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The Comedy About A Bank Robbery

Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields

Mischief Theatre

The Lyric, Theatre Royal Plymouth

2–6 October 2018

Perhaps not THE comedy about a bank robbery but certainly a comedy about a bank robbery, Mischief Theatre's latest big stage hit is a frivolous farce with plenty of puns and originality with recognisable nods to 1950s Hollywood movies.

The Conley Poly Am Dram worthies of the *Play That Goes Wrong* and *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* are nowhere to be seen as writers Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields abandon the play-within-a-play conceit. And I missed it.

Set designer David Farley's skills are still employed to great effect with not so much collapsible furniture or malfunctioning props—although the misbehaving foldaway bed is used to great effect—but instead in quickish change scenery, plenty of doors and innovation (such as a tremendous chase with an office chair motorbike and laundry basket car).

Without the usual malfunctioning fixtures to steal the show, the spotlight is firmly on the farce, physicality and plot which, although funny, is not always quite enough to keep the pace with the first half a little stilted at times. Running gags—escalating seniority equating to larger and larger moustaches etc—and the odd do-wop a cappella moments break the momentum with no real correlation to the unfolding plot so unfortunately screaming filler.

On press night, understudy Eddy Westbury made a menacing jailbird Mitch Ruscitti who, roping in the help of getaway passenger kneeling Neil (David Coomber), heads to Minneapolis to rekindle passion with con artiste femme fatale Caprice (a strong debut by Julia Frith) and to hang around the visiting diamond lodged in her father's bank vault.

In a city where everyone is a crook, Caprice falls for wideboy Sam (Sean Carey), the FBI is on hand (particularly in a dark cupboard) and with three trouser-less Robin Freeboys providing slapstick and plenty of opportunity for obvious wordplay (let alone his nephew Roger) there is much to confuse.

Music captain Jon Trenchard is lovelorn loser Warren, battered and berated but whose contortions in the bird's eye view scene are superb while loose-limbed George Hannigan makes an impressive debut as 'everyone else' with a particularly impressive solo fisticuffs between three characters a stand-out moment.

It's fun but I must admit to slight disappointment.

Reviewer: [Karen Bussell](#)