

PENETRATOR

Bakehouse Theatre Company

Bakehouse Theatre, Angas Street, Adelaide
Until May 28

Review by Rod Lewis

Anthony Neilson's 1993 black comedy has seen better days.

In its time the play was undoubtedly as confronting as it is funny with its plethora of expletives, violence, drug taking and homosexual undertones, but the themes have since been done better and often enough to relegate this one to the history books.

It lacks a resolution and the character revelations are as surprising as tea in China.

That said, Eddy Knight's tight direction guides a powerful cast through a somewhat amusing 75 minutes of gritty machismo.

Nick Pelomis and Duncan Graham are Max and Alan, two flatmates living in comfortable squalor. In them we find an honest rapport only possible between two long-time pals. They bounce smoothly between moments of silence, light-hearted mateship and emotional discharges.

Tadge (Nathaniel Davison) is a disturbed friend recently discharged from the army. The moment he enters, the stage clouds with an air of anticipation and danger that is breathtaking. Davison is exceptional, finding every nuance of sanity and insanity in his psychotic character. With a single look he is able to express the inner turmoil and savagery that he both suffers and inflicts on others.

Like his fellow cast-mates however, Davison successfully walks the line between humour and drama, giving both even keel.

Knight keeps the action fierce and the comedy sharp, but ultimately the play seems to be out to shock rather than to make any point.

With simulated masturbation, mutilated teddies and confronting violence, the faint of heart would be well advised to steer clear of this one.