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PLAY REVIEW:

The Car Plays have legs and wheels

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The creators of the Car Plays have found a unique way to bring theater to the public: They decided to take the theater out of the theater. They've taken the audience and the players, and put them together in actual cars. That's right. In the Car Plays you have a front-row, and sometimes back-seat, view of the action that's taking place.

Presented by Moving Arts Theatre Company, hosted by Woodbury University, and originally conceived by Paul Nicolai Stein, the audience views a series of plays while seated in vehicles with the actors. At the end of each 10-minute performance, carhops open the doors, leading audience members from one car play to the next.

There are four rows of five cars. Each row of five cars is considered a series, and is named after famed Los Angeles streets — Figueroa Boulevard, Ventura Boulevard, Hollywood Boulevard and Ocean Avenue. Each series reflects stories from their respective areas.

The plays last 10 minutes apiece. And each piece is as different and unique as the many colorful characters that make up Los Angeles.

I chose Hollywood. I guess I was feeling a bit dangerous. But it turned out to be a satisfying decision. The first play was in a van. The scene was two aging rock stars giving a young woman an interview. I was struck by how fully immersed you are in the scene. The players would turn to us, the passengers, and include us in the story. You are there, with the actors, in the moment. And it's a very rewarding theater experience.

The other plays included a man hiring a hit-woman to kill his wife. I actually jumped at one point in the act. The feeling was just that real. Also, there was a couple struggling to stay together in another act. They exit the vehicle and speak through the windows, while you are sitting there between them.

The acting was top-notch. The players have their work cut out for them.

Yet in each car I never saw a player fumble or even seem anxious. I truly felt a part of each scene and found myself laughing, empathizing and even being afraid for some of these characters.

The Car Plays is the most innovative play I have ever seen.

Even if you are not a fan of theater, I highly recommend The Car Plays. This is a play, and format, that is

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Gerry Athas, front seat far left, and Andrea Pulcini, front seat driver side, watch the play "Men in Black Leather" performed by Jon Amirkhan as Nolan, left, Trey Nichols as Berke, center, and Wendy Abraham as Carol, right, during "The Car Plays" at Woodbury University Thursday. (Scott Smeltzer/News-Press)

just beginning, and I feel will continue to grow.

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