

As sharks circle, ignore the door

Gengarry Glen Ross — People's Theatre Studio, Newcastle, until Saturday.

AGAINST the sight of American real estate salesmen tussling for a commission, a sharks' feeding frenzy looks like a tea party.

David Mamet's two-act *expose* introduces us to the overriding importance of the 'lead' (to, in this case, the sale of a morsel of Florida to the next gullible customer).

The bosses give the best salesmen the best leads; the rest get nothing. It isn't a system that thrives on office harmony.

Mamet's staccato language is charged with the power that drives US capitalism.

Of the four salesmen in Frances MacDonald's tightly-directed production, Gordon Mounsey as a bob-tailed Shelly Levene and Chris Goulding as a startlingly De Vito-like Richard Roma draw the most poison from the words. Excellent performances both in a darned fine play.

DAVID WHETSTONE

EVENING CHRONICLE, Thursday, June 6, 1991

Sharp practice, sharp acting

THE stench of dodgy business practice hangs heavily over David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS
People's Theatre
By PHIL PENFOLD

Double-glazing vendors and wide-eyed youths offering timeshare "opportunities" on Spanish beaches are angelic innocence compared with Mamet's fast-talking purveyors of the American dream retirement home.

His "heroes" here are so glib that they almost convince themselves of their honesty, integrity and five-star probity.

That's what makes his play so fascinating; it would be impossible to discover a more corrupt bunch of double-dealing, triple-crossing, unsavoury salesmen.

After a few bumpy moments the whole thing takes off as a damning examination of men whose scruples and

morale are on a level with street-fighting tomcats.

Although all concerned deserve their measure of credit, two people in this cast stand out above the others — Christopher Goulding and Stephen Melville.

Mr Goulding looks more and more like Heaton's answer to Danny de Vito, and is just as versatile with his swings of mood from the co-operatively urbane to the glaringly vicious.

Mr Melville's handling of the youngster who is rapidly educated into the unsavoury system and who discovers it to be without merit — but irresistible — is as good a piece of finely-tuned work as I've seen on any stage, anywhere, this year.

Big money and big egos

Glengarry Glen Ross: People's Theatre, Heaton

WE are in the world of wheeler-dealing and cut-throat competition, of big money and bigger egos.

David Mamet's play is set in the American real estate business, where employees of an ailing firm are competing for the role of top dog in a contest to decide their future.

Each of the men involved is aiming for the top prize of a Cadillac, and with it job security. The losers will receive only redundancy and its attendant humiliation.

The drama, brief and concise in its exploration of the salesmen's situation, divides neatly into two acts covering the flash topside and the seedy reality of this urban jungle: the first is set in a restaurant where deals are struck, the second in the business office after a burglary brings naked emotion out into the open.

Despite its Broadway pedigree, Mamet's writing strikes me as being as much appropriate to cinema as the theatre. Perhaps that's a consequence of its liberal use of four-letter words and a colloquial immediacy not often found in a medium more often given to an artificially literary turn of phrase.

Here, the harsh, jabbing rhythms of the scabrous dialogue are vividly expressive of the aggression and violent ambition of the salesmen's milieu, where keeping ahead is more than just a matter of pride and satisfaction.

The all-male cast of Frances MacDonald's production is uniformly excellent, realising with a conviction quite unexpected in an English (let alone amateur) company the uniquely American-metropolitan flavour of the piece.

In particular, Christopher Goulding once again shows himself a master of dialect and mannerism, in a performance brilliantly conforming to the mould of diminutive masculine arrogance set by the Hollywood likes of Joe Pesci and Danny De Vito.

Sheldon Hall