

LA WEEKLY

THEATRE PICK OF THE WEEK

RED DEVILS

MARCH 26-APRIL 1, 1993

Jacobean fanaticism is alive and well in Northern England, according to playwright Debbie Horsfield. Only now it takes the form of working-class blood loyalty to Manchester United, the soccer club whose prowess on the field has long been matched by its fans' violent ill humor in the stands. Horsfield's characters aren't the shaved-headed hooligans who destroy trains, however, but for young women whose hardcore devotion to the team occasionally becomes an erotic longing. Leather-jacketed, tomboyish Phil (Lillian Dean) is the group's unelected leader, a woman clinging to the end of this season of football, friendship and adolescence. The simple story follows her and her mates Beth (director Alicia Gold), Nit (Mehr Mansuri) and Alice (Dyanne DiRosario) as they scrape up money to buy scalper's tickets to a cup match in London and later, at Wembley, the whole time bickering over fashion, bigotry and the worthiness of their team. Of course the story has its End of England metaphors, but Horsfield never lets politics turn her girls into polemical hand puppets; instead, *Red Devils* remains a funny, compelling story about the personal and economic forces that can pull friends apart. Under Gold's taught direction, the self-assured actors turn in memorable performances that make their characters both lovable and repellent. Theatre/Theater, 1713 N. Cahuenga Blvd., Hlywd.; Thurs.-Fri., 8p.m.; thru May 7. (213) 664-4011.

-Steven Mikulan