

REVIEW: THE DEAD DEVILS OF COCKLE CREEK

By Abby Kong for Peril Magazine February 27, 2018

Kathryn Marquet's *The Dead Devils of Cockle Creek* is a must-see of the season. A gripping, riotous display of the human resolve, the pitfalls of single-mindedness, and our innate practice of stereotyping each other, this killer dark comedy is more than meets the eye.

The script is as sharp as it is unapologetic, as rich as it is comedic. It challenges political correctness without edging on insensitivity, and reaches the corners and curves of broader cultural issues. Despite the murderous underworld character of Mickey, a middle-aged Irish capitalist who staunchly opposes all forms of racism, and the first generation Asian-Australian girl guide who happens to be a One Nation member, the production doesn't shoot for cheap laughs through absurd stereotypes.

A common trap of dark comedy is that of extremes: it's either too light, missing the moments of impact, or far, far too dark, cloaking the audience in too much discomfort to see beyond the grotesque. *Dead Devils* finds the perfect balance between hilarity and home-hitting truths that challenge cultural bias and perceptions.

The show is perfectly cast, with near-flawless performances from beginning to end. Special mention to veteran actor John Batchelor, who hits the nail right on the head with his equally hilarious and twisted portrayal of an underworld chicken nugget producer, Mickey O'Rourke. The interactions between the cast flit seamlessly from that of mortal enemies to an aggressively dysfunctional family, creating a terrific, complex and ugly spectacle you can't tear your eyes from.

The character work of the cast, under Ian Lawson's direction, effective lighting and sound by Christine Felmingham and Wil Hughes, and a first-rate script by award-winning playwright Kathryn Marquet combine to create the perfect storm of enthralling, wildly entertaining dark realism. In a landscape where art is becoming increasingly political, *Dead Devils* is the ultimate challenger of perception and stereotype, with a healthy amount of theatrical blood thrown in for good measure.