

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Rodeo Noir

by Andrea Lemon

EXTRACT

© 1996/98 Andrea Lemon



This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

RODEO NOIR

by **Andrea Lemon**

RODEO NOIR was first presented by **LEND** at New Dramatists in New York City,
on May 3, 1996.

Artistic Director Anne Harris.

Directed by Melanie Sutherland.

RODEO NOIR was first produced at Vitalstatistix Theatre co in Adelaide,
South Australia in August, 1998.

Artistic Director – Catherine Fitzgerald

Director – Andrea Lemon

Musical Director – Andrea Rieniets

RODEO NOIR was awarded the 1998 Stage and Gold AWGIE Awards;
the LEND International Exchange Award

Script development was supported by the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust; Australian National Playwrights'
Centre.

Rodeo noises and action are indicated by sounds and projected images.

Music is a combination of live sound from the three piece band, and prerecorded backing.

Images are projections. They show metaphoric images, particularly those of wild west movies and of freedom. They create the visual reality of the rodeo world.. images of the dusty reality within which the action takes place. They also create the poetic atmosphere of the play... dust.. night skies.. long roads.

With thanks to the writings of Zane Grey, and the yodeling songwriters of yesteryear.

CHARACTERS

- Mickey** Late 20's. Single. Gung ho cowgirl who has lived alone on the farm all her life with her dad Doug. She's the best son he ever had. Has a crass mouth and loves drinking almost as much as riding broncs (which, being a woman, she is not permitted to do). She is not good at knowing what she's feeling, or of being careful about others' feelings.
- Kit** Late 20's. Petite, feminine cowgirl who grew up in the suburbs. She is a smart, educated woman who has tossed in the urban life to follow the rodeo circuit. She is married to Russ, an ex-cowboy, and has a very young son Timmy. She is currently at a crisis point in her life, and is emotionally fragile.
- Eadie** A 60 year old yodelling cowgirl of ambiguous gender. She appears to be a drag queen, wearing a large wig, rhinestones and heels. She has a broad accent, and a dark secret.
- Doug** Late 50's. Mickey's dad. Stock contractor for the rodeos. He has a firm hold on Mickey, and doesn't allow her much freedom. Seen as a "good bloke" by the other rodeo people, but is manipulative, and has a drinking problem. Doug is also the Announcer and judge at the rodeos.
- Cowboy** Late 20's. Champion cowboy who isn't very bright but means well. He has a 'reputation' with the girls, but is actually a sympathetic, 'good bloke' who has trouble expressing himself.
- Bank Manager** Late 50's. Played by the same actor as Doug. Patronising business man who doesn't understand the idea of relationship to land.
- Judd** The Rodeo Committee President. Late 50's. Played by the same actor as Cowboy. Not too smart.. in fact a bit slow.
- Slim and Shorty** members of Eadie's band. Can be either men or women. Slim is a bit of a joker. Shorty is keen to get down to business. They're loyal to Eadie, and aware of her 'secret'.

ACT 1 - Bald Hill Rodeo.. Thursday evening to Saturday

Prologue

Music

Theme from "The Good the Bad and the Ugly"

Ennio Morricone

The stage is dark and shadowy. Two men walk slowly towards each other. We can just make out their shapes, no more than enormous shadows cast on the cyc. They get within twenty paces of each other:

Cowboy 1 *(steps into the light)* Put your guns down and come outside like a man...

Cowboy 2 *(steps into the light)* I been waitin for you to turn up.

Cowboy 1 You know who I am?

Cowboy 2 I recognise yer. Even under all that crap! You been followin us?

Cowboy 1 *(laughs without humour)* Fate brought me here. Right to your filthy doorstep.

Cowboy 2 You lookin for trouble?

Cowboy 1 No.

Cowboy 2 Well.. it seems you found it.

Cowboy 1 I want somethin from you.

Cowboy 2 Took you twenty years.. but I knew you'd come crawlin back sooner or later.

Cowboy 1 You know what it is.

Cowboy 2 I been hearin things about you.. things that make me wanna puke!

Cowboy 1 I wanna know the truth

Cowboy 2 No! *I* wanna know the truth!

Eadie *(offstage)* The truth is someone forgot to tell them we needed a stage!

Eadie Starr enters. She is a 60 year old yodelling cowgirl, dressed in outrageous heels, rhinestones and big wig. She is followed by her two band members, Slim and Shorty.

Scene 1 ***The Band***

Eadie *(she stands in something)* Bloody cow pats!! Damn! There go me heels.

Shorty Jesus. Look at this dump will you?

Slim Looks like we're gonna have to play here in the dirt.

Eadie Slim, how is the audience gonna see us standing down here in the cow poop!?

Slim Don't worry Eadie mate.. they'll see your wig from Texas!

Shorty I'm sick of working these shit joints.

Eadie These are our fans Shorty. The people who buy our records.. the people whose money will buy your way to Nashville. So I suggest you keep that in mind as we move amongst them.

Slim So whadda ya reckon Ead... facin east or west?

Eadie East love, it'll be evening. The sun'll be behind us and they won't see me wrinkles.

Slim Maybe we're meant to be set up in the bar..

Shorty Not the tin shed!

Eadie Oh not fluros! How's a girl meant to look *anything* under those bloody things...

Slim Wear your big hat Ead.. no-one'll see a thing..

Shorty Not even your face.

Slim *(laughs)* Oh no! A fate worse than death.

Shorty Fate worse than dyin live on stage.

Eadie There's *nothin* worse than that!

Shorty and Slim Except not *havin* a bleedin stage!

Eadie Well... have you two forgotten how to count?

Shorty 1.. 2.. 3.. 4..

Eadie *(during the band intro.. fiddling with her wig and checking the light)* Do you really think they can't see me under me hat? What about under me wig?

Band **"Happy Yodelling Cowgirl"**

June Holms

Eadie *"I'm a happy cowgirl yodelling all the day
Yodel-ayee-o-del-eedle-ayee-o-del-eedle-ayee
My home is on the prairie where the long horn cattle stray
Yodel-ayee-o-del-eedle-ayee-o-del-eedle-ayee
I have no cares or worries no matter where I roam
You'll always hear me yodelling down the trail to home sweet home*

Ai-del-eedle-odel-ayee-ayee-odel-o-too

Bree-be-dee-o-lay-ee-dee-yoo-ai-o

Dol-ayee-ayee-odel-ay-o-too

Bree-pa-dee-o-lay-ee-too

Yo-diddle-ay-ee-ay-ee

Yo-diddle-ay-ee-ay-ee

Yo-diddle-ay-ee-dee-d'l-dee-o

Yo-diddle-ay-ee-ay-ee

Yo-diddle-ay-ee-ay-ee

Yo-diddle-ay-ee-dee"

Scene 2 **Thursday Evening - Mickey's Place**

Eadie *(at the end of the song, Eadie speaks over the music)*

Once upon a time, when the west was wild, there was this cowgirl who had an achin, yearnin, burnin to ride the broncs and the bulls. A cowgirl who dreamt of sittin tall in the saddle, her lariat coiled along her thigh. A cowgirl who dreamt of ridin the wide brown plains swift as the wind.. breakin a line of rustlers.. turnin a stampede.. ridin her horse, who'd thunder on and on.. wringing wet.. flying lather.. hot as fire.

Mickey and Doug are in the kitchen. Mickey is cooking. Doug is flipping through the newspaper. We can hear the Lone Ranger on the television. The kitchen is dirty and dark with years of sausage fat on the walls. Behind Doug's back Mickey is gazing intently at a photo she is holding.

Mickey Hey dad. How come girls don't ride the broncs no more..?

Doug Beats me.

Doug pushes a pile of stuff off the table to make room for his feet. Mickey quickly sticks the photo in her pocket.

Mickey Hey watch that! Those're me entry forms!

Doug Well get 'em off the table.

Mickey Get your feet off the table! We're gonna be eatin off've it soon. *(she goes back to cooking)*

Doug What we havin'?

Mickey Sausages.

Doug Anythin' else?

Mickey Like what? Bombalaska?

Doug Potaters..

Mickey You want potaters you cook em.

Kit's Place - Same evening.

(intercut w/ Mickey's place)

Kit has the phone tucked between her ear and shoulder. She is cooking and trying to clear the table of a huge amount of debris, and simultaneously feed a toddler in a highchair.

Kit *(on the phone.. being very sweet)* I've been trying to get through to you for three weeks..... I thought maybe if you could come out here and have a look at the place you might get some idea what it means to me..... Yes I know it's a long way to come..... I'm sure you can afford the petrol.

Mickey's Place

Mickey We takin Peg this weekend?

Doug Waste'a money luggin her along.

Mickey But she's goin real good Dad..

Doug Not this weekend she ain't.

Mickey Then when!? You said soon.

Doug We got enough stock on without her.

Mickey She'll pay her way.

Doug With what?

Mickey What she wins.

Doug Pink fit.

Kit's Place

Kit You could come out here, check the place out, and we can have a nice relaxed cup of tea and a chat about this when it's not costing me an arm and a leg STD..... Well fuck off then!

Kit hangs up furious

Mickey's Place ..

Mickey Can I rope off Howdy Doody?

Doug Who's gonna heel for yer?

Mickey You!

Doug Not this weekend.

Mickey I'll find someone....

Kit's Place ..

The phone rings. Kit sighs and picks it up.. still trying to get everything done.

Kit Hello?.... *(unenthused)* Oh hi Pop..... yes we're still here..... Yes, I know it's Thursday..... Yes I know it's after 6..... look, can't you guys get your own dinner tonight? Surely there's a tin of baked beans in the cupboard somewhere.....

Mickey's Place ..

Mickey Kit can heel for me.

Doug *(snorts)*

Mickey Yes or no?

Doug *(grunts)*

Mickey What's that mean?

Kit's Place

Kit Last night? I bought you a lettuce. Spread a bit of mayo on it and presto! Salad!

Mickey's Place

Doug Kit don't rodeo no more.

Mickey Yes she does!

Doug No she doesn't!

Mickey Jesus!

Mickey slams Doug's dinner down in front of him and leaves the room.

Kit's Place ..

Kit *(simultaneous)* Jesus Kev, open the fridge and have a look!

She hangs up. Rolls her eyes. And sits.

I'm losing my lollies.

The phone rings again

Fuck!

She picks it up roughly and yells into it

What!!.....

Mickey *(on the phone.. taken aback)* Kit? It's me...

Kit *(she softens)* Oh hi Mickey.....

Mickey You havin' a day are yer?

Kit *(sarcastic)* Yeah it's been great! The Bank Manager just proposed to me.

Mickey *(excited)* For real!?

Kit No Mickey.. but he "might consider" my offer of afternoon tea. How's it with you?

Mickey *(forced)* Me? Oh I'm good! Great!

Doug *(yells)* Keep it down will yer!? Can't hear the bloody tele!

Mickey *(hushed)* Bald Hill's on this weekend.... can I convince ya?

Kit No way Mickey.

Mickey Go on! We been missin ya....

Kit I'm not ready, ok?

Mickey A cowgirl can't ride an ironin board forever mate..

Kit Mickey.. what would I do with Timmy and..

Mickey Get Russ' dad to look after em.. he's not a bloody cripple.

Kit *(horrified)* Mickey!

Mickey Well he's not!

Kit Pop doesn't know how to feed a parking meter!

Mickey There's good money up....

Kit How far is it?

Mickey Only six hundred k!

Kit No.. look the truck hasn't been used since.. *(not saying what she's thinking)* y'know.. over a year.....

Mickey Come on Spurs.. just think about all those big hats, and the dust, and the drinkin'.. and the smell of the horses and the leather and the sweat...

Kit *(with feeling)* Jesus I miss it.

Mickey *(she takes out photo)* And there's somethin I wanna show ya.

Kit What's that?

Mickey Not tellin! Any chance you could pick up Peg on the way through?

Kit Mickey I'm not promising...

Mickey See ya there Cowgirl!

(She hangs up. Kit looks around the kitchen close to tears. Pause. She decides.. turns back to the phone and dials.)

Kit Pop?.. About dinner..