

REVIEWS...

In keeping with the 18 year old tradition, five men in their late thirties gather together every third week to battle it out over a game of poker. Chris (Nick Dunning), a successful lawyer, lends his kitchen to the ritual as well as his sense of balance and calm.

Gentle Nicky, played sensitively by Robert Glenister, teaches English to foreign business men, but hasn't given up his dream of becoming a successful writer if he can just get past page 127 of his novel. Eddie (Peter-Hugo Daly) isn't averse to sniffing the odd bit of floor polish and classes himself as a rock star of the 'Keith Moon Academy'. Clive (Jonathan Coy) is a sexist, homophobic still requiring toilet training whilst Kevin (Trevor Cooper) is a bit part actor who has just

landed the coveted role of a seal in an Omar Sharif advert. A mixed bunch to say the least.

Through Robin Lefevre's tight direction, the drama cleverly moves back and forth within a period of six months, while the pivotal poker table groans under the weight of unburdened secrets, anxieties and betrayals. I have never seen this movement in time executed as well as in this play. The suspense is never lost but just keeps on mounting as the audience is mesmerically drawn into the impossible situations.

The cast deserve praise as within two hours I was able to feel total empathy for every single one of the characters. No easy feat. Their weaknesses were all put under the microscope, especially when Chris played back their messages on his answerphone. No need for action, their dialogue said it all.

It would be very difficult to categorise this play. A tragi-comedy perhaps but the whole brilliant framework of this drama defies categorisation. An incredibly clever, sharp foray into the underworld of friendship and one which deserves all the praise it gets. □

JULIE EAGLETON AT HAMPSTEAD THEATRE

ACCORDING TO HOYLE

BY WILLIAM GAMINARA

DIRECTOR

ROBIN LEFEVRE

DESIGNER

SUE PLUMMER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

GERRY JOHNSON

SOUND DESIGNER

SIMON WHITEHORN

MICKY

CLIVE

KEVIN

CHRIS

EDDIE

ROBERT GLENISTER

JONATHAN COY

TREVOR COOPER

NICK DUNNING

PETER-HUGO DALY

"If you know too much it's gonna' limit your thinking" are the words of wisdom which shatter the silence of the vast Wyoming landscape. It is the late 1860s and two mail order brides are awaiting collection by their new husbands. Macon is the more confident of the two and is passing on her advice to a dizzier Bess, while they nervously wait on a dust track for their new fate.

Studio 2 in the Riverside Studios was transformed with its wide spacious stage setting and atmospheric music creating a real Western feel. The music is superb and would not be out of place on the *Thelma & Louise* soundtrack. The ambience is set but unfortunately *Abundance* is lacking.

Beth Henley, who penned such classics as *Crimes of the Heart* (Diane Keaton starred in the film version), has come up with such a novel idea for a play but the dialogue and development of the storyline is somewhat hit and miss. When Macon discovers her husband Williams has a glass eye she responds with "You all seem to be blessed with disfiguring features around here", a sensitive observation. William turns out to be gentle and caring while Bess does not have the same luck with Jack, her brute of a husband. Corey Johnson is well cast as a swaggering, menacing bully who unpredictably shoots at anything he sees for the fun of it.

The play spans twenty five years of the women's lives: the two couples live together at one point as Bess and Jack lose their home. Macon and Jack conduct a secret, passionate affair, and Bess is carried off by a Sioux tribe. Amazingly all of this drama occurs before the interval.

The second half just gets more ludicrous with Bess returning after nine years looking like a wild animal. With tattoos etched on her chin, we find that she has been living with the tribe and has married one of its chiefs. Here the plot gets very sketchy as Macon resorts to tying Bess up on a chain so that she can't run away but, hey presto, newcomer Professor Crome arrives on the scene with a very strange accent and a proposition. He persuades Bess to write a book detailing her experiences spent with the tribe. Fast forward all of five minutes in Riverside real time and Bess has gone on to sell 60,000 books, become a world famous author and embark on a lecture tour of Washington. Meanwhile Jack has turned into a lap dog of a husband. William has been killed in a farming accident while Macon is left destitute and riddled with syphilis.

Maryam d'Abo and Myriam Cyr deserve praise as they maintained a sensitive rapport throughout the play and their passion for this project shone through with some flashes of really good character acting. The idea for this piece was original and one which I wish had developed in a different way. The missing years should have been filled in more thoroughly to create a rounded instead of misshapen *Abundance*. □

BY BETH HENLEY		SOUND DESIGNER	SIMON WHITEHORN
DIRECTOR	LISA FORRELL	ORIGINAL PAINTING	JEFF CARPENTER
SET DESIGNER	ANTHONY LAMBLE	BESS JOHNSON	MYRIAM CYR
COSTUME DESIGNER	STEPHANIE COLLIE	MACON HILL	MARYAM D'ABO
LIGHTING DESIGNER	IAN LOFFHAGEN	JACK FLAN	COREY JOHNSON
ORIGINAL MUSIC	KEVIN BROWN	WILLIAM CURTIS	WILLIAM HOPE
		ELMORE CROME	DAVID CURTIZ

JULIE EAGLETON AT RIVERSIDE STUDIOS

ABUNDANCE