

Broaderlines Review - Single Asian Female

“There are monumental moments in S.A.F, when real life is mirrored so perfectly you can feel the audience bursting with empathy, or side-glancing their theatre date with a knowing eye.”



SINGLE. ASIAN. FEMALE.

Brisbane treasure **Michelle Law**, co-author of “Shit Asian Mothers Say” and regular contributor to The Lifted Brow & Frankie, has freshly penned a play that’ll have you yowling. The sold-out preview (13-02) at La Boite’s Roundhouse was packed with high school students to the local g’literary.

Single Asian Female opens with a bang – Mummy’s doing karaoke atop of a table and in traditional dress. Pearl Wong (Hsiao-Ling Tang) is a woman on the cusp of a new chapter in her life – she’s divorced the abusive husband who brought her to Australia and now has the running of the family restaurant, The Golden Phoenix, all to herself. Mei (Courtney Stewart) is near graduating high school, pushing end of year formal attire boundaries and discovering a love of Jane Eyre – and is hopelessly torn between her Asian roots and fitting in with her peers. Older sister Zoe (Alex Lee) is forced back home from her old life in Brisbane and is struggling to balance a burgeoning career, pick through the dating pool, and keep her cool whilst living once more in close confines with her family, invading her already minimal space.

Pearl harbours a distressing secret, and we follow these three women desperate to take charge of their lives over two fast-paced acts.

The show is loosely based on the author’s experiences growing up as one of the only young Asians (aside from siblings) in her Sunshine Coast community, and is a welcomed addition of truthful, original theatre in a time when many shows still don’t reflect the diversity of the talent operating. (A different local theatre company, for instance, had run its last production of Avenue Q, a show in which jokes based around the Japanese accent feature prominently, with an all-white cast.) In an Australia of Pauline Hanson propaganda; (who famously bemoaned that we were being “swamped by Asians”) this is important theatre.

Single Asian Female takes on racism, sexism, mental illness, reproductive rights, immigration law, sibling dynamics, and domestic violence – but the story holds strong enough that it rarely feels soapboxy or cliched; it's authentic relating from the comfort of a retractable seating system.

There are monumental moments in S.A.F, when real life is mirrored so perfectly you can feel the audience bursting with empathy, or side-glancing their theatre date with a knowing eye. And small things too, like drinking plain hot water instead of tea because you'll stay up too late if you have tea, or the emotional connection (although no longer on high rotation) to a Missy Higgins tour tee, that establish Michelle Law and director Claire Christie as keen observers of the poignant and relatable.

Supporting cast Emily Burton and Emily Vascotto were brilliant as a range of backup players, often some of the best-timed comic relief, though Vascotto's vapid teen mean-girl character was arguably somewhat one-dimensional (although to be fair, some teenagers kind of...are).

It was joyous to see such wicked-funny women (and charismatic support Patrick Jhanur) grace the stage, and it's beyond wonderful that this badass play now heads the Google search predictions for "single Asian female" instead of searches from crusty old white men in coin-operated internet booths.

Single Asian Female plays the Roundhouse at La Boite until 4 March 2017.
Tickets available [here](#). Enter promo code 'AVANT' to receive 10% off.

Guest reviewer Cecile is a Brisbane-based writer of cautionary tales. Read more of her work cecileblackmore.wordpress.com or follow her adventures on instagram [@saintcecile](https://www.instagram.com/saintcecile) / twitter [@cecileblackmore](https://twitter.com/cecileblackmore)

IMAGE – BROADER LINES

Source: <http://broaderlines.com/saf/>