IT’S MY PARTY (AND I’LL DIE IF I WANT TO)
Heartspace Theatre
The Irish Club
Until 08 Mar 2009

Review by Anthony Grzyb

"It’s My Party (And I’ll Die If I Want To)” has Ron Patterson inviting his three grown-up children over for sausage rolls and Saladas to announce his imminent death!

With only 111 minutes left to live, he has arranged his evening ‘party’ of family bonding and connectivity, including a planned slide-show and bottles of champagne, in order to make peace and atone for his inadequacies as a father. Fortunately for the audience, things don’t go as planned.

The production is the result of a successful Year 12 season last year, and the young cast gives their energetic best. Elizabeth Coleman’s script zings along, but the actors need more passion in their performance, and work on their comic timing.

Samuel Hakendorf shines most as Ron, the flawed ‘emotionally unavailable’ father. While little sympathy is ever really evoked for his plight, in the second act he is particularly hysterical and succeeds in winning the audience over.

Of his family, Michael Patterson (Simon Moorcroft) is the son who’s having a little trouble telling his father he’s gay; Debbie (Rachel Sullivan) is the older and cynical unwed daughter, and Karen (Emily Ferrier) is daddy’s little girl, getting married before her older sister. Kirsty Wigg plays their mother, Dawn.

Although all actors are around the same age, effort has been made to create believable characteristics relating to their varied years.

This ‘party’ becomes quite amusing in the second act when the proceedings become more farcical, with undertaker Ted (Joshua Koster) arriving before the time of death. He is curiously offbeat. Following the formula of a black comedy closely, this play rarely falls into the trap of being saccharine-sweet, and the final scene is strangely poignant, while being simultaneously zany.

The set design is simple, never shifting from the family living-room, yet there is no sound effect for Michael’s mobile phone constantly ringing (perhaps it was on ‘vibrate’?).

While “It’s My Party” never really reaches any profound familial territory, it is honest and fun, and you can eat Saladas! - if you want to!

Rating: 3 stars (out of 5)