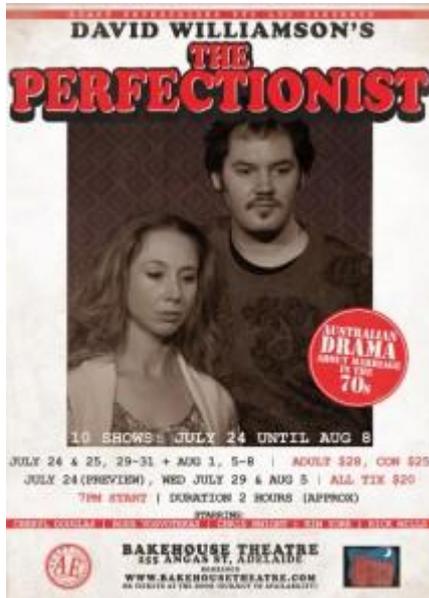


THEATRE – The Perfectionist – Bakehouse – 4K

Theatre
by Peter



By Peter Maddern

There is a kind of universality to much of David Williamson's work – flower power uni radicals of the 1960s face adulthood in the haze of the Whitlam liberation but who find the going all gets a bit tough when life's realities hit.

Set in the late 1970's Stuart (Ross Vosvotekas) is the perfectionist battling on for years on his PhD thesis that he believes will revolutionise modern economic theory. But his personal pursuits clash with those of his wife, Barbara (Cheryl Douglas) also pursuing academic glory and trying to raise their three children.

Their statis is interrupted when Barbara comes upon a book entitled *Open Marriage* which proclaims a new view on the traditional take of the committed and dedicated union of a man and a woman and when she wishes to engage as a baby sitter Erik (Chris Knight), a blonde haired radical of his own while they spend six months in

Denmark. Together, Barbara and Erik's views of the world form the basis for experimentation both in Scandinavia and then back in Sydney while Stuart battles management of his time and his parents. Jack (Rick Mills) is a successful barrister has overdone leadership of his household driving his wife Shirley (Kim York) to drink and their other son into isolation.

Ross Vosvotekas' Stuart is a study in stiffness and self-possession though they are moments more than others when Ross warms us to his task. Cheryl Douglas is a delight both to look at and observe as she carries a broad range of emotions; from loneliness through coy school girl to seeming fulfilment of life's promise. Rick Mill's belligerent take no prisoners persona is almost intimidating but he is nonetheless outshone by Kim York's pugnacious defence of what might have been; she is the epitome of the dutiful wife of their generation. Chris Knight's Dane is entirely convincing except for his dress sense. Even given this is the 1970's, if sartorially Erik is the best of Scandinavia then perhaps Barbara should have been a little more circumspect in whom she chose for inspiration.

It is interesting perhaps to reflect on the characters for a contemporary audience. In its time Stuart would have been archetypical but 40 years on he is somewhat of a dinosaur. Yet, many in the audience struggled to see this, preferring to hiss at his pomposity rather than revel in his indulgences.

The Perfectionist as a play seems to want to cover too many twists and turns and at times struggles during its well beyond two hour duration. But its messages around the difficulties of making a marriage work, the dangers of pop culture self-help books and the unalterable forces of genetics that thus need to be managed and not beaten are well made.

This is all a great fun production in true Williamson style; one to be enjoyed and not taken too seriously.

Kryztoff Rating 4K