

## Outrageous Characters At Lab Theater

by Di Saggau

“Sordid Lives” now playing at Laboratory Theater of Florida, is billed as a black comedy about white trash. The characters in the play are over-the-top and extremely entertaining to watch. The play focuses on a family gathering in a small Texas town for the funeral of the matriarch, Peggy, who died after tripping over her married lover’s wooden legs during one of their motel get-togethers. We meet Peggy’s sister Sissy (Stacy Peres), her two very different daughters LaVonda (Cindi Heimberg) and Latrelle (Joann Haley) and Ty (Drew Larman) a gay grandson, along with an assortment of angst-ridden friends and neighbors.

One of the most human characters is Earl “Brother Boy” Ingram, (Ken Johnson) who has been institutionalized for 20 years because he is a gay cross-dresser. He is flamboyant in his feathered pink peignoir and especially in his Spanish flavored gown with extremely high red patent leather shoes, that he wears to his mother’s funeral. That’s when we discover his humanity.

Pat Clopton has long been one of my favorite local actors and her performance in this play as a boozy floozy is played to perfection. Watching her try to put on lipstick with a cigarette dangling from her lips is a scene stealer. Shelley Sanders as Bitsy Mae Harling, is the first character we meet as she sings the title song. She sings some other appropriate tunes throughout the play both on and off stage which adds a delightful diversion from watching the scene changes.

Others in the cast are Sandra Dixon as a maniacal therapist who wants to prove she can turn a gay man straight; Brian Linthicum as G.W.Nethercott, Peggy’s paramour; Kayleigh O’Connell as Noleta Nethercott, G.W.’s outraged wife; Patrick Erhardt as Wardell Owens; Chet Gridley as Odell Owens, and Gil Perez as Reverend Barnes.

Director Scott Carpenter has put his damaged characters in situations that will keep you laughing throughout the two-hour play. You’ll also find some heart in a few of them and the dramatic ending sends a strong message. “Sordid Lives” plays through October 1 at Laboratory Theater of Florida, 1634 Woodford Avenue in Downtown Fort Myers. For tickets call 218-0481 or go to [www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com](http://www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com). I salute Artistic Director Annette Trossbach for bringing this humorous, campy production our way.