
MURDER BY MISADVENTURE

Tea Tree Players

Tea Tree Players' Theatre, Surrey Downs
Until February 26

Review by Rod Lewis

Edward Taylor's comedy thriller is reminiscent of Ira Levin's much funnier, clever play *Deathtrap*, but it has enough twists to satisfy any whodunit aficionado.

The story centres around television thriller writers Harold and Paul who face the end of their 10 year working relationship when the former decides to dissolve the partnership. Suddenly their plots are made real when blackmail and backstabbing transform into murderous intent.

Director John Sharpe has cast well and offers his fair share of scares, intrigue and wit well above what is scripted, with audience screams being the ultimate nod of success!

Mike Phillips making a good stab at Harold after assuming the role late in rehearsal, while Paul Zechner puts in a killer performance as drunken ideas man Paul Riggs. Merri O'Neal Contino maintains a nicely controlled level of hysteria throughout the play as Harold's wife who is drawn into the conflict against her will.

Don Stuart's arresting performance as Inspector Egan adds an additional injection of humour late in the story, although each appearance of the character stalls the plot a little too long.

It is often better to have no accent than bad accents and the personal dialects of the actors do nothing to detract from the English script.

It is almost a given that a Tea Tree Players' set will be outstanding and their staging of a modern, high-rise apartment for this season once again makes the tiny acting space look large. Attention to detail, including modern artwork, statuettes, barely seen balcony furniture, and some clever effects add up to an impressive visual feast.