

Straight White Men

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Chris Pitman, Lucas Stibbard, Hugh Parker ©Kate Pardey

SO YOU'RE straight, white and male — does that mean you should be a social outcast?

Are we the new minority? (I say we because I happen to be a straight white man too).

And are we so privileged we should feel guilty? Donald Trump obviously doesn't but then again us straight white men don't really want to promote him as our poster boy.

In a pluralistic age there are questions to be asked about all this and Korean-American playwright Young Jean Lee does so in this comedy with bite, in a co-production between La Boite and State Theatre Company (of South Australia) directed by Nechsa Jelk.

It's a blokey piece, by its very definition, and there is profanity and sexual references which may offend. That's good.

And there is a comedy musical number about the Ku Klux Klan early in the piece. Who finds the Ku Klux Klan funny? Well, these overgrown adolescents do.

Chris Pitman Lucas Stibbard Hugh Parker in Straight White Men ©Kate Pardey 2.jpg

Meet widower Ed (Roger Newcombe) and his three sons — Matt (Hugh Parker), Jake (Chris Pitman) and Drew (Lucas Stibbard). The boys, misfits one and all, in their own way, are all getting together for Christmas and we all know that's the time when family relationships go pear-shaped.

But they are all happy enough at first and they spar and wrestle like teenagers and eat takeaway Chinese food on the couch. It's real food too. I hate it in plays or movies when you know there's no actual food in a bowl or people feign eating.

The situation is an American scenario but Australian straight white men and others will also find it pertinent. The crux of the story is Matt's depression. The black dog is the curse of the straight white man, isn't it?

Hugh Parker is always a favourite, but this might be the first time you've seen him in pyjamas. Pic: Kate Pardey

His depression is free floating and his dad and brothers try to help him but don't get far.

These men are all still children at heart and the curse of the straight white man is that he has trouble growing up. I wouldn't know about that myself but some of you may recognise the syndrome.

Underlying the banter and shenanigans that go on in this piece are questions about what it means to be straight, white, male and privileged, a question that may be more urgent in the US than it is here although it's worth asking because, despite a blip in recent years by the name of Julia Gillard, all our prime ministers have been straight white men, unless one of them was hiding something.

This play is well acted. Chris Pitman is particularly strong as the aggressive banker and Hugh Parker is always a favourite. This may be the first time you have seen him in his pyjamas though.



Hugh Parker ©Kate Pardey