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Mike Bartlett?s Generational Reckoning

Scala Wien, 25.04.2026 [ENA]

Mike Bartlett’s Love Love Love—the Austrian premiere at Theater Zum Fürchten’s Theater Scala on April 18, 2026—dissects the Baby Boomer legacy with surgical precision, spanning 1967’s Summer of Love to millennial disillusionment in three razor-sharp acts. Babett Arens’ incisive staging transforms the intimate Scala into a pressure cooker of familial implosion, where free-love idealism collides with neoliberal entitle

Sophie Prusa, Teresa Renner, Paul Barna, Felix Frank, and Boris Popovic deliver blistering performances, their ensemble chemistry weaponizing Bartlett’s lacerating wit. Andrea Bernd’s sets—psychedelic crash pad to sterile McMansion—mirror the arc from utopian commune to soulless suburbia. Act I explodes in 1967 North London: Kenneth (Boris Popovic) and Sandra (Sophie Prusa) host a Beatles-blasting dinner party, joint-passing devolving into sofa-bound infidelity as All You Need Is Love mocks from the stereo.

Popovic’s Kenneth embodies hapless hedonism—his stoned philosophizing (“Property is theft!”) curdles into spineless betrayal. Prusa’s Sandra ignites as counterculture siren: her Sgt. Pepper-era miniskirt and Mary Quant bob frame a restless sensuality that erupts when she ditches boyfriend for Kenneth mid-A Day in the Life. Paul Barna’s Henry—Sandra’s jilted suitor—provides aching contrast, his quiet devastation underscoring the boomers’ collateral damage. Arens’ blocking turns the living room into primal arena: bodies entwine amid lava lamps as hippie platitudes justify primal urges.

Act II catapults to 1990: the same flat now suffocates under Thatcherite clutter—IKEA shelving, muzak New Labour posters. Kenneth and Sandra’s marriage has fossilized into sitcom dysfunction; their adult children, Rose (Teresa Renner) and Jamie (Felix Frank), explode in spectacular parental showdown. Renner’s Rose channels millennial rage with ferocious clarity: “You had the sixties! Where’s our revolution?” Her soliloquy catalogs boomer hypocrisy—free love begat latchkey childhoods; commune equality yielded private school privilege.

Frank’s Jamie weaponizes passive aggression, his deadpan “Can we have the house?” detonating generational warfare. Popovic and Prusa age masterfully: Kenneth’s paunch and pint glass, Sandra’s peroxide bob and gin blossoms reveal entropy’s cruel arithmetic. Arens stages the dinner table as battlefield—crockery shatters as much from subtext as physical violence. The 2011 finale strips illusions bare: Kenneth and Sandra’s golden wedding devolves into grotesque farce at their Surrey mansion. Champagne flows, but Rose’s plus-one speech eviscerates their legacy: “You burned the house down then

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demanded we rebuild it."

Now radicalized eco-warrior, Rose rejects inheritance as blood money; Jamie's corporate climb reveals boomer capitalism's ultimate victory. Prusa's Sandra—protesting too much in Laura Ashley—crumbles under truth's weight; Popovic's Kenneth retreats to dementia's refuge. Arens' masterstroke: the final tableau freezes all five in mutual recrimination, Here Comes the Sun warping into dystopian dirge.

Bartlett's dramaturgy—Pinter pauses exploding into Alan Bennett vitriol—thrives under Arens' metronomic pacing. Bernd's costumes chronicle cultural decay: kaftans yield to power suits yield to athleisure. Sound design weaponizes era markers—Woodstock fades to X-Factor auditions—while lighting transmutes from hazy idealism to clinical fluorescence. The Scala's proximity amplifies claustrophobia; every slammed door reverberates like Greek tragedy's ekkyklema.

Love Love Love indicts without preaching, mourns without sentiment. Boomers exit unrepentant, millennials unvictorious—the private remains political, love remains conditional. Theater Zum Fürchten proves intimate spaces birth profound reckonings; Bartlett joins Osborne and Stoppard in Britain's dramatic pantheon. Vienna's Scala hosts a generational Ring—without gods, only flawed mortals. Catharsis achieved through uncomfortable laughter.

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