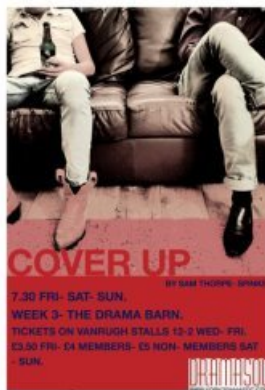


Review: Cover Up

Student written play, *Cover Up* entertained through-out, bringing the Barn audience an unravelling tale of deception and disgrace. [Lucie Parker](#) reviews

Saturday 26 January 2013



Director and writer: Sam Thorpe Spinks

Assistant Director: Rosie Litterick

Producer: Jo Thompson

Rating: ★★★★★☆

The first play written by Sam Thorpe Spinks brings us an unravelling tale of deception and disgrace, culminating in an explosion of emotions which places the audience at the voyeuristic heart of its powerful crossfire in this intimate drama barn setting. The addictive television-drama style of *Cover Up* steals your attention from the moment you set foot in the barn, only to relinquish it back as the lights go up. With tones of Arthur Miller dancing in and out of the second act in particular, the submerged yet starkly apparent tensions subtly bubble away beneath the farcical discourse throughout the play.

Jason Ryall plays Simon, a complex character that epitomises a lonely and mournful antagonism, stirring potent feelings of annoyance from his unjust attitude of “investments over friends”. Jason, played by Will Westerman, is Simon’s flatmate and aspiring writer, whose charming nature and innocent dreams evoke an empathetic relationship between himself and the audience. Their landlady, Mrs Edwards (Zoe Biles), provides the medium outlet of escape for both Simon and Jason. Acting as the moral beacon she feeds their woes with advice and spoons out anecdotes like medicine in the attempt to soothe their sorrows. Jane (Polly Jordan), the girlfriend of Simon, is an equally sad character, trapped within the contemptuous confines of their relationship.

Jason Ryall slips into this role wonderfully, stoking the audience’s hatred with his strong portrayal of the weak and cowardly Simon. Polly Jordan plays a powerful Jane, capturing the disintegrating stability of her broken character perfectly. Will Westerman strolls around as Jason at ease, adding another emphatic performance to the mix. The first act revolves around the dynamic between these three, and although each actor provides a solid individual performance, the chemistry flirting around their triangle of angst and despair is lacking in parts. The stronger second act bombards the barn with humour, coaxing raucous

laughter from the audience and teasing us with the nonsensical nature of the dinner party that follows. Hilary (Flora Ogilvy), Gerald (Joseph D'Angelo), and Sue (Kerry Hibbert) are a flavoursome mixture of wonderfully exaggerated and contrasting characters that deepen the schizophrenic dynamics by creating a bizarre surface of normality, beneath which former tensions slower simmer away.

The set up of the barn somehow manages to carve a vast space in preparation for the bold dynamics that follow. The authenticity of the living room adds further to the feeling that we are voyeurs of an everyday life situation, with steaming mugs and the rich smells of pasta bake contributing to these carefully thought out touches. The sofa is the main focus of the room, acting as a representation of the interconnected relationships that spiral up and down. As they eventually tail off into a sad nothing, the sofa goes too, leaving a blank space that is the visual reminder of the hollow emptiness of the room and the man within it.

The ending failed to capture properly the moral hints that darted around the script, leaving a disappointing sense of something unfinished. Yet regardless of whether our moral compasses were fulfilled, the ability of the script to constantly entertain at the level it did is something to be recognised and respected. From the position of an integrated observer, the lesson we certainly draw away from this wasp's nest of emotions is that "you never know what life will throw at you, or your sofa".



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