

AUTOBAHN



by NEIL LABUTE

"Audiences are very forgiving, so it's fun for me to see how far I can push before they stop forgiving," he says. "I like to heap it on them, because they come to the theater, they've got dough, they probably live a pretty good life. They need a good whack now and then." – Neil Labute

– A Playgoer's Companion --



About the Playwright

Neil LaBute was born in Detroit, Michigan on March 19th, 1963. He was raised in Spokane, Washington and attended Brigham Young University where he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). At BYU, he produced a number of plays that pushed the envelope of what was allowable at the straight-laced Mormon university, some of which were immediately shut down after their premiere. However, he was still honoured as one of the most promising undergraduate playwrights at the BYU theatre department's annual award ceremonies. Many say that Pulitzer Prize winner David Mamet was a strong influence on him. He chose to attack subjects that many don't really want to talk about and showed the way that people really talk amongst themselves.

After LaBute graduated from the University of Kansas and New York University, he got a scholarship to London's Royal Court Theatre in the US in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City. Then he got into cinema. He made his films like his plays: showing just characters talking and revealing how evil, scared, ignorant, wounded, delusional, disillusioned and cynical they are. – *adapted from wikipedia and the Internet Movie Database*

“LaBute’s plays are, in fact, so provocative that some past audience members have walked out midplay or screamed out ‘kill the playwright’ or slapped an actor’s face after a performance. And that makes a side of LaBute happy. ‘It’s part of my makeup,’ he says, ‘to ruin a perfectly good day for people’.” – Pat Jordan, *New York Times Magazine*

"Perhaps it's time we stop thinking of LaBute as a mere "provocateur," a label that condescends to an artist of grand ambition and a nimble facility with language." – Jason Zinoman, *TimeOut New York*

About *Autobahn*

"Sitting in an automobile was where I first remember understanding how drama works. . . Hidden in the back seat of a sedan, I quickly realized how deep the chasm or intense the claustrophobia could be inside your average family car." --Neil LaBute

"Be it the medium for clandestine couplings, arguments, shelter, or ultimately transportation, the automobile is perhaps the most authentically American of spaces. In *Autobahn*, Neil LaBute's provocative new collection of one-act plays set within the confines of the front seat, the playwright employs his signature plaintive insight to great effect, investigating the inchoate apprehension that surrounds the steering wheel. Each of these seven brief vignettes explore the ethos of perception and relationship -- from a make-out session gone awry, to a kidnapping thinly disguised as a road trip, a reconnaissance mission involving the rescue of a Nintendo 64 to a daughter's long ride home after her release from rehab. The result is an unsettling montage that gradually reveals the scabrous force of words left unsaid while illuminating the delicate interplay between intention and morality, capturing the essence of Middle America and the myriad paths which cross its surface." – *doollee.com*

"They're all onion-peelers: narratives that seem simple at first but gradually reveal layers in relationships that have, in most cases, become extraordinarily bumpy and bitter."— *Seattle Times*

Labute's work as a playwright

In 2000 he wrote an off-Broadway play entitled *Bash: Latter-Day Plays*, a set of three short plays depicting essentially good Latter-day Saints doing disturbing and violent things. This play resulted in his being disfellowshipped from the LDS (Latter-day Saints) Church. He has since formally left the Church.

LaBute's 2002 play *The Mercy Seat* was one of the first major theatrical responses to the September 11, 2001 attacks. Set on September 12, it concerns a man who worked at the World Trade Center but was away from the office during the attack — with his mistress. Expecting that his family believes that he was killed in the towers' collapse, he contemplates using the tragedy to run away and start a new life with his lover. Starring Liev Schreiber and Sigourney Weaver, the play was a commercial and critical success. – *adapted from wikipedia*

"I can sit and watch two people talk forever as long as the talk is good," he said when he visited Seattle a few years ago. No kidding." – *Seattle Times*

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