his demon (specialty costumes by Teresa Shea). Behind the mirth, and eventually overtaking it, lurk uglier truths. If we aren't sufficiently enthusiastic, Rebecca turns on us with fury and tears. In the "vision" segment, we hapless employees lose points for having any imagination at all. And if we lose enough points, a visit to the Human Resources Director may be in store. High scorers win buttons, the top mascot being a monkey. The trio performs a celebratory monkey dance. Dayan, in his warrior getup, flings his legs up and down in succession, like pistons, while singing about being top banana in a spectacle that's simply horrific. Original music by David O. Burglars of Hamm at the Powerhouse Theater, 3116 Second St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.; thru June 20. (323) 769-6334. *Note: Roles alternate.*

—Steven Leigh Morris

