

C'est une Femme du Monde :: Les Pavés de l'Ours
 (Love Sees Double :: Love and Bad Investments)
 >melbourne french theatre<

In a small room over the Richmond library, the clink of wine glasses rings out over the low buzz of constant French gabbling. The make-up is immaculate and a heavy cloud of fragrance hangs in the air. We must be in the right place, and this is just the audience!

Founded in 1977 by Michael Sully and David Gornik, The Melbourne French Theatre Company celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year. Each year they have one or two seasons of either plays (entirely in French or bilingual French and English) or *café-théâtres*, using a wide repertoire of French playwrights from the Middle Ages to contemporary workers. In October 2001 they presented *En Attendant Godot* (Waiting for Godot) by Samuel Beckett.

The recent double bill *C'est une Femme du Monde* and *Les Pavés de l'Ours*, both by playwright Georges Feydeau, was MFT's 50th production. Aptly cast with a mix of both French actors and locals who love to speak the lingo, the production exhibited clever direction by Michael Sully; the performances suited the subtle humour and intelligent overstatement of Feydeau. The English subtitles were also very well done.

The MFT is a gem that provides an opportunity for lovers of live theatre, students of French, even Francophiles to promote French culture and drama whilst enjoying a good night out at the theatre.

Elyn Cook

www.mftc.org

The Aliens

>la mama<

Written by Jackie Smith, and a co-winner of the prestigious Patrick White Playwrights' Award (2001), *The Aliens* is a comedy drama that explores the destructive nature of patriarchal values within a rural setting, and the pain and suffering that festering wounds and secrets can cause.

Back in her country hometown after receiving a desperate letter from her quirky, mentally challenged childhood friend Dieder, Liz the uptown city-girl returns arrogant, outspoken but anxious. Prominent throughout the play is the tension between Liz and Dieder's cynical and ostensibly nasty mother. Hilarious sparring scenes take place between the two, revealed to have greater depth at the conclusion of the play.

The characters are haunted by the suicide of their neighbour Peter's daughter who was Dieder and Liz's best friend in their youth. Dieder alone speaks about the tragedy, attempting to come to terms with it by declaring that her beloved friend and longtime companion was kidnapped by "the aliens". Taunted by packs of ravenous young boys playing trumpeting techno music in their commodores outside her house, Dieder cowers away, ignoring them. Her inner torment is revealed through her dreams of prying, spying, probing aliens, and the anxiety attacks brought on by loud music and overexcitement.

Liz, the 'city-slicker heroine', offers to save Dieder from the boredom of the sticks and start a new life with her, mainly to soothe her own sore conscience. Tensions arise again however and the play ends explosively when the cause of their friend's suicide is revealed and the bloody past oozes out. The play concludes with a bleak image of denial, everything and everyone back in the same place, symbolic of the stagnancy of rural life, and its patriarchal values.

The script although simple, is subtle, original and definitely deserves its honourable commendation. Well done to Jackie Smith who not only wrote the play, but also played the extremely difficult role of Dieder with such panache. This production will, without a doubt, do La Mama proud.

Clair MacDougal

A figure wandering through lonely streets of 'undernourished street lights', performs a lucid and poetic narrative. A binary opposite to this individual is the paced birth of a people: the underclass who scratch and claw with the agility of their bodies, limited by space and by what the wandering figure stores...

Cyclops Alley is a refreshing gasp from the theatre which is currently being produced, it is not some Marxist's wet dream, nor another sordid exploration through psychoanalysis. *Cyclops Alley* is part of the series of physical theatre, *Explorations*, at LaMama, which explores the effect of visual performance competing with sound. John Britton's script sets the play with a torrid mind that possesses an ego you would expect from a monk who has just pipped his last hardcover bible. A critical narration of bold images and limbers grace to every sentence; Melbourne's live poetry venues do not know what they are missing out on, as Britton's fight (from parody to hot-headedness) is a lullaby braving the night.

The daring elevation of bodies and the bold unquiet shadows of the five performers are a delicacy to behold. The figures spill into one another with fluidity, whilst the gesticulating arms and rotating heads become more choreographed and robotic as the action on the stage comes to a pivotal climax. The figures care for one another with a soothing touch that defies the words of the imperial narrator.

If only more theatre explored its own properties in such a way instead of plying what has, or perhaps what should have been, thrown out with the bath water. The languid assurance in the monologue coupled with mime expedition is easily integrated by the visual performance: all the performer, whose bodies themselves form a dialogue, exhibited the naturalness that such an experiment of senses demands. A definite keystone for modern theatre.

Angela Saule

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Zoe Burton and Kelly Tracey, *Roulette*



Les Pavés de l'Ours



The Aliens