

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Good Egg scores a hit with the comedy 'Matt & Ben'



BY JANA MARCUS

March 16, 2026

[Gift this article](#)

Quick Take

Good Egg Productions makes a strong debut with "Matt & Ben," the comedy by Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers imagining how Matt Damon and Ben Affleck came to write "Good Will Hunting." Packed with fast-paced humor and terrific performances from Sarah K. Michael and Sarah Mitchler, the show delivers a night of genuine laugh-out-loud comedy. It runs at Santa Cruz County Actors' Theatre through Sunday.

The screenplay for "Good Will Hunting" falls from the sky in "Matt & Ben." Literally.

One moment, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck are two struggling actors sitting in a messy Boston apartment trying, with limited success, to write their own screenplay. The next moment, a mysterious script drops from the heavens onto the floor between them. The title page reads: "Good Will Hunting by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck."

If you go

Who: Good Egg Productions
What: "Matt & Ben" by Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers
When: Through Sunday
Where: Actors' Theatre, 1001 Center St., Santa Cruz.
Tickets & info: [Click here](#)

From that moment, the play launches into a gleefully ridiculous comic fantasy. It explores friendship, rivalry, artistic ambition and the terrifying possibility that genius could arrive before you are ready.

Laughs arrive early and often as the pair wrestle with the mysterious screenplay that suddenly appears in their lives, unsure if it's divine inspiration or a cosmic prank. The audience is in on the joke immediately.

The result, in Good Egg Productions' lively staging at Santa Cruz County Actors' Theatre, is a genuinely fun evening of theater driven by two terrific performances.

Written by Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers, "Matt & Ben" has an origin story that mirrors the one it spoofs. The writers created the play as college friends at Dartmouth. Like many young performers, they dreamed of breaking into an industry with few opportunities. Their solution was simple: write something themselves.

In that impulse, they found inspiration in Damon and Affleck, who wrote "Good Will Hunting" while still struggling as actors. That screenplay would eventually win the Academy Award and launch both careers.

Kaling and Withers turned that Hollywood legend into satire. First staged in 2002, "Matt & Ben" imagines a wildly fictional origin story for the screenplay. It exaggerates the process of artistic inspiration until it becomes comic chaos.

MORE ON LOCAL STAGES
[Mountain Community Theater's 'The Spitfire Grill' struggles to ignite](#)


The production is firmly rooted in its mid-1990s setting. Ben's apartment is a lovingly cluttered time capsule of the era, complete with a vintage Macintosh computer, movie posters, an old leather sofa and enough junk food scattered across the room to sustain two struggling actors through a very long writing session. The design leans into the current wave of '90s nostalgia, reinforced by a soundtrack that places the audience squarely in the decade when Damon and Affleck were still unknowns trying to break into the business.

The play was written to be performed by women. In this production, Sarah Mitchler takes on the role of Matt Damon while Sarah K. Michael plays Ben Affleck. The casting twist adds another layer of playful commentary while giving two strong performers a chance to fully inhabit the bluster and insecurity of the characters. The two Sarahs carry the show with impressive comic energy.

Sarah K. Michael's Ben Affleck is a delight. She dives headfirst into the swagger and dumb machismo of a Boston bro, but still reveals the vulnerability beneath. The role showcases her talents. Michael shifts easily between spot-on accents and imitations. Her comic timing lands with precision throughout the evening. Just as striking is her wonderfully expressive face, capable of broadcasting every flicker of panic, pride, and wounded ego as the miraculous screenplay complicates Affleck's life.

Sarah Mitchler provides the perfect counterweight as Matt Damon. Her Damon carries himself with the confidence of someone convinced he understands acting and character analysis on a deeper level than his friend. He frequently lords his supposed sophistication over Affleck. Mitchler keeps the character grounded while allowing Damon's growing paranoia about the mysterious script to spiral into some of the play's funniest moments.

Director Ian Dyer clearly understands that the success of "Matt & Ben," like the best two-person comedies, rests on the chemistry between its two performers. His staging gives the actors room to explore the escalating absurdity of the premise. He keeps the pacing brisk and the focus squarely on the evolving friendship between the two characters. The result is a two-person farce that feels both tightly controlled and joyfully chaotic.

As the story unfolds, the screenplay itself begins to take on a life of its own. Damon becomes increasingly convinced the document might be less of a blessing than a curse.

At one point, hearing a knock at the door, he freezes in dread.

"It's the script," he declares nervously.

The moment plays like something out of a horror movie. Damon spirals into the fear that they might actually die because of this strange cosmic gift.

Instead, the door opens to one of the evening's most delightful surprises. J. D. Salinger appears in a cameo, portrayed by Mitchler, who slips easily into yet another character to offer Affleck a surprisingly tender moment of reassurance about his future.

The production also makes playful use of theatrical gags. Some of the evening's biggest laughs arrive by breaking the fourth wall, such as a slow-motion sequence of photographs flying across the stage. Assistant stage manager Zed Warner briefly appears to guide the moment, turning the sequence into a clever bit of metatheater that the audience clearly relishes.

Through comic arguments about authorship, acting technique, and who deserves to play Will Hunting, the play quietly circles larger questions. Why do some artists break through, while others spend years knocking on closed doors? How much of success is talent, and how much is timing, luck or circumstance?

"Matt & Ben" never tries to answer those questions directly. Instead, it lets them sit just beneath the laughter.

What ultimately carries the evening is the pleasure of watching two performers together chase the absurd possibilities of the script. Mitchler and Michael bounce off each other with infectious energy, escalating the physical comedy further and further before inevitably circling back to the friendship and emotional sincerity that anchors the story.

At a time when audiences might arrive at the theater carrying the weight of the world outside, a night of unapologetic laughter can feel like a gift. Good Egg Productions has delivered exactly that kind of evening. Sometimes the script falls from the sky. More often, someone decides to write it, and if this debut is any indication, Good Egg Productions is off to a very strong beginning.