

SCENESTR.

Single Asian Female Brisbane Review @ La Boite Theatre

by Jesse Chaffey

Thursday, 21 February 2019

Crafted with a genius blend of humour and heart, 'Single Asian Female' simultaneously pulls at heartstrings and splits sides.

Writer [and cast member, in this instance] Michelle Law has created something important here. But it masquerades as a comedy with an edge to it... Until you walk out and realise what you've just witnessed.

Themes of racism, immigration and cultural appropriation are, for the most part, served to the audience with a spoonful of sugar to help the realisation go down. As for the other stuff, it doesn't shy away from presenting certain situations the exact way they happen, sans chaser. Both treatments work brilliantly.

Of course, such success would be non-existent if it weren't also for the cast members of this show, who pull off their roles with ease and never make you think twice about each of their emotions or their intentions. This is a beautiful collection of people, the chemistry is real and the family ties are believable.

Emily Burton is the blissfully unaware Katie, who is completely in the dark about cultural sensitivity, and she nails it.

Courtney Stewart plays Mei, the adolescent daughter with dreams of fitting into the privileged white society that surrounds her. It's a very real scenario, and the messages about being proud of your culture are extremely necessary.

Hsiao-Ling Tang could not be anymore wonderful as mum, Pearl. She's everything a mum is... Over-protective, cringeworthy at times, daggy, and just plain beautiful.

Tatum Mottin's insufferable Lana is almost everything that is wrong about not only high school, but society as a whole. Don't worry, that means Tatum is a brilliant actress.

The chemistry between Paul (Patrick Jhanur) and Zoe (Michelle Law) is undeniable, particularly in a scene that shows Zoe meeting a range of awful men at various nightlife venues. When Paul comes along, you sense the good in him almost instantly.

Although it aims to paint a stark image of Asians living in Australia, most if not all audiences will leave the theatre after this production relating to one thing or another. It's an intentionally specific ['Single'... 'Asian'... 'Female'] premise, and yet it manages to cater to a surprisingly wide demographic of human beings. That's ridiculously clever.

There's absolutely no question as to why, after the show's premiere at La Boite two years ago, it has done as well as it has, travelling to Sydney for a season at Belvoir St Theatre and soon heading to Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

It's simple... When you throw comedy, darkness, a beautifully-written script and a solid cast together, you've got a recipe for triumph.