

# LAW WEEKLY

MARCH 25-31, 2005 / VOL. 27 / NO. 18 [lawweekly.com](http://lawweekly.com)

**KILLER JOE** Playwright Tracy Letts is also a Steppenwolf actor, and that Chicago theater aesthetic pervades his comedic amorality play that's equal parts David Mamet and Sam Shepard. In a trailer park outside Dallas, Chris Smith (Joe Sikora) — deeply in debt — hires cop Killer Joe (Paul Dillion) to off Chris' own mother for the life insurance payout. Things get complicated, and a bit dramatically strained, when Joe demands Chris' simple-hearted virgin sister, Dottie (Corryn Cummins), as a "retainer" — which leads to a sexy, candlelit seduction scene between the pair amidst cockroaches and beer stains. The whole thing feels a bit like an indie film, or a play from 1979, about the dire costs of greed and other temptations — turf

well-covered with familiar themes of bruising violence and sexual humiliation. The play is a great vehicle for the actors, who rise — sink, actually — to the occasion with wry humor and irrepressible tawdriness, under Scott Cummins' direction — though what exactly motivates misogynist Killer Joe and the runny-nosed waif he appears to covet remain open questions floating in the blood bath. Fine performances also by Loren Lazerine, as Chris' cuckolded brother, Ansel, and by Laura Niemi, playing Ansel's black-hearted wife. Lost Angels Theater Company at the Gardner Stages, 1501 Gardner St., Hlywd.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.; thru April 17. (866) 811-4111. (Steven Leigh Morris)