

Directed by Margaret Bell

THIS is one of those plays to which almost everyone can relate – either as part of their past or the present. It's filled with teen anguish and motherly love.

Alex has just finished year 12 and is awaiting his university acceptance letter. It's that long, long holiday that any parent with a hopeful uni student suffers. It's a three month languish in no-man's land for Alex.

He is killing his time with fishing, surfing and lying on the beach watching the girls go. He lives at Caloundra in a holiday house with his mother. He is bored and frustrated by his wait.

Then he meets Fortuna, a girl of similar age and a relationship is formed.

It is a slowly blossoming affair, in an old-fashioned 80s-style, fumbling and insecure courtship between two charming people.

The play, being adapted from a novel has a lot of narrative spots, all done by Alex, which makes the role a particularly difficult one for a young actor.

But Margaret Bell, making her debut as a director after many years of stage management found exactly the right man for the job.

Stephen Quinn is a second year drama student and obviously understands the role well. He's been there: done that. He is also a tall, bleach haired guy who looks as if he spends hours surfing and lying in the sun.

He played Alex excellently, a true teenager, at times wise and smart others gauche and dumb according to the hormonal balance – and he handled his many pages of dialogue with great

assurance as he slipped seamlessly from teenager to narrator.

He had a great rapport with his single mum Tessa, played by Selina Kadell. Selina was terrific as the overworked, possessive mother who was trying desperately to let go of the apron strings.

She won heaps of giggles with her delivery and the scenes between the two were very real.

So too the scenes with Alex and Fortuna, the daughter of a hippy couple who live in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. She was played by Alice Long, who I last saw doing a terrific job in a play called Silly Cow.

I thought her performance in this play was even better. She almost stole the show as was the perfect teenager. She flirted, showed her insecurity and her gentle love-play with Alex was beautiful to watch. She showed her bravado when talking about her rather strange father and invalid mother, and I found myself looking forward to the scenes between the boy and girl.

Fortuna's father Cliff was bravely played by John White. I say brave because the first thing we see of this eccentric potter is a naked backside. Luckily the front is covered by an apron. The blasé Fortuna explains to the stunned Alex that it's just the way he works. He feels comfortable

It seems that Cliff is also a singer on the lookout for the final voice for his country band and the bewildered Alex is drawn into the strange family. Fortuna's mother is Gail, played in very Blanche Dubois sort of way by Selina Kadell in total contrast to her other role.

In the middle of all this are a couple of other characters, a very odd plumber named Fred and a friendly neighbour called Len, who played enthusiastically by Ross Coombes.

The set was impressionistic, covering several different locations and it worked well with Brian Hobby's atmospheric lighting plot.

It continues at Chelmer until April 4. Bookings on 07 3379 3937.

ERIC SCOTT March 16, 2009 [absolute theatre](#)