

Extremely gripping theatre

NEXT production by Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Court Theatre is *Extremities* on a subject that many people - both men and women - find difficult to confront, the crime of rape.

A common misconception is that rape is about sex. It is not. Rape is about power. It is about the degradation of another human being.

It is a more or less acknowledged fact that there is little justice for the victims of rape. For them the trial is often just as harrowing an ordeal as the crime itself. And, according to an American statistic, of the cases that actually make it as far as trial, only 2 per cent result in a conviction.

William Mastrosimone's play *Extremities* sprang from a conversation he had one evening with a woman who'd just been raped. As she left she said to him, "If only I could have just five

minutes in a locked room with that animal...".

The play is, in a sense, a fantasy, a wish fulfilment for women in that position, and also a serious examination of the moral and psychological implications of a victim who turns the tables on her attacker.

Extremities has been performed all over the world with massive audience support. It is a tense thriller with challenging themes of revenge, justice, and the ugliness of the human spirit within us all.

Director John Buckingham has assembled an accomplished cast and crew. The two main characters are played by Rick de Kerckhove, who won last year's Swan award for Best Actor, and Susan Reoch, who gives a highly dedicated, committed performance as the victim turned aggressor.

The play runs from

Tuesday June 1st to Saturday 5th. Tickets cost £4.50 and are available to members. For details of membership phone 081 943 3322. As the play contains violent action and explicit language, it is unsuitable for children.

EXTREMITIES

1993

Teddington Theatre Club



Style and guts

STAGED by Teddington Theatre Club last week, William Mastrosimone's *Extremities* is a nasty Broadway play wrapping up a would-be serious debate about rape in the titillating guise of a thriller, in which the rapist and rapee take turns to hold each other in Freudian total subjection.

The central figure is Marjorie, a resourceful young woman played with bags of style and guts by Sue Reoch, who is attacked in her home by the slimy Raul (Rick de Kerckhove) seeking a 'nice' rape with her consent.

But she manages to disable him with an aerosol fly spray and then proceeds to exact her revenge with chemical torture and the threat of burying him alive in the garden.

Later, when her girlfriends (Nicola Sivyer as a trembling teacher with a rape whistle and Nancy Towers as a bland social worker) return home from the city, understandably thinking her off her trolley they try to reason with her, with sententious discussions about the one-sided laws of rape and assault.

But the play is packed with improbabilities. In a wordless prologue we first see Mar-

jorie dealing death to a wasp, one of Mother Nature's rapists, and vengefully stubbing out her cigarette on the body. This sets the scene for the moment when she blinds Raul with the same spray, following it up with a kettle of boiling water over his head.

Then something quite extraordinary happens. Instead of leaping on her bike, conveniently parked near the door and pedalling off for help (thus prematurely ending the play) she manages, single-handedly mark you, to bind her attacker hand and foot, and thrust him into the fireplace behind a ladder barricade which she chains to a couple of conveniently placed hooks.

This all takes place during a stage black-out. But in the gloom of Hampton Court Theatre, and without a curtain as for the original London production in 1984, we saw that she was actually assisted by several stage hands as well as by her victim.

Nor was the illusion helped when we watched Raul step smartly out of his bonds for offstage refreshment during the interval. But I have to admit the damned thing did grip, thanks in part to John Buckingham's taut direction.

John Thaxter