

# Theatre Travels Review: Last of the Red Hot Lovers at Bakehouse

*By Lia Cocks*

Walking into the Bakehouse Theatre this evening was a burst of fresh air. No, literally. It was 45 degrees outside. And fittingly, I was going in to see Neil Simon's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*.

This offering is the fourth for Starc Productions, Adelaide's newest full-time professional theatre company, a collaboration between Marc Clement, Stefanie Rossi and theatre gem Tony Knight. Starc's sentiment is to produce plays with minimal set design, thus allowing the actors to take, for lack of a better phrase, centre stage.

This was evident upon entering the theatre - a clean, classic set in white and red. Stylised as such that the key timekeepers - the clock and telephone - were in bold red, while the couch and table were white. I liked the addition of the apples on the table; a suggestion of sexual seduction perhaps?

Set in 1969, to the tunes of Bacharach, Barney Cashman, a middle aged, married, fish restaurateur, wishes to join the sexual revolution. Unbeknownst to him, it's not that easy.

In three acts we witness his three failed seductions; Elaine, a brash sexpot who enjoys cigarettes, good whiskey and other women's husbands, Bobbi, a paranoid pot smoking wannabe actress who is a sandwich short of picnic, and Jeanette, his wife's depressed, intellectual and moralist best friend.

Marc Clement as gentle, bumbling, optimistic Barney was spot on. Little nuances such as the fidgeting and finger smelling in the first act show just how unprepared Barney was for his first adulterous encounter. However, by the final act, Clement does a fantastic job of endearing the audience to his character.

Stefanie Rossi, stole the stage the moment she made her thunderous entrance as Elaine. Her twang, her walk, mannerisms and witty one liners are perfection. Next we meet Bobbi, another reincarnation by Rossi, a hippy chick Barney met in the park. This time, Barney, a little more prepared for his rendezvous, talks less and brings better whiskey and an array of cigarettes. His last, and worst attempt, is with the melancholic, pill popping Jeanette [Rossi, in my favourite character of the night], who instantly regrets her decision to meet Barney.

This final act asks the question Barney has been searching for all along - who is decent, gentle and loving? Who is indecent and what makes someone indecent? Can you name three people that are decent, gentle and loving?

Tony Knight has found the laughs and pathos of this play, and the refinement of his directing never lets his actors over play the characters, allowing the audience to really invest and believe in them and the story.

Don't miss this exceptionally cast, well played and supremely entertaining piece of theatre!