

KNUCKLE

1992

Richmond Drama Awards

Pastiche thriller

DAVID Lewsey's absorbing production of David Hare's *Knuckle*, the first in Teddington Theatre Club's winter programme, also kicked off the eighth season of Richmond Drama Awards last week.

The plot is about Curly, a hard-boiled arms dealer strongly played by Rick de Kerckhove, investigating the disappearance and presumed murder of his sister on a deserted South Coast beach and in the unlikely setting of a Guildford night club.

There was excellent support from Tony Nelson as Curly's neurotic father, a merchant banker with a guilty secret or two; Anne Low as the banker's accommodating housekeeper in black lace underwear; Joe Early with the flowery flowing locks and 'loons of the period; Sara Pruce as a touch-me-not night club girl; and David Hannigan quadrupling all the other roles.

The production continued Lewsey's exploration of dramatic and literary byways, in this case a pastiche Ross Macdonald-style thriller, an underpopulated drama with an elusive political message that understandably played to empty houses when

premiered in the West End in 1974, kept going by a foolhardy 'angel' with a fortune to lose.

Probably more people saw last week's revival than the original staging, and it seems a pity there are no opportunities for strong amdram productions like this to transfer to the Theatre Museum's intimate auditorium as an example of an almost forgotten genre. At the Museum at least the dialogue would be easier to follow than in the booming Hampton Court Theatre.

The notorious echo was made worse on this occasion by a setting of bare, resonant walls and floor, not a comforting drape or carpet in sight, although this worked well for the beach scene.

The setting, backed by a vast, mysterious abstract by designer Jean Goodwin, also featured a scaffold pros' arch representing a rifle with a telescopic sight. Centre-stage a swivelling 'moon' module built by Gordon Edwards carried us swiftly through sixteen scene changes, the cast doing their own stage management mid-dialogue as if anxious to get the performance over as soon as possible.

John Thaxter