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## REVIEW: "End Days"

Williamston Theatre &  
The Jewish Ensemble Theatre Company

in love with (A) Rachel, (B) science and (C) Elvis, whom he honors by wearing a glittery costume. Nelson has suffered a devastating trauma, too: Both his parents are dead, his father by suicide. He has turned to Judaism and is preparing for his bar mitzvah.

Into this cheery group comes – well, no-one, which is one of Laufer's points. If hell is other people, as Jean Paul Sartre famously postulated, couldn't salvation be, too?

How, or if, the play gets there makes for highly rewarding theater. Director Tony Caselli has a terrific cast in veterans Manfredi and Sutton-Smith and the younger Head, Hiller and Eilersen. Manfredi's depiction of depression makes a basset hound look bouncy by comparison. Sutton-Smith's Sylvia projects a different kind of crushed spirit; proclaiming how happy she is having found Jesus, her demeanor is anything but joyful.

Hiller portrays the I'm-so-tough-nothing-can-hurt-me attitude and intellectual openness of a badly damaged, whip-smart teenager. As Nelson, Eilersen's combination of kindness, volubility, eagerness to please and percolating intelligence bubbles over into the human equivalent of a golden retriever puppy. Head's Stephen Hawking is spot-on, and for all we know so is his calm and gentle Jesus.

There is a lot of sound, a lot of light, many and varied costumes, a set that packs surprises and plethora of props for which credit is due, respectively, to Jason Painter Price, Ryan Davies, Lane Frangomeli, Kirk Domer and Alex Gay.

The play is at Williamston through Feb. 24, but that won't be the end of "End Days." It moves to West Bloomfield's Jewish Ensemble Theatre on March 6.

**SHOW DETAILS:** "End Days" continues at Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston, Thursday-Sunday through Feb. 24. Running time: 2 hours, 10 minutes. Tickets: \$15-22. For information: 517-655-SHOW or [www.WilliamstonTheatre.org](http://www.WilliamstonTheatre.org).

The production then moves to The Jewish Ensemble Theatre Company at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre on the campus of the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road., West Bloomfield, Thursday, Saturday & Sunday, March 6-24, plus Wednesday, March 6 & 20. Tickets: \$38-\$45. For information: 248-788-2900 or [www.jetttheatre.org](http://www.jetttheatre.org).

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Performance Information

Show times

- Thursday, January 24, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Friday, January 25, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Saturday, January 26, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Sunday, January 27, 2013 at 2:00 pm
- Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Friday, February 1, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Saturday, February 2, 2013 at 3:00 pm
- Saturday, February 2, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Sunday, February 3, 2013 at 2:00 pm
- Thursday, February 7, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Friday, February 8, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Saturday, February 9, 2013 at 3:00 pm
- Saturday, February 9, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Sunday, February 10, 2013 at 2:00 pm
- Thursday, February 14, 2013 at 8:00 pm
- Friday, February 15, 2013 at 8:00 pm

## Apocalypse Wednesday?

By Martin F. Kohn

Posted: Feb. 2, 2013 at 4:42 p.m.

When religion is found wanting and science falls short, when atheism gets you nowhere and even rock 'n' roll (in the form of an Elvis-obsessed teen) doesn't have the answers, what's left?

After searching and searching, look a little closer to home, suggests Deborah Zoe Laufer in "End Days," her comedy (yes, comedy) at Williamston Theatre about a family traumatized by 9/11 and seeking redemption.

Dad Arthur (John Manfredi), the sole survivor among 65 colleagues at the World Trade Center, hasn't gotten out of his pajamas or left the house for years. His wife, Sylvia (Emily Sutton-Smith), raised as an Orthodox Jew, tried atheism before turning to evangelical Christianity; she spends her days hanging out with Jesus (Andrew Head) and preparing for the Rapture, which she's pretty sure will come on Wednesday because she asked Jesus to blink once for yes and two for no.

Arthur and Sylvia's daughter, Rachel (Lydia Hiller), is a super-smart 16-year-old whose attire makes your average Goth kid look like a Brooks Brothers model and who has conversations at her school locker with physicist Stephen Hawking (Head again). Next-door neighbor Nelson (Eric Eilersen) is a geeky high schooler

Ann-Marie MacDonald's  
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