No Man's Land flawed by failure to use Randy Quaid to the fullest

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vexed, and although Quaid is given star billing, his appearance in the film is more a succession of cameos than an actual part of the movie. The touch of drama in this film is just that, a touch. Body Taylor's moral ambiguity is lost amid the glitzy portfolios and good times. It is an exercise that only Varricchio's true, cold-hearted nature begins to emerge. And the tension is negligible, even at the climax, which is all too predictable.

But such was the intimacy of her character, that no one who heckled got an abrupt shutting up in return. On the contrary, Poundstone played off almost all audience noise. Once, she used analogies to explain her set. "Did you FEED your cat, Paula? Are you SURE you left ENOUGH FOOD for dinner?"

Housing the show was the timeless, tireless Barry Katz. ("Dr. Skeezy," the self-proclaimed comic who's also hosted recent MIT "Comedy Nights" at the Student Center; also contributed fine sets was MIT graduate Steve Thrilling '86 (Masters in Computer Science at stepping stone to career in stand-up comedy?) and Anthony Clark ('Ever wanted to go up to a toll booth and ask for Toll House cookies?'). Both comedians relied on the intelligence and mental past experience of the audience, without condescension. The approach served perfectly as a stepping stone to career in stand-up comedy.

Poundstone's comedy is her near essential and even tried to sell us some made-up stuff ("Then there was my Sister Piffetta; she was beaten to death by a gang of nine Mexican kids wearing blindfolds"). All in all, a masterful, sensitive set.

Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of Poundstone's comedy is her near absolute refusal to stoop to degrading humor, as is so common on today's stand-up scene. It's refreshing to be reminded that we can laugh not only out of embarrassment, hatred, and greed, but from the "nobler" emotions as well.

At times, in fact, Poundstone's approach bordered on the maudlin, especially towards a drunken patron who first got the most patient crash course in speech therapy on record, and who later got himself thrown out of the club (Paula: "We'll sure miss him..."). Audience members found themselves palpably drawn to her charm and warmth; some could not help calling out "encouraging" (read: inane) comments. All in all, a masterful, sensitive set.

Because of space limitations, "On The Town" will not appear in today's issue of The Tech. An abbreviated version will instead appear on Friday.