



Death at Dixie's Speakeasy

The lost art of improv makes an appearance at mystery dinner theater

By Lindsay Caron


I knock on the back door of the Alley. A small window instantly opens. An Irish lad in a cap looks at me quizzically. "Who sent ya?" he asks. I give the password and am allowed entrance. It's Sunday night and I'm a server for the evening down at Dixie's Speakeasy.

I'd never been in the joint before and had no idea what was about to ensue. I found the boss (lead writer and Improvikos director D.D. Jay) and asked for my instructions. "If any dead bodies appear, find a table cloth to throw over them," Jay says. "And when we give the signal, cause a commotion for distraction. Oh—and can you do the Charleston?" I had my work cut out for me. Take care of my customers, follow bizarre instructions and try to solve a murder all in the course of three hours.

The first shot went off between the salad and the main course (catered by Charly's). Guns were drawn. But in that era, everyone owned at least one gun. The actors join dining patrons to chat and drop

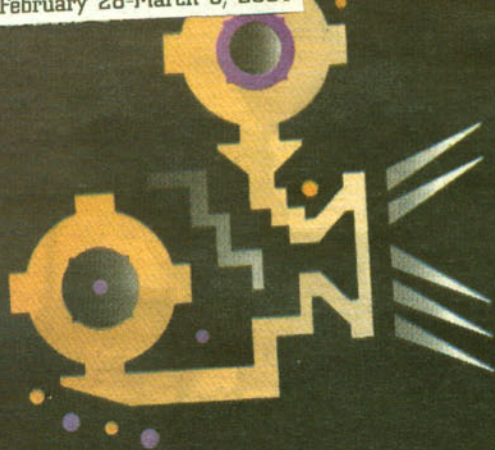
hints and theories as to "whodunnit." This was not the extent of the audience participation. Several folks were handed scripts, props and questions.

The talented cast includes a Chicago mobster, a mobster in a dress, a money hungry stock broker, the love lost Federal Agent, the slightly corrupt Sheriff of Flagstaff and the head of the Womens Christian Temperance Union. It's impressive to see so much interaction with an audience while staying completely in character. And the shocking truth: The cast collaborated to write the script as well, putting together scenes, characters and pieces as rehearsals went on for this intensive project that began last October. Improv is a lost art. It is wonderful to see it brought to audiences in such a fun format.

"Death at Dixie's Speakeasy" will be premiering Sun, March 3 and 10 at 7 p.m. at the Alley. Tickets are \$25 and must be purchased in advance. For more information, call 774-1662. 

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