

OFF BROADWAY

Not Your Grandma's Theatre

Dead Special Crabs



Dead Special Crabs cast.
Photo by Al Foote III.

Theatre Review by [Howard Miller](#)

Playwright Dan Kitrosser is never one to say no to a joke or a gag, as the often funny, often head-spinningly out of control joke-and-gag-filled *Dead Special Crabs* opening tonight at TBG Theatre clearly demonstrates. *Dead Special Crabs*, a presentation of Wide Eyed Productions (“we are dedicated to leaving our audiences wide eyed”), is a road trip comedy that offers up more detours than an actual north-to-south journey on I-95 during the height of construction season. The loose-jointed plot follows Loomer (Nic Marrone) as he drives a tan Corolla — a car purchased by his Aunt Missy (Ellen David) as a wedding gift for Loomer’s sister — from Maine to the wedding locale in Florida along said highway, where a serial killer is on

the loose wreaking havoc among unwary travelers.

The real reason Loomer has volunteered for the task has nothing to do with his sister, however. He is chasing after Virgil (Greg Carere), a poet whom Loomer recently fell head over heels in love with during an incident involving a stash of Metamucil. As Loomer explains to his best friend June (Samantha Cooper), a self-absorbed self-help aficionado who has agreed to accompany him on his trip, “I literally became a homosexual like a week ago.” Meanwhile, Aunt Missy has elicited the help of Det. Barney Horntub (Lee Seymour) to chase after Loomer, both to protect him from the serial killer and to retrieve the car, which she wants to drive to the wedding herself.

Along the way, there are encounters with the members of a two-person cult, a lesbian barista, and a docent at the Edgar Allan Poe House in Baltimore. The storyline, a description of which I am abandoning at this point, is as convoluted as anything concocted by Charles Ludlam or W. S. Gilbert, and the jokes run the gamut from baggy pants burlesque humor to farce to absurdism (such as the radio station that plays a capella songs performed by a group of mimes).

This is all funny stuff, indeed, and director Kristin Skye Hoffmann manages to keep everything moving at a breakneck speed. Ellen David is a standout as Aunt Missy, a combination of Ruth Buzzi’s cranky old lady character from the television sketch comedy *Laugh-In* and Irene Ryan’s “Granny” from *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Andrew Harriss as Walter, half of a married pair who are wanting to expand their cult involving the worship of light, also turns in an excellent performance by enveloping himself completely into the silly mode. His wife, well played by Amy Lee Pearsall, is Kathy, formerly known as “Cathy” — which leads to one of several running gags that thread through the play. The two-level set by Joshua Rose does beautifully for supporting the play’s farcical aspects, which encompass most of Act II, and the hand of sound designer J. Alexander Diaz touches everything, from the underscoring of IMPORTANT LINES to the voices on the car radio.

In truth, the joy you derive from *Dead Special Crabs*, which clocks in at two and a half hours with one intermission, is dependent on your predilection for goofiness, of which there is an abundant supply. Yet it should be noted that alongside the barrage of jokes, the playwright has incorporated a gentle message of acceptance, and he has written every one of the characters — even the serial killer (whose identity is revealed) — with affection. As Walter says to Loomer at one point, “the best things happen when you are finally just yourself.”

Dead Special Crabs

Through December 6

TBG Theater, 312 West 36 Street 3rd Floor

Tickets online and current Performance Schedule: brownpapertickets.com