

## Review: An evening with Gary Lineker

An exploration of the role of football in society, 'An evening with Gary Lineker' sees an effective combination of subversive humour and accurate social commentary. [Ben Cross](#) reviews

Saturday 17 November 2012



**Director:** Alex Ferguson

**Producer:** Tom Giles

**Writers:** Arthur Smith and Chris England

**Verdict:** 3 Stars

This week's drama barn comedy didn't star Lineker sitting around chowing down Walkers' crisps, as he inevitably does nightly, whilst trying to act. For surely he would end up merely showering his audience with salty and vinegary bits? Lineker isn't the focus of the play at all – although what is does seem a little elusive.

The narrative kicks off with a football fanatic husband Bill, acted by Olly Brassell, and wife Monica, played successfully by Helen Peatfield, in a Majorcan hotel room waiting for the 1990 Germany-England semi-final of the world cup to commence. As Bill gears up for the match, Helen in turn fantasises about Gary Lineker and attempts to talk to her spouse about their relationship. Luckily for Bill, the awkward and inappropriately football-hating Ian, an old school friend of Bill's (acted by the David Mitchell-esque Harry Whittaker), and his inappropriately German compatriot and hopeful romance Birgitta (Daisy Hale) arrive, both of whom are funnily incongruous and well-acted – Whittaker particularly having hilarious moments. Joined by the final character Dan (Declan Dillance) the game commences, which progresses and unfolds alongside the various complex relationships within the play.

"The thing that men really care about is football" – at its most basic, *An evening with Gary Lineker* is interesting if only in exploring football's place in society. Having a brother who's a football-lover, the scenes of suspended reality whilst 'the game' is on are generally accurate and familiar, and the play takes this to interesting extremes whilst being subversive and critical.

The naturalistic set works well, suitable for and reflective of a gang of mates watching a football match whilst wonderfully opposing the play's latent surreal qualities. Both the directing and play as a whole is generally good although not exceptional. The internal monologues, signified by a bright white light on the character, don't have the full effect they could. Minor mistakes (which perhaps can be put down to teething errors) and a cast that is slow to warm up let the play down. However, *An evening with Gary Lineker* is worth seeing as, if nothing else the ending does baffle and delight.



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