
Love asks a terrible price

THEATRE

Ruby Moon
By Matt Cameron
Always Working Artists
Victoria Hall
Review: David Zampatti

The child out there haunts our dreams. In Frederick McCubbin's painting *Lost*, all the way through to Paul Kelly's *One Night the Moon* — in which he wrote the music and starred — the child disappears into nature.

In our modern, frantic horror stories, the child is stolen from right under our noses, from streets like Flaming Tree Grove where, in their ordinary suburban house, Sylvie (Kate Rice) and Ray (Benj D'Addario) confront the void their little Ruby has left behind.

Ruby put on her red dress one day and went to visit her nanna. She hasn't been seen since.

Sylvie and Ray struggle to avoid using the past tense when they talk about her and tend the mannequin with a red dress they leave on the verge every day, just in case someone remembers. They confront the unbearable and they fall apart.

Matt Cameron's *Ruby Moon* is part whodunnit, part psychodrama but, more than anything, it's an exercise in terror and the terrible price of love.

D'Addario and Rice do fine jobs as Ray and

Sylvie, and they also play the Moon's neighbours with energy and dark humour.

Rice, in particular, convincingly conveys Sylvie's nerves stretched to breaking point as the truth about herself, her marriage and the fate of her child is revealed.

In contrast, D'Addario's best moments are his portrayals of the sometimes shady characters who populate the street and who, despite our suspicions about them, often turn out to be little Ruby's best friends. As one of them, Sunny Jim, the dissolute clown, presciently observes, we should fear the ordinary, not the strange.

Director Jeremy Rice handles with deft control the actors' tricky transformations from Sylvie and Ray to the other characters, all of which happen on stage. And he has a couple of tricks up his sleeve — one at the play's very beginning, the other at its very end — that will make you sit up straight.

Ruby Moon was originally written to introduce young audiences to this most difficult of subjects but it made the transition to the adult audience at Victoria Hall with ease.

It reminds us, as we become more fearful of the dangers out there and obsessively protective of our children, that Little Red Riding Hood gets to grandma's house. And it's there her troubles begin.

Ruby Moon runs until October 30.
