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## **HURRICANE SEASON**

Review by Pauline Adamek

Eclectic Company Theatre's annual playwrights competition and festival, now in its eighth year, showcases new works by promising playwrights, with mixed results.

For three weekends a different trio of plays is on offer, along with a voting ballot for audiences to fill out. The final weekend, August 5-7, is reserved for the audience favorites of the festival. This review is for Week 2. In "Stalking Pollyanna," written by Hal Corley and directed by Katie Witkowski, Mark Motyl plays a middle-aged gay man who spots his boyhood movie-star crush (Hayley Mills) in a bookstore. During this short play he is goaded by his obnoxious younger boyfriend (Jeremy Mascia) to make contact with the girl from his dreams. Delicate revelations that link the man's gay identity with his childhood fantasy are clouded by the implausibility of his friendship with such an insufferable younger man. Dean Farell Bruggeman's "Damien" is directed by Wendy Radford and consists of two intercut monologues that are tenuously linked: Mark Burford charts his character's fondness for his dog while his neighbor, a crabby middle-aged Southern woman (well played by Taylor Ashbrook) suspects the aging pooch of being possessed by the devil. Best of the night is "Holey Smokes," a tale tinged with horror written by Ellen Elizabeth Steves. A massive hole has inexplicably appeared on some rural property. Defying investigation, the chasm traumatizes the locals and visiting scientists. Within the large cast (Dana Amromin directs well), 12-year-old Brigid Fleming gives an exceptional performance, playing a disturbed child with heart-wrenching conviction.

Eclectic Company Theatre, 5312 Laurel Canyon Blvd., Valley Village; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; thru Aug. 7. (818) 508-3003. [eclecticcompanytheatre.org](http://eclecticcompanytheatre.org)