

EXTRACT

US OR THEM

Ned Manning

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US OR THEM
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NOTE ON THE SCRIPT

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US OR THEM

Us or Them in its original form was first presented by actions and students at Childers Street Hall, Canberra on 1 November 1977, with the following cast:

TOM QUIRK	Steve Payne
MARY SMITH	Marte Newcombe
PRIM CARLOS	Anne Cowrie
GARRETT SWAN	Brian O'Brien
SARAH CROSSMAN	Anne Payne
ROBERT WHITCAN	Ned Manning
DAVID NEYLAND	Jeremy McGrane
TRISH RENDLE	Cherie Ellison
WENDY RAE	Brona O'Brien
SALLY McKENZIE	Kerrie Deane
STEVEN WILKIE	Haydn Muir
PAUL PAYLING	Danny Miles
MR MAHONEY	Gary Roberts
SAM SNAPE	Ed Dittmar
PETER RICKARD	Chris Raft
JANE McNAUGHTON	Ross Dadd
RONALD CARLOS	Richard Maloney
SID SMITH	Charlie Willocks

Lighting by David Ellis
 Stage Manager Carolyn Page
 Designed by Bronwyn Bancroft
 Directed by Ern Steffan

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Us or Them has undergone many changes since its original production in Canberra. It was read and workshopped by members of the Griffin Theatre Company as part of the company's 1983 play-reading season. Prior to the 1984 production by the Griffin Theatre Company it was workshopped with the direction and designer and then with the cast and company writers. Much of the rewriting took place during this period with the author working in consultation with the company.

The first professional production, by the Griffin Theatre Company at the Stables Theatre, Kings Cross, Sydney, opened on 21 February 1984 and transferred to the Phillip Street Theatre on 18 April 1984.

CHARACTERS

Year Eleven students:

STEVE WILKIE

WENDY RAE

SALLY McKENZIE

Teachers

MARY McNAUGHTON, in her mid-twenties

DAVE NEYLAND, the English Master, fortyish

GARRETT SWAN, about the same age

ROBERT WHITCAN, in his mid-twenties

TOM QUIRK, about the same age

PRIM CARLOS, a little older than Mary

Tom and Prim may be played by the same actors who play Steve and Wendy.

SETTING

There are three playing spaces: the staffroom, the corridor and the party area.

The staffroom consists of desks, chairs, teaching materials and a coffee space; the corridor is connected to the staffroom by a door or lighting.

The staffroom is a bunker for the teachers, the corridor is a battlefield.

The party area is separate, having no connection with the school.

ACT ONE**SCENE ONE**

The students in the playground.

STEVE Bugger the exams, they're a waste of time.

WENDY Only if you don't study for them.

SALLY They're a means to an end.

WENDY You're stupid, Steve, you could've copied my assignment.

SALLY Which you copied from Janice Beaumont.

WENDY I didn't copy it – I used it as resource material!

SALLY Anyway, the exams are only worth half the marks – if you did your assignment, Steve, you'd give yourself a chance.

WENDY Might have to turn up to class first!

STEVE God, you two crap on – give me the shits, you're like a couple of teachers.

WENDY Don't get poohey.

SALLY If you copied Wendy's you'd at least have got them in on time.

STEVE Can't get it into your head I couldn't give a fuck about assignments? Jeez. Why would I want to learn about that crap? Waste of time.

WENDY OK. We get the message.

STEVE You only do yours to please Whitcan, anyway.

SALLY Bullshit!

WENDY Whoa!

STEVE Little Miss Actress, aren't we?

SALLY Get stuffed.

WENDY Hey, did you get that answer in Art History?

SALLY Oh ... about architecture. What was it?

WENDY Gothic.

SALLY Yeah.

WENDY Gothic architecture – Janice Beaumont knew all about it.

SALLY Trust you to copy.

WENDY Jealousy is a curse.

STEVE You'll get caught one day.

SALLY Yeah, and the shit'll hit the fan.

US OR THEM

STEVE Which'll leave a hell of a mess.

WENDY Which Swan'll have to clean up.

SALLY/STEVE Yeah!

WENDY You better watch him, Steve, he's after you.

STEVE He doesn't worry me. He's a nobody.

SALLY A nurd.

WENDY A what?

SALLY Nurd.

WENDY Oh. Hey – going to the pub tonight?

SALLY Nuh, can't. Got some work to prepare.

STEVE Oh, yeah, that'll be the day.

SALLY I have.

WENDY First time for everything, I suppose. Hey, did you ask Tom about netball?

SALLY Yeah. He can't take us.

WENDY Who'll we get, then?

STEVE Why don't you ask your mate, Whitcan?

WENDY Yeah, he'd be OK.

SALLY Nuh, I don't think –

WENDY Why not?

STEVE Yeah, why not?

SALLY Dunno, he's not into –

WENDY Keeping him to yourself?

SALLY Don't be a dickhead.

WENDY Well?

SALLY All right, I'll ask him.

STEVE All you chicks do is play netball. Why don't yas go to the beach or something?

WENDY 'Cause I wanna make the State Team.

SALLY I'm going surfing in the holidays.

WENDY Oh yeah.

STEVE Hey, I've nearly got enough for me Ducati.

WENDY/SALLY Boring!

US OR THEM

STEVE: God, youse are up yourselves.

WENDY You're juvenile.

SALLY Now, now, let's not get into that again. Smoke?

WENDY Sure.

STEVE Ripper – I'm out.

WENDY Just for a change, OK?

STEVE Get rooted.

WENDY Hey, look who's got a new skirt. Bet that cost her a few bucks.

STEVE *(stutting out his cigarette)* Waste of a good durry!

MARY enters.

MARY Good morning. I thought smoking was illegal.

SALLY Oh yeah, it is, Miss McNaughton, we were just checking on the juniors, you know.

MARY I believe you, thousands wouldn't.

WENDY Great dress, where'd you get it from?

MARY You like it?

WENDY Yeah, it's great. I like the colours, bright colours suit you.

MARY You reckon?

WENDY Yeah, goes with your personality.

MARY Flattery will get you everywhere.

SALLY She knows that.

MARY Bet she does. How are you, Steve?

STEVE Fine. And you?

MARY Fine.

STEVE What's that badge mean?

MARY It's an anti-nuclear badge – in support of the women in Greenham Common.

STEVE Where's that?

MARY In England, they're demonstrating against nuclear arms.

STEVE Oh, great. Where can I get one?

MARY Oh, um ...

WENDY I heard about them on the telly.

MARY Yes. I'll get a couple if you're interested.

US OR THEM

STEVE Great. Hey, marked our essays yet?

MARY 'Fraid so. Better be off, got lessons to prepare.

MARY exits.

STEVE She's a spunk. I'd give anything to ...

WENDY That's why you do essays in her classes.

SALLY Cat.

WENDY I'm going to be a teacher.

SALLY You've told us before.

WENDY You know how much teachers get?

SALLY Heaps.

WENDY And the holidays, all on good pay.

STEVE Yeah, I might too.

WENDY/SALLY *You?*

STEVE Yeah. P.E.

WENDY Might have to pass a few exams first.

STEVE God, you're a bitch. It's easy to become a teacher.

SALLY Must be!

WENDY Oh yeah? You've got to go to University first.

STEVE Bullshit. You go to College.

WENDY Not if you fail your exams, you don't.

STEVE Who said I'm gonna fail? Anyway, bet Tom didn't go too well in class and he's a teacher.

SALLY You two crap on! Who saw *Prisoner* last night?

WENDY The Freak's in for it now.

STEVE The Freak's fucked.

SALLY She is not.

STEVE Dunno how you watch that crap, it's so boring.

WENDY At least it's real.

STEVE Yeah, real shithouse.

SALLY Wait till I'm in it.

WENDY Be lucky if you are. Did you see Paula Duncan's house in *TV Week*? Wow!

STEVE Think I'll skip Maths.

US OR THEM

WENDY Look out, here comes Neyland.

DAVE enters.

DAVE Morning.

SALLY/STEVE/WENDY Morning, sir. Hello, sir!

DAVE No loitering around here, please. I've asked you seniors before to set the example. With the exams coming up you should be getting ready for school, checking up on homework, preparing. You can never do too much preparation.

SALLY Yes, sir.

DAVE Wilkie, please make yourself a bit presentable.

DAVE exits.

STEVE Yes, sir ... what a jerk.

WENDY They reckon he's got cancer.

SALLY Eh?

STEVE Bullshit.

WENDY Yeah, not long for this earth, I hear.

SALLY Really?

WENDY Would I lie to you?

STEVE God, you're a bullshit artist.

SALLY Who told you?

WENDY Well, he looks like he's falling apart to me – look at his mind.

SALLY Yeah?

WENDY Sucked in!

SALLY Got nothing on yours.

WENDY Yeah? Who was in Terry Wilson's panel van last school Social?

STEVE That was great dope you scored from him. How much did it cost?

WENDY In financial or physical terms?

SALLY Get stuffed.

WENDY I might do some modelling in the holidays.

STEVE Yeah – you can be the before in the 'before and after'.

WENDY Just you wait till I get me own car. You'll be the first one scabbing a lift. 'Come on, Wendy, take us to the Drive-In'.

SALLY No way. When I make it as a TV star I'll be the one with the car and the fancy clothes and all the money ...

US OR THEM

STEVE Fuck! Here comes Swan. Let's go.

They all exit.

SCENE TWO

The staffroom. GARRETT SWAN enters and makes his way to the staffroom which is illuminated as he enters.

GARRETT Morning. Oh bugger, don't tell me Prim's off sick again. That'll mean extras, for sure. She never rings up in time to get a relief in.

MARY Relax, Garrett, she's just having a bit of car trouble, that's all. She ran out of petrol and Ron's running her in; she rang a minute ago.

GARRETT Thank God for that. A full day I don't need.

MARY Not all that long till the holidays.

GARRETT Too bloody long, if you ask me.

MARY How were your Year Eleven exam papers?

GARRETT Bloody dreadful. Half the buggers didn't bother finishing. God knows how they think they're going to get a job. Only about half a dozen managed to pass. It's a waste of bloody time.

DAVE enters.

DAVE Morning. Ah, Garrett, did you speak to the boss about the Council meeting?

GARRETT Yes, he didn't have any idea. Some bullshit about student representation. You'd think the buggers had enough freedom, the way they carry on.

DAVE I see Robert has been nominated for Council. Good to see. Read the *Herald* editorial?

GARRETT More propaganda. Every time the Federation makes an issue you can be sure the press will come down on the Department's side. What do you expect?

MARY The press to support the status quo.

DAVE Well, that's a moot point. I'm not convinced another strike will do much.

MARY We've tried everything else. How on earth can we ever do anything for remedial kids if class sizes aren't adjusted? If a fourteen-year-old's reading age is only ten you need to give special help. It's a waste of time leaving him in a class of thirty. No wonder we have literacy problems.

DAVE I know, Mary, I'm well aware of that, but there are certain priorities which we have to look at first. I'm not so sure reducing class sizes is the answer to all the ills of the education system. Anyway, I'd best go and check all is in readiness for the week.

DAVE exits.

GARRETT Typical bloody response. You'll get no mileage out of him. Too bloody worried about fostering his own, if you know what I mean.



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